

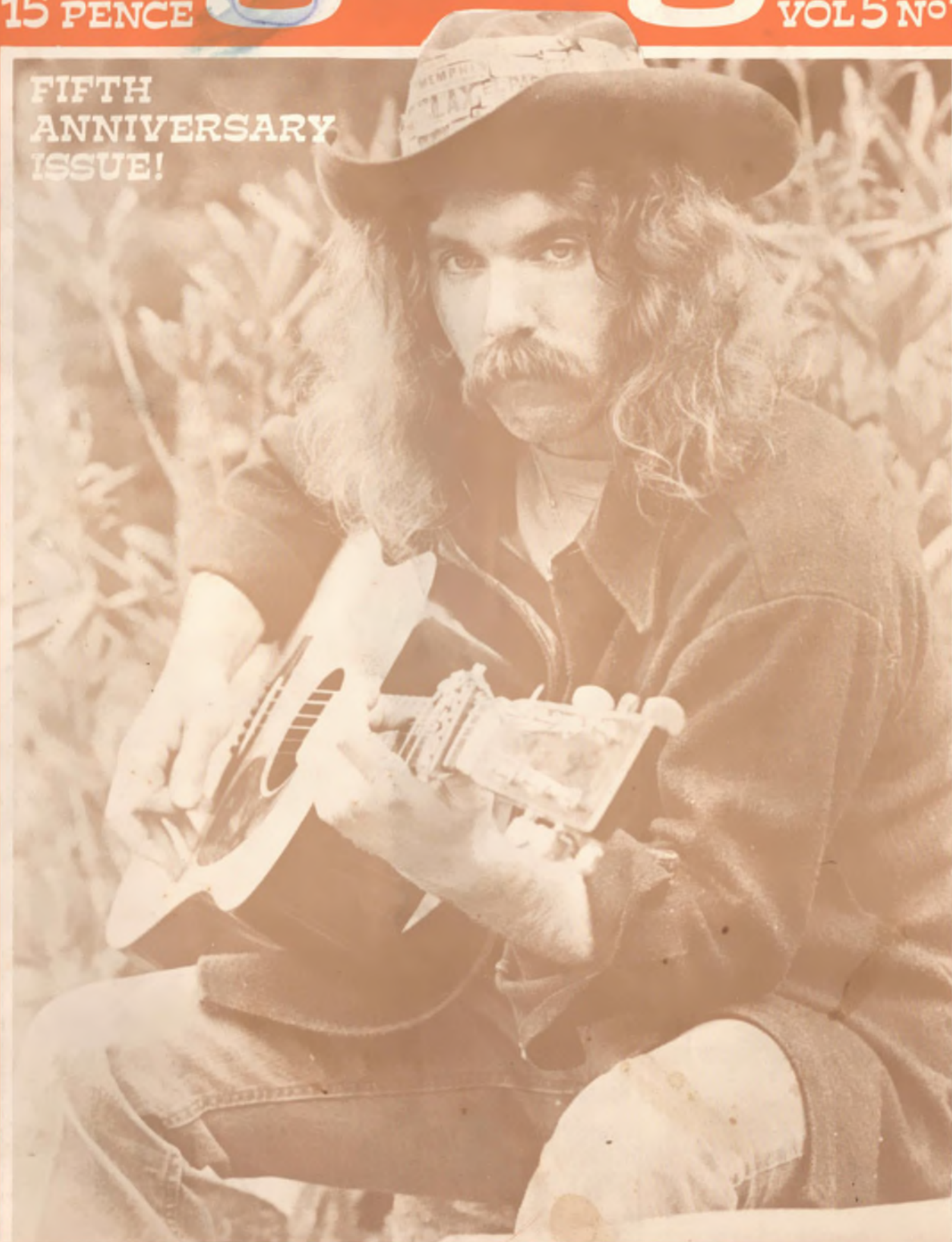
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PETER HUGHES BALDING THIRTY ONE SNACKED OUT & CRACKERS ART STUDIOS



John Martyn is probably the most important British artist never to be featured in ZigZag before now, so his inclusion in this particular issue is both fitting and, I hope, welcome. In my opinion, there are few concert performers more entertaining and satisfying than him, and at least four of the seven albums he has made are absolutely essential listening, while the others are nothing less than interesting and enjoyable in their own right. In this country I think it's true to say that he carries more respect than popularity, although in the States, where he recently completed his fourth tour, he goes down extremely well playing to audiences ten times the size of anything he faces here. It was during his month's rest after the last American tour, a gig at Imperial College (more about that later), and a short trip to Paris with Traffic, that I went down to interview him at his home in Hastings.

Now Hastings, as you are no doubt aware, is on the south coast of this fair isle and apart from being an historical land-mark and a destination point for thousands of summertime holiday makers, it's one of the more unspoilt coastal towns with a fabulous little fishing industry and an 'old town' that consists of a maze of steep, narrow, winding streets, quaint old houses, a market place, and numerous pubs. On arriving there, I met John in his local (and it really was a local... everybody knew each other, and they made me, a total stranger, feel very welcome), and after several games of snooker, and much mirth, we ended up in the living room of John's house overlooking the sea where for the next couple of hours he answered my questions in some detail.

John Martyn was born in Glasgow and spent most of his childhood there before coming down to London when he was 17.

"I learned to play off a guy called Hamish Imlach who taught me all the things I knew in C... taught me all these kind of guitar licks and the sort of stuff that Ralph McTell plays—ragtime, very gentle kind of Dylan stuff. I used to go and see him all the time. A friend of my father's called Willie Sinnit used to make guitars and he knew I was playing guitar, so he said 'I know a friend called Hamish Imlach who plays in clubs and stuff'. So he took me around to two or three clubs. Hamish did a concert close to my house once—this was when I was 16 and I'd been playing for just about three or four months—with a guy called Josh McCrae who did a song called 'Messin' About On The River' (remember that one from 'Children's Favourites' days?). Well he didn't turn up so they were stuck for somebody to play for half an hour. They asked people from the audience to do a couple of songs and eventually they showed me up there and everybody liked it.

So Hamish said 'Why don't you come round and do a couple of songs in my set for people and maybe earn a few quid for it'. At that time I'd been chucked out of art school for being nasty and silly, and I didn't have much money—I was earning my money playing darts in those days, making about two quid a day—and he took me around to a lot of folk clubs. A lot of them thought it was just ridiculous mind you, but Bert Jansch was just beginning, I think he had one album out and he was a very 'underground' hero—he smoked pot, pot and not hash I may add, and everybody listened to him. So I just did loads of gigs like that. Everyone in Scotland was very in awe of the London scene... like that was the thing to do if you wanted to make it... that's where you went. Then I listened to a Davey Graham album and that completely blew me away. I went to see him in a folk club called Cousins and I came back full of the whole thing about London. I was dossing in London, sleeping in Trafalgar Square, and getting moved on by the fuzz. I came back up and worked on a building site for a couple of weeks, couldn't hack that, and then I met the Incredible String Band who were very much into what I was doing. They'd only just started and I would support them on little folk club gigs and get three or four quid. They told me that they were working at Cousins so I went down there and they introduced me to Andy Matthews (see his picture in the Ralph McTell piece in ZZ 39). And I remember I just asked him and asked him and asked him and asked him for a gig. And he said, 'I've never heard you'. So I said 'Fxxk you man, I've played in your club about five or six times, why haven't you heard me?' So he said, 'Alright, you can do an all-nighter.' So I did an all-nighter with Davey Graham, and that was it. Cousins is really the only London club that stands out in my mind. Not because it had a reputation, but because it was a good club. And it was the only place where you could totally relax. Also it was in Soho and that was very romantic to me when I was young... strippers and concerts and stuff... a very wide-eyed thing. That relates to a song of mine called 'Dusty'—that wide-eyed thing. My parents were divorced when I was young and I only got to see my mother for two months of the year, and I never got to stay with her because my step-father didn't like me, so I stayed with her sister and her husband. Now they lived in Hampton Court and every year when I went down it

would be the Scottish school holidays which is late July, August and a bit of September, so I'd always be in Hampton Court at the time of Whitsun which was when the fair was. And that song 'Dusty' is just about Hampton Court Fair, 'Cause that was my dream when I was a kid... the grass is always greener. Actually, though I was very happy as a child because my grandmother was just beautiful to me and my father was excellent, but London was like a dream to me... even the Southern line, the green trains, and the journey from Waterloo to Surbiton—that's where my mother lived. You see I come from Glasgow which is a very stropky part of town and you don't have any choice up there—either you're violent or you're a weed. And I haven't got the capacity for being trodden on. I'm a natural born coward just like everybody else, but I don't like being taken advantage of. I'm probably still the same now. But at the time it was just either eat or be eaten and it was just such a pleasant change to come down here. There were fights in school all the time and knives were bandied about, and it always seemed more civilised to be in England, especially round the Kingston way. It was just a very civilised part of my life. I did my best in a way to become a middle-class Englishman for two or three months and then I realised that there was another side to that which was the pill-droppers who lived with their parents at night in Hinchley Wood or Esher or something but who nonetheless went out at weekends and took loads of speed and smoked a bit of grass, and went about with loose young ladies. There was a whole kind of movement... Ren-bourn and all those people, and the white blues thing... Jo-Ann Kelly and that thing. All that comes from the Thames Delta. So I was involved with that for awhile. It was a very strong part of my life, a real stretch for me because I'd led a very closed sort of existence up until then."

If Cousins was the most memorable venue for John in those days, then the Kingston folk barge was probably the most important because it was there that a guy called Theo Johnson approached John and said, quite literally, 'I will make you a star!' If you look at the cover of his first album, 'London Conversation', you'll see a sleeve note which starts 'So there I was on this barge on the river...'

"That's the Kingston folk barge which was run by an alcoholic called Geoff who used to drink methylated spirits and red wine... he's now become a traffic warden, and the barge was towed away as a derelict. I was playing on the folk barge when a fat man called Theo Johnson appeared. He'd just recorded two albums of bawdy ballads for Island, be-



cause Island at first were kind of a spurious label; they used to release dirty noises and stuff called 'Aphrodite Unleashed' or something... any kind of record that would make money, rugby songs, anything at all that there was a small market for they'd chuck out. Anyway Theo Johnson took me up to Island with a song called 'Fairy Tale Lullaby' which everyone was very impressed with, and I've been there ever since. About three weeks after I'd signed with Island, Theo Johnson came to me and said, 'here's the management contract'. And it gave him 45% of everything I might earn for the next ten years, so I told him to stick that. And that was probably one of the best things I ever did in my life. An intuitive business decision. I've seen him twice, maybe three times since. He was the man who started me off on the road to whatever."

John's first album for Island was "London Conversation" (ILPS 952), and it came out in 1967. There are twelve tracks, eight of which John wrote himself, and they all conform fairly rigidly to the standard folk song formula of the time. Most of them are quite clearly the songs of an innocent youth, as is implied in what he's already said, but they're nonetheless very pleasant, and two in particular are outstanding. "Back To Stay" is a very beautiful love song with an unusual structure that sets it apart from everything else, and a sad, dreamy melody the likes of which only John Martyn and a handful of other songwriters are capable of producing. "Don't Think Twice" is in a similar vein and equally good. It's a Dylan song of course, and it's given a simple, soft treatment that recalls parts of Nico's "Chelsea Girl" album quite vividly. There's a fairly long number called "Rolling Home" which is dominated by a somewhat less than dazzling piece of guitar playing, but the remainder of the album just features John on guitar and vocals, simply and clearly produced in wonderful mono, and as I say, very pleasant. It's interesting to note that he had only been playing guitar for about three months when that album was made and during that time there were two people in particular that he listened to and possibly learnt a lot from:

"Les Brown, who is completely unknown and has never recorded... he plays kind of American Doc Watson guitar very very well. Lovely voice. Also a friend of mine called Paul Wheeler who is featured on the second album. He's been a friend of mine for a long time. Very English, he was another part of the middle-class stream."

By the time his second album "The Tumbler" (ILPS 9091) was released (1968), he had been exposed and influenced by a variety of people who he'd met on his exploits through London's folk scene... people like Davey Graham, Bert Jansch, and a guy called Harold McNair who played flute on "The Tumbler".

"Harold McNair is dead now. He died three and a half years ago of cancer. He had cancer when he played on that album. His death was one of the sad things in my life—a really terrible drag. He was a very sweet little guy, very unassuming, very beautiful, very good flute player and a great alto player. He was definitely the best flute player I've ever heard. Nobody swung like him. They called him Little Jesus... he was West Indian. He did a great deal for me in that he opened me up. I started to think 'wow, there are people who can really do it'. He did a lot for me just by example. We were never really close friends or anything, just good acquaintances. We played well together. Al Stewart produced "The Tumbler"... I don't know why that is. I think it's because somebody said I should have a producer. Chris Blackwell I think said

that. Probably Al Stewart volunteered, because I don't ever remember asking him. I don't think I would have been so silly. But we recorded the album in one afternoon which is quite interesting I think. Things were very simple in those days."

The only other musicians on the album besides John and Harold McNair, were the aforementioned Paul Wheeler on second guitar and Dave Moses on bass.

"I met Paul at an Incredible String Band gig when I first started working in London, and the first thing that brought us together was our mutual admiration for the Incidents. He wrote, and still does write really well. He's got a song called 'Juli' which I eventually want to record. I tried to record it on the last album but it wouldn't fit in somehow."

While the difference between "London Conversation" and "The Tumbler" isn't as drastic as you might be led to believe, there are improvements and modifications that lend themselves very well to Martyn's rapidly developing style of writing. All twelve tracks are originals and although they're still quite obviously straight folk songs, there's room for something like "Sing A Song Of Summer" which is a fast-paced sort of nonsense song that somehow works in a very naive, unpretentious way, and an instrumental, called "Seven Black Roses". My own personal favourite from the album is the aforementioned "Dusty", an opinion that is coloured by some nice memories as well as being the first song of John Martyn's that I ever heard. In the days when, for me, sampler albums were the only means of picking up on more than one artist's work in one month, I invested in one such LP on the Island label called "You Can All Join In" which contained "Dusty" and soon became the track that I played more than any other, basically for two reasons. First of all because it was so damn good, and secondly because even then, John's voice had taken on a slurred, expressive quality that made a lot of the words difficult to distinguish, and necessitated a few hundred plays before even the first verse could be deciphered. I can still remember quite clearly how, along with a friend of mine, I would sit in front of my ultra-sophisticated, atomic-powered, air-suspensioned super Junior Dansette portable attentively trying to figure out what it was all about. We hadn't a clue what it was all about really, but we knew it was good, and at the time that was all that mattered. Oh yes those were the days! Still, the rest of "The Tumbler" is good too. Harold McNair's flute work is superb throughout, especially on "The Gardeners" and "Fly On Home" which was co-written with Paul Wheeler, and the guitar work and production generally has a bit more sparkle and vitality than its predecessor's. As John says, "The album 'sings' a bit more than before."

After that came two important events in John's career. His meeting with his wife-to-be, Beverley, and his involvement with Joe Boyd and Witchseason.

"I became friendly with a guy called Jackson C. Frank who came over here to do a tour and was very screwed in the brain... we were having lots of fake Leary 'Acid Tests', peculiar things in those days, and he was doing a gig at Chelsea College of Art, and I went along with him. Beverley was also playing at the gig, and he had known her for four years previous to that, so we just kind of got together. Jackson played, then Beverley played, and then I played, and she said 'Would you like to play some session music for me?' and I agreed. At that time she'd just been

signed to Witchseason publishing company by Joe Boyd, and then I was signed originally to be her back-up guitar player on a few sessions she was going to do in America, but it eventually seemed obvious to go as John and Beverley Martyn and to make an album together. I don't think Joe Boyd ever really liked me, and he probably still doesn't. I think he thinks I'm a good musician, but I've always had personality differences with the man. I think he has a different conception of what British music should be. Of course he made a very gallant attempt to kind of pull together English music at one point... you know, Fairport Convention and the Incredible String Band. He tried to get a little movement going and to a great extent was successful. Incredible String Band especially, because he found them and found them at their peak, because they were incredible. I honestly don't like them now, but they were amazing at that time. I don't know how much of that is coloured by sentiment, but I don't think a lot of it is. Rarely had I heard two people swing that much together. Really good.

Anyhow it was really coincidence that both Bev and I went to Island because Joe Boyd had a deal with them whereby everything he released on Witchseason production company went out through Island. So there was no change for me."

When the time came for John and Beverley to make their album together they went to the States... this was summer 1969... and under the guidance of Joe Boyd and the musical direction of Paul Harris they cut "Stormbringer" (ILPS 9113) at A & R Studios, New York. The line-up of musicians on the album is impressive to say the least... Paul Harris—piano, organ, Harvey Brooks—bass, Levon Helm, Billy Mundi, Herbie Lovell—drums, and John Simon—harpsichord, and the music is, as one would expect, outstanding.

"Joe Boyd approached the whole thing in a very straightforward way. He wanted the other musicians to know the chords and the changes before they went into the studio to save money on rehearsals and stuff, and he put us together with Paul Harris. He was living in Woodstock, and Joe rented us a house there for three months. It was the year of the festival. We just lived there and worked with Paul Harris very quickly and very briefly and we just went into the studio and did it very one-off, very swift. Levon Helm and Harvey Brooks we met in Woodstock and used them, just because they were friends. It seemed obvious that they should be on it. Dylan lived up the road, and Hendrix lived virtually next door. He used to arrive every Thursday in a purple helicopter, stay the weekend, and leave on the Monday. He was amazing... a good lad. Joe Boyd is credited as having produced the album but I've always been suspicious of the term producer anyway. In Joe's case it was more of a discipline thing. He used to just say 'Well that won't do'. We used to have disagreements. He doesn't have as free an approach as I'd like to see. But really I enjoyed making that album a lot. That was really one of the finest hours because I think it surprised everybody. I think they were expecting some little folksy album to come out and it came out with a lot of bite. It was just a little bit ahead of its time I thought. Probably a whole lot came from that record... like people started using the drum ideas and stuff, and nobody had really thought of using drums with acoustic instruments before. But it's difficult to say that sort of thing without being conceited."

Well he doesn't have to because I'll say it for him. "Stormbringer" is a beautiful record and a very influential one in that it set a precedent for countless country-rock bands to

Recorded in concert at The Royal Festival Hall London on Friday January 18th 1974 with The London Symphony Orchestra and The English Chamber Choir conducted by David Measham
Production narrated by David Hemmings

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follow. The musicianship and arrangements are just about perfect, and the songs, all of them, are outstanding. What more could you ask for? Of the ten tracks, John wrote six of them, including the title track which is quite possibly the best thing here, and Beverley wrote the four on which she takes lead vocals. There are very carefully and tastefully handled string arrangements by Paul Harris on "Can't Get The One I Want", "Stormbringer" (which incidentally has a particularly memorable chorus), and "The Ocean" which along with "Would You Believe Me?" presents us with the very first taste of things to come in John's pre-occupation with electronics and the possibilities of electric music. Beverley's finest contribution is "Tomorrow Time"—a lovely song heightened by John Simon's great harpsichord playing and Bev's own clear gentle voice. As I said at the beginning, if you haven't got any John Martyn records, you should endeavour to obtain four in particular. And this is one of them. Just as a footnote to tidy things up, it should be mentioned that the American trip was more or less a honeymoon for John and Beverley as they'd only got married a short time before, and the album took just eight days to make . . . six days recording and two days mixing.

On to the fourth album, "The Road To Ruin" (ILPS 9133) (1970), recorded at Sound Techniques in Chelsea with John Wood as engineer. It was the second and last album made with Beverley and the one that John feels was the least satisfying to make.

"Joe Boyd took to reading newspapers throughout the sessions. He had other things on his mind I think. Beverley and I had disagreements with him about what was right and what was wrong. Also that record wasn't a spontaneous thing, unlike the others. It was a question of, you know, 'we'll do an overdub'. 'Can we do it now?' 'No, do it next week.' And so we just went back and forth and back and forth."

Personnel for the album were Paul Harris—piano, Wells Kelly—drums and bass, Mike Kowalski—drums, Rocky Dzidzornu—congas, Dave Pegg—bass, Alan Spenner—bass, Dudu Pukwana—sax, Lyn Dobson—flute and sax, Ray Warleigh—sax, and Danny Thompson—double bass.

"Danny Thompson . . . I can't remember how I met him now. I think I might have met him at a place called The Three Horseshoes in the very early days of the Pentangle in Tottenham Court Road. I think I met him there once or twice and we liked each other. He was probably just high for the session and ever since then we just got on like a house on fire. Great bloke. They brought Paul Harris over especially to do the album. Mike Kowalski played drums, and Wells Kelly . . . a great drummer—he's got his own band called Orleans I think. Rocky Dzidzornu—he's just a conga player, one of those you know,—smiley, and happy and jumpy and leapy and grumpy—all these kind of English conga players—they've all got nicknames. Then there was Dave Pegg from the Fairports and Alan Spenner—he played with Joe Cocker's band. I can't really remember why they were used for what tracks or anything. I should think that most of the decisions were Joe's. Of course there was Dudu Pukwana. He played with Chris McGregor's band, Brotherhood of Breath, as well as his own band Spear, and Assagai. Joe Boyd was also producing McGregor's band so I went along to a few of their gigs and I really came to love Dudu. He was cleaning the Odeon a year ago which is an absolute disgrace because he's probably one of the best alto horn players in the world. He finds it very difficult to get a gig over here.

As for Lyn Dobson and Ray Warleigh, they are just British jazzers. Ray Warleigh plays occasionally with C.C.S. and he has his own little trio as most of these jazz session-men do."

"The Road To Ruin" stands apart from other John Martyn albums not least because of the way it was recorded, and also because it employs distinctly jazz instrumentation in what is basically a rock format. Tracks like "Primrose Hill", "Auntie Aviator", and the title track, feature a lot of sax playing from Pukwana, Warleigh, and Dobson, and Paul Harris' piano work on "Auntie Aviator" is quite different from any of his other contributions to Martyn's records. John wrote four of the nine tracks, Beverley one, they wrote three between them, and Paul Wheeler was responsible for the other one. I think it's true to say that although the standard of the compositions isn't at all inferior to previous songs, the over-dubbing is a bit too apparent in places and sounds rather cluttered on occasions, robbing the record of a lot of the 'feel' and confidence that the other albums display in abundance. However, this is probably just pedantic hair-splitting on my part, because overall it's a very pleasing record to my ears, and songs like "Parcels", "Road To Ruin", and "Give Us A Ring" are especially good. Just an added note of trivia . . . if, like me, you are an incurably dedicated reader of sleeve notes and personnel listings, you will discover, on the jacket to "The Road To Ruin" a very strange balls-up indeed. Apparently they couldn't seem to decide what the title to one of the songs was, and so there is frequent mention, in the bit that explains who plays what, of a track that is nowhere to be found on the track list. It becomes obvious however that "Let It Happen", and "Say What You Can" are one and the same song! How's that for obscure, inconsequential reference to detail then . . . I think even the new CBS press officer would have been proud of that one!

Between "The Road To Ruin" and his next album, "Bless The Weather" there was a long gap when nothing much was heard from John. He stopped gigging and took to spending a lot of time with his family at their new home in Hastings, and by this time Beverley was expecting their second child. But the main reason for this period of inactivity was the fact that Joe Boyd disbanded Witchseason.

"The folding up of Witchseason was purely politics. My records hadn't sold in vast numbers. After "The Road To Ruin" Joe Boyd decided it was policy for Beverley to record a solo album and for me to record a solo album, and then for both of us to record an album together. And when we went to Island, we went on the premise that we would both record a solo album and mine was the only one that they ended up recording. You could say that Joe Boyd sold us down the river. And then again you could say that that wasn't the truth at all, and that he was given assurances that weren't carried out. I don't know, I never got to the bottom of that. I was just disgusted by the whole affair. That was the shakiest point in my relationship with Island Records. We weren't world famous and nobody had paid too much attention. We'd had good critical write-ups, but no-one had covered any of the songs, and we hadn't had a number one single, and Radio One didn't like us, and all that kind of stuff. There wasn't too much interest from the A&R men and the powers that be, so Island said 'Give him six grand and see what he comes up with'. And that was it. It took a fair amount of time for them to decide to give me the money, or something, I don't know. They got very scared at that time really, they must have

thought that I'd been around a long time and I wasn't famous, and didn't look as if I was going to be, so why throw away good money? And that's really how the next album, 'Bless The Weather' came about. Incidentally, Joe Boyd went to work for Warner Bros, made that Jimi Hendrix film, and helped on the soundtrack for '2001' and stuff."

Now "Bless The Weather" (ILPS 9167) (1971) is very much a reversion back to the pure, simple songs of the early days but with a considerably more mature outlook. The lyrics are stronger, the melodies very imaginative and very beautiful, and the instrumentation is for the most part kept to a basic guitar/bass/vocal line-up. Additional help is used though in the persons of Ian Whiteman and Roger Powell from the legendary Mighty Baby, Tony Reeves, Richard Thompson, Smiley De Jonnes, and Beverley on the odd vocal track.

"Ian Whiteman and Roger Powell . . . great lads. I met Ian Whiteman at a Sandy Denny session and I said 'Please come and play piano for me'. I was looking for a drummer so I said 'Who do you suggest for a drummer?' And he said 'Well I've worked with this drummer for years,' so he brought Roger Powell along. Ian and Roger went off to Morocco and made that album "If Man But Knew" calling themselves The Habibiyya. They've since become Sufis. The last I heard they were doing concerts in Berkeley in America. They were living on the campus and giving lectures on Sufism and doing the odd concert once a week . . . meditation and stuff."

"Most of the songs on "Bless The Weather" were very quick. I'd been writing songs in the studio on the day they were recorded. It's much nicer like that—to be spontaneous. There was no re-writing, it just came out very naturally. I much prefer that approach. I suppose the logical extension of that would be to go and improvise an album but even that's too heavy. There's a nice happy medium in "Bless The Weather". John Wood helped me produce it. He was much less dictatorial than Joe, much less so. I'd like to work with him again actually. But I went through a kind of funny point on the last album. I said I'd like him to produce it and then all of a sudden everything overtook me and I ended up producing it myself. And that was a bit painful. I shouldn't really have done that. It was very rude of me in a way, so I'm going to try and get back with him.

"People kind of sat up and took notice of me after that album. I don't know why . . . I've never really had it in my mind to be a success. I take it for granted that some people will like it and some people won't. I can't really think of it in those terms though because if I did I think I'd get a bit messed up. I'd start thinking, 'Well I'd better not play that or somebody won't like it'. It's just a matter of following your heart."

Without elaborating on "Bless The Weather" too much, let me say that it is a fabulous album, quite definitely one of the very best of 1971, and one which you should spare no amount of trouble over to possess. Every song is a gem, and one in particular, "Glistening Glyndebourne", demonstrates Martyn's growing interest in electric music and his unique use of electronic devices, his desire to play an instrument that can give him sustain, and his concern with sound textures, all of which he explains thus:

"I first thought of the possibilities of electric guitar after hearing the Band's "Music From Big Pink". They used great textures on that. It turns out actually that in my naivety, a lot of what I thought was electric guitar was in fact the Hammond organ. It was the first time I heard electric music using very soft textures,

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panels of sound, pastel sounds, rather than uumph!! I was intrigued by that because I think a lot of people just equated electric music with hard-rock, they didn't think that you could be gentle with it if you wanted. That's one of the reasons why I like Joe Zawinal of Weather Report so much, because he exploits the gentle side of electronics. Terry Riley too. I still much prefer gentle music than anything else. With my electric music what happens is that the note comes out of the pick-up on the guitar and goes into the fuzz box which I use now and again, and then it goes into a combination of volume and wah-wah pedal which I use a fair bit. It comes out of that and goes into an echoplex which repeats the note so you chop in between rhythms, and you can choose your own timings because it's completely elastic. And you can set the number of repeats. I just like the idea of making a machine human in that way, and I like impressing the humanness of yourself onto a machine rather than the other way round which is what happens in a lot of cases. I got into that because I really wanted to play an instrument that had sustain. I tried to play the horn. I can play the horn, but I wasn't as good as I wanted to be, and it needs at least a year to get your chops in. The fingering is the simplest part of it. It takes at least a year to play in a completely controlled way, and you need to have control. It's like getting blisters on your fingers before you can play the guitar properly. I just don't have the time, so I thought 'Fxxk it, I'll just stick a few gadgets on the old whatsit, and play that like a horn'. I still haven't really got the sustain that I want. What I'll probably try and do next is get a moog for the guitar. And I might start using two tape loops instead of just the one I use now."

John says he's given up the horn now, and is presently engrossed in an interesting looking Indian woodwind instrument, the name of which I've shamefully forgotten, but which produces a very loud, shrieking sound and looks very difficult to play.

Next we come to his sixth album, "Solid Air" (ILPS 9226) (1973), which if I had to decide, would probably rank as my favourite of the whole lot. The tracks are "Solid Air", "Over The Hill", "Don't Want To Know", "I'd Rather Be The Devil", "Go Down Easy", "Dreams By The Sea", "May You Never", "The Man In The Station", and "The Easy Blues". Every one except Skip James' "I'd Rather Be The Devil" is an original, and every one drives me to ecstasies. The musicians featured are Danny Thompson—double bass, John Bundrick—piano, organ, clarinet, Dave Mattacks—drums, Dave Pegg—bass, Speedy (Neemai Acquaye)—congas, Tristan Fry—vibes, Tony Cox—sax, and Richard Thompson and Simon Nicol on mandolin and autoharp. Sorry if you're expecting pages of effusive praise but I'm going to cop out of trying to describe this album to you in any terms at all. I could simply never do it justice and will just leave it up to you to make haste to your nearest record shop and buy it. If you are that hard up and can only afford to own one John Martyn album, then this is the one you should have. Before John comments on it, I'll just say that by now his voice has reached a stage where it is fully integrated into the overall sound as virtually another instrument, his lyrics reach a new peak of excellence, and "May You Never" is probably the warmest, purest, and most genuine song I've ever heard.

"Now 'Solid Air'... I really like the title track. It was done for a friend of mine, and it was done right with very clear motives, and I'm very pleased with it, for varying reasons. It has got a very simple message, but you'll have to work that one out for yourself. As for my



voice, I've always used it as another instrument, and I think it should be that. It was always my conception of a vocal. I think from now on though, when the song requires it, I'll make a conscious effort to make the lyrics more intelligible. I used Dave Pegg and Dave Mattacks on the album because they go together. It's always good to have a rhythm section that are used to playing with each other. Incidentally, Ed Carter and Mike Kowalski, the guys we mentioned before, really turned me on to Latin music... bossa nova."

As you can see John Martyn himself didn't have an awful lot to say about "Solid Air"... it's just one of those records, like Tim Buckley's "Happy Sad", and Terry Reid's "River" that you have to listen to and wallow in. The next subject we covered was John's session work.

"I haven't played a lot of sessions. I was on Paul Kossoff's album "Back Street Corner" (ILPS 9264). Actually there's a funny story about that because what happened was that Koss appeared on a session of mine. I was doing a single of "May You Never" and he played some back-up guitar. I got pissed off with the whole idea and said I didn't want to do it. By that time Island had put so much money into it with this funny producer called Robin Somebody-or-other so he (the producer), decided to go ahead without me, and just over-dubbed these things and stuck bits together and issued it anyway. It cost vast amounts of money to produce and sold four copies. But anyway, at the end of one of the sessions, late in the evening, Kossoff came in and we just started jamming, and he was very intrigued by the whole thing. I was a bit pissed off because it was going to be a song. I think you'll find that the chords are very similar to "So Much In Love With You", and that stuff was actually on my session. The next thing I knew, it was on his album. I was a bit choked at the time because I wasn't that wild about it—it's just a little bit of guitar playing. It doesn't seem to be much of a statement of anything. It wasn't a conscious collaboration.

"I've played with Bridget St John a couple of times because she's a friend and I know her from Richmond a long time ago. I've also done some records with Dudu Pukwana which have never been released because they were a bit far out. And that's about it. I wrote some lyrics for Dudu's tunes, and I wrote some parts out for chicks to sing, and played a bit of

guitar. There aren't many people that I'd really like to play with, but I'll tell you what, I'd like a month with a really nasty rock band, just to get it out of my system... a really dirty rock band, maybe with Kossoff. I think there's a bit of frustrated rock'n'roller in everybody!"

And so to the most recent album, "Inside Out" (ILPS 9253) (1973) which maintains the style and diversity of its predecessor with a number of songs that compare favourably with anything he's done. The best are a lyrically mysterious song called "Fine Lines", "Make No Mistake", and "So Much In Love With You" which sounded even better at Imperial College a few weeks back. There's another illustration of sustained guitar textures in a very mellow track called "Eibhli Ghail Chiuin Chearbhaill", and plenty of loose, almost unstructured electric guitar work that reflects Martyn's respect and interest in the best jazz. Musicians featured this time include Danny Thompson, Remi Kabaka, Stevie Winwood, Chris Stuart, Chris Wood, Kesh Sathie, Bobby Keyes, Brian Cooke, and John Wilde.

"I think I'll always use Danny Thompson because he's got real feel for my music and I've got real feel for his. The people from Traffic—Stevie Winwood, Remi Kabaka, and Chris Wood—that came out of the American tour I did with them. Remi is kind of unique in his method of drumming. Not many drummers blow with as much freedom as he does.

"'Inside Out' is a funny album in a way. I don't know if I'll make an album like that again. I think that was just a once-off. I just thought that it was about time I said something in that vein because there seemed to be a lot of funniness going round and I just wanted to say something very simple and very direct. But a lot of people said it was very complicated. I've got a feeling that the new songs I've written are going to be a lot more acceptable than those on 'Inside Out' which were a lot harder for some people to get their ears round, harder than any other record. Not out of design, but out of what I've been listening to and what I've been doing. With the concept of love, which is what 'Inside Out' is basically all about, there is a danger of going into that and saying it for the rest of your life, so I think I'll certainly try and avoid that and shift to some other thing."

Well, whatever it is he decides to shift to next, I can only feel confident that it will match up quite easily with everything he's done so far.

"I definitely want to try and get a trio together. I've got Danny Thompson, so I'd like to find a drummer. I've got great thoughts of Danny Richmond who plays with Danny Thompson a lot. He plays with Mingus right now, and used to play with Mark-Almond."

At the moment though he only has bassist Danny Thompson accompanying him on live dates, and together they are quite superb. Their act is injected with plenty of humour, exuberance, and a never-ending cascade of very fine music. They begin with an extended electric piece, soften things up with a selection of short acoustic songs from the last three albums, and then they finish with another piece of electric improvisation, rounding things off with either "The Glory Of Love" or "Singing In The Rain". When it's all over you realise just how important and enjoyable John Martyn and his music is. Go see him and search out his albums. There isn't a nicer bloke around at the moment.

Andy Childs

Note: A few of the quotes above are taken from the excellent magazine 'Supernazz' whose interview with the man himself you should definitely read. Many thanks to them.

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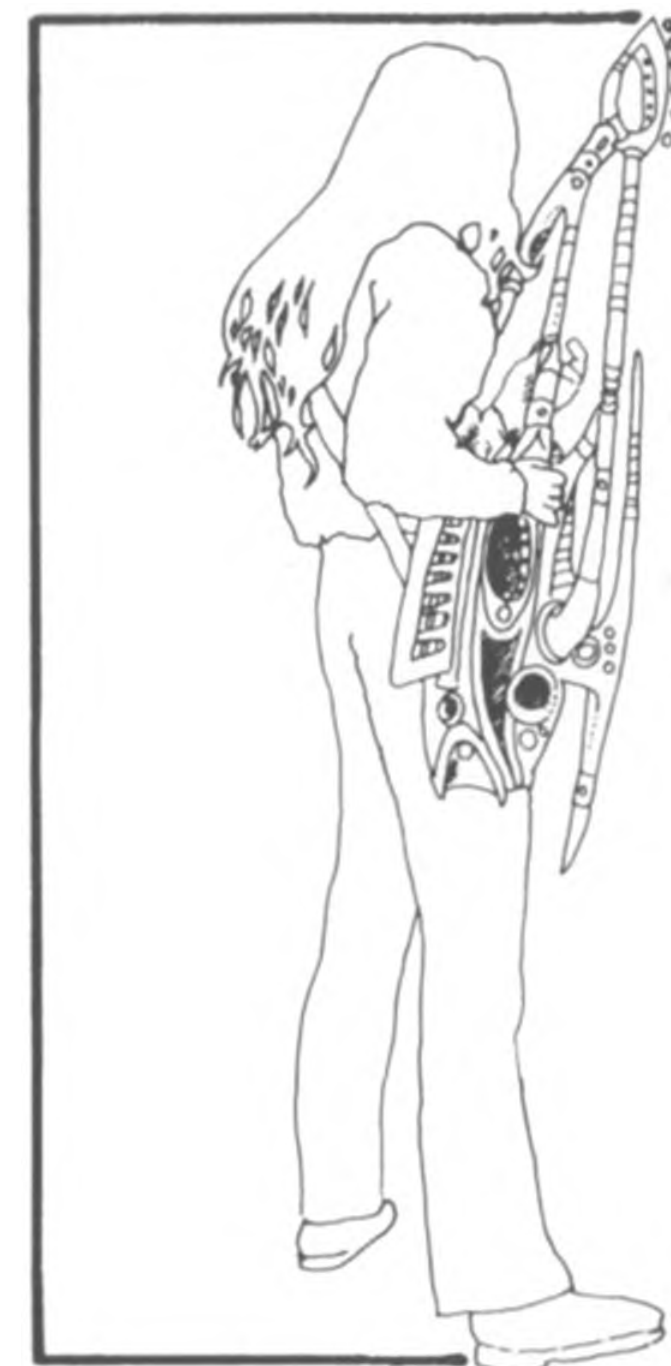
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JOHN CIPOLLINA IN QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE

PART TWO DID THEY FALL OR WERE THEY PUSHED?

In ZigZag 38 we unfurled details of the early Quicksilver Messenger Service, searching the rim of outrage and lunacy, evading the disciplines of a record deal, and leading a totally hedonistic existence in the wilds of Marin County. This month we'll explain the second, more sedate, phase of their career.

1. Donahue's Out to Lunch

"When we first started and were living in that basement on Water Street," explains John Cipollina, ace guitarist and co-founder of the group, "we used to call up Tom Donahue, who owned Autumn Records, and say 'listen, you're Dino's manager and Dino says we're his band—so what can you do for us?'" But Valenti was in jail and Donahue didn't even want to speak to us—so every time we called, there would be all this mumbling and then his secretary would say "he's out to lunch". Well, we called him practically every day for 3 months, but no matter what time it was, he was always "out to lunch". So, after a while, the penny dropped and we'd all walk around chanting "Donahue's out to lunch... Donahue's out to lunch"... it became a real big catchphrase around the house."

They decided they didn't need a record contract anyway; it might interfere with their policy of uninterrupted enjoyment... but when some of their friends started cutting albums, they were keen to see what happened.

"The Airplane signed with RCA and all the other bands in the area began to watch them real close, to see what would happen. The Airplane were really taking off locally; Matthew Katz was handling their affairs, they had the Matrix, they wrote and played good stuff, they packed out the Fillmore whenever they went there, and their reputation was really spreading out across the country—by word of mouth, I suppose, and through the underground press. So they really had it right there... but all of a sudden, when they started recording, they were walking around with long faces."

"Then the Dead signed, and the same thing

happened... they weren't nearly as much fun. And all the groups were being urged to go out on tour, promoting their albums over as much of the country as they could cover—and nobody ever seemed to be playing around town anymore... the scene was breaking up. But we were still around, and we weren't about to sign up and leave the area, so we got all the gigs we could handle. In fact, Quicksilver holds the record for the number of gigs played at the Avalon; 75 nights I think it was. So whilst we were up there on our ranch, fooling around and having good times, we were always capable of getting ourselves together to come into the city and play our asses off."

"We shared the bill with so many different

people; everyone from Howling Wolf to the Doors—but we got more money than any of them, even though we hadn't got an album out or anything. So we stayed around... never did too much travelling, except up and down the state."

Whilst their manager, Ron Polte, was assessing the various record company offers, sending them back with clauses amended in red ink and making outrageous demands, he negotiated a one-off deal with United Artists, which involved Quicksilver's appearance in a film called 'Revolution', a pot-boiler about 'the underground', and their contributing two tracks to the soundtrack album.

"I've never seen the film," says Cipollina. "I missed it when it came to town, but maybe it'll come on television someday... doubt it though—it wasn't too hot from what I hear. Anyway, the band was a 5 piece in the film, but by the time we came to cut the two songs for the album, Jim Murray had left and we were down to four. So if you can find somewhere where 'Revolution' is playing, you'll see us as we were back in that summer of '67... some summer."

Quicksilver do two tracks on the album; Buffy Sainte Marie's 'Codine' and their adaptation of the old folksong 'Babe I'm gonna leave you'... both superb. Sad but true, the album (discussed at length in past issues) is now deleted but if you come across a copy, grab it fast, because it constitutes an essential fragment of the San Francisco jigsaw.

2. 'What's an 8-track?'

"I remember when we actually did sign, we were really depressed afterwards... we were walking around with gloomy expressions saying 'we finally did it... never mind, it was fun while it lasted'. (It certainly was as you'll know if you read ZZ38). Mind you, we held out until we got a really good deal; Ron Polte is a genius—I'm still glad to say he's my friend and I'd never consider



Quicksilver Messenger Service in 1968: John Cipollina/Gary Duncan/Greg Elmore and (in front) David Freiberg.



shoot at the brave horses and how will we ride?



signing anything without asking his advice."

Not only did they get a load of money, they got unprecedented freedoms in terms of material, presentation and studio time. "Also, we made Capitol provide 8-track facilities for our use . . . almost unheard of in those days of 4-track studios. It was the first time Capitol had ever seen an 8-track, and us too! We'd told them 'we're not going to record unless we have an 8-track' and they'd said 'what's an 8-track?' So we said 'we don't know, but we hear they're really groovy, so we've got to have one!'"

The first album, 'Quicksilver Messenger Service', was started at the beginning of December 1967 with Nick Gravenites and Harvey Brooks producing ("they just told us what to do and we did it"), and Pete Welding was subsequently roped in to help mix the tracks down. According to Cipollina, "the album was a lot of fun . . . and some parts are pretty good I think". Such delicate understatement!

A little unsteady in places, certainly subdued . . . but still magnificent. Setting new standards for twin guitar interplay, Gary Duncan and John Cipollina trade rhythm and lead roles—Duncan's full bodied, more mellow tone contrasting with the ringing density of Cipollina's solid Gibson. Listen to 'Gold And Silver' and you'll hear it all.

The album's happy atmosphere, I feel, stems from the obvious fact that they recorded it basically for themselves and their friends (whoever wanted to listen) . . . no compromise, no pandering to commercial considerations—just 4 musicians playing their hearts out. What more could you ask? . . . but this was only an indication of their power and quality. (By the way—if you're uncertain of personnel details etc—see

the family tree in ZigZag 26).

Understandably, Capitol wanted a single to push and since the album contained no obvious top 40 material, pressure was brought to bear.

In September 1968, again under the supervision of Nick Gravenites, they went into Golden State Records to appease Capitol's whim. "If they want a single . . . we'll give them a single." Laughter exploded round the room.

Of course, they had no intention of lowering their standards or treating the quest for a hit with any kind of solemnity. The only things they took seriously were wine, women, song and maximising their enjoyment of life. Consequently they presented Capitol with possibly the most frivolous single of all time, 'Bears'.

"They wanted us to record a single at a time when we weren't quite ready . . . we were a little scattered, as I recall—but then I can't remember a time when we weren't a little crazy. Anyway, we found this thing called 'Bears' . . . we loved the song and really decided to have some fun recording it. If you listen, you can hear these funny noises over the vocal track; we finished the backing alright and then David Freiberg went to add the vocal . . . and we all stood around him making faces and behaving like idiots, trying to make him blow it. Gary Duncan was chewing crisps and then emptied the bag over his head, Nick was blowing in his ear, people were jangling key rings and sticking their fingers in his nose—but he struggled through it, and we sent it to Capital . . . I don't know what they must have thought when they heard it!"

Until it appeared on 'Anthology' last year, 'Bears' was almost totally unobtainable but the

b-side, Dino Valenti's 'Stand By Me' isn't contained on any album and has become the rarest Quicksilver track. (I'm open to offers in excess of 2000 guineas.)

Six weeks later, they recorded a series of gigs (at the Fillmores West and East) which were subsequently edited to comprise the backbone of their second album 'Happy Trails'. This was the one; it just took everybody's head off (metaphorically, of course—though in the case of Pippin, there is some cause for doubt).

Cipollina: "We were always better live. There's no point ever going into a studio unless you're going to have a good time—but all the same, we found the atmosphere just a little strange when we cut our first album, and we decided to record the follow-up live . . . in a familiar setting and with a familiar audience, so we could really cook and let ourselves go."

'Happy Trails' is a classic—but I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that.

Apart from the title track, which they tricked Greg Elmore into singing, the only studio cut was 'Calvary'. "The basic track was all those screaming lead guitar lines—we cut all those first, and then Freiberg, Elmore and I went down to LA where we joined three 8-track machines together so we could pull all the pieces together and finish it off with rhythm instruments and voices. That was quite a project, but it was Gary Duncan's last contribution, because he split during the course of recording it."

"The finished piece was sectioned as our interpretation of the crucifixion; it starts with the condemnation, goes through the journey to the cross and ends with the angels coming . . . we were really swacked out when we conceived that one, but I've never seen anyone review that track as we'd meant it."

For most people, the highlight of the album was their spectacular near half hour epic 'Who Do You Love', where they took an R&B write-off and came back with the greatest track ever to come out of San Francisco . . . one which captured the spirit of an era. Spliced from untouched live recordings and covering the whole of side one, it never lets up.

They'd been doing this song since their earliest days and the arrangement had evolved over some 30 months; it was Jim Murray's vocal tour de force but when he left, Gary Duncan took over and he rasps out Bo Diddley's horror comic lyric over that snatchy corkscrew rhythm before delivering a guitar solo which crystallises every essence of acid rock.

This one will go to the desert island with me . . . without doubt a peak of unity, command and mastery. They never got close to it again; instead of consolidating their achievements, they split.

3. Outlaws Upset the Applecart

Having walked out of Folsom Prison a free man once more, Dino Valente had come round to see his old mates—but they were tooling along quite nicely without him by this time, and he went off to cut a solo album for Epic. Nevertheless, he was living in the Sausalito/Mill Valley area and saw a lot of the group—particularly Gary Duncan. According to Cipollina, "they hung out pretty good together, were very compatible and were riding the same musical tracks. Eventually, Gary and Dino decided to form their own group called the Outlaws and they spun off to New York to look for some hot shot musicians that Dino knew."

"They left on January 1st 1969 but literally a week later, Gary was on the phone saying he'd come back if Dino could come too . . . but every-one was a little wary of that—it would be too intense."

Elmore, Freiberg and Cipollina attempted to carry on but found gigs too restrictive as a trio. "We were looking around for another member for some time and then we found that Nicky Hopkins was in town. His piano playing on 'Beggars Banquet' had just flipped us all out and I really wanted to meet the guy and see what a hot-shot English musician was like, so Freiberg's old lady (who was the subject of Hopkins' 'Girl

From Mill Valley' and, incidentally, Steve Miller's 'Quicksilver Girl') introduced us. Well, he really flashed me out, and after I'd invited him up to my place and he'd seen my collection of guns and things (full details when our Copper-head article finally comes together), he ended up staying there. After that, it was a case of gradually edging him into the group."

The first contribution he made was on 'Joseph's Coat', a track being prepared for the third Quicksilver album, 'Shady Grove'.

"I asked him to listen and see if he could add a piano part," says Cipollina. "He listened to it once, making a few notes on a piece of paper and then went straight over to the piano, taped his jottings in front of him, and played it first time! It was just astonishing. So he joined the group and we felt a real resurgence . . . he really gassed us out. A genius."

The album, good as it was, was an anti-climax after the magnificence of its predecessor, though its quality has crept up on me over four and a half years of random playing. Cipollina reckons it took only 6 days to record, but over 4 months to mix down! The mind boggles! "We used to go into the studio and have mixing parties every night," he says. (Yes, I seem to have heard a few wild tales concerning Quicksilver's legendary "mixing parties".)

The end of the year upon them, they prepared to play their traditional New Year's Eve gig for Bill Graham at Winterland . . . only to be confronted by Duncan and Valenti, whose twelve month foray had been a spectacular failure consisting of fruitless searches in New York and rejecting an endless stream of hopeful but unsuitable auditionees at their rehearsal studio in Sausalito. "We're old friends," they said, bowing and scraping at Cipollina's muddy boots, " . . . why not let us play too? Just for old time's sake?"

Cipollina was so moved that tears welled in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks, pouring like a burst rain water pipe over the kneeling figures before him.

"Piss off," he said, " . . . can't you see I'm busy?" He motioned towards the voluptuous teenage nymph, naked except for her diaphanous denim panties, who was now tugging at his sleeve.

"Oh please John," begged Valenti, " . . . we're starving. I've learnt four more chords and I promise not to sing anymore songs about unicorns prancing through my mind."

As the chimes of midnight and the strains of 'Auld Lang Syne' faded away, they took the stage as a sextet, Elmore/Freiberg/Cipollina/Hopkins/Duncan/Valenti, and initial reaction was ecstatic. "It knocked everybody out—including us . . . so much so that we decided to stay together, and we began to do a lot of touring."

Stay-at-home Quicksilver actually went out to New York and the East Coast, down to Texas, back to California, to New York again, where they topped the bill at the famous Brinsley Fillmore gig, and finally to Hawaii.

4. Curtains for Quicksilver

"We loved Hawaii so much that we ended up staying and cut an album there . . . in fact, one and a bit albums."

"Why spend a hundred dollars an hour in San Francisco when we could rent a huge hunting lodge in the middle of a 15 mile sugar plantation, 7 miles off the main road? Hawaii became our playground and Quicksilver became adopted sons . . . we grew to feel part of it, and even now I feel replenished every time I go there; no politics to contend with, unlimited sunshine, the smell of tropical fruit, all those beautiful brown skinned girls, but mostly nature itself. I mean, you can put a mask on, swim in the waters and see fish that . . . they're so funny looking you have to laugh! I can't tell you how lovely that place is."

"We partied . . . for a while it was just like the old days. We all got convertible cars with



telephones in them, went to the beach every day and just went crazy—but we always assembled back at the lodge each evening to eat . . . the food was just so amazing. The chef was so good that we took him back to San Francisco with us for 6 weeks."

"We had a full staff of maids, engineers, roadies, friends, a chef and assistant cooks, everything we needed including carpenters who converted this huge dining room into a studio; partitioned it off to form the control booth and everything . . . and we even brought in the biggest piano on the island—a beautiful Baldwin. There was no electricity, so we had to have generators to power the mobile recording unit but that studio must've been the finest gas-lit studio on earth. That was a great studio—nearly as much fun as Mickey Hart's place; the only studio where the engineers strap on holsters and six guns before they sit down at the console!"

They took the tapes for the resultant album, 'Just For Love', to Los Angeles where they spent a month mixing—but when it was released, hardcore Quicksilver fans were disturbed, bewildered and disappointed—partly because Dino Valenti had insinuated himself into such a dominant role. If you like his whining wandering love songs, fine, but frankly 'The Hat' would be tedious incarnate without Gary Duncan's acoustic decorations and 'Gone Again', with Dino whimpering how he "feels so groovy now" would send me to sleep were it not for Hopkins' redeeming figures. At least I love the sleeve . . . but to see Cipollina, certainly one of the three greatest guitarists living (and even Deke Leonard would agree with that), in such a back-seat role is a bummer, to say the least. (Maybe he wanted

it that way—who really knows?)

Something had happened, and Quicksilver was about to crumble irreparably. A few tracks into the next album, the trivial squabbling developed into threats and full-blown resentment. In a fit of Alamo-style melodramatics, Valenti gathered them in the courtyard of the lodge, took a stick and drew a line in the dirt; Nicky Hopkins, manager Ron Polte and John Cipollina walked over. The tail was now wagging the dog. It was the end of an era.

Cipollina: "I did a couple of tours with them, just to keep it together, and then I split for good." Even when pressed, he refuses to say anything nasty . . . but he reckons that Dino is "only effective when he can get right in there—he has to be in charge; that's his personality."

On 31st October 1970, after laying down the basis for a track which came out as 'Local Colour' on the next album (despite the date mentioned on 'Anthology'), Cipollina packed his bags and flew home. "It was a fun group but I wanted to get into some other things—it was almost like being married and not being able to go out with another lady, you know? I wanted to get off the road for a while, do some thinking about the way my music was going, maybe do some producing—and then I ran into all these crazy people . . ."

But that's another story, as is 'The Latter Days of Quicksilver', and we'll save them for another time.

Pete

(Large lumps of the above appeared in a recent MM article I did. Sorry 'bout that, but I repeated them here for a clearer picture of the whole).

When Andy Warhol first unleashed The Velvet Underground in New York, people were astonished. When he let them loose in the provinces, no-one knew what the hell was happening! Here's an interesting eye-witness account (first published in Boston Broadside) of their debut in Chicago.

CHICAGO HAPPENINGS

Andy Warhol's EXPLODING PLASTIC INEVITABLE with the Velvet Underground at Poor Richard's, Chicago, 24 June 1966.

It's hot. Godawful, sticky, sweaty, miserable hot. The place is jammed and there's hardly room to move. The waitress does her best, but it takes a while to get your drink and you're dying of thirst.

There's all sorts of mirrors and lights overhead, some of them rotating. Lights shining and blinking and changing colors. White dots moving across the walls and ceiling in a complex pattern, up one wall and along another. Red dots start moving through and around and among them, in a different pattern (or is it the same?).

Suddenly on the side wall there's a black & white movie, poor quality, like a badly done home movie, of a man eating. He eats slowly, luxuriously, savoring each bite, staring blankly off into space. He goes on eating. Music and noise begins to come from somewhere.

Now on the end wall there's another movie. People moving around — a girl? — several boys — one tall, well-built blond, lifting weights posing, dressed in Levis and open black leather jacket with a white T-shirt underneath. He moves with a strange combination of cruelty and sensuous delight. The man on the side wall goes on eating, staring blankly at this scene once in a while. The lights continue to dance over and through the movies. The music gets louder; a voice begins to talk but you can't understand the words; there are shouts and screams occasionally.

There's a man strapped to a chair, stripped to the waist, being whipped. Are those his screams? No, they aren't in time. The man goes on eating. The girl smokes. Is she part of the whipping scene, or has she somehow slipped over from the eating movie? The music is very loud now, with a driving rock and roll beat. The muscular blond is moving slowly about with a whip which he curls about his body.

Suddenly, he flings himself into a dance in time with the music, a vicious, body-snapping dance, while the 'hipping goes on behind him. Suddenly that film moves to the top of the screen and below it appears another view of



the same scene, earlier or later? The whipping is in the foreground, or is it a dance? Lights, noise, screams — the man on the side wall eats slowly, fondles a cat, stares at the audience.

Various tortures, fights, dances — all mixed together. Inextricable. Lights shining unbearably bright in your eyes. Dancing lights on the wall. Nasty tortuous dancing with whips and lighted matches. The man eats, watches, watches you. Louder, faster, noisier.

Suddenly the films end. The noise and music go on. Several people have appeared from somewhere. They stand on a stage in front of the screen, tuning instruments. The noise of their tuning, the electric buzzes and hums, begin to blend with the noise and music from the films. Then they gradually take over. Behind them on the wall are movies of a girl. One, two, several views of her in

different movies. Close-up, far away, they begin to zoom in and out in time with the music. Eyes, mouths, noses, she stares, blinks, licks her lips. On stage now is the cruel blond man, with his whip, dancing with a tall masculine blonde girl in silver lame costume. The lights have become a dim blue flicker, but a flicker that goes faster and slower and pauses now and then, just as your eyes get used to each kind of flicker. Dancers on the floor, with huge strips of silver material that flash above their heads as they dance. Clean-cut, straight looking kids, working hard at dancing to the noise.

Bright green and red spotlights, the dancers silhouetted on the walls in great grimacing poses. The musicians occasionally revealed, sweating over their instruments, grinding out a noise that has music in it somewhere. They're watching the movies, watching each other, watching you. Too much happening — it doesn't go together. But sometimes it does — suddenly the beat of the music,

the movements of the various films, the pose of the dancers, blend into something meaningful, but before your mind can grab it, it's become random and confusing again. Your head tries to sort something out, make sense of something. The noise is getting to you. You want to scream, or throw yourself about with the dancers, something, anything!

The noise builds to a climax and ends. The dancers pause. Everyone looks a bit weary. The musicians diddle around with their instruments and amplifiers. The lights and films go on. One of the musicians is a girl. Or is it?

They start again. There's an electrified violin making horrible bagpipe sounds against the noisy background. It's grating, terrible, and yet your mind latches onto that bit of tune against all the chaos. It's almost a relief.

The films are doing strange things. The blonde girl becomes a brunette — girl or boy? Showers of colored lights suddenly burst upward from the drums with a crash of cymbals and shoot across the ceiling and walls like a fireworks burst. The dancers on the floor are looking tired and ecstatic and bored, all at once. The music gets noisier, the violin is frantically screaming a tune, higher and higher. On the screens, some of the views of the girl are replaced by films of the blond boy and silver lame girl, dancing, fighting, torturing each other with the whip. The real pair are there too, making weird shadows on the wall, the boy dancing, but writhing in torment with his hands over his head.

The music is lost in the chaos of noise. Are there children chanting or singing? The amplified violin goes higher and higher, becomes a shriek, a feedback noise, a regular dit-dah-dit of unbearable Morse code screaming above the other noise. It all builds to a tremendous climax. Then it goes on and on and on and on. You wish it would stop. The musicians build wilder and wilder. The drummer hits a shuddering beat that you feel through the floor. It's all coming to an end. But it doesn't. It goes on. The lights flash in your eyes. The noises all blend into one and your mind tries to sort out little bits of rhythm or tune. The screaming Morse message is still there, but you only hear it now when you listen for it. The dancers on the floor are sweating, looking like they can't bear any more of it all. But it goes on and on. Finally it all comes to a shuddering screaming end, the music and noise die down, the films flicker out. Only the colored lights still dance across the walls. The musicians and dancers wearily leave, looking wilted. You sit there for a while, finally find your waitress, pay your check, leave. It's hot.

What can you say?

by Larry McCombs

Pete Atkin
'The Road Of Silk'
 a new album from
 Pete Atkin and
 Clive James a partnership
 which has been described
 by a leading music critic
 as "one of the most
 formidable song writing
 combinations in Britain today"
 Road Of Silk promises
 to be as vital and
 exciting as their
 previous albums.

THE ROAD OF SILK - PETE ATKIN
 LPL 5014

RCA Records and Tapes

rambling through with DAVID BLUE

Everyone in any way interested in rock music and its development knows that Bob Dylan spent some of his formative and pre-star years in Greenwich Village, New York. They will also know that he became the hub of a sort of talent circle, which included Tom Paxton, Dave Van Ronk, Phil Ochs, Eric Andersen, Patrick Sky and so on. Many of the names that were ticked for stardom at that time seem to have effectively fallen from view, but certainly one, David Blue, is still keeping on keeping on, still trying with quite some effort to, shall we say, fulfil his potential.

Early days in the Village

David Cohen, as he was then, arrived in New York in 1960 at the age of eighteen. "I was an actor, or else I was sort of looking forward to becoming one. I wasn't a musician. But the Village was great. Getting beyond all those myths, the Village was really nice—it's the original site of New York, where the Dutch were, and it looks like England or Amsterdam, very old, very charming. When I got there, it was almost the end of the beatnik era and there were young poets around, long before the music started, and that was attractive. It got a lot of press and coverage, and when I read about it, beatniks seemed very romantic in a way... through Life Magazine! I really can't say how the music started. There doesn't seem to be anything comparable at the moment, but then again I'm older, and in a way I'm not on the streets—but that was definitely a street situation. We were all nineteen, and nothing particularly mattered; no-one was looking forward to any success or anything."

In Anthony Scaduto's book "Bob Dylan", it's noted that Blue strummed the chords for Dylan while the latter was writing "Blowing In The Wind", but apparently it would not be strictly correct to say that Dylan was responsible

for Blue becoming a singer. "Dylan just happened to be there. Maybe he was the symbol of the time, or the spearhead, but we were friends, and at one point he encouraged me. 'That's a great song you wrote—here's a typewriter, take this, and let's go up to the woods,' but said in his own way, and that made me much more interested in seeing it as something I was doing. When I got to New York, Dylan had already been there for some months; he was playing, people knew who he was, and he had made a record for Columbia. It came out during my first year on that scene, but nothing was happening particularly—he was well thought of around the area, but no-one had an inkling of what was going to happen." Thus, taking up singing was not simply jumping on a bandwagon. "There's this bar that we used to hang out in called 'The Kettle Of Fish'. Maxwell Bodenheim and the celebrated eccentric bohemians of the twenties hung out there, then it was the beatniks, and then it was the folkie crowd, the crowd that made it on a national or international level, and brought attention to it."

Around this time, 1963, David Cohen changed his name to David Blue and it has been variously reported that either Bob Dylan or Eric Andersen had re-christened him. David confirmed the latter, and when asked the reason, said "Grass! The reasons are varied. I wasn't really into music then, you know. Eric was, and Dylan and Ochs, and all those people were into it—they had records and things like that. I was getting drawn into it by the fact that I was there and I wrote, but I had never consciously thought I was going to go ahead and do something. When I started to, there were three guys called David Cohen: there was a David Cohen with Country Joe, and there's a David Cohen here in LA who's a studio musician, guitar player, and there was me. It was getting confusing—people would say to me "Hey, loved your movie score!", and I'd

have to say it wasn't me. I could only play one chord—how the fxxx could I do a movie! Also, when I went to New York, Jack Elliott was my hero, and everybody's hero, and he'd changed his name, and so had Dylan. When I was in acting, it was normal to change your name, and I used several names when I was 17; I kept looking for the right one, because Cohen just didn't sound right to me as an actor..."

At this point, it's probably appropriate to quote briefly from Anthony Scaduto's excellent book: "When Cohen began singing professionally, at the urging of Dylan and others, he changed his name to Dave Blue. Blue was suggested by Eric Andersen, because it fit Cohen's personality at the time: gruff, nasty, unsmiling, suspicious. He looked and acted a lot like Dylan."

Getting into folk music bore him fruit when he was signed up to Elektra in 1965. Had he made such an obvious impact during his four years in New York, or had Jac Holzman been approached on his behalf? "It seems to me that it was just that I was there, and those were the times, and suddenly Dylan's popularity was no longer restricted to a small area; he was now an international hero. He'd been writing his own songs, which was unheard of in that folk situation; I mean, folk music became the popular music; Peter, Paul and Mary had number one records all the time, and the Kingston Trio were huge. Record companies could see that Dylan was happening, so they were looking for another Dylan, looking for singers, and that's how I made that 'Singer-Songwriter Project' album. I never approached anyone—they came and gave it to me."

The album, "Singer/Songwriter Project", was released in America in September 1965 on Elektra EKS 7299 and features four tracks by Bruce Murdoch, and three each by Richard Farina, Patrick Sky and David Cohen. Briefly, Farina is now dead—had he still been around, I think he would probably be enormously successful now, but he was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1966. Murdoch's current activities are not known to me, but Sky continues even now, having recently released an album called "Songs That Made America Famous" on the Adelphi

Bits and pieces from Boston's THE BROADSIDE FOLK MUSIC AND COUNTRY MUSIC

DAVID BLUE Elektra EKL 4003

Mr. Blue is a pretty fair lyricist. However, he sets his lyrics to music, and with regard to that talent he is impoverished. It's a shame, really. I was all set to completely pan this album until I read the accompanying set of lyrics.

"grand hotel," although marred by a piano riff highly derivative of (stolen from) "Love Letters Straight From Your Heart," "the street," "i'd like to know," "midnight through morning" (excuse the poor-man's-Haydn piano), "it ain't the rain that sweeps the highway clean," "so easy she goes by," and "about my love" could be fine ballads if given a half decent musical vehicle to convey their thoughts. But Blue's melodies are non-existent, and he refuses to sing—I say refuses, because I believe that he can carry a tune, but he chooses not to in the mistaken idea that his untutored sprechstimme is somehow appropriate to our incoherent age. Perhaps he feels that it is more honest to express his sensitive impressions through coarse means, and I might agree that this is a phenomenon representative of our generation.

David Blue should not impute a prostituting influence to musicianship. A little of it could do much to reveal his not inconsiderable talent.

Ralph Earle

David Blue, singer/songwriter and Elektra recording artist, will appear with his new group, The American Patrol, for two weeks at the Unicorn Coffeehouse beginning Tuesday, February 7, through Sunday, February 19. Former David Blue fans will be elated or disappointed to find that David is now electrified and amplified.

label in the States. If it's not a familiar record company name, that's not surprising, because the songs are, I'm told, somewhat over the top, and the album was turned down by all the conventional labels.

As far as Blue (or Cohen) goes, his contribution to the "Singer/Songwriter Project" is adequate, but unremarkable. There's one amusing little song called "I Like To Sleep Late In The Morning", which might be a folk club audience participation number, were it not a shade too complicated, but "It's Alright With Me" and "Don't Get Caught In A Storm" are frankly ordinary. Nevertheless, it was a start.

Elektra were obviously sufficiently impressed to allow David to make his own album as the next step, and "David Blue" (by this time the new identity had been assumed), came out in late 1966. On the face of it, the backing group looks pretty fantastic, consisting of Paul Harris on keyboards, Harvey Brooks on bass, Monte Dunn on guitar (from Ian and Sylvia Tyson's band, as was one of the drummers, Herbie Lovelle) and second drummer Buddy Salzman. Also, it's engineered by Bill Szymczyk, who has his name on some pretty heavy records nowadays. But all that glitters, apparently...

"It was real rough. Nobody knew what they were doing. That was Paul Harris' first record, and he was still in school but came down after school and did the sessions; he was a friend. Harvey came because of Al Kooper—they went to school and had a band together. Kooper brought Harvey into the scene, and to Dylan.

"I had no idea what I was doing, you must understand that. I was being produced by my manager, and as a producer, he had no idea what the fxxx he was doing. I didn't care one way or the other—I mean, they just gave this to me. Somebody said, 'Hey make the singer/songwriter project', and so I did it, though I could hardly play the guitar, even if I could write songs. You know, I sat at a party one night and sang a song, and somebody said 'Did you write that?' I said 'Yeah,' and he says, 'That's great, I'll publish your songs'. I mean, to me it sounds ridiculous. I said, 'Sure,' and they gave me fifty dollars. They just came and took me away, and for a long time, I had no control



March
F 25 Mississippi John Hurt
Sa 26 John Hammond
Su 27 Ed Freeman
M 28 David Blue
Tu 29 Charles River Valley Boys
W 30 Eric Andersen
Th 31 Paul McNeil

April
F 1 The Blues Project
Sa 2 Jimmy Reed
Su 3 The Dirty Shames
M 4 Buffy Ste. Marie
Tu 5 Jim Kewskin
W 6 Peter Childs
Th 7 Nancy Michaels
F 8 Tom Rush
Sa 9 Mitch Blake
Su 10 Don McLean
M 11 Bill Staines
Tu 12 Jesse Colin Young
W 13 Mel Lyman

Saw Dave Blue's new group, the American Patrol, for the first time recently. They (especially the lead guitarist) seem to be quite talented. I still find rock offensive, but I feel I ought to commend a group that uses taste instead of volume...

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Turk's Head
Cape Cod - old Route 6
Entertainment nightly

Every Thursday - Reading from
Tolkien's Lord of the Rings
Ald Coffee Too



Chris Alexander - Earlybird PRODUCTIONS

over any of it. Had my intent been serious, I would have known more, and I would have definitely rejected a lot of the things that I just let happen, like my manager producing my record, or those people playing on it, or Bill Szymczyk being the engineer. He's well known now, but that was the first record he ever engineered, and to me it sounds terrible." It struck me that Elektra would hardly have tolerated putting out a record with such obvious defects, but David felt that at that time, the company was new to the business of rock'n'roll, having only just made the transition from being an almost totally folk oriented company, and they were feeling their way somewhat.

Personally, I'm not so easily convinced that "David Blue" is the travesty he would have us believe. Sure, it's obviously a poet with Dylanish tendencies trying to sing not quite tunes, and the record is comparable to "Highway 61 Revisited" (which pre-dates it by a few months) in the organ based backings. In an interview in the now defunct "Da Capo" magazine, Blue mentions that such luminaries as Dylan, Kooper and Sir Douglas were in the studio. "They weren't playing, they were all just there, because they're some of my friends. It was very disconcerting to some of the musicians in the studio, and to me too, really. At that point, Dylan was my friend, but it was DYLAN, you know. It's absurd—if I say 'Bob' or 'Eric' to someone, I'm accused of name-dropping, but these are my friends, like the people I went to school with." Possibly, therefore, the act of playing before such personalities may have intimidated Blue and his men, but I reckon that the backings come over as primitive, but largely successful. Three tracks particularly are certainly all right with me, those being "The Gasman Won't Buy Your Love", "Arcade Love Machine" and the untypical "Justine", but

there are portions of other tracks, like the Pete Townshend style bass note in "It Tastes Like Candy", the lyrics to "So Easy She Goes By", and the Neil Diamond-ish tone adopted on "Grand Hotel" which arrested me when I heard them. In fact, only two tracks are really bad, the "Subterranean Homesick Blues" copy on "If Your Monkey Can't Get It", and the interminable "The Street", which is probably designed to be hypnotic, but succeeds in inducing sleep. Altogether, worth a second look in the secondhand racks, which are the only place you're likely to see it. On Elektra, EKS 74003.

Interlude

[From "Da Capo"] "... then I recorded a second album for Elektra with the American Patrol, which I never had released. I just couldn't get behind it. Then the band broke up, and then I broke up, and split to California." I asked David who had been in the group. "It had a guy named Bob Rafkin, who was on a couple of my records, and Jack O'Hara on bass, and a couple of different drummers. The first drummer was a junkie; I had no idea what a junkie was, and I was wondering why he was throwing up in the dressing room! It was a very naive time. I stopped the album; the clincher was "Rubber Soul", which came out just at the time I finished my album. I heard "Rubber Soul", and could not release my album—I mean, it's not like I was trying to beat the Beatles, but production-wise et cetera, they were so good, and it was my opinion that my album stank, you know..."

Mid-Period

"The American Patrol album was sold to Warner Brothers through the insistence of Phil

Ochs, this cat Andy Wickham and Mo Ostin, purely to prevent Elektra releasing it. I had signed with Reprise in the meantime; they were trying to change their image of Sinatra and Dean Martin and so on. They signed the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, Joni Mitchell and me. At that point, they had company freaks, people who were supposed to liaise between the artist and the company, and Andy Wickham was the company freak. He could talk to Hendrix, theoretically, and he could talk to the Dead, who wouldn't talk to anybody. I mean, they'd be stoned on acid, and would go up to these executives and horrify the shit out of them. And these weren't reasonable people in 1965 . . . in terms of dealing with corporations, we all rejected it to some degree or other. I certainly wasn't as far out as the Dead. Nor was I together—I never thought I'd make a record for Warner Brothers. I never thought I'd take another breath at that particular moment of time." OK, so what was it that led them to sign you? Was it the general 'making the company hip' sort of thing?

"It was Phil Ochs, I think. I had a reputation as a writer of note; I don't think I could sing or play particularly well, but everybody knew who I was. I didn't know, but they seemed to know—know what I mean?"

The first album on Warners, or rather Reprise, came out in March 1968 and was titled "These 23 Days In September" (Reprise RS6296). It was never released here, and despite the fold-out sleeve which bears several good pictures of a suspicious looking Blue, has no backing musicians credited. David was able to help a bit . . . "Bob Rafkin (presumably on guitar), Hal Blaine on drums, Joe Osborn on bass and Gabriel Mekler, who played piano and produced it; that's about all I can remember. It was a far better album than "David Blue" because the person producing had some idea of how to produce a record, and the people who engineered it know how to engineer records. So it was better and clearer. I don't particularly like the quality of the record, I mean I don't like the sound of the album that much, and I don't like my performance. It's better than the first one, but . . . I like the songs, but I think I murdered some of them because I didn't know what I was doing—*still*. I don't believe that I had any control over anything until I signed with Asylum."

Sure enough, there's little doubt that this album is better produced than its immediate predecessor, and the backings are surer and very different. Also, the quality of the lyrics is excellent, to the extent that I'm sure there are people around to whom this record is a constant source of help after a distressing love affair, by which I mean that it seems to fit into the Cat Stevens/Leonard Cohen lonely ladies in bed sitters syndrome. Not being in that category myself, I find the backing a little bland—not bad at all, but a little tedious, and there's a touch of *deja vu* which becomes irritating—you hear a familiar little touch, and start remembering where it came from, but before you've got it, old Bluey's going on with his song, and you've lost it. Maddening, and there's an obvious example with "You Will Come Back Again" which starts just like "Go Now". Really, the tunes blow this album for me, or rather the lack of tunes. Of the nine tracks, there are two that I really like, and which require little effort to appreciate—these being "Ambitious Anna" (I knew one just like her, who married a bloke about twice her age—but he was rich, I believe), and "The Fifth One", which has a nice bass intro, backing vocals and a pleasantly understated fuzz guitar. As poetry, the rest of the album is great, but as music, less so. Incidentally, there's another version of "Grand Hotel", which was on the previous album, but this time the title gains the prefix of the definite article, and has its verses rearranged. I think I like the earlier version better, and really I think I prefer the previous album.

Next, released in January 1970, comes "Me" by one S. David Cohen (Reprise RS6375). (The

ability to hear this record comes by courtesy of Veronica Bryce, without whom Frame's and my stay in America would have been less bright. Ta, Veronica.) The first question I asked was the obvious one. After laughing somewhat, David said, "Well, it's just that simply there was an identity crisis. I went through huge internal strife—that was my real name, and that's what I should use, and in order to be honest with myself and the world, and to get an idea of who the fxxx I was, that's what I had to do. More or less. So that's what I did." In "Da Capo", as previously mentioned, it's fair to note that David replied "Hmmm (yes)" to an enquiry as to whether the Cohen name would be permanent.

"It was made real quick. Mac Gayden was on it, Charlie McCoy, and some other names I can't remember. It was the Nashville sessions, and I did it in three days, which is very typical of Nashville records. You go in there and whip it out, which I liked. But as I listen to it, I really don't like the record—that was a very strange time of my life." It would seem to me that for an artist to have sharpened his quill for six months to produce a set of meaningful and careful songs would be depressing for the artist, to say the least . . . "Well, Dylan just did an album in three days . . . But at that time, I didn't write songs like that. I do that now, but I didn't then. I'm always writing songs, and at the time I made that album, I was very shaky. I mean, in that time of my life, it was all over, and after that album, I didn't do anything for two years, and they dropped me from the label."

Not a very promising sounding record, you might think. And you'd be dead wrong, because it's very good, mainly because of the perfectly sympathetic backings. Of the eleven tracks, I like seven, I adore one ("He Holds The Wings She Wore"), and the other three aren't at all bad. Actually, I feel that it's the sort of record that could be a hit today. It's not exciting, but it really is tasteful, warm and very well played. I suppose that this might be some kind of response to "Nashville Skyline", which was released several months earlier, and there certainly does appear to be some kind of correlation between the work of Dylan and Blue (er, Cohen) with the latter, as it were, following in his master's footsteps a la Good King Wenceslas. Whether or not that's true, I do like this record. As with "23 Days", there's no personnel listing, but it can be safely assumed that the backing musicians are Area Code 615, to a greater or lesser extent, although I'm not expert enough to pick out anyone except the names mentioned. If the steel player is Weldon Myrick, then he's well up to form on such things as "Atlanta Farewell" which ought to be a country hit by somebody sometime, and if it's Norbert Putnam doing the bowed bass bit on "He Holds The Wings She Wore", then he's right there too. Charlie McCoy shines wherever you can hear his harp, but especially on a jaunty track called "Me And Patty On The Moon" which predates G. O'Sullivan's idea for "Clare" by several years. In fact, it's a most enjoyable album with the right proportions of light and shade for me, whereas the previous Blue works have been a little on the shady side. Also, for the first time, David sings someone else's song, "Mama Tried" by Merle Haggard, and he does it well, although it's difficult to imagine anyone doing it badly. I'll say it again, a nice record, and in the unlikely eventuality of you ever seeing it (deleted in America, not released here), definitely worth a bit of time. Why they terminated his contract, I don't know, but they did, and afterwards, there was no light in the tunnel for a while.

Another Interlude

"One day the light of God just shot right through me. [Laughs] It's very complex and subjective for me to explain to you how I was reclaimed . . ." Did it have anything to do with the fact that you were friendly with Joni Mitchell, who is also managed by David Geffen? "No. As a matter of fact, I had the opportunity to go with Elliot Roberts before I did the '23 Days' album,

and I turned it down on the advice of someone—whom I dislike intensely! The only thing I could say to sum it up is that up until I went to Asylum, most of my life was very confusing and misdirected, and very insecure, and I was not in control of myself or understanding what I was doing. I found myself in dire straits, in terms of a human being, but I eventually got it back together with some help, so that I arrived back in LA in 1970 actually wanting to get a record contract, which had never been the case before. So at 29 I began to take it seriously. Elliot told me that he had got me a record contract with a company, and I was pleased, even though I didn't particularly like that company, but the same night, he said I could go on Asylum, which was a lesser deal in terms of money. To me, it had nothing to do with money, but it had to do with my relationships with Elliot and David as people, and their concept of what sort of record company they were going to make of Asylum. And that's why I went with them—because I believe in them"

Latter days

The first Asylum album released by Mr Blue, as he called himself once again, was "Stories", the American number of which is Asylum SD5052, although it was released here as well, in around May 1972. It struck me as rather a down album . . . "Very down! [Laughs] But that's what I want—my reaction to that was that I made a record, saying what I wanted to say in the way I wanted to say it, and I thought it was very effective. If you listen to that record, and say 'God, what a downer!', then I've succeeded in doing exactly what I wanted to do. In terms of commercial acceptability, it's not where it's at, but I realised my effectiveness in communicating emotion through that record, because I could put it on and bring people down! Every song's about suicide or death or loneliness, and I mean, that's not particularly fun. I meant it as an optimistic album in a way, but only through that kind of flavour, like Leonard, you know . . . I was writing about despair, because that's where I had come from. It wasn't the state I was in, I was getting out of it, reflecting, and I wrote about that and put it on a record."

The record boasts a number of stellar sidemen—Russ Kunkel, Jimmy Karstein and John Barbata on drums, Ry Cooder on slide, Chris Ethridge on bass, Rita Coolidge and so on, including Jack Nitzsche doing string arrangements, as well as the old faithful Bob Rafkin, playing and co-producing with Blue himself and Henry Lewy, who is also the engineer. Unfortunately, all the superstars in the world can't make me enjoy this album. Mournful is too happy, if you understand what I mean—it's not really the blues, because blues can be boogies too. This is unrelenting dirgeville, and I'm afraid such is not my taste at all, although I suppose that one gets used to the mood after the record has been playing for a while. Still not my cup of tea really, and I don't even feel like picking out fave tracks.

I'm much happier to enthuse about the most recent album, "Nice Baby And The Angel", which is Asylum SD5066 in America, and was released here in March last year. "I couldn't continue feeling the way I did in order to write songs like those on 'Stories', or make records like that, because when I went on tour and sang those songs, I saw the kind of response I was getting, which was not the response I wanted. I believed in those songs, and I still do, but as a performer, I saw that people were left in a strange downer mood, because there was nothing relieving about the music at all—not a negative thing, but it wasn't *happy*. I realised that in order to get what I wanted, I had to give them what they need, and in order to do that, I had to get out of the sht I was in, which I did in Europe. I performed in England, nothing very big, but I can only say I had nothing but positive experiences. I'd never been to Europe, and I was very excited about going, and it was cathartic, like I just got rid of a lot of things, and left them behind, so that

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"GRAHAM CENTRAL STATION"

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The debut from Iamla Motown's songwriting duo now switched to Warners. Arrangements and accompaniments have class and it fair bristles with happiness. In fact, it's a brilliant affirmation of their collective talents. Motown's loss is Warner Bros' gain!



TOWER OF POWER
"TOWER OF POWER"

Eleven-strong San Francisco group with a new album that includes the US hit single "So Very Hard To Go". It's an exciting mixture of sophisticated sound textures; horns, rhythm and vocals, plus the songwriting talents of saxist Emilio Castillo and Steve Kupka. Lead singer Lenny Williams' flexibly soaring voice reflects the amalgam of soul and jazz plus some hard-riding percussion as a bonus.





David Blue sows his wild oats



David Blue enters a period of despair



David Blue meets David Geffen



Picking the fruits of his labours

when I came back, I was in a much better frame of mind. The influence of English music was strong, and I got more melodic there." The result, it would seem, was "Nice Baby And The Angel", which was produced by Graham Nash.

"I came back from Europe and stayed at Graham's house, and the board (for Nash's home studio) was just in and being fixed. And were were waiting—the two of us would sit there every night, just bored out of our minds, watching television. Then one day it was ready, and the next day there were fourteen people in the house, who were there for two weeks, and all we did was record all day long. (Dave) Mason flew in and (John) Barbata, and Dave did some tracks for his album, although I don't think any of the cuts survived on to his album, because he re-did them." Whatever happened to Dave Mason's tracks, there's certainly some prime examples of his quite excellent guitarring on Blue's album, and altogether, the backings are superb. David Lindley, once of Kaleidoscope, contributes some fine violin and slide guitar, Graham Nash does some nice bits on electric piano and acoustic guitar, and the same rhythm section as before, Ethridge and Barbata do their part well. Additionally, you get Bob Rafkin on guitar and the amazing Terry Adams, the cellist who came over with Van Morrison last year, plays on the record as beautifully as she did at the Rainbow. The contrast between this record and the previous one is little short of remarkable, in that Blue's confidence seems a million per cent restored, the melodic side of his writing (as he noted), is improved tremendously, and in some strange way, the inclusion of backing vocals renders even the slightly melancholy tracks hopeful—that feeling that even if things aren't as good as they might be, you've got a friend. The two best tracks are the first and last, "Outlaw Man", which was a hit (with slightly changed words) for the Eagles, and "Train To Anaheim", with which title no-one could fail, and which also strikes a responsive chord in Pete and I because there's where Disneyland is, and we could write reams about the day we spent there, a day which we'll undoubtedly remember frequently until we get back there. The eighth wonder of the world, folks. . . Really, though, the record is well worth your listening time, and certainly augurs well for David's future, especially when you consider that he claims sales of 2,000 overall

for "Stories" and 15,000 in the first week alone for "Nice Baby And The Angel". A nice one, and certainly the best of the six albums. I asked whether David cared very much about the sales of his records. . . "Of course, I'm concerned, but I'll be much more concerned when it's half a million records, because up to that point, it's strictly that they're supporting me, and they're putting it out and taking a loss. I'm not going to make any money from that record, because in a sense, I'm in debt, the typical record company debt. It costs a lot of money to make these records and put them out, and it's only made back if the record is successful to a great degree, a few hundred thousand albums. If you have a million seller, you can pay your costs off and make a profit,

but I'm not there. I just don't sell that kind of records, so I don't sit around thinking that my record sold ten copies this week. Of course I want them to be successful, but I don't think about it too much."

Oddments

There are a couple of subjects about which a small amount was said, and I think they should be noted before I finish this piece. The first is that when Clear Light broke up, David got together with Dallas Taylor and Ralph Schuckett (later of Jo Mama), with the intention of forming a band, but three months' rehearsal was all that resulted. The significance of that information, apart from its trivia value, is that Blue

got to grips with electric guitars which is a direction he wants to pursue—"I'm a rocker at heart". At the end of last year, he was on the road with a band composed of Don Felder on lead guitar, Rick Carlos on bass and John Mauceri on drums, the latter two having previously been in the backing group for Batdorf and Rodney, a now defunct Asylum group, and the first named having recently joined up with the Eagles. Felder apparently grew up with the Allman Brothers, which seems akin to being a member of the Royal Family these days, and at one point, he and Blue went out as a duo, with Blue playing acoustic and Felder using a Pignose amplifier, an astounding machine about a foot in each measurement, and the perfect way to be electric without needing a roadie. All interesting stuff.

Finally, before I let David have the last word, I asked him about the rumour that Joni Mitchell's album "Blue" was named after him. "No, not to my knowledge. The song was written a long time ago, you know, and I hadn't seen Joni for years. It's very flattering, but it wasn't about me at all. It doesn't hurt that such a rumour should abound, because Joni and I are very close, she's one of my best friends. But it wasn't about me, and I couldn't in all conscience say 'Yeah, sure, of course, these most admiring women write songs about me'. It's not true. Nice, though. . ."

From here on in

The theory is that David Blue is to make another album with Graham Nash, and maybe some singles. Certainly, the combination is a promising one, and some of the songs are already written, although the vinyl business may hold up the actual execution. "I feel very positive. The next record's going to surprise a lot of people. We made 'Nice Baby' with the intention of changing the direction of my career, which it did, and the next one will be the product of what I've learned on the road playing rock'n'roll shows for the last year. I've been down, and I've been depressed, but I just think that it gave me a better understanding to deal with people who are in that place now. I understand better what it's like to be a human being, from my own experiences, and that's a benefit. I've been up for a couple of years now, and I don't want to fail at what I'm doing. What can you say? 'No, I don't want to be a star, I want to play back-rooms for two dollars a night for the rest of my life'. I'm not into that at all."

John



There are bears in the stairs, often in pairs

Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes, full of fish and finger pies

ELEPHANT'S MEMORY

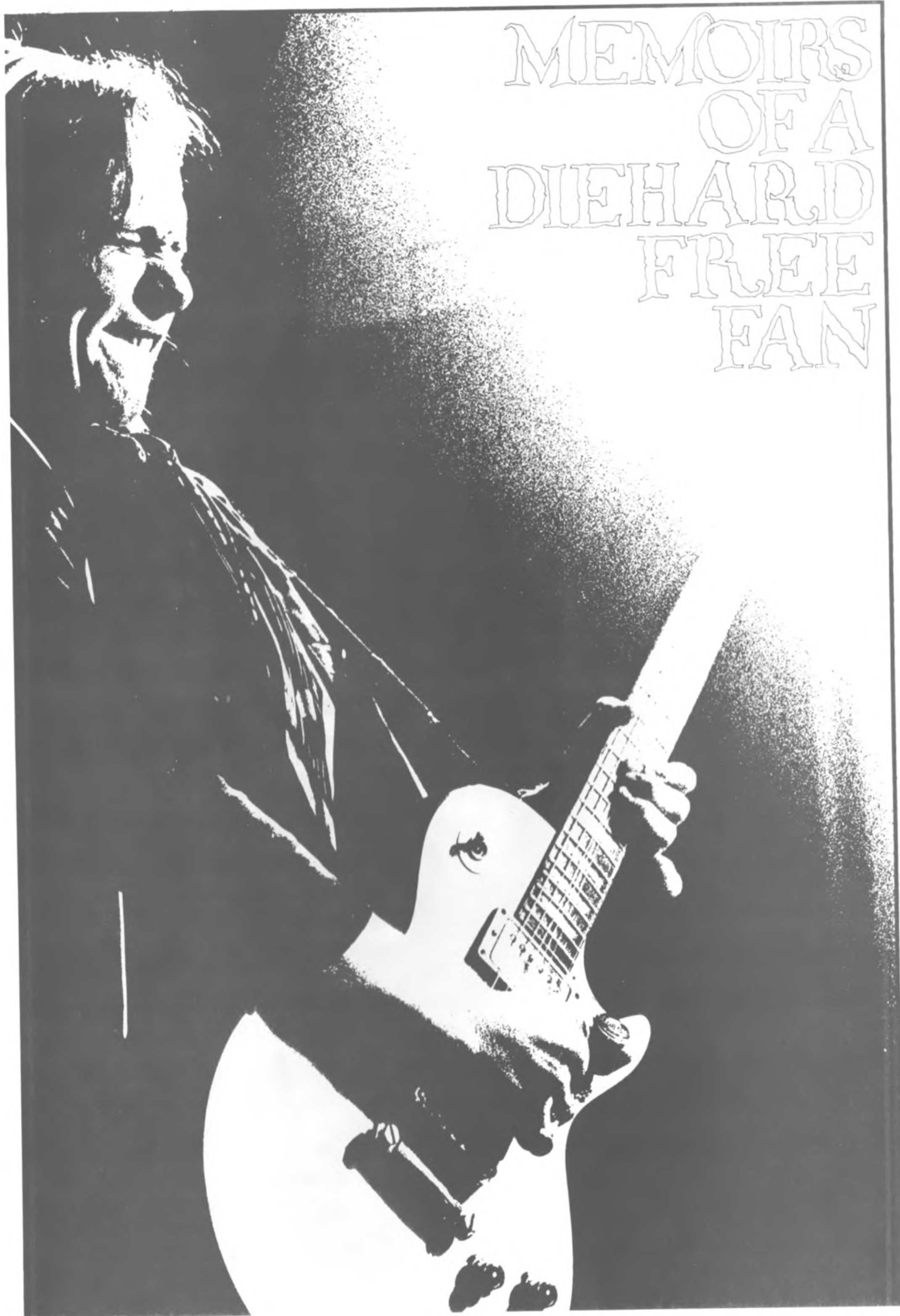
ANGELS FOREVER

"It was hard to find a track not to play.

After working with John Lennon, it's good to see Elephants Memory making it on their own, a highly recommended album"

Anne Nightingale
(Sounds of the seventies)

2383 260



MEMOIRS OF A DIEHARD FREE FAN

★Whoops! Disregard this...the old clock caught us napping and we couldn't quite finish it in time. Sorry 'bout that, but we'll print it next issue.... (Pronounce "!!")

I was always thinking about doing a family tree on Free and in 1972, during my last few weeks at ZigZag's helm, I got into correspondence with Jim Wilson, a self-styled "hanger on and gear humper", who had collected every possible scrap of information about the group and had agreed to help me sort it out.

Then I left the mag and the project got shelved. Until now. Having been asked to edit this issue, I wrote to Jim again and he was good enough to let me borrow all his cuttings—so comprehensive that I decided to do just a History of Free (see centrespread) rather than a family tree incorporating Mott the Hoople, Spooky Tooth and the rest of the Island menagerie.★

As well as his scrapbooks, he sent a few pages of what he calls his "observations" and because I think it makes an interesting change to look at a group through the starry eyes of a fan rather than the usual, jaded old journalist, we've printed his story as he wrote it. Here we go...

The band first came to my notice through a small Melody Maker article comparing the group to the "Heavy Mobs", e.g. America's Blue Cheer, saying they were only a three piece, not mentioning Paul Rodgers (although he appeared in the picture which accompanied the article—Kossoff was missing from the picture).

Also I heard them play a session on an early John Peel "Top Gear" programme. From the start the band always aimed to play soulful simple music which could be enjoyed by the group and audiences alike. They were growing out of their "blues" roots.

They made themselves well known gigging up and down the country and getting a little radio exposure, but early on they got a plum American tour supporting the "super group" Blind Faith. Instead of playing to crowds of under 2,000 as they had been, they were subjected to audiences of up to 20,000 in vast baseball stadiums. Good experience for a band so young, and it certainly stood them in good stead later in their career. During the tour, Kossoff exchanged or sold one of his guitars to Eric Clapton—a very rare Black Gibson Les Paul original with a faded ivory finish.

Proof of their strength was that the American audiences had suddenly realised that just because a group was British didn't automatically mean they were good. They were becoming discerning and the band had to work for everything they got. On the last gig of the tour at Denver they received the sort of ovation they were used to only in Great Britain. So the first American tour was a success financially and artistically—a rarity in those days.

Back home, articles were appearing in the press, saying mainly how simple and soulful their music was and how surprising that it was produced by a band so young. The inevitable questions about influences drew answers mentioning Otis Redding, Big Bill Broonzy, Ray Charles, Freddie King, Albert King and B.B. King.

Gigging in this country progressed and the following in the North became stronger and stronger; they were building up a hardcore following rather than building success rapidly and fading equally quickly. They were paying their dues.

The atmosphere at gigs was getting better all the time. I was living in the North then, so I saw the band quite regularly. The best gigs were always Redcar Jazz Club, Sunderland Top Rank/Locarno/Fillmore North, Newcastle Mayfair/City Hall.

In January 1969 they were gigging in the North; on the Saturday they played Redcar Jazz Club and though they didn't have a gig the following night, they were staying at the Wool-singham Hotel, in Linthorpe Road, Middles-borough. On the Sunday night, however, Jethro Tull, who were booked to play the Jazz Club, failed to turn up. Graham Barker, the Redcar Jazz Club promoter, phoned Free and at short notice they agreed to fill in. Very brave considering Jethro Tull's standing.

Obviously the audience was more than a little hostile at the non-appearance of Jethro Tull, but Free went on and played one of the

best sets I ever saw them play. They stumbled on the stage looking pretty nervous, but 1-2-3, and straight into "The Hunter". They didn't stop moving until the set finished 90 minutes later, when they were called back for three encores... unheard of in those days.

Immediately, the band was booked for gigs all over the North and they became one of the few groups with the power to entertain. They did this above all else, and showed a liking for their audience through their music... always remaining completely natural and likeable. Paul Rodgers always greeted the audiences with a "Hallo, how are you?" or "Good to be back" rather than rushing on, plugging in and playing.

Also the working class audiences of the North could relate to their songs: "I'm A Mover", "Walk In My Shadow", "Woman", "I'll Be Creepin'" and perhaps more than the others "Trouble On Double Time", "Sad Songs Of Yesterday" and "Mr Big".

So when they were booked in the North, and particularly the North East, they played to sold-out audiences, often with many locked out. One night I remember when they were using the Pye Mobile Recording Unit to try and get some tracks down for a live LP (two of them later appeared on the "Free Live" album—"All Right Now" and "The Hunter"), and that night there were 4,000 in the Sunderland Locarno plus an estimated 5,000 outside. It was incredible. I arrived at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and there were already about 500 people queuing outside—and the doors didn't open until 7.30. I remember speaking to two guys (one who claimed to be Simon Kirke's brother) who had hitch-hiked from Plymouth to attend the gig. Such was the loyalty of your average Free fan.

After the gig, there was the inevitable party for the band, roadies, management, groupies and hangers-on (which is what I was really, although I did my share of gear humping). These parties were usually set up by Geoff Docherty, friend of the band and promoter of the Sunderland Fillmore North and later the Newcastle Mayfair gigs.

In those days I was at college and just used to hitch around the country attending Free gigs, hanging on, humping gear, they only had one roadie, New Zealander Graham Whyte, but there was no shortage of assistants. I remember seeing them at Redcar, Newcastle, Sunderland, Bishop Auckland, Peterlee (I think) Kirklevington Country Club, Hull, Nottingham, Durham, Bridlington, Scarborough, Sheffield, Leicester, Edinburgh and Manchester. I even hitched down to London in the middle of February to see them play an all-nighter at the Lyceum in the Strand. In all the times I saw them (over 40), I never saw them play a bum gig or a bad set. They must have been one of the most consistent bands around.

Also they were still one of the friendliest and most good natured; they accepted all the hangers-on they collected, and on one occasion when Frazer was ill, the other three turned up at the gig to apologise for their non appearance and say hello.

However, the audience had grown too big for the Northern clubs, so quite rightly they graduated to the concert halls and went down equally well. They couldn't go wrong. Then came "All Right Now", in the early summer of 1970, followed by the Hollywood/Newcastle-under-Lyme Festival at Easter, where they went down a storm.

Meanwhile, they were undertaking a tour of Britain and after two gigs (one at Sunderland, one at Durham), where fans caused riots, the musical press was full of Beatlemania crap. "Free were the next Sones, the next Beatles..." shit like that, which was bound to have a bad effect, though it took time.

I was at both gigs. The second one, at Durham, was really frightening. The stage was only two feet high with steps leading up to it, and it wasn't very wide—so the band was really close to the edge. The speaker columns were balanced precariously on tables at either side of the stage. There wasn't a support band, so the kids

had nothing to do but wait for Free and they had been in the hall for nearly three hours before the group came on. People were crawling under the column speakers and literally hiding behind the stacks. The band room was really small, with room for only about six people. The fans, hangers-on etc found it and invaded it. Albums, "Fire And Water", had been sent up to be autographed, but fans came in and the majority of these were ripped off. Chicks came in and out looking for the band, and Kossoff siezed one and split to the adjoining bath/wash room.

Kossoff was in a good mood, he went to take a leak and came back into the dressing room and explained how he'd had an audience in the gents while he was taking a slash. They stood watching and applauding, saying "Far out, Paul, nice one," or whatever was the phrase then.

To get into the gig in the first place, the band had to fight their way through hundreds of chicks who had been locked out without tickets—later estimated by the police at over 1,000. At the time "All Right Now" was number 2 in the MM charts. Having had difficulty getting into the hall, they had even greater difficulty getting to the stage. By the time they did, the crowd had worked itself into a frenzy, went berserk and stood as one. The band went into "Fire And Water" and the crowds stormed the stage, pinning Koss to his stack, knocking down Si's drum-kit and ripping at Andy's hair and Paul's clothes. The columns were knocked over, and the band had no alternative but to leave the stage and return to the band room, while Graham Whyte, myself and another friend Mike tried to get the gear together again. Various stewards from the Tech College tried to calm the crowd, and the police were sent for, but the band eventually came back again and tried to complete their set. I was commissioned to keep the left hand column speakers in position, while Mike looked after the right. The fans continued to push against the stage and it was really frightening, but the band controlled things well. All the same, they were glad to get off and a police escort took them back to their hotel. They were really upset by that gig because they just loved to play and because if they couldn't they felt frustrated. That gig made the front page of the Melody Maker the following week.

The band also recorded a Top Of The Pops to promote their single. They mimed their instruments, and Rodgers sang live over a backing track. They all looked thoroughly pissed off. Enough said.

After the British tour, Free split for a small European tour with Traffic and Bronco (three concerts: The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam).

While in The Hague, Free and Bronco went out on the town. They tried to go into a club called Tiffanys, but the doorman refused them admittance because of their long hair, which was still frowned upon in Holland. As they pleaded with the doorman, Free's "All Right Now" played over the speakers, but the doorman wouldn't accept that Paul Rodgers was actually singing on that record. They accepted the inevitable and went to another club, but not before Paul had asked for his records back!

The next day was spent looning around with Jim Capaldi. Koss later played on his solo album. Koss tried to chat up a German chick, but he didn't speak German and she didn't speak English so the affair didn't last long. Bandwagons and group cars collected loads of parking tickets—providing much amusement.

From there the group returned to England and were booked to play the Isle of Wight Festival. They were due to play the Saturday night, but I think it was Sunday early afternoon when they went on. They played a shortened but good set and it was good to see the whole crowd rise as one as the band went into "All Right Now". Made the front cover of the Sunday Times colour supplement (or was it the Telegraph supplement?)

During the Festival they met Jim McCarthy, who became friend and roadie, to help Graham Whyte.

Because of the hit, many people said Free had

siding downtown in a railway station, one take over the line

"sold out" but this was never true; it was the possessiveness of the fans coming through—they were losing their group to a much bigger audience and felt this exposure could only harm the group.

From then on, their progress was swift; an American tour with Bloodrock, "The Stealer" released as a follow-up single but didn't make the charts, their fourth album, "Highway" recorded, and then in early 1971 a long tour of Britain, following their extensive tour of Europe including Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, which they'd undertaken in late 1970.

On March 7th 1971, they broke the attendance record at the Lyceum Ballroom, Strand—a record previously held by the Rolling Stones, and then Wilson Pickett recorded "Fire And Water", a sizeable American hit. A feather in the cap for Rodgers and Frazer.

There followed a successful tour of Japan, with riots in Tokyo, but suddenly, without any warning, Free split during a tour of Australia and while "My Brother Jake" stood at No.12 in the charts. The members of the band split to all corners of the earth; Rodgers and Kossoff to Japan, Frazer back to England, and Kirke to Los Angeles where he spent some time in jail. The music papers were inundated with letters of protest, and letters expressing sadness.

When the split came I was in Nottingham visiting a friend, I bought the MM, and at first I didn't notice the column at the side of the page. When I read it, I couldn't believe it; I was angry with them for throwing away what they had built up and I wanted to bollock them for being so stupid, but I didn't know the circumstances. I read the story again and I cried. Yes, I cried; a 20 year old guy crying because a group had split, but that's how Free got to you, and I bet I wasn't the only one. Even then I knew they would be together again before long; there was some way, I just knew it. I just knew they would be back and I looked forward to that day. The split was not just personal or musical but something deeper.

Anyway, the band went about their solo projects; Andy Frazer formed Toby, Paul Rodgers formed Peace, and Paul Kossoff and Simon Kirke recorded an album with Tetsu and Rabbit.

The split had hit Kossoff badly; he'd turned to dope and got into all kinds of problems. It was basically to sort out Koss and to put a smile back on his face that the group decided to get together again, though none of them had been particularly successful with their solo ventures. They originally reformed for a British farewell tour and a Japanese tour.

The whole thing was mounted on a bigger scale than before; they took their own lights and lighting men on the road with them, plus better gear. Graham Whyte became their personal manager, driving the group car and roadies were Jim McCarthy, Pepe (a Scots guy) and Jonathan, a really well spoken guy. The first gig was Newcastle City Hall; one of Free's happiest venues.

At Newcastle on Tuesday 1st February 1972, Free came back. Not knowing the situation roadie-wise I hadn't seen the group for so long, I didn't risk going in with the roadies; it would have been OK but I didn't know at the time. I bought a ticket to see them for the first time since I bought a ticket to see Jethro Tull at Redcar Jazz Club. I sat in Row T, Seat 14 in Newcastle City Hall—and what a comeback it was.

Anyway, how did I get to know the band in the first place?

I had known of Paul Rodgers while he was with the Road Runners in Middlesborough (I lived in Northallerton not far away and they played Northallerton Town Hall, so I knew them vaguely as one knew local groups).

Anyway, having seen them at Redcar Jazz Club, and having heard them do a superb live set on John Peel's Top Gear, I went to see them at the Queen's Head Hotel in Bishop Auckland.

I knew it was a small place and I wanted to be sure of getting in so I went early and I arrived at the hotel at 2 o'clock for a gig that wasn't due to start until 8. I sat outside the club wondering how to kill some time, when the group's van pulled up outside the club, which was deserted but for me. The band tumbled out and I was really thrilled to see them, showing obvious signs of recognition. Andy Frazer came over and asked me if I was going to see them that night, natural as anything, and when I said I was, he asked if I would help the roadie set up the gear, which I did gladly. It must have been the smallest stage in the world, with a very low ceiling, but it was a good gig. Rodgers knocked out part of his tooth when he swung the mike stand above his head; he forgot about the low ceiling and the mike crashed down, hitting him in the mouth, but he just sang on unperturbed.

I enquired about their next gigs up North and luckily they were playing at Durham the following Saturday (I was at college in Durham), so I saw them the next Saturday, humped gear and had a good time. From there it was Newcastle, Redcar, Sunderland, anywhere, but always the same greeting when I saw them. "How's things?" "What you bin doing?" To them, I must have been one more of those hangers-on, but they were always so friendly... a great bunch of guys.

I had to walk 12 miles back to Durham, through the night, but I didn't mind; you could keep going for days from the buzz you got off a Free gig. I pinched one of Simon's broken drumsticks and they gave me some posters, which I have still got.

Back to the story: Bronco played a competent opening set but the crowd were there for one thing—to see Free.

The atmosphere built up during Bronco's set and at nine o'clock the stage darkened. A single spot picked out the word Free on the bass drum, high on the stand, centre stage. Then DJ Andy Dunkley said something about a "big welcome for Free", but it was well nigh inaudible above the cheers, whistles, and foot-stomping, which lasted for a good three minutes. The group came on and plugged in. Free were back. They had been away seven long months.

Rodgers grabbed the microphone and said "The reasons why the band split up were very complicated. The reason we got together are very simple—we just love to play."

Then they were into the "Sad Songs Of Yesterday", a familiar opener, followed by "Soldier Boy", a new Rodgers song. Then came "The Highway Song", "My Brother Jake", "Hold On" (all with Frazer on piano), "Lady", "Ride On Pony", "Be My Friend", "I'm A Mover", "Walk In My Shadow", "Mr Big", "The Hunter". They were followed by three encores: "All Right Now", "Crossroads" and



Free in 1969: Rodgers/Frazer/Kossoff/Kirke

Now it's a mighty long way down Rockin' Road, from the Liverpool Docks to the Hollywood Bowl

"Rock Me Baby".

Free were back with a vengeance—Rodgers performing like never before, stalking the stage, swinging the microphone stand, smashing it to the ground. Sheer aggression in everything he did.

After this very successful British tour they undertook an extensive American tour, which had many disasters and didn't go down too well. Koss became ill and missed several gigs, but it was a hurriedly put together tour Graham and Jim, the roadies, had to share the driving responsibilities between gigs, while the band travelled separately. As they had such long distances to cover, one drove and the other slept in the back of the van. When Graham was driving with Jim sleeping in the back, the exhaust system apparently developed a fault and carbon monoxide fumes seeped into the back of the van, and Jim died in his sleep.

On re-entering this country at the end of the tour, it was found that Graham Whyte's visa and/or work permit had expired and for some reason he was refused a renewal. He was given a few days to get his things together and then departed back to New Zealand. So that was really the end of the Free we knew and loved. Everything seemed to be pointing towards calling it a day.

Meanwhile the single "Little Bit Of Love" and the album "Free At Last" had both made the lower reaches of the charts. The music papers were full of stories that Free would stay together forever, but little did they know. The statement Simon Kirke had made in a Sounds interview (March 18th 1972) that "Free is more than a group; it's the thing we love," was beginning to wear a little thin.

On 22nd July 1972, out of the blue, Frazer announces he has quit Free on the eve of their Japanese tour. No reasons, no future plans announced.

The Japanese and Hungarian dates had to be honoured, so at the last moment John Rabbit Bundrick and Tetsu replaced Frazer (originally just for this tour).

Rumours that Kossoff was about to quit were denied but he was suffering from ill health and was unable to make the Japanese trip. Rodgers took over lead guitar, and Koss promised to be ready for further Free dates being lined up in Britain.

The lads themselves admit that this was not a "Free of love" but a Free to honour contracts and to avoid disappointing fans. Still, they were bloody good. I only managed to see that line-up once but it was special in a different sort of way; Rodgers had really come on a bundle and he was the focal point now, writing the bulk of the material, singing, playing guitar. Unfortunately an ego thing developed between him and Rabbit.

Further misfortune hit the group in Japan; illness to Simon Kirke—appendicitis and tonsillitis.



Even so, the gigs went OK and featured new numbers like "Seven Angels", "Like Water" and "Honky Tonk Women". Also the Japanese tour was done with unfamiliar roadies.

A September/October tour of Britain was set up and Kossoff's return planned. Meanwhile, they did session work on Claire Hammill's "One House Left Standing". The tour went off OK; the last gig, at Brighton Dome, was in October 1972, but Kossoff was injured backstage at Newcastle and some gigs were cancelled and full-filled later.

In the 1972 NME Musicians Poll, Rodgers came second to John Lennon. Paul Williams, David Bowie, Russ Ballard, Steve Marriott, Rod Stewart, Mike D'Abo and Colin Blunstone all voted Rodgers among their favourite singers.

Several other tours were completed, and "Heartbreaker" was released, but when Tetsu left to join the Faces, Free was effectively finished.

Andy Frazer's final words on Free:

"The story of Free is four lads growing up and maturing through and with their music, and because of it, discovering life through it. I think everyone has grown up more now, and are ready to produce a more mature music that may answer all the questions and frustrations that have gone down before."

Then Ritchie Blackmore states (Sounds, January 1974):

"The only band I know that go on without thinking they're superstars were Free. To me they were a great band, they were far ahead of any other band I know. I think they're the only English band that people should feel they're lucky to have."

I go through all this to say that Paul Rodgers, Simon Kirke, Mick Ralphs and Boz are gonna be good, really good. I have got a feeling.

Don't let *them* go the same way as Free did. Get out and see them. You won't be disappointed.

Jim Wilson



Beckett * Roger Chapman * Al Clark * Jim Cregan * Janie den Hartogh * Geoff Docherty * Charlie Gillett * Jan Gooding * Tony Gourvish * Kilburn and the High Roads * Linda Lewis * Sean Murphy * Gordon Nelki * Robbie * Mark Rye * Barbara Scott * Rob Townsend * Charlie Whitney

I've been warped by the rain, driven by the snow



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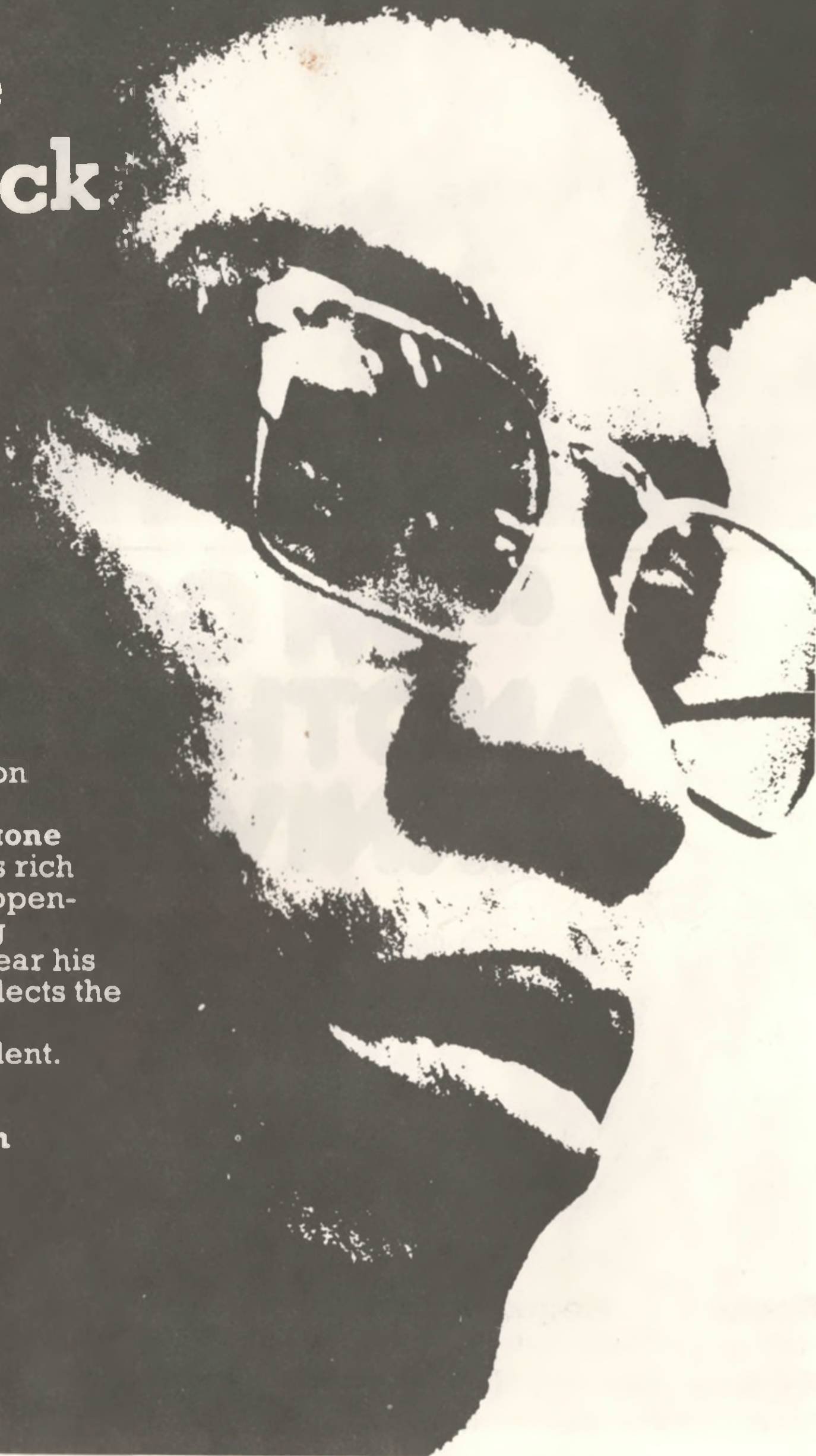
Headhunters is the Herbie Hancock album

Herbie Hancock is already a legend. As a composer, session pianist and soloist his reputation is nothing short of brilliant. **Rolling Stone** wrote, "His music is rich and luxuriant and open-ended, succeeding brilliantly". Now hear his new album that reflects the fantastic depth and dimension of his talent.

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a new album from
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the music people



In May 1967, with a new example of the booming "San Francisco Sound" being launched literally every week by some label or other, Columbia Records left no stone unturned ensuring that the waiting world heard all about Moby Grape.

Details of an elaborate no-expenses-spared Bacchanalian press party—only part of a gigantic promotional thrust involving a purple elephant walking down Sunset Strip, a helium balloon bearing the group logo moored in Frisco's Golden Gate Park, and a horse and cart delivering bunches of grapes around Hollywood—are still recounted with reverence by nostalgic glazed-eyed journalists who recall the usual alcoholic and gastronomic provisions being supplemented by all kinds of exotic delicacies, and the whole thing being conducted in a room covered by a foot thick carpet of orchids and Hawaiian flora.

The most spectacular aspect, however, was the simultaneous release of an album and five singles; throw enough shit at the wall and some of it is bound to stick. Moby Grape became overnight stars, sure enough, but all their success and subsequent failures were later attributed to the initial gimmick/hype... the victims of synthetic promotion.



What a Bunch!

To unravel the whole story, we managed to find Peter Lewis, the "anguished, mournful teenybopper's dreamboat" of the group, who explained all.

Lewis, leading an LA group called Peter & The Wolves through the summer of 1966, was on the lookout for a more impressive line-up and in the course of his search ran into Joel Scott Hill (who is currently in a group with Gene Parsons up in Mendocino).

"Joel's a blues singer who's been around for some time now," says Lewis. "He was even in Canned Heat a while later, but when I met him he was leading his own trio, which had faltered, and he decided to team up with me and this drummer called Kent Dunbar, who'd been in Nooney Rickett's (of Love fame) group. All we needed at that point, to make it a really tight group, was a good bass player and though Joel had been playing with this guy, he was hesitant to suggest him because, in his words, he was 'crazy'. That's great, man, I said, '... that's what's happening... bring him along!' So he did, and it turned out to be a guy called Bob Mosley."

"Our standard rehearsal procedure was that we'd all go up to some guy's house, take a bunch of LSD, and play... well, Joel and I didn't, but Mosley and Kent used to—and the music was great."

The stumbling block, inevitably was lack of management and the other ancillary requirements of the commercial rock world, but a friend put Lewis in touch with a guy up in San Francisco, one Matthew Katz (pronounced Kates), who had managed the

Jefferson Airplane, now on the verge of a national breakthrough.

"He invited us to go up there, but Kent and Joel didn't like the idea—so just me and Mosley went along to see if we could put a cool deal together."

Grape Minds Think Alike

Katz put them together with Skip Spence, formerly drummer with the Airplane (see "JA Takes Off" and hear his great song "My Best Friend" too), who'd been fired for missing rehearsals but now had ambitions to front his own group—as guitarist/singer.

"Skippy was a great songwriter and drummer, but he was only just starting to play guitar again.

Nevertheless, though he was no Eric Clapton, or anything, he had a certain style which we dug. So we began rehearsals; me, Mosley, Skippy and a drummer called Bob Newkirk, who was quickly washed out in favour of Don Stevenson from a Marin County group called The Frantics... and he came along with their lead guitarist, Jerry Miller."

"We went over the bridge to Sausalito and started to rehearse in this place called The Ark, an old boat that had been docked and fixed up like a night club, and it seemed to work real good as a 5-piece with 3 guitarists; Jerry on lead, Skippy on rhythm and me fingerpicking most of the time. Word got around and soon lots of people were dropping by to see us—and a month later, we were playing gigs in the city... like we were doing the Fillmore around the end of 1966, only weeks after we'd got together."

"We really loved the music we were making, and so did everyone else, it seemed—especially the record companies, who had just stumbled on the San Francisco Sound and were making all sorts of rash offers, saying things like "whatever you want is yours."

It was really great in those early days, but mainly because we were into playing with each other more than anything else. I guess that's what made it so good—because regardless of our public image, we spent the whole of those early weeks just writing, playing and singing. It's all we lived for."

Katz invited record companies to see the group, which he'd now called Moby Grape, at the Fillmore in November 1966 and, according to legend, representatives of 14 labels showed up to bid.

Realising what a hot property he had on his hands, Katz assessed the potential of each offer in terms of bread and the label's marketing/promotion/distribution abilities. A short list of 3 were favoured with detailed discussions: Elektra, whose A&R man Paul Rothchild had been one of the first to note their quality, at the Matrix a month earlier, were prepared to do "any deal Katz wanted" and

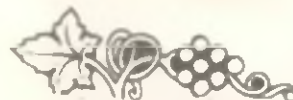
Kama Sutra, high on the charts with the Spoonful, were also in the running, but Columbia Records finally closed the deal, mainly through the enthusiasm of David Robinson.

Take it easy... don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy

"Robinson was really into what we were doing and we really dug him. He was a staff producer, doing stuff like Phyllis Diller, but he wanted to get into rock and he excited Columbia enough to come across with an offer that Matthew couldn't refuse. It was Robinson who came up with all these promotional ideas too—like he conceived the plan to release 5 singles at once, though I suppose he now realises it was more of a publicity hype than sensible marketing. Anyway, Columbia went made for us."

To add to the notoriety attracted by the promotional launch, three of the group were busted during the evening following the party.

"The charge was contributing to the delinquency of a minor; we were parked down a fire road in Mill Valley (a road cut into woodland to prevent fire jumping and spreading) with these chicks and the cops who found us didn't seem to like what was going on. It was all across the papers the next day, but that only added to the publicity—and we delayed going to court for a year! Then we got off! But the scene up there was so cool . . . everybody was so easygoing—nobody cared what you did really."



Fruit of the Vine

The first album was, and remains, a classic and rather than attempt to describe its quality, I shall rip off a whole section of an article in *Crawdaddy* 10 (July 1967), written by Paul Williams, who says it all (a bloody sight more eloquently than I could):

"Well, it took me a long time, but I finally figured out who Moby Grape remind me of: The Everly Brothers. Also Buddy Holly, Buffalo Springfield, middle-Beatles, Byrds, New Lost City Ramblers, the Weavers, Youngbloods, Daily Flash and everybody else. Above all the Grape gives off this very pleasant sense of déjà vu. Rock has become so eclectic you can't even pick out influences—you just sense their presence. I don't really know *why* the Grape remind me of the Everly Brothers. But it's a nice feeling."

"Moby Grape is one of those beautifully inextricable groups with four guitarists (including bass), five vocalists, five songwriters, and about twelve distinct personalities (Skip Spence alone accounts for five of them). The Grape is unusual for an SF group in that it does not have an overall, easily-identifiable personality. It is without question schizophrenic—which is nothing bad, because the group is extremely tight and they simply shift personality from song to song. Their music is always unified; it's their album as a whole that's schizoid. In fact, much as I like it, I enjoy the songs even more one at a time (for your convenience, Columbia has issued almost the entire album on singles—which is particularly nice because the mono mix is far better than the stereo, which must have been done too

fast).

"Skip Spence's two songs make it clear that he's the most talented—though not the most prolific—songwriter in the group. 'Omaha', to my tastes the toughest cut on the album, is one of the finest recorded examples of the wall-of-sound approach in rock. It surges and roars like a tidal wave restrained by a sea-wall. Moby Grape is a particularly violent group . . . not in the sense that they want to do harm to anyone (it is a huge misunderstanding to think violence is inherently evil, or that it necessarily causes harm—there is violent joy, and this album is proof of that), but in the sense that almost every song is attacked with great force and abandon. Moby Grape assault their audience, bathing them in almost unavoidable joy. Jamming it down their throats, in fact. The other Skip Spence song on the LP, 'Indifference', is another screamer, a well-constructed brilliantly executed shuffle number, to be sung on the street, loud, early in the morning, or listened to in the afternoon with your fist pounding the table."

"Peter Lewis is second in the hierarchy of Grape writers, and probably the most sensitive. He shares with the other Grape members the ability to create extremely appealing melody phrases, chorus lines, and rhythm riffs; this ability, combined with the resultant concentration on structure, tightness and brevity, is what makes all the Moby Grape songs sound like good singles. Lewis, in 'Fall On You', puts together a number of catchy little themes into a very nice, very fluid song, vaguely reminiscent of 'One More Try'. In 'Sitting By The Window', he waxes almost eloquent, with just enough restraint to make the song both illuminating and un-presuming. The guitar-work is really excellent, the three Grape guitarists work together with exceptional taste throughout the LP."

"But describing each song is not really the way to write about the Moby Grape. They are elusive; you detect a thousand moods and changes, but you never quite hear the words, never know who's singing, never are certain who's playing lead. You can't pin them down, can't get too close; you learn to forget, learn to absorb their music, learn to stop trying, submit to it and sooner or later it all comes clear. Country Joe, the Dead, are very clean; this group never lacks for tightness, but they get fuzzy round the edges. They aren't involving, but you dig the changes; they aren't involving, but you listen for the words; they aren't involving, but there's something going on here . . . and slowly but surely the depth in this music (which at first attacked you but seemed so uninvolved) swallows you up, and you feel the complexities it invokes."

"Moby Grape is an almost ideal example of a 'rock'n'roll' group, and their emergence now, as the historical concept of rock'n'roll seems on the verge of disappearing into a music too complexly based to fit a general description, is both surprising and quite pleasing. The Grape play short, melodic songs,

complex but straightforward, tightly structured with careful drumming and rhythm, experimental (but not "far out") bass, exciting, well-thought-out lead guitar (no fooling around) and early Beatles or Everly style group vocals. A given song ('Mr Blues') might draw on C&W and blues traditions, Otis Redding phrasing, Keith Richard restrained lead guitar, "Captain Soul" rhythm progression, etc. And every note is proper, polite. It's enough to make you nostalgic; nothing is more refreshing than the unexpectedly familiar."



Raisin' Hell

Sad but true, they never got close to that quality again. Peter Lewis admits it. "That was the best album by miles . . . I loved it; it was everything we had. That initial power coming to bear, where you could see ways to use all those stored-up ideas . . . it was the heaviest, most intense rock music I ever played in my life. Everyone was in gear because we knew it was time to get it on or get off . . . and we got it on, the music was all there."

"That album was cut at exactly the right time, a man. Sometimes you go for years without hitting on one thing and then it suddenly flows. About every 2 years, I guess, I get a flash and a flood of material rushes into my head . . . and I can express it, play it and sing it—and that album was cut when everything seemed perfect. San Francisco was like heaven, everyone was stoned and happy and free, everyone loved and lived for music, everyone was into the same scenes, and the whole atmosphere was so conducive to creating songs. It's difficult to explain it seven years later, but 1966/67 was some year up there in San Francisco, believe me."

Before we move on from that first album, I must relate "the case of the offensive gesture". The sleeve photo, though it appears to be a standard lackadaisical effort involving simply getting the group together and shooting the snap, was in fact the result of a tortuous day's hunt. "Jim Marshall, the photographer, was obsessed with finding the right background to shoot against and insisted on driving us all over the place, over the mountain, up and down, all around until we'd wasted at least three-fourths of the day jammed up in his car. Finally, he found what he was looking for up in Fairfax, about 40 miles from where we lived, and though we really dug the guy, Stevenson thought it would be amusing to sum up our feelings by flipping the bird." Columbia was not amused.

This gesture, clearly visible in the photo, does not carry the same emphatic message in England but in America it is understood to mean "fck you", "get fcked" or words to that effect (without the asterisks).

Whether Columbia's art department didn't think it would matter or whether they genuinely didn't notice, I don't know, but when the Powers That Be saw it, they freaked. Too late. Tens of thou-

sands of albums had been shipped. "Better late than never," said the Powers That Be, however, and the offending digit was air-brushed out against the wash-board backing on the subsequent pressings (though it was never changed on English copies).

Wine, Women and Song



"Our early gigs were marvellous—scenes like the Dead, the Airplane and us, all on the same bill. There was so much energy and enthusiasm, it was incredible, but when we had to start going out to play places like Milwaukee, it was a real bringdown."

"The first promotional tour we did was with the Mamas & Papas; the deal was that we'd get equal billing but no bread. On arriving at Philadelphia, our first stop, however, we found we were third on the bill—in small letters underneath the Buckinghams—so we refused to play. Grudgingly we did two numbers, but we kicked up such a fuss that we were kicked off the tour after a couple of days . . . we just couldn't get into all that organisation and stuff."

"Then Columbia got us a tour, supposedly to promote the first album, but looking back it just didn't make it. Our first gig was a Catholic High School in some obscure Mid-Western city and the microphones were so small that Mosley and Skippy smashed them. That put us in bad with Columbia who had not only put up a lot of money to sign and record us, they'd put up a lot of bread to finance the tour—so some guy was sent out from New York to give us a good talking to."

"He was saying stuff like 'I don't see how you hope to pursue your career if you're going to behave in this sort of way,' but it was strange because the equipment just wasn't right . . . we couldn't work with it."

The thought of days filled with sunshine and laughter and evenings involving voluptuous chicks, guitars round an open fire and an abundance of herbage sounded far more appealing than continuing this kind of half hearted gigging, so they went home. "We just sat around for a year, waiting to record our second album . . . that was a good year."



Second Harvest

Eventually, however, they did begin work on another album—in New York. This was after a false start: "We were going to record it in LA first of all, but they made the mistake of renting us a house in Malibu . . . just the right location to sit around in the sun. Of course, there was no way that we were going to work up an album in a place like that—and to make matters worse (for Columbia, but better for us) the Buffalo Springfield had a house just up the beach. We spent a lot of time

Oh how it hurt I could come out to here and be shit-flattening?

playing together, swimming together, trying to sink each others' boats, but as far as preparing an album was concerned, it was a complete blow out. Sure was a lot of fun though!

"Realising they couldn't trust us (a reasonable conclusion), they packed us off to New York, where they could keep more control over us . . . and that was a very different story: two months of going into the studio from six at night to six in the morning."

"Al Kooper and Mike Bloomfield were around the studio at the same time. I remember Jerry and I were sitting on the floor in the men's room working out some guitar figures and Bloomfield blusters in, completely wiped. Anyway, we got together and recorded some loosely structured tracks . . . nothing amazing, but pretty good in flashes."

"Wow", their second album, was released in April 1968; a single album in Britain, but a double in America—one half being the highlights of their excursions with Bloomfield and Kooper, and going under the subtitle of "Grape Jam".

Again I shall resort to theft, this time lifting a lump from Robert Somma's review in the Los Angeles Free Press:

"Wow was a disastrous rock performance: childishly conceived, randomly produced, irrelevantly performed, stupidly promoted, self-congratulatory and smug. Everything about it seemed designed to draw attention away from the group's strong suits. It all appeared eager to divert from the band's expected and possible riffs and to focus on the trash they had decided to play. The cover was ugly, the design flatulent, with mucky notations and impertinent photographs. The companion piece 'Grape Jam', one of the first rock 'sessions', was super only in its ordinariness and inanity. It too, like all the others had those ubiquitous, clannish, self-aggrandizing ladies-in-waiting Kooper and Bloomfield."

Harsh words, harsh words. It's nowhere near as bad as he makes out—in fact, it's a good album (and one which, like the first, I often see in second-hand/deletion racks—so there's a good chance of picking one up). By no means a classic, but good and interesting.

"We cut some good tracks," says Lewis, "but I think it was mixed badly. I remember being down in Austin, driving to a gig and hearing a track on the radio for the first time—and I was just devastated. It was a track we'd worked really hard on; it was like the resolution of the ego stand-offs we'd got into . . . we suddenly realised we were going wrong, and we cut this song 'Bitter Wind'—but our hearts into it; a bitching cut. Then I heard the weak remains on the radio . . . it was such a drag."

"The mistake was ours in as much as we didn't stick with it through to the master stage; we beat it back to San Francisco as soon as we'd laid down the tracks . . . couldn't stand New York any longer."



Peter Lewis/Skip Spence
Jerry Miller/Don Stevenson/Bob Mosley

Note the
offending
finger!

Alone Again Oar

That summer (1968), it leaked out that Skip Spence had left suddenly and in mysterious circumstances. "There was a scene in New York; he went to Belle Vue Hospital for six months . . . took too much acid and freaked out completely. Then he got mixed up with this chick, a witch according to some people, and he got completely unglued . . . got hold of a fire-axe and went berserk."

"Somehow he got hold of a motorcycle and rode down to Nashville, where he was together enough to cut a solo album. Then he came back to the coast, to the mountains up near Santa Cruz where he had a house. He went through a very strange period, but then we all did . . . trying to get back to where we were, but going the wrong way. It was a turmoil that should've been kept under wraps rather than exposed, but it just didn't seem to come down that way."

According to Sandy Pearlman, former ace Byrd chronicler and now manager of the dreaded Blue Oyster Cult, Spence arrived in Nashville on December 15th 1968 and cut the whole album, "Oar" (released under the name of Alexander Spence almost a full year later), in one day on December 16th. Hardly likely, since he played all the instruments himself, but he was certainly back home by Christmas.

So Moby Grape, still floundering about despite everybody's efforts to make them stars, are down to four.



Sour Grapes

What will happen? Will the demonic Matthew Katz throw himself off the Bay Bridge? Will Bob Mosley join the marines? Will Miller and Stevenson join the Rhythm Dukes? Will Peter Lewis hitchhike to Alabama? Will Scotland Yard burst in on a Moby Grape drug evening? Why did David Robinson instruct Lewis to head for Squaw Valley, and who were the mysterious bogus Moby Grape at Altamont? Don't miss next month's exciting episode: Up Granite Creek Without A Paddle.

ful microscope — and the other half will be comprehending it. (The same guy wrote that Arthur Lee/Rimbaud thing we printed in Jan 70). If you can understand what the hell it's all about, please let us know. . . .

And, of further interest to Moby Grape fans may be this article on Skip Spence's 'OAR' album, which is reprinted from the amazing (but extant) Da Capo and is by Walter Hite-smán. Half the battle will be reading it — but it should be ok with the use of a power-



Oar only works given somewhat of similar sequence, and maybe not even then:

- 1964: *Prelyte*, Byrds — Control-ling of formal elements (amateurs be-coming professional: group)
- 1965: *Aftermath* (English ver-sion), Stones — Perfection of hard group rock (the Star)
- 1966: *Pet Sounds*, Beach Boys — Mastery of studio (Symphonic: the Creator)
- 1967: *Smiley Smile*, Beach Boys— Collapse of avant-garde (Art)
- 1968: *Forever Changes*, Love — Professional mastery of all forms of popular music (Virtuosos: group again)
- 1969: *Oar*, Alexander Spence — Professional as amateur; the Individual

If *Prelyte* be the given Before, *Oar's* After: recorded five years apart, they are now released within a few months of one another. . .

Oar announces in part an end to changes for the over-25 bunch: as maybe the first unequivocal reflection of it, it is past statement.

A PHYSICAL CONDITION

Oar's no high; it could be the record you live with: real honest-to-God Op-ium rock. The last five years manifest themselves in Spence as a physical condition, and nothing else — no Civil War songs, no satiric operas, no beatific simplicity, no blues bath, no sweet harmony — just Spence, sound-ing like Wallace Beery about to expire from Death Valley thirst, crooning: " . . . Tears fell like rain/Oh Oh Die-ance-ah/I am in pay-ain. . . Oh Die-ance-ah-ah-ah/I'm in luuu-ahhvee. . . " (and that's about all you're able to make out), backed up by himself (through over-dubbing Spence plays drums, bass, rhythm, lead — in each instance as if he were arthritic), and of course it's the funniest cut on the record ("Diana").

A PROCESS

Pace is dictated more by Spence's various downbeat deliveries than by tempos per se; his tone, coupled (sub-sequently) with a beat that could just as easily be someone in galoshes falling down a flight of stairs, renders the surface variety useless: although vocals differ accordingly, the almost unparal-leled lethargy does not; "it" captures the set without a struggle, but there was no fight/nosurrender — only the process. . .

A SOBER 35

No other record I've heard courts boredom quite so openly without in any way succumbing to it: *Oar's* no-thing if not, like the mountain, there. Instead of studied repetition (Stooges, Velvet Underground), Spence lays out a sloppiness amply provided for, dis-ciplined, by his past looseness — the result then of the fact that he was a real fuck-off, the way people back in high school used to be fuck-offs, incredibly — why not, up yours — casual (Skip): wearing a gym sweat-shirt and mugging for pics; labeled "self-grooming" in performance; drum-mer with the original Airplane, switch-ing to rhythm guitar for Grape: who else could go pronto through two major groups on two different instru-ments, play the hip clown, and toss off "Omaha" and "Motorcycle Irene" in the process? That is the Spence on *Oar's* cover (taken before *WOW*) — airy and comfortable, tossed sandy hair belying the oriental effect his bottom-less goatie might suggest — while Skip today, on the lack and looking a sober 35 in grainy profile (shaved?), has become Alexander.

(If you yourself tromped into Ace to cut a few R&R sides you'd wind up like the Gods [although no one could be that BAD] attempting *Pre-flyte*, unable to approximate the seem-ing unprofessionalism of *Oar* — even if you wanted to [and that's just it too — who would?] — through lack of poise: Alex's easy consistency.)

II

(Hemingway wrote *The Sun Also Rises* at 25; Lennon wrote "I Am the

A Cripple on his Deathbed

Walrus" at 27 — a B side taken for granted. He never/may get BETTER.) Modern Rock People are the first performing stars who, at an excep-tionally early age, turned auteurs en masse, and who took control of form (genre-art, in this instance), not at birth (1955-58), but just as it was beginning to move around, and you could really do something with it. (Chaplin's an early example: star turned director; he also had the luck to land in film not at the absolute begin-ning, though almost.) & what happened was that — they quit, got off the stage: Brian Wilson, then Beatles, Stones. Group (or combo) rock was dumped for the studio. And from 1966-67, things got pretty compli-cated — roughly like this:

- Spring, 1966: "Eight Miles High," Byrds — Overt drug song/Symphonic combo
- Summer, 1966: *Pet Sounds*, Beach Boys — Mass symphonic (studio)/LP unification
- Summer, 1966: *Blonde* on *Blonde*, Dylan — Symphonic combo/LP unification
- Summer, 1966: *5D*, Byrds — First schizophrenic album (past/future)
- Fall, 1966: "Good Vibrations," Beach Boys — Use of the studio to break down formal song struc-tures
- Winter 1966/early Winter, 1967: Failure of the Beach Boys to complete *Smile* — an attempt to make a sym-phonic "Good Vibrations" (vid. "Cab-inessence" on this year's 20/20)
- Early Winter, 1967: *Younger than Yesterday* ("So you want to be a R&R star") — *5D* resolved into tradi-tional group rock: a holding action
- Early Summer, 1967: *Sgt. Pepper*, Beatles — Their *Pet Sounds*
- Late Summer, 1967: *Smiley Smile*, Beach Boys — Fragments from the original *Smile*, which was to have been an album of flashes. Also schizo-phrenic (Side I)
- Early Fall, 1967: "We Love You," Stones — Their "Good Vibra-tions"
- Late Fall, 1967: *Wild Honey*, Beach Boys — A quickie, the first Get Back album ("It's not too late: I'd love just once to see you in the nude")
- Late Fall, 1967: *Magical Mystery Tour*, Beatles — Their *Smiley Smile* (matching first side — "Your Mother" followed by "Walrus" corresponds with "Heroes"/"Vegetables"; at least the Beatles had the luxury of two heads)
- Late Fall, 1967: *Satanic Majes-ties*, Stones — Their *Pepper*
- Early 1968: *John Wesley Hard-ing*, Bob Dylan — Confused Get Back
- Early 1968: *Notorious Byrd Brothers* — Between "High" and *Yes-terday*: modern resolution
- Spring, 1968: *Friends*, Beach Boys — Polished *Wild Honey*, the first *Nashville Skyline* ("Busy Doin' Nothin'"; Brian's complicated street directions to his house)
- Summer, 1968: *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, Byrds — Go Country
- Winter, 1968: *Beggar's Banquet*, Stones — Never that "far-out," they had the energy to produce strongest Get Back album, on heels of two murders (Bobby died during "Devil," etc.)
- Winter, 1968: *The Beatles* — a review (parodies, etc.); secondary literature feeding off itself
- Early 1969: 20/20, Beach Boys — A survey ("Do it Again" to "Cabi-nessence," from *Smile*)
- Spring, 1969: *Dr. Hyde*, Byrds — Major collapse of new eclecticism
- Spring, 1969: *Nashville Skyline*, Dylan — Goes Back to country: year and a half late with no bod
- Fall, 1969: *Abbey Road*, Beat-les — New professionalism. . .

(Rimbaud, the child prodigy of Lit., got out at 19 or 20; subsequently became a money-grubbing incompetent gunrunner. To throw my hat into a controversial area, I think he wrote *Illuminations* — or the bulk of them — after *A Season in Hell*, and I think that he quit because he wasn't making it in . . . Anything worth having should not be needed. — Come to think of it, all those children got cut down quick: Chatterton at 17 or 18 from starvation; the elegant Radiguet at 21, who wrote: "A disorderly man who is going to die and does not know it suddenly puts his affairs in order. His life changes. He sorts his papers. He rises and goes to bed early. He gives up his vices. His friends are pleased. Then his brutal death seems all the more unjust to them. He would have lived happily.")

ART OR HAWTHORNE?

The question being — why didn't Brian Wilson finish *Smile*; or anyone else you want to ask. . . There are some quasi-facts: Brian's gathering of Hollywood hippies (Van Dyke Parks, Michael Vosse, David Anderle) didn't go down too well with the Hawthorne Boys: it reached the point, sort of, where he had to choose between Art and his own family (surfing, Brian supported — consider it — around twenty people; taking off, and middle-aged, Anderson and Gauguin didn't alter that many pockets); also, for a number of reasons, Brian became con-vinced *Smile* was tuning him into a supernatural frequency forbidden mere mortals. . .

Whatever — the fact is, Modern Rock People have turned on artistic com-plexity with such a vengeance that truth and simplicity are now synono-mous; the studio's considered once again God's gift to South Philly.



TOO FAR GONE?

It's too early to tell yet whether Get Back's a cop-out or not — whether Brian's neuroticism sunk *Smile*, whether "Eight Miles High" was over the Byrds' head, whether Dylan simply couldn't take being strung-out any longer (robbed of his James Dean chance) — whether or not, for that matter, "Shapes of Things" and "Hap-penings Ten Years Time Ago" were just technical flukes.

I wonder. . . Would the Honky Tonk Women have saved Brian Jones or was/is he considered too far gone? As for me, I know I can't always get what I want — Moms told me — but it's getting to the point where what I need is what I want. You? Really?

The Sixties started off with a bang — Hemingway, MM suicides (only Mailer really seems on to this); and if Jack Kennedy had not been killed, and if Martin Luther King had not been killed, and if the goddamned war could've been ended, and if Nixon had not won and Humphrey not been the alternative, and if all of us weren't made potential criminals by draft and drugs — then maybe the Sixties would not close with the sort of puny energy level exemplified by Moratorium Day, and maybe Dylan wouldn't be singing like your Uncle Max sicked-up — he's happily married now, you know, a father with a father's concerns,

and certainly Paul's recent work gives no real support to the rumor he lives — and maybe we all wouldn't have to go out and muck around in some stoned cow pasture and hail it as the religious event of our time. . . Can't you have any fun by yourself?

Yeah, give peace a chance: Lennon's apparently making up for the Speak-Out phase the Beatles saw fit to passover (thankfully) five years ago, and meanwhile Alexander Spence is down in Nashville, all alone, doing a song called "War in Peace" — the lyrics to which I cannot literally make out —

III

No use turning over — *Oar's* essential models lie on Side I:

○ "Little Hands" — An opening cut comparable perhaps to "Sympathy for the Devil" in its ability to crystal-ize all that follows — the one instance where Spence approaches conventional dynamics: *Oar's* 45, *Oar's* quiescence — *Hands* is a majestic, lumbering dirge of great humanity and wisdom:

Little Hands clapping
Children are laughing
Little Hands clapping
All over the world

Come let us be there
Yes we will be there

Little Hands clapping
Children are happy
All 'round the world
Little Hands clapping
Truth they are grasping
World with no pain
Go on and on. . .
Etc.

The music gives these lyrics a ground-ing, and in doing so only emphasizes the odds against which they are sung.

○ "Cripple Creek" — Narrative ballad. Old story Tex.

○ "Diana" — Young love ballad; not a recreation, like Ruben's Jets — rather, how Richie Valens, if he were alive (and stripped of commercial con-siderations), would do "Donna" today.

○ "Margaret — Tiger Rug" — Novel-ty number, sung with all the enthusi-asm it deserves:

Well, there goes Margaret the
darling ice-skater
She skates the truth on the ice
And if she wasn't so daring and
dashing
Her lips would be chapped at
half the price

Spence yawns; the bouncy syncopa-tion warbles: and Paul ("Rocky Ra-coon") McCartney, Bob ("Peggy Day") Dylan should be forced to listen to it one thousand times running.

○ "Weighted Down" — An inter-minable, no range folk-blues (?) — ideal for Lee Marvin.

Weighted down by possessions
Weighted down by the gun
Weighted down by the river
For you to come

Waiting down by possessions
Waiting down with a gun
Waiting down by the river
For you to come

On & on. (Lennon, 500 times.)

○ "War in Peace" — Rock. Left-handed phasing makes the vocal indecipherable, and rightly so. Fighting for life in the midst of all this is *Oar's* first big guitar break, which emerges from a tidal wave of slush to carry on in quicksand; the cliché riff of our time — from "Sunshine of Your Love" — takes it out; and here Spence gives *Oar* its lone embellish-ment by looping a grace figure off it —

PRODUCTION

○ In pace, *Oar's* closest to "The Lake" (plus minute graduations), and in execution to the remainder of *Grape Jam*, although the mix has a slightly sharper wash to it, as if to compensate for lack of drive.

○ Ironically enough, *Oar's* a "stud-io record" in the sense that overdub-bing is a "gimmick". . .

CONCLUSION

○ Spence shows that form won't suffice; if you're honest, and not merely professional, a novelty number, say, doesn't bounce under any cir-cumstances.

○ *Oar's* great value lies in the "fact" that beside it, almost every-thing seems too much.

STRAWBS

Hero and Heroine

"Hero and Heroine" is the most hypnotic and adventurous album the Strawbs have recorded. Through their often beautiful, sometimes shattering melodies and flowing visual imagery, they have created a spellbinding tale of what happens when two people live a little longer than "happily ever after".



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have you ever even heard of MICHAEL FENNELLY?

The Famous Chloë ★

Where's The Money Art Studios

Basically, I'm in a quandary. It would be nice to write one of those eye-catching, super-slick pieces which everyone reads and remembers, because that way I would feel that I'd done justice to the bloke this piece is all about. I'm totally convinced that he's quite outstanding and original, and more to the point, that he's going to be a star. However, that depends on other factors, the main one being that currently there is no decision on whether his album is released here. As I write this, around the middle of March, his record has just come out in the States, and I haven't seen any reviews yet, so I just don't know how he's going to be received. What I do know is that I managed to purloin an advance pressing, and I've been playing this sleeveless wonder for about six weeks, and it's just fabulous, a totally great album. Before you stop reading, assuming that I'm going to write at length about some obscure avant garde jazzman (I'd never heard of those people either), let me tell you that Michael Fennelly, the subject of this article, is into rock music, straight down the line. And, of course, like almost everyone we take an interest in, he hasn't just suddenly appeared from behind a bush...

Beginnings

Michael is 26 this year, and he comes from New Jersey. While still a child, he idolised the Everly Brothers, and wanted to become one, but only after he'd gone through the phase of wanting to be a cowboy. "I wanted to leave New Jersey, because I wasn't happy. I was in high school and I really hated it—I wanted to be playing rock'n'roll. There was a friend of mine who also wanted to leave, and I said 'Where shall we go? Let's just hitch-hike somewhere,' and he said he wanted to meet a girl called Andrea Dron, who was doing airline commercials at the time, and she must live in LA, so let's go there. That's why we went." This was at age 17, but we're going a bit too fast.

"I'd had rock'n'roll bands in New Jersey. As a matter of fact, there was a UHF station in New Jersey, a TV station, with a rock'n'roll show called 'Discoteen', and a ghoul who was the host, whose name was Zacherle." It transpired from our conversation that this was in fact

John Zacherle, who had a fairly famous single called "Dinner With Drac", a less successful but probably better manifestation of the "Monster Mash" syndrome, which was released here in the spring of 1958. "He used to have 'The Zacherle Show', and then later it was called 'Discoteen'. There was a rock'n'roll contest on this, and my band entered and went on to the semi-finals, and then we split to LA. We found out later that they had used our tape from the semi-finals in the final, and we had won a recording contract with Kama Sutra. It would be kinda funny now to go back to Kama Sutra, and say 'Well, we've been getting our shxt together, and we're ready to cut now.'" Although little of note has appeared recently on Kama Sutra, Michael felt that the label was "big stuff" at the time, and, dare I blushing say it, he was impressed that I knew of the Critters, who were being hailed as the slightly different successors to the great Lovin' Spoonful. In fact, both the indolent Frame and myself are proud to possess the first album by the Critters, which contains such undying gems as "Mr Dieingly Sad" and "I'll Wear A Silly Grin". Buy it if you see it, and your life may change. (In fact, though a Kama Sutra production, it's on Kapp Records.) Back to Michael. "You know what the Critters' lead guitarist is doing now, or was doing? He's with Carly Simon. I used to work in a record store in New Jersey, and sell records to the Critters and sell the Critters' records. And I was at the Continental Hyatt House in LA, where all the rock bands stay, and I was meeting some guy from a record company, when I saw another guy who looked really familiar sitting across by the swimming pool. The record company guy said, 'Oh, let me introduce you to Carly Simon and her band—here's her lead guitarist, Jimmy Ryan'. I looked at him, and he looked at me, and he said 'The record store, right?' One of those tearful reunions, you know!"

New Jersey behind him, it's time we returned to Michael's early exploits in LA. From my researches, it appeared that he had been a coffee bar protest singer, and had written a song titled "This Trouble's Been Going On Too Long". "Well... do you remember the Sunset Strip protests? That was during my protest days, when I had a harmonica holder, and an acoustic

guitar with painting all over it. That was my protest song, which a couple of guys from KPFFK, I think, with a tape recorder similar to yours, recorded and put on the air, saying 'Yes, this trouble's been going on too long, and here's a song to prove it!' sort of thing." So how did you initially get into the coffee house scene? "I met a girl after being there about four days, and she took me to Sunset Strip and showed me this coffee house, and I got to know the owner of the place. There was police brutality and all that stuff going on, and I just sort of wandered into it, started working at this coffee house. I wasn't really a coffee house singer—I mean, I'd sweep up at first, answer the phone..." Was there any aim behind this dues paying type of activity? "I don't know that I was waiting for anything to happen. I knew that I wanted to be a rock star from about the age of nine, but I really wasn't pursuing it with any great fury when I first got there. I was just playing my guitar, and I wanted to see what was happening—sort of wandering aimlessly, not really pursuing stardom."

The next step on star route was a group called Yellow Brick Road. The infamous Captain couldn't take the credit for the name, so it was probably Judy Garland, but Michael isn't sure. "I wandered into that one. The lead guitarist in the group had the name, and he said 'Oh yeah, this has been the name of my group for ages, and it *will* be.' It was a psychedelic band, feed back. Boy, we could feed back! It was Airplane, about the time of 'Surrealistic Pillow'. Loud ragas and so on. 'Yeah, play your E string for a while, man! Either one, it doesn't matter'. That was in another coffee house—the first one was the Fifth Estate, and this was the Omnibus. We were sort of the house band, and the guy who managed the coffee house had aspirations to being a rock'n'roll manager, and he figured this was his band, so we lived in the coffee house, and didn't have to sweep up like everybody else. All we had to do was play our rock'n'roll."

Further enquiries elicited the information that it was most unlikely that I would have heard of any other members of the group, that they didn't make any records, and that the period of this exploit was 1966/67. Shortly afterwards,

For the love of a lady grows stronger every day

the Fennelly career began in earnest.

The Millennium

The name you have just read is that of a long defunct group, who made one album for CBS in March 1968, which was not released here, titled "Begin". Perhaps the most impressive thing one can say about this record for starters is that Jac Holzman frequently quoted it as one of his "desert island" records, and for a man who has heard as much as he had, that's quite a compliment. "I was found by Curt Boetcher and Keith Olsen for their publishing company. Originally, I entered as a songwriter, they heard some of my songs, liked them, cut some demos, and signed me to their Mee Moo publishing company. Then Curt wanted to get a house, and he needed someone to help pay for it—he wanted a big house, I suppose, not just a little place. So I agreed, and at that point began to figure out that I would be in the band he was forming. Before this, he had a group called the Ballroom, which was the predecessor to the Millennium, and he had produced some things for the Association, but nothing monumental." Actually, I rather feel that some of the Association's greatest work was done on their first album, which Boetcher produced. That album contained "Cherish" and "Along Comes Mary", both of which songs are very dear to me. Reverting to the Millennium, it seemed that the personnel on the record were somewhat different from what had been planned. Drummer was to have been Toxey French, who is now a producer, bass Jerry Scheff, now part of Elvis' band and also in Ray Manzarek's new group, apparently, and guitar Ben Benay, a name accorded much respect among American musicians, although he's next to unknown here.

What eventually happened was that the group comprised seven members, who you can see in the picture starting from the bottom left and going clockwise. "Ron Edgar, the drummer from the Music Machine, Lee Mallory, who had been working with Curt for a long time, Joey Stec, a Polack from Chicago, Doug Rhodes, who played keyboard with the Music Machine, and played bass and keyboards with the Millennium, Curt, me, believe it or not, and Sandy Salisbury. Five guitarist writers. Great plan for a group, isn't it? No ego problems with five guitarist writers, you know! And that picture doesn't do anybody justice—four in the morning in Griffith Park, and they had me cut my hair for that group—still pisses me off. Also, Keith Olsen, who co-produced the record, was the bass player with the Music Machine, so we had three guys from that group."

With that sort of line-up, how did you go about getting a record contract? "I think that Curt already had his ties with Gary Usher at that point, and was doing some things with CBS, or at least talking to CBS about it, so we didn't really audition for CBS, because it was pretty much Curt's thing, you know. He got people together who were going to do this big super group thing with him, but he already had his ties together. Naturally, I was overjoyed at the prospect of making a record."

As the Millennium only made one album, something obviously went wrong. Was it a critical success? "Oh, yeah. It was funny, because it was one of those cases where the group really believed their hype. I mean, people said, 'This is the next thing, a new dimension in sound!' and everyone told us 'Wow, this is the greatest thing we've ever heard, this is the next big thing, blah, blah, blah,' and we all believed it. Then the cold white light of dawn hit us as the record hit the shelves and nothing happened. We spent a fortune doing it, too—three months and lots of money."

Whatever was felt by the record buyers of America at that time is not going to change my mind about the group's album. I think it's excellent, and any others of you who appreciate the great and now defunct vocal harmony groups of the sixties, like Harper's Bizarre, the Association and the Mamas and the Papas will certainly dig it too. Maybe it's a little heavy on effects, and there are certainly some slightly irrelevant

noises coming from the speakers every now and then, but it was actually one of the very first albums recorded on a sixteen track machine, and the pitfalls of that sort of overkill were much less well known. The songs are almost without exception classy, the singing is brilliant, and the instrumentation no problem—altogether, a record for your list. It was on mine for a long time, but I was fortunate enough to find one in Shepherds Bush about a year ago. I've never looked back since, folk. Michael wrote or co-wrote four of the songs on the album, "To Claudia On Thursday", "It's You", "It Won't Always Be The Same" and "There Is Nothing More To Say", and three of those figure among the best six tracks on the album for me. Michael was, it's fair to say, somewhat less happy about the album, and talked about some of the tracks.

"The noise that sounds like sawing through wood on 'To Claudia On Thursday' I thought was great, and I'd like to use it again sometime. It's a Brazilian instrument. Bola Sete, a really nice Brazilian guitar player, had a percussionist named Paulinho at the time, and we got Paulinho in with all his percussion instruments. One of the things he had was a drum with one skin on the top and a stick coming down inside the drum, and he would use a damp rag and manipulate the stick, which produced the noise. It was like a squeaking animal or even a human voice almost. (Ethnic note: it's called a cuica.) On 'The Island', we got just about every tropical sounding instrument we could find. Conch shells . . . in the big studio at CBS, where they record orchestras, we were spread all over beating log drums. And I did birds on that one—I was the bird on the island, the parrot." Whatever he says, I like the effects, and I think that they were used rather before most other people had caught on. "A lot of people used to say that, that the Millennium were before their time, and that was their big problem, but I don't go for that. I'd call it over produced. I thought there were a number of songs on the record by different writers, not just me, that were really decent songs, that had some real meat to them, and it's all lost, it's all buried behind this giant wave of production and effects, and 'Wow, wait till we bring the motorcycles in!', you know. Really, the songs lost all their personality. There's one of those songs, the lyrics of which I wrote, which sums up the pretentiousness of this band, and that's 'There Is Nothing More To Say'." I suppose that I must quote the lyrics in part, but before I do, I hope you'll understand that I'm one of the fraternity who listen to lyrics exceptionally, that is, I'm more into sound than meaning, so whatever the words, I'm still quite able to enjoy records because I like the noise. OK, the words:

"There is something that you hear in so many of our songs,
"But it's something that we want you to know,
"The time is going to come when we're going to lead the way . . ."

"We really thought we were somewhere between religious rock'n'roll leaders of the new youth, you know, I mean honestly believed it. I find it embarrassing listening to this record. There are two songs that I still like, which are "To Claudia On Thursday", and "I Just Want To Be Your Friend" which Curt wrote. Those two . . . but it's all buried, you know? And the thing that really gets me about this record, and it was also the situation in the group, is that it was Curt's project—Curt was the leader. Curt, more than anything, has a talent for exciting people around him. He's got a lot of charisma, and he's a great leader, and he can get record deals you wouldn't believe, simply because he has the ability to excite people. And he can get musicians around him, and in a way, that's really good, because you need someone to generate excitement, and to say 'Follow me, men, over the hill' sort of thing. But it turned out that he would take a song that Joey and I had written, and I'd sing the vocal to it, and lay it down pretty much the way I felt it should be, and he'd overdub his vocal on top of it, and feature his vocal. It was the Curt Boetcher

sound, and I'm still a little bitter about all that."

The name of Bob Brown is mentioned on the sleeve as personal manager . . . "He was a promotion man for MGM, who managed the Millennium for a couple of months. Or would the word be mismanaged? I don't know . . . Nice guy, seersucker, white shoes. Really, I thought he was Hollywood—'Wow! Big time now! White shoes!'" Presumably, after this album nobody expressed a great deal of interest in doing another? "No. Did you notice the 'To Be Continued' at the bottom of the sleeve? We were dreamers, weren't we? The group kind of blew up—there were some odd personal things in the group that need not even be brought up. But it didn't break up, it blew up. Some of the members were dumped, and some quit."

What happened to the rest of the group then? "Let's see . . . Joey has been in a number of groups, working with a guy named Ralph, who used to be in the Blues Magoos. Lee worked with 'Hair' for a while, some time afterwards, and a number of groups. Doug Rhodes is now living in Canada, on an island, as sort of a hermit, with Curt's wife. Ron's been drumming with a number of groups, kind of mild stuff. He was an even better jazz drummer than a rock'n'roll drummer, and he was certainly good at rock'n'roll. Sandy went to Hawaii for a while, then he was doing things on Together Records, which was Curt and Gary's (Usher) label."

Right, I want all of you out there in ZigZag land to write to me with information about Together Records. That way, we'll get a feature together quite soon, I hope. Curt Boetcher, by the way, went on to a number of other projects after the Millennium, working with people like Tommy Roe and so on, culminating in a superb solo album last year on Elektra, titled "There's An Innocent Face". He was also one of the leading lights of a band featured on "Nuggets", Sagittarius, and I asked Michael whether he'd been involved.

"Sagittarius was just sort of a spin-off, that was Curt and Gary's project, just in the studio, and used guys from the Millennium, including me. Gary's main talent is surrounding himself with talented people, and using their talent to his best benefit, to be honest about Gary, and he did that with Curt for a long time. I don't know whether Curt ever got wise. I mean, that's OK, because we all needed the experience and the exposure at the time, and we certainly got it from the Millennium and Sagittarius and so on. But it says very little on the Sagittarius albums about the people who were doing it, it's more Curt Boetcher and Gary Usher. There's one album with a figure of a horse, and out of the horse's head is coming Gary Usher with a bow pointed one way, and Curt Boetcher with a bow pointed the other, and a little list of names at the bottom about the guys who actually played on it, which was the entire Millennium and various others. I think they made two albums for Columbia."

Bigshot, Stonehenge and Crabby Appleton

Names of groups, you know. You surely won't have heard of the first, you'd probably be wrong if you thought you knew the second, and you ought to be well aware of the third. Right, now let's start again.

"For a short time, Ron Edgar, Doug Rhodes and I, and a guy named Murray Plant, a guitarist, had a group called Bigshot. It was not a big shot—we just rehearsed for a while, and then they wanted to go the club route, get our shxt together in a club, so to speak, and I really didn't want to play in clubs, the five sets a night thing—because I figured that was going backwards as opposed to forwards. So after that, I just wrote for a long time, maybe six months. I went to San Francisco for a month, just sort of living on unemployment and publishing. Then, in the spring of 1970, I met the guys in Stonehenge, met them in a club drunk one night. I had submitted some tapes to Elektra, looking for a recording deal, and Stonehenge had also submitted tapes to Elektra with their



THE MILLENNIUM

existing group, which included a guitarist who played an awful lot, and a singer who was a nice guy, did some nice things, but wasn't really carrying it. They hadn't made any records—there have been albums by groups called Stonehenge, and albums called Stonehenge, but this Stonehenge was just a group that played in clubs and at the beach in L.A."

Prior to this, it should be noted, John Weider, once an Animal, and later a member of Family and Stud, had played with Stonehenge, around the time that Eric Burdon finally disbanded the sometimes amazing Animals. Fennelly: "I heard Stonehenge play, and I said, 'You need me singing, playing guitar on my songs with your band. You don't need your singer, and you don't need your lead guitarist,' and they said, 'You

have a point, so let's hear your songs'. They liked my songs, and I liked what they did, so we put it together. It was pure coincidence that we had both submitted tapes to the same company at the same time."

Thus was formed Crabby Appleton, and before we go much further, an explanation of the origin of that group's name is required.

"There is a cartoon show called 'Tom Terrific', who was a little guy who had a thinking cap which was a funnel. Using his thinking cap, he could turn himself into a trumpet if that's what the situation needed, or turn himself into a rifle or whatever, to save the day. And his dog was Mighty Manfred, who was the original reds freak—although you don't call them reds over here, do you? Tuinals—he was always falling asleep,



CRABBY APPLETON

Back row: Flaco Falcon/Casey Foutz/Phil Jones
Sitting on steps: Hank Harvey/Michael Fennelly

Water does no more than get you soaking, but people act as if they're going to drown



saying 'I'm tired, Tom'. And Crabby Appleton was the villain, the meanest man in the world, rotten to the core, wanted to blow up the world. We kind of identified with Crabby Appleton."

The cartoon illustration which you should see somewhere hereabouts, was provided for us at great trouble and expense by one of the PROs from Dover, the unsinkable Mike O'Mahony, without whom. Doesn't he look mean, with the gap in his teeth and a couple of fingers short? Crabby, I mean, not Mike.

The first Crabby Appleton album, titled after the group, was released in 1970 on Elektra EKS 74067 (that's the American number, although it's also had at least two English numbers). It was produced by Don Gallucci, and was the first thing he had ever produced, although Michael told me that he had been the organ player of the Kingsmen, and was on "Louie Louie".

Before we go any further, some brief biographical information on the remaining members of Crabby Appleton, stolen and paraphrased from a piece by Ben Edmonds in an elderly copy of Phonograph Record Magazine. The earliest to join was Hank Harvey, the bass player, who is described as soft spoken and comes from California, where Crabby were based. Phil Jones (drums) and Casey Foutz (keyboards) arrived from Iowa, and Felix 'Flaco' Falcon is a Cuban conga drummer and percussionist, whose work can also be found on albums by Dave Mason and Joe Cocker. Go on, check if you don't believe me.

Don Gallucci was obviously only learning his craft, and Michael felt that the sound on that first album was not typical of the group. "I'm sorry that Crabby Appleton never got a chance to cut a live album. We were not a terribly consistent band, and there were many times when we just didn't get the audience off or get off ourselves, but we had a much louder, harder, more ballsy sound than we ever got on record." I expressed the opinion that the front cover photograph of the group, portraying them as the people you'd least like to meet in a blind alley on a dark night, may have put a few thousand potential customers off even considering the purchase of the album . . . "We weren't trying to look mean. I think really what you have there is boredom. We weren't the most photogenic band in the world, and at photo sessions we just stood there for an hour while the guy was clicking away. It was more boredom than meanness, because we weren't tough guys, and as a matter of fact, the guy who looks the meanest was a pansy." To which there is no reply.

Of the ten tracks on the record, I particularly liked four, "Go Back", "Try", "The Other Side" and "Catherine", while I wasn't very keen at all on some of the others. Michael put it in perspective. "See, I have two views of this album: the songs as they are on the album, and the songs as we played them live. A couple of these as we played them live were nothing like the record. 'Peace By Peace' (a terrible track) was a really good rock'n'roll number when we did it live, but on this it sounds like we're playing ukeleles. 'Hunger For Love' was our real crescendo, the end of the set when Casey did what Keith Emerson is famous for now. Not knives,

but dragging his organ across the stage. He would ruin his organ every night, and every night after the gig, or the next day, he would have to go and get the organ bolted together again and fixed up.

"We had rehearsed for about three weeks before we cut the first album, and most of these songs didn't really come into their own until about a couple of months later on the road. We were a much better live band than on record—which is easy to say since you've never seen us live and you've heard our records! But it's a shame we never really got that loud punch in the studio, especially with the hard rock numbers. My favourites, when we were playing them live, were the hard rock numbers, but on the record, I can't stand to listen to them, because they just don't do anything. They're so meek. I still like 'Go Back', not because of the material involved, but because of what it did for us in terms of putting us on the map. It was a chart single, but a kind of odd one, because it would be number one in one city, and twenty miles away it wouldn't be in the charts in another. On this record, the ones that really stand up for me, a couple of years later, are the soft ones, and I especially like what Casey did on those with electric piano and harpsichord and so on—he really put in some nice lines."

A new band with a record company needs to go on the road to ensure its success, if such a move is logistically possible. Had Elektra put up the money?

"Not really. Elektra wanted us on the road, so we went out with the least possible amount of equipment, and we were always having equipment problems, just like every band. We weren't really well financed by Elektra—they kept hoping we'd make a fortune for them, but they never put it into us. We went out on the road pretty soon after the album was cut, but sporadically. I think the biggest blow to Crabby Appleton came early, when 'Go Back' was on the national charts, and number one here, number ten there, and number forty there, and it was during the summer of '70. The East coast was our biggest market, and we had a whole East coast tour mapped out. Then all the pop festivals started getting injunctions against them, and the whole tour was cancelled, so we never really toured on 'Go Back' until it was too late. We just sort of sat around, and said 'Why are we sitting here with a hit record on the charts?'"

I don't feel inclined to say any more about that first album, so we'll rush on to the next, and finally Crabby Appleton album, "Rotten To The Core", which was released in America in 1971 on Elektra EKS 74106, and wasn't released here at all. The personnel was identical to that on the first album, although a few session people were also occasionally used to augment, where that was felt necessary. Also, the producer was changed. Between the two albums, a single was released of a great song called "My Little Lucy", which was subsequently re-recorded for the album. "My Little Lucy" was our second big disappointment. In the case of 'Go Back', I fought with Don Gallucci tooth and nail to do that song, because he didn't like it, he didn't like the arrangement, he didn't think it fitted on the record, and he didn't think it was a single. It was just one of those artist/producer fist fights all the way down the line. Finally we got it out, and it was a hit, and I said "... and the next one's gonna be an even bigger hit, and that's 'My Little Lucy'". We were positive it was going to put us on the map, but it didn't. Although I prefer the single version to the album cut, because it's fresher, we weren't going to work with Don Gallucci again. So Elektra, who had suggested Gallucci, then came up with Zachary."

That is Robert W. Zachary, an Elektra staff producer, who, as Michael mentioned, had produced a very good album by Paul Siebel called "Jack Knife Gypsy". (Incidentally, latest reports on Siebel indicate that he has some health problems, from which I hope he recovers, because he's too good to lose.) Nevertheless, Michael was as little satisfied with Zachary in retrospect as he had been with Gallucci. "I

would do the whole thing over again. See, Crabby Appleton was a rock'n'roll band first, and secondly we did some mild things, even some country numbers. We tried to be versatile, but the thing that we really got off playing, and the thing that we found we could really excite people with, was rock'n'roll. It was straightforward, nothing fancy, but the rock'n'roll we're playing on there is all meek. Once again, we're playing ukeleles, turned up a little louder this time, but they don't sound like electric guitars."

I mentioned that I especially liked a track called "Makes No Difference", with particular reference to the strained vocal sound. "One of the things I think this album suffers from is that we were all in love with cocaine at the time, because it made us feel very excited. As a result, when I listen to this record, I keep thinking that the tempos are much too fast. Songs that were never written or arranged to be that fast, they were much slower than that. And the vocals are all very screechy, like I've got my finger down my throat as I'm singing or something. Yeah, you can use that, as long as you add that I no longer use cocaine. I don't do milk commercials or drug commercials. The youth of today is going to make up its own mind anyway."

On reflection, I find such inside knowledge on the making of an album a little disturbing. When I first played the album, it just seemed like a high energy thing, but now I know that it was done with the help of nose eraser. I'm beginning to wonder about a lot of other albums that I previously thought were the product of high spirits (and I don't mean drinking petrol in aeroplanes). I have to say that after listening with that extra clue, I totally agree with Fennelly, and can begin to appreciate what possibilities the songs possess if taken in a lower gear. Such a criticism doesn't apply so much to "Paper To Write On", which I took to be a spoof country 'n'western track. "It wasn't a joke. It was done tongue in cheek, but it wasn't really a joke, and it was amazing how many people identified with that song. 'Smokin' In The Morning' I liked, because there was nothing to it, just straightforward twelve bar, and of course I liked 'Lucy', even if a lot of stations wouldn't play it because of the lyrics."

I enquired why there had never been a lyric sheet with Crabby's albums, as sometimes the words sounded interesting. "I like most of my lyrics, but I never really felt that I wanted to draw that much attention or pretension to them. If you can't hear them, the fault was more in the mixing than in not including lyric sheets, because the vocals should have been able to be heard. I take part blame for that, because I was there with the mixing, and always felt that if the guitar didn't sound raunchy enough, I should turn it up. As a result, the keyboards all got lost, the lyrics all got lost, and you hear a lot of neat guitar. It was the sound that was lacking, not the volume of it, and I learned that later."

The additional musicians used on "Rotten To The Core" were of sufficient interest to me to be worthy of comment. Firstly, the Blackberries, and this was some time before Humble Pie took up with them. "We got the Blackberries because they were supposed to be at the time the best black chick singers, and we wanted them for 'Makes No Difference'." I reckon that they're also on the track after, "You Make Me Hot", incidentally. One of the very best tracks on the record, which still stands up even after the revelations referred to above, is "One More Time", which features the legendary Byron Berline on violin. "What it needed was a fiddle, and Byron was undoubtedly the best one. Zachary had worked with Byron before, and had also worked with David Grisman, the mandolin player." (Grisman appears on "Paper To Write On") "We didn't get these people because they were stars, we got them for the instruments they played, and they turned up, whether they were stars or not. Like on the new album (soon to be discussed), we have a saxophone player who's fxxking incredible, and he's not a star, he drives a taxi!"

To wrap up "Rotten To The Core", it has a

very good sleeve (Michael's idea), and I think it's a lot better than Crabby's first album. For the record, my favourite tracks are "Lucy", "Tomorrow's A New Day", "One More Time", "Paper To Write On" and "Makes No Difference", but it's all highly listenable, as well as being a good thing to surprise your friends with in the one-upmanship stakes. Unfortunately, it wasn't very successful.

"After playing it out to the last act and four encores, touring some more, and changing managers, it got to the point where we just felt very stagnant and frustrated." The group folded up in March 1972. From there, Flaco Falcon went on to his more famous gigs with Mason and Cocker. Casey Foutz continued to work with Fennelly, and is on his new record, Phil Jones is back working clubs—"he likes to stay round home, doesn't like being on the road, doesn't like the music business. Hank Harvey is playing in a group now and then, and also holding down a straight job. He's married. It was a very insecure existence that Crabby Appleton had, like so many bands, and he did desire a little more down to earth sort of job and environment. He's out of it now, and his wife has a kid. To be struggling with rock'n'roll bands when you're thinking about the other aspects of your life can get pretty nightmarish."

In between

Looking for a record deal can be nightmarish too. "I wrote some songs, played some pinball. I had taken my tapes around a little bit, had some people hear them, but I was pretty much in a state of laziness. I knew I wanted to do a solo album, but I didn't know exactly how I wanted to approach it, or whom I wanted to do it with. It sounds corny to say 'collecting' like a band goes away to get their shit together, but I was just sort of collecting my thoughts, writing a lot of songs, living the humble life."

"Eventually, I took some tapes to CBS when I decided I was ready to do my album, and played them for a guy named Dave Swaney, who used to work for them in marketing and A&R, I guess. He said he was leaving CBS, but felt that we could work together, so we formed a production company, Dave Swaney's Company for want of a better name. We got together and did some demos, and he started taking them around, because for the artist himself to go into the record company is a joke—the guy who answers the door says 'Don't call us, we'll call you'. When he took them to Columbia, luckily they didn't remember the Millennium, although they were familiar with Crabby Appleton."

So they signed you, and told you to make an album? "No, no, they said 'Why don't you cut three singles?' They said this in the form of a contract—"Cut three singles, and we'll see if we want to do an album with you, because right now we're not committing ourselves for albums with unknown artists," and I said 'But I'm known! Don't you know who this is?' So I did three sides for Epic, and Clive Davis listened to them and said 'I don't hear a hit—play me some more songs'. So I played him some more songs personally, and he said, 'I don't hear a hit—let's chew on it for a while.' I asked him not to chew on it too long, because I was really dying to get started, so in March ('73) I was supposed to go to England and cut an album for Epic, and got a tentative go ahead from Don Ellis (not the musician who made jazz albums like 'Electric Bath', but the head of Epic). Then, two days before I was supposed to go, I had my passport in my hand, my smallpox vaccination in my arm, and it turned out that Clive Davis had decided he didn't want to go ahead with the project, so we asked for a release, and got it, and started taking the tapes elsewhere, to a couple of other labels that had expressed interest."

Not a terribly promising start to a solo career, I think you'll agree. "Then the Clive Davis phenomenon happened, and he was ousted—which I don't take any pleasure in, by the way. I was kind of disappointed that he didn't like what I was doing, and I thought surely the head of the

biggest label in the country, and I guess in the world, should realise what potential I had—I thought I was pretty good, and he should realise it! But Clive was ousted, and a couple of days later, Don Ellis called, and said that he wanted to do the record after all. So we went back to re-negotiate, and got even a better deal. It's odd the way it happened. And there I was in England." Why England then?

"For a number or reasons. As you can tell from what I've told you, I've had great trouble finding a decent producer to work with—somebody who, without tampering 100% with what I was doing, could really get good sounds and enhance what I was doing rather than rearrange it all. And most of my favourite groups are English, so I naturally turned to English producers, and listened to a number of them. I liked Argent and Colin Blunstone, both done by Chris White, and conveniently enough, they both recorded for Epic, so we got in touch with Chris, listened to each other's work, both liked what we heard, and got together. He suggested that I should go to England, because it would be a change of pace, and I agreed, although I like L.A. Fresh atmosphere, I think you can hear that on a record. There's something inspiring about going somewhere else, and doing something different with some different people."

And he certainly has used a lot of our wunnerful British musicians. Some of them are predictable, in view of the fact that Chris White was the producer. "To begin with, Robert Henrit and Jim Rodford, the rhythm section from Argent, who we used on the hard rock'n'roll tracks, because they're hard rockers by nature, and also because Chris is familiar with their styles and has worked with them, and they were available at the time. On the milder tracks, we used Dave Wintour on bass, who does a lot of session work. I think he played on Daltrey's album. Also Mike Giles and Henry Spinetti on drums." Just to remind you, Mikes Giles was one of Giles, Giles and Fripp, and was in an early version of King Crimson, before he made the McDonald and Giles album with another ex-Crimson. I saw him as part of the band backing Neil Sedaka some time last year. Henry Spinetti, apart from being Victor's brother, was in Judas Jump, I believe.

"The basic theme of the album, as indicated by the title 'Lane Charger', is the diversity of the styles of songs that I do. It's by no means a concept album, but the hard tunes are very hard, and the mild ones are fairly mild—they're not Carpenters, but acoustic guitar as opposed to electric lawnmower . . ."

Also, there's horns on three of the tracks. "Nick Newell is a saxophone player who's fxxking incredible. He plays every woodwind instrument you'd want to hear, but at the moment, he's driving a taxi. He's not a star, he doesn't do that many sessions, but he just plays beautifully. We called him in for what this one song needed, as opposed to what his name would add to the record, and he was amazing, just beautiful. Someday, you'll hear from him, hopefully. I'm not really horn oriented very much, but I also got Mike Cotton on trumpet on a couple of tracks, and he brought along John Beecham on trombone and Alan Holmes on clarinet, baritone and tenor sax. Gaspar Lawal, who's also really good, played percussion on a couple of tracks, and Casey Foutz, the keyboard player from Crabby Appleton, came over with me to help." Nick Newell was at various times with Zoot Money, Keef Hartley and Satisfaction, which also included Mike Cotton. Mike himself, after those halcyon days of "Swing That Hammer" and so on with the Mike Cotton Sound, eventually joined the Kinks for a while, along with the aforementioned Beecham and Holmes, but now I'm glad that he's very happily playing with Acker Bilk.

All right, now the record. As I've said before, I think it's quite frighteningly excellent, with five of the eleven tracks just indescribably good. At this point, I'll say that any comparisons which I may make in the next few lines about other artists relate to those artists at their very best. Fennelly is not a pale imitation of



MICHAEL FENNELLY

anything, he's definitely a consummate musician in his own right.

The pattern of the first side of the album is a fast song followed by a slower one, through three tracks of each type, and although such a move is maybe obvious, it certainly works. "Lane Charger", first and title track, starts off with an explosion, which could be a bottle breaking, then goes into some high energy type guitar and vocalising, the voice almost struggling to overcome the heaviness of the backing. Not for the first time on the record, I'm reminded of the Led Zeppelin sound as demonstrated on "Black Dog", and the similarity between Fennelly's and Plant's voices is quite astonishing. A potential single, as is the next, and contrasting track, "Touch My Soul", where the vocal is nearer to Neil Young. The guitar playing on this track is impeccable, and the horns added provide a sound not unlike that on the first and best album by Blood, Sweat and Tears. The third of this magnificent triumvirate of tracks, which should convince anyone that hears them to buy the album, is "Won't You Please Do That", which has a brilliant starting riff from Fennelly's guitar against Henrit and Rodford's pounding rhythm. Michael screams, and they're off into another track which Led Zep might be pleased to use one day. The dynamics demonstrated are great, and the vocals are superb. This one might need to be cut down for the third single, but it seems to me to have everything that a single requires in terms of impact and so on. The last track on the first side is "Easy To Love", which is a solo performance on slide guitar and voice, with a castrato vocal similar to that used by Steve Miller on "Dear Mary", which is on an album you should have, "Sailor".

The second side of the album is merely excellent—there's a Four Season's vocal sound on "Shine A Light", some guitar playing reminiscent of Mick Taylor on "Bad Times", and even perhaps something approaching Chris Montez on a gentle track called "Flyer", which also contains the Nick Newell passage about which Michael waxed so eloquent. But the standout track on this side for me is "Watch Yourself", which starts like Zeppelin, but develops into something more akin to the Stones or Free. I've heard a whisper that there may be a super duper star guitarist guesting on this one track, which may be true. Perhaps it's a testimony to Michael's own prowess that I hadn't noticed any change in quality as far as the guitar playing goes. Before I finish this thumbnail, let me reiterate that the comparisons I've made are guidelines, not criticisms. There's probably nothing totally original left to use on records that's any good, and everything I've heard recently is a synthesis of someone else's drop-pings. Michael Fennelly's album is just the best synthesis I've heard for a very long time, and I'm extremely pleased that I've been the first British writer to pick up on his work. Now it's up to you, and I hope that you'll do the right thing. I get a buzz from this record of the same intensity, but with a great deal more pleasure, as I get from an express train tearing through a station while I wait for a stopper. The rush of air, the sudden build up of sound, and the pow! as it goes past where you're standing. I suppose that's a lot of bloody rubbish, but how do you describe something that threatens to blow your balls off, but is still just what you've been waiting for? A ferret in your under-pants?

Octavius Knox

Who?



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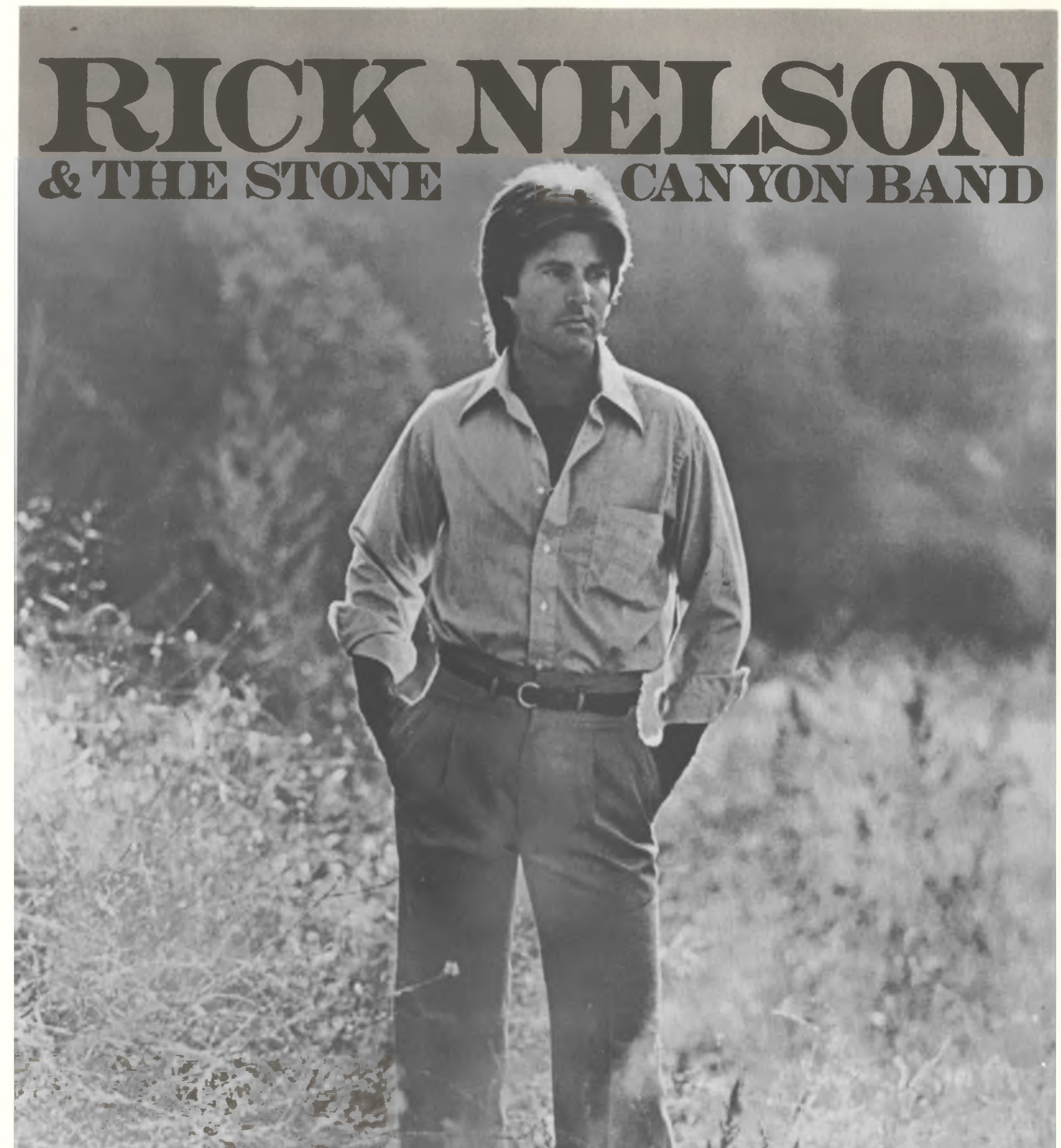
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So there was poor old McGuinn, down on his arse and in the gutter, trying to raise a phoenix from the battered wreckage of the old Byrds.

Ex-Byrds were questioning his integrity in trying to carry on, and the press was throwing rocks as hard as it could, certain that the Byrds were a dead duck. Somehow, they struggled on—and writer Ben Edmunds gives a good impression of the general feeling of this period (though I feel that his assertion about "faceless names" is not strictly true):

"Disension had always been an integral part of the Byrds' history, an ever-present footnote to their musical changes, but for a while, things got really out of hand. Group members came and went like Volkswagen parts, leaving Roger McGuinn the sole survivor of the original band. Faceless names like Kevin Kelley and John York went through the motions of being The Byrds, but it just wasn't the same... their live shows were little more than a skeleton exercise in nostalgia.

"On record, their material tended to be thin and somewhat undefined; they lacked artistic substance, and only the presence of McGuinn gave any clue to the identity of the band.

"It was at times like these that the Byrds found out who their real friends were, for only the staunchest of fans could have weathered those lean days. And there were times when even the staunchest must have been tempted to give them up for dead."

If they found out who "their real friends" were, they also found out their enemies; a bitter and resentful sounding Chris Hillman joined Gram Parsons in thrusting in the dagger.

Chris: "It was very difficult to work with McGuinn... he's the type of guy that... to him, it's just a job. He goes up on stage and becomes a musician. Offstage, he's not. He doesn't buy records, he doesn't listen to the radio, he doesn't really keep up with what's happening in music."

Gram: "He always found a way to either buy the information he needs to keep up with what's going on. He himself doesn't live that life, and he brings you down. He's got Clarence White in the Byrds now, which is great, but McGuinn wouldn't know Clarence from... from Mighty Sam. As a matter of fact, he's probably never heard of Mighty Sam."

Chris: "He should have just buried it... let it die. All he's doing now is riding it out till it ends, just for the money. It's not a creative, productive thing anymore... he pays everyone's wages every week and he's the head Byrd."

Gram: "And everybody still writes all these comprehensive articles on him—like Crawdaddy and all that analytical bullshit."

Sour grapes? Whatever the reason, Hillman should have known better than to accuse McGuinn of "riding it out for the money". It's a wonder that he wasn't smitten by lightning when he said that—because he knew better than anyone that the Byrds were broke, flat broke and in debt.

Having forsaken the services of that admirably genial duo Jim Dickson and Eddie Tickner (God

THE BYRDS = CHAPTER SEVEN DOZENS OF BUT NOT ONE AGAIN THE PIEKS AP THE PIECES November 1968 - March 1969

bless 'em) in favour of a more dynamic, thrusting and abrasive manager (whose name we'd better not mention), McGuinn and Hillman (the surviving partners) had, during 1968, been screwed stupid.

McGuinn explains the stark horrors of the situation in which he found himself:

"This manager, legally acting on our behalf, had renewed our contract with Columbia and the deal was negotiated in such a way that we found ourselves effectively in the red for years.

"He took his commission, which was agreed at 25,000 dollars, and quit. He said, 'I'm sorry fellers... but I'm resigning: I'm giving up the management business to go and live in Big Sur.' Of course, we couldn't touch him; we'd signed contracts saying he was our legal representative and that he had power of attorney."

"What he'd done was sacrifice most of the other possible benefits for as large an advance as he could—and we didn't know about reading contracts: all we knew was that we trusted this guy... and he sold us down the river. For a start, he gave away our 100 free recording hours per album... I mean, we had managed to get that clause in our first contract back in 1964, but he gave that up in exchange for more front money. Usually when you renegotiate a con-

tract you go for a better deal, right? Well he went for a worse one with a bigger advance.

"Then he took his share and split. After this deal, Chris Hillman and I each had 50,000 dollars in our accounts but then it dwindled to 30,000 then to 20,000 and we said 'hey, wait a minute... what happened to the other 60,000 dollars?' He told us that there were a lot of bills and expenses that had come up all of a sudden—and there was nothing we could do because he had power of attorney to do what he liked with our money."

"That's when Chris decided to split with what remained of his money, and he bought some land in New Mexico. I, like a dummy, left mine in and in no time that was gone too."

As the sole remaining Byrd, shouldering the burden of a 5-year recording contract which had to be fulfilled, Roger McGuinn had no option but to try and pick up the pieces.

As we saw in the last chapter, Gram Parsons quit on the morning of the South African tour and the Byrds were down to Roger McGuinn, Chris Hillman and Kevin Kelley. In the pandemonium following their return to Los Angeles in August 1968, Clarence White came into the group on the recommendation

of Hillman. "I always wanted to be in a group with Clarence, but as it happened I only did about 3 or 4 gigs with him and then I left... it was very sad in a way, but that's the way it came down."

The McGuinn/Hillman/Kelley/White line-up was short-lived; in late September, Kelley was rolled out in favour of Gene Parsons, and three weeks later Hillman quit. So, from the beginning of November 1968, the Byrds were McGuinn, Clarence White, Gene Parsons and new boy John York on bass.

Critics continually prophesied their doom; they seemed to be clustering around, waiting for their downfall, to be in at the kill. The Byrds denied them that pleasure.

Clarence White's pre-Byrd career was dealt with fairly extensively in ZigZag 33... but what about Gene Parsons?

Gene Victor Parsons: drums, guitar, harp, banjo, lute and all kinds of miscellaneous engineering equipment. Great bloke. Born Los Angeles, 4th September 1944, brought up in 29 Palms, where he taught himself to play a variety of stringed instruments and (according to Aesop's Fables) got himself expelled from school for blatting up the corridors on his motorbike. Worked in his father's machine shop and acquired all the skills of automotive engineering but plumped for a career as "a catskinner"—i.e. driving one of those great Caterpillar/excavating/building contraptions.

"I was working out in Joshua Tree National Park, in the Mohave Desert about 150 miles east of LA, in a place called 29 Palms but I happened to travel into the city to look at some instruments, because I was messing around with banjo and guitar at the time, though I hadn't played professionally."

"So I was in this shop in Hollywood, fooling around on a banjo when this bunch of characters came in... Gib Guilbeau, Derrill Cotton and Wayne Moore, who were evidently a group, calling themselves the Castaways. They heard me picking away and asked if I'd like to help them cut a record—so I went along and played banjo with them, and then went back home."

"Before too long Gib called me up and asked me to join the group on bass—this would be around 1963, I guess. I didn't know anything about the bass; I was pretty deeply into ethnic folk music and tended to spurn anything but acoustic music—but he persuaded me that any banjo player could learn bass real fast and so I joined."

"I went on the road with the Castaways and we played the Nevada circuit, all over Colorado and the Pacific North West. We worked for about two years I guess... it was Gib playing fiddle, Derrill was rhythm guitarist/singer, Wayne played guitar and sang too, and I was bass player—and we hired a drummer from time to time, as and when it was necessary. We had one called Michael Cannon, who later played with John Hartford, and another called Boyd Bilbo

... so we had Gib Guilbeau and Boyd Bilbo. "We were what you might call a country show-band, we wore monkey suits, striped vests and all that sort of thing. They expected it on the Nevada/Las Vegas circuit and we had to lace the solid country stuff with show-tunes like 'Around The World' and 'Pennies From Heaven' ... complete with dance steps! You should have seen us! But it was regular work and pretty good experience.

"We recorded a bunch of singles over the time I was with them, but none were too successful ... one called 'Run Charlie Run', a commercial folksy thing, sold the most, I think. Then the growing dissatisfaction about our progress and so on started taking over and we broke up.

"Gib decided that he was going back to Louisiana to buy a tug boat ... he was just going to sit around on this tug boat and play his fiddle—get out of the music business altogether. I went back to the desert and worked in the machine shop for about another year and a half before Gib called me up again.

"By this time, he was living and working in Palmdale, which is in Antelope Valley, at a club called The Jack of Diamonds. He said he wanted me to come out and join him and play drums! I'd never played drums but he said any bass player could play drums and so off I went, spurred by the fact that Gib reckoned he had a deal with Bakersfield International Records.

"I sold my house, gave notice to my employer and moved to Palmdale, playing drums on an earn-as-you-learn basis. For over three years, we worked that club on an average of 6 or 7 nights a week, but we still managed to cut some stuff for Bakersfield International, which was owned by Gary Paxton ... and that was the beginning of Cajun Gib and Gene, which is what we called ourselves for recording purposes. And that's where we met Clarence White.

"Gary used to record in his garage; the garage was the studio and all the equipment was stacked in a bus parked outside—but some great records came out of that place. We (Cajun Gib & Gene), had one local hit with 'Sweet Susannah From Louisiana', which was a country hit in California, but the label wasn't together enough to follow it up.

"Anyway, we met Clarence on a Gosdin Brothers session, which we were playing on too (because we were sort of like Gary Paxton's studio band), and that tune was a hit too—'Just Enough To Keep Me Hangin' On'. We saw more and more of Clarence but it took about a year to get to know him well, because he was so quiet.

"Well, Bakersfield International folded up—mainly because there was no organisation behind it. Gary Paxton was fairly disorganised himself ... he was spread out too thin, and there just wasn't the machinery and distribution that a successful label has to have. He was buying land, getting into this deal and that deal and eventually went bankrupt, when he moved to Nashville.

of forming his own group but instead he joined the Mamas and Papas as a back-up musician and then he played with Johnny Rivers before becoming a Byrd.

"John's favourite creative directions are in music and also in films, sculpture and poetry. He says "These are things people do at certain stages in their lives. Any one of these areas should be a career for someone and I am too young to know yet which of these will be a career for me in the next period of my life."

"For John the hardest part of performing is walking off stage because when the music has put him in a certain mood he feels that ending it and stepping off-stage is a let down.

"(Last heard of writing the soundtrack of a film about gypsies.)"

For McGuinn, it was a pretty desperate period—no lights on the Christmas tree that year. These snippets of interview reflect the gloom:

ZZ: Was Roger despondent?

Gene: He sure was. There was no money in working for the Byrds ... they couldn't even pay their airline bills. The fact is, we were in debt to the airlines and we were hitting the bottom of the barrel, working some pretty bad gigs, playing down the bill to all kinds of other groups, and it was hard. For Roger, it must have been really rough, considering what a big group the Byrds had been ... So he was down-hearted, sure enough. But Clarence and I, on the other hand, were upbeat ... we decided that the Byrds were going to become a real group again—and we started really working and trying, and our optimism and effort seemed to bring up Roger's spirits again.

ZZ: When you joined the Byrds, they began to mould to suit you, rather than expecting you to fit them ... but you were like an extra lead guitarist really—you didn't replace anybody as such.

Clarence: I wouldn't have felt nearly so comfortable if I'd just come in as a replacement for someone—I was able to introduce my own parts rather than copy what someone else had worked out ... so I was quite happy from that point of view. As you say, the Byrds were pretty low when I joined and I was able to take an active, creative part in the rebuilding process. We were going out for little money, doing scrappy gigs, but we knew we were going to get back up there and it was something to work for ... to achieve new heights rather than maintain an existing level.

ZZ: Were the Byrds going out for low bread then? Clarence: Sure. We weren't in a position to pick and choose. In those days, if a group broke up, the DJs would throw their records aside and the papers would forget them. Nowadays, it's good publicity to split up—look at CSNY and people like that, but in 1968 it was bad news.

ZZ: As well as that, Roger's spirits were down and the critics were talking as though the group was on its last legs.

Clarence: That's right; our reputation was off the



The first press photo of the new line-up (note clean shaven faces): Left to right - Clarence White, Roger McGuinn, Gene Parsons and John York in November 1963.

"But it was an interesting period; we did a Gosdin Brothers album, a Clarence White solo album and a whole Cajun Gib and Gene album. Then we played on a lot of stuff I've almost forgotten—gospel sessions and all sorts."

In fact, realising just how much deleted grist was gathering dust in Gary Paxton's attic, Arista Records of Holland recently took the initiative to go snooping—and the fruits of their expedition have been packaged on an album called "Cajun Country".

During this period, Gib and Gene had begun to tail off their Palmdale gig and started up Nashville West with Clarence.

"Nashville West worked mainly in El Monte, at a club which was actually called the Nashville West. It was a great big huge barn, capable of holding about 1,500 people, I guess, and we worked there 5 or 6 nights a week, but we also did weekly gigs up in Bakersfield, so we were on the road quite a bit. In fact, I'd hate to think how much time we spent lurching up and down those California roads in my old '54 Mercury station wagon."

"Sneaky Pete would sit in with us whenever he could, though he was engrossed in so many other

projects that it wasn't possible all that often, and we played good old country music ... me on drums, Gib on fiddle, Clarence on guitar, and Wayne Moore, from the old Castaways, on bass—and Lloyd Green, the Nashville steel player, sat in with us from time to time too.

"There was a big audience for country music; not a young audience or a longhair audience, but mostly truckdrivers, farmers, ranchers and those kind of people and big country bars still thrive in places like Palmdale and Fresno and Bakersfield. But when Clarence was invited to join the Byrds, Nashville West folded up and we went our separate ways."

Which brings us back to Autumn 1968. Within days, Clarence convinced Roger and Chris that he "didn't feel comfortable with Kevin Kelley's drumming" and suggested that it might be expedient to replace him. And guess who's name was top of the audition list ... his old mate Gene.

"I was auditioned in this big warehouse in a pretty raunchy section of Hollywood. We went through a bunch of tunes and Roger and Chris concluded that they'd be happy working with me." So Chris was

stadium was emptied in haste and confusion when the lights were ordered to be turned out. No police were present at the concert to help prevent the disorder, to aid fainting girls and injured boys, or to unravel the traffic jam that ensued in the streets outside the stadium.

"Here at the scene was the Byrds' roadie Frankie Blanco who stayed on stage for two hours after the show protecting the Byrds' amps and other equipment and trying to prevent it from being stolen as 'souvenirs'."

Their first work together, "Dr Byrds And Mr Hyde" (CBS 63545, released 5th March 1969, and produced by Bob Johnston) is what I call the Byrds' rabbit-shit album; bitty and disjointed ... but, for a first album, it wasn't all that bad.

The sleeve photos are very strange. I remember the first time I saw it in One Stop's window I thought "Who the devil are those fuckers?" No names, no clues to their identity, and on the back a weird series of photos and the usual Byrds trick of no composers' credits and only the barest minimum of information.

On the front, the Byrds are (starting at the top and working clockwise): Roger McGuinn (pulling at cigarette), John York (with debonair stetson), Clarence White (looking disturbed) and Gene Parsons (jaunty as ever).

ZZ: Those pictures on the back—the other three look as though they're feeling complete fools ... was it just an idea you had?

Roger: Well, yes ... we came down from outer space and became cowboys. It was partly whimsical and partly the idea that extra-terrestrials are walking among us ... and just might be cowboys.

ZZ: How do you regard that album, looking back?

Roger: It's not one of the best ... I don't know how low we've been, but it's not one of the best.

ZZ: Was that your worst period in terms of public acceptance?

Roger: No, "Sweetheart Of The Rodeo" sold fewer.

ZZ: I meant as a group—were gigs a bit dodgy?

Roger: Yes, we had a hard time breaking in with the new band; everybody would come up and say 'Where's Gram, what happened to Chris Hillman?' and so on ... at one time it got to be a running joke—"Who's in the Byrds this week?"

Another thing about the sleeve; just to give that schizophrenic touch, the word 'Hyde' is in a Western playbill typeface as opposed to the rest which is data/computer style.

What about Gene—what does he think of the album as a whole?

Gene: I don't like it at all. Bob Johnston is a nice enough guy—don't get me wrong—and he's produced plenty of good records ... but he wasn't a good producer for us. The album seemed to be the result of poor planning and forethought really ... it was just a bunch of tapes thrown together in one pack-

given the job of telling his cousin (Kevin) that he was now an ex-Byrd.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned bread scandal loomed large and Hillman himself became an ex-Byrd. His dissatisfaction culminated in a dressing room scene in which tempers flared and Hillman smashed his bass in finest dramatic style. "It was an argument about bread, but it wasn't us ... it was the manager. It was at the Rose Bowl; we'd just finished the gig and I guess the pressures were on Chris—Gram Parsons was trying to entice him into the Burnitos and he was angry about his financial situation."

Apparently, he shoved this manager up against the wall and threatened to pulp his face for him, but then he backed off, smashed up his bass to vent his wrath, and announced that he was quitting the group.

"Roger didn't seem too perturbed, as I recall," says Gene. "He reckoned that Chris was always quitting and that he always came back ... but this time he didn't and we were in a spot because we had a gig to play in Salt Lake City later that week."

There was no time to hold selective auditions, but Clarence knew a guy called John York who he'd played with in a pick-up backing band (which also included drummer Eddie Hoh) that Gene Clark had put together for a couple of gigs at the Whisky A Go Go and the Troubadour.

Gene: "Clarence thought he might have possibilities but as it happened, we subsequently found he wasn't really travelling the same route as us, either musically or personally. I'm not saying he was a bad guy or anything; we just weren't compatible. Anyway, to go back—Roger got in touch with him and he flew out from New York, and became a Byrd."

Of all official Byrd biographies, John York's is the most scantily informed, but the fair and tender Chrissie Brewer has managed to assemble a few facts, which we repeat verbatim:

"John Foley York was born on 3 August 1946 in White Plains, New York.

"His training in music started at a very early age when his mother directed a church choir in New York. She would take John along to choir rehearsals when he was a small baby and he says he loved music right from that first introduction.

"Later John was taught piano and he also sang in the church choir and school glee club. John says he has never had special voice training but singing has always been a natural form of expression. He remembers hearing kids singing in the train station when he was small and says "Everybody liked to sing out there. In New York we even sing on the subway." (Who was he trying to kid???)

"At 14 he learned to play guitar and used a record player for amplification. He attended an acting school during his teens but otherwise he was totally involved in music.

"After graduation from high school he spent a year in a local college and then went to Los Angeles in June 1965 to seek his musical fortune. He joined the Sir Douglas Quintet and in January 1967 thought

age. The sound was bad, the mixing was bad ... we weren't too pleased with what he did, frankly.

... and Clarence: It was Bob Johnston's baby; he'd produced people like Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, so we naturally thought that he would be great—but then we realised that those people would have their material so well prepared that all the producer needed to do was come into the studio, put his feet up on the desk and just listen. So the producer's role in those sort of cases would be reduced to making sure that there was stuff to get high or whatever, making sure the engineer has the sound right, and generally making sure that everything runs smoothly. With a group, especially one that's never recorded together before, you need someone to mediate, throw in suggestions and so on ... but Bob Johnston just made sure the tape was rolling, and that was it."

Some brief notes on the tracks: "This Wheel's On Fire". Back to Dylan, back to 4 unassisted Byrds—no session men. Freaky stereo effects in Clarence's solo and Roger's moog bit at the end ... so much for the 'electronic album' discussed in the last chapter.

ZZ: When you played that fuzz lead, did you feel comfortable ... and on the album as a whole?

Clarence: Not really ... I felt that I was faking it. In bluegrass music there is a lot of gospel and blues influence and flavouring—so the blues part was in me, but there were so many people playing blues that I didn't ever feel that I could catch up with them. So I just wanted to play honest music in an honest style that I believed in and felt at ease with. It's funny that you should mention 'Wheels On Fire', because that's the most embarrassing thing I've ever done. It's horrible ... I really don't know what to say, except that I wasn't ready for it—I wanted someone else to play lead on that ... oh, don't remind me of that track!

Gene: Bob Johnston made us do some weird things—like he made me tune my snare so loose that the head was barely hanging over the drum. He wanted that kind of sound, even though I could hardly play with it ... it was like hitting a wet paper towel.

"Old Blue". Clarence's permanent position as a Byrd brings a new "sound" and constancy of sound, but this old folk chestnut isn't much of a song despite all the re-working and re-arranging.

"Your Gentle Ways Of Loving Me". Written by Gary Paxton and Gib (who also recorded it on his 'Swampwater' album) Guilbeau. Gene brings his first influence to the group (having got the song from his old mates) and McGuinn sings it with Gene on harp and harmony. This is still basically a country album, but it's moving back to the old Byrds' pop foundations.

"Child of the Universe". From the film "Candy" (and also on the soundtrack album, Stateside SSL

10276)—specially co-written by Roger. Flimsy stuff—like most film commissioned rock. "Or did she exist?"

"Nashville West". Clarence & Gene's old theme tune. Roger plays neat but very subservient rhythm role under Clarence's fabulous playing. Gene: They wouldn't let us do it the way we wanted to—it didn't come out anywhere near as well as it should have. We'd recorded it before, during our Bakersfield International days, and that was much better (it had Glen D. Hardin on piano too) but the best version is on a tape that I recorded on a little bitty Sony during a gig that Clarence, Gib, Wayne and I did in the Nashville West club one evening.

The end of this track is weird—some strange, buried nonsense lyrics which sound a bit like "you fckers... dancing every day, getting stoned, running round the..."

Clarence: It's just a bunch of nonsense... some people in the studio were, er, half drunk and they were just chanting along... it was just a free for all.

(Send your interpretations for my perusal, please.)

"Drug Store Truck Driving Man". Written in London just before the South African tour: a McGuinn/Gram Parsons specific pistake directed at a certain country music DJ—"this one's for you Ralph!" (I had a bit of interview about this track, a discussion about "rednecks" and the South but I appear to have lost it). This track was put out as a single before the album and has added instrumentation to enrich its commercial potential: a jangle piano (I wonder who) and a pedal steel part dubbed by Lloyd Green—they sent the tape to him in Nashville.

McGuinn: That song is a rebuttal against an editorial that was launched live against us on Radio station WSM in Nashville Tennessee by Ralph Emergy the disc jockey. He accused us from a right-wing fascist viewpoint of being hippies, socially undesirable and possibly even dangerous. He was rather like the antagonist with the shotgun in "Easy Rider" that kind of attitude. He used to do commercials on the radio in between the records (imitates a DJ salesman's sing-song voice) "No matter what kind of a rig you drive step right in to your Clark Truckstore and get yourself a Clark seat, it'll fit any rig, it's the most comfortable seat you can drive in the road. So get yourself a Clark seat next time you see the Clark sign on the highway. And now here's... and he'd play a record. That kind of attitude. And I got the feeling from him, smoking his big cigar and sitting back in his Clark-like contraption in his swivel chair, but a really plush one, that it was like a Clark Truck seat; it must have been very much like a Clark Truck seat. I guess Clark Truck seats must be alright; I've never had the chance to evaluate them against other labels.

"So I got the feeling from this that he wanted to be a fckng truck driver, and so I thought he's like a drugstore cowboy, a drugstore cowboy, a



Cowboys and Spacemen: A short saga

When The Byrds were beginning, folk/rock was being hailed as "just-another-one-of-them-there-subversive-pinko-fads, etc." Like marathon dancing or marathon peace marching. Everybody knew better, of course. A little later on, The Byrds quietly slipped away into the fifth dimension (zap zap). One side of them remained there. Another side returned just in time to sit around the old cosmic campfire and take some of their greatest hits from a passing peace pipe. Then, feeling mildly notorious, they hoedowned with the sweetheart of the rodeo and left her lying on the porch strumming a calico guitar. Changing into hats, boots, angora chaps and Crockett rowels, they hit the trail. After a short ride they met their Mr. Spacemen-selves coming from another direction. "Dr. Byrds, I presume," said a Byrd from under his sweat-stained Stetson. "Mr. Hyde, I believe," said the same Byrd from behind his pressurized faceplate.

Dr. Byrds and Mr. Hyde. A new Byrds album on Columbia Records and Tapes

DR. BYRDS AND MR. HYDE (CS 9755)
SIDE ONE: "This Wheel's on Fire," "Old Blue," "Your Gentle Way of Loving Me," "Child of the Universe," "Nashville West." SIDE TWO: "Drug Store Truck Drivin' Man," "King Apathy III," "Candy," "Bad Night at the Whiskey," Medley: "My Back Pages," "B.J. Blues," "Baby, What Do You Want Me To Do?"
PERSONNEL: Roger McGuinn, 12-string guitar; Gene Parsons, drums; Clarence White, 6-string guitar; John York, bass. PRODUCER: Bob Johnston. ENGINEERS: David Diller, Tom Moy, Neil Wilburn. RELEASED: March 5, 1969.

COLUMBIA RECORDS
and to appear in
Underground Newspapers

drugstore truck driving man, head of the Klu Klux Klan for the political attitude he plugged.

"King Apathy III". I'm intrigued to know the story behind this one—forgot to ask. Terrific track. What's it all about... pissed off with the inertia of the longhair movement? Too many sheep and too many shepherds without ideas? What am I talking about?

"Candy". Co-written by McGuinn and John York. Nothing great except the guitar solo.

"Bad Night At The Whisky". Lyrics by Joey Richards—see Subud chapter earlier. Roger: The Whisky on Sunset Strip is a lousy place to play, and we had a bad night. I was driving Joey home from a subud meeting—he needed a ride home—and he said 'do you ever write melodies to lyrics?' I said, 'Sometimes' and then later he gave me these lyrics and we got together and knocked a song out of them... it was nothing great.

My favourite track—4 guitars, 2 rhythm, 1 fuzz and 1 floaty, and I like the way the "aaaahs" move across.

The final medley is a peculiar choice... why shove this in? Just a filler? The Byrds, as they had more hits, blended some of their oldies but goodies into medleys to appease the demands of live audiences, and this is one of the set pieces (which they still did right up to their end last year). Why "BJ Blues"? Bob Johnston Blues? No—not according to Clarence, though he admits that interpretation was appropriate at the time. More chatting at the end... "Hey Clarence, you're really... that was beautiful, hey let's play the break song... the E bass pedal... out of sight."

The album closes with the Byrds' signature tune, which they also retained right to the end.

McGuinn, it appears, went through a strange reversal of opinion (caused, one presumes, by "Lay Lady Lay"—see next chapter): in a conversation with the LA Free Press's John Carpenter he says: "Bob Johnston comes out into the studio and just vibrates... he's beautiful. He's fantastic; comes out there and you can tell by feel whether things are coming out alright." 14

Later, in Bud Scoppa's book, he's quoted as saying: "Bob Johnston is an insidious dupe artist. He tells funny stories and then he cons you into his game." 19

So there we are... not a very pretty chapter—and to compound the misery, let's end on a note of despondency from Jazz & Pop's review of the album:

"All concerned, including Columbia, are exploiting the identity of the Byrds far beyond endurance. The Byrds should be left to descend into their own magnificent, prismatic ashes, dying as gracefully as once they flew. "Dr Byrds And Mr Hyde" is just a warmed-over corpse decomposing in full public view."

The end of the Byrds? Not a chance! Pete

SUMMARY: What can I say? Very little happened during these four months; they resolved to resurrect the Byrds from the depths in which they found themselves but put out a fairly dismal album... 'Dr Byrds & Mr Hyde' (CBS 63545, released March 5th in USA, April 25th 1969 here). Don't worry, things'll start to get better in the next chapter!

CONTEMPORARY EVENTS:
1963
Nov... Beatles 'White Album' released, Flying Burrito Brothers formed.
Nov 5th... US Elections; Nixon wins by a narrow margin
Nov 8th... Bruce Reynolds, Great Train Robber, arrested in Torquay
Nov 26th... Cream's last gig at Royal Albert Hall in London
Dec 14th... Scaffold's 'Lily the Pink' tops English charts
Dec 15th... Boxer Jess Willard dies at 87

Dec 21st... Author John Steinbeck dies at 66 (must be a more hazardous profession)
Dec 24th... Apollo 3 makes 10 orbits of the moon, transmitting live TV pictures.
Dec 25th... Christmas Day!

1969
Jan 3rd... Irish civil rights clash in Londonderry
Jan... Meher Baba dies
Jan... Wootton Report on Cannabis rejected by Government for coming up with the wrong answer
Jan... 433 arrested at San Francisco State College
Jan... Crosby Stills & Nash formed
Jan 16th... Jan Palach burns himself to death in Wenceslas Square in protest against Russian suppression of Czech freedom
Jan 24th... Civil Disturbance causes that fascist fckkpxg General Franco to impose Martial Law in Spain

Jan 24th... LSE taken over by students
Jan 27th... 14 Israeli spies publicly hanged in Baghdad
Feb 1st... 'Albatross' by Fleetwood Mac gets to No 1 in England
Feb 3rd... Apple becomes an Abkco managed company
Feb 4th... Led Zepellin first album out
Feb 10th... Ronald Reagan (another drug store truck driving man) declares a state of extreme national emergency after cordoning off Berkeley Campus
Feb 25th... Jaxon's Dogfood breaks up and members plan a new rock magazine, Zigzag
March... Jim Morrison allegedly exposes himself in Florida
March... 'Happy Trails' by Quicksilver, Neil Young's first solo, and first Flying Burrito Bros albums all released
March 2nd... Nixon meets the Pope in Rome (two of a kind)
March 2nd... Concorde makes maiden flight in Toulouse (and John Peel's Top

Gear! is interrupted for a half-assed commentary on the event)
March 5th... Kray Brothers sentenced to 30 years minimum for murder
March 10th... James Earl Ray sentenced to 99 years for murder of Dr Martin Luther King (it should've been more)
March 11th... Golda Meir becomes Prime Minister of Israel
March 28th... Eisenhower dies at 78 (rpm)
March 28th... Extensive anti-Soviet demonstrations in Prague - press censorship is imposed (we get some of that too)



THE AFTERNOON WE INTERVIEWED ROGER: with Roger McGuinn himself, his wife Ianthe, his son Patrick, Antonia Lamb and her kids Jim and Joanna, Chester Anderson, Bart Cannistra with a Camera, Ianthe's mother, and a pregnant Retriever named Sophie... organized by Antonia Lamb

Before we get into this, there's something you ought to know about the Byrds. If the thought of their music has just now caused a flicker of pleasure plus a faint ache of transcendence, then you already know it. If you feel nothing, go find a copy of "Bells of Rhymney," say, and listen to it with headphones. Their music penetrates you like the knife of Shiva.

The Byrds have changed enough since birth to warrant inclusion in the 1 Ching. The thing that remains constant is the soul. The soul is Roger (once Jim) McGuinn.

Roger McGuinn is a Cancer with the moon in Cancer and Pisces rising. For those of you who don't know, that's a lot of astrological water (receptivity, feeling) there. He resembles a young eagle, crossed with Tristan, plus a slightly weary boy from prep school. He talks in a soft, flat, direct way. His blond hair has been through neat folk, goatee, Beethoven longhair, Renaissance scholar, short with moustache and goatee, short with moustache, longer with handlebar moustache, clean-shaven with medium hair, and is currently growing out from short with a distinctly down-of-hawk-feathers look.

He has a great collection of toys. As far back as 1963 he would turn up with little devices to interrupt Muzak in restaurants, strange slide projectors and odd boxes that did nothing but flash or blink or grumble softly to themselves.

On a Thursday in late spring, we organized and tried to be as official as possible. I was going to, along with Chester and the assistance of Bart's technician-ship, I was going to, by God, interview Roger. It turned out to be a lovely afternoon instead.

Roger had something. Ianthe, his fragile statue of a Scorpio wife, had it worse. Ianthe's mother was there, and seemed vaguely suspicious at first. My little girl and Patrick McGuinn eyed each other's baby bottles with doubt. And the phone kept ringing.

The interview covered most of the livingroom, the converted wet bar that holds a lot of Roger's stuff, and the pool room, which is almost entirely filled with an enormous pool table that has more drawing power than Homer's Sirens. Included in the interview are peripheral trips to the bathroom and the kitchen.

ROGER: Well, I've got, you know, a nice hi-fi set, and a color oscilloscope that was built by Sid Washer, and it's sitting on top over there.

[Points to a large color TV with a small set atop it.]

Currently however I can't demonstrate it, because the line that goes to it is broken because I had to cut some of it out when I took it apart to replace a fuse in it. And I had to use some of it to rewire it, because I extended all the wires inside of it about a foot. If you've seen Sid's you know what mine is like.

TONI: I've seen yours, so I can describe it.

[A portable color TV, rebuilt to respond in visual stereo to sound. Difficult to describe on paper.]

ROGER: Right. So there it is. And I've got, oh, just about, you know, about three tape recorders, and a turntable and a video recorder which is sitting inside there

[the wet bar].

The video recorder is broken, has a broken clutch right now, so it can't be demonstrated either.

[Later on he rewound it by hand and did demonstrate it, playing a segment from his own home channel, KMCG—in the heart of beautiful Encino—wherein the Red Chinese invade the San Fernando Valley

while looking for directions to Disneyland.]

And um, I have a robot. Would you like to see that?

[Roger goes to the closet and brings out a small robot, about a foot high, on a base with wheels. He sets it down on the floor by the sliding glass doors, and puts a little square transmitter to his lips.]

ROGER: Go!

[With much whirring, flashing of lights, and opening and closing of its chest, the robot goes.]

Turrrrrrrrr. Back up. Stop!

[With a final scree wraak sort of sound, the robot subsides.]

TONI: Can I do that?

ROGER: Well, it's rather difficult to do, but, yeah, you can do it...

[Hands the transmitter to Toni.]

TONI: Go.

[The robot does nothing.]

ROGER: You have to be abrupt.

TONI: GO.

[Nothing.]

ROGER: You have to be very abrupt.

TONI: Go. Go! GO!

[With a sudden burst of noise and movement, the robot finally goes. It heads for the rug.]

Turn.

[It doesn't.]

Stop. Stop!

[It crashes into the rug and spins its wheels.]

ROGER: Here. Let me. Turrrrrr Leeeeeeet. Stop! Turrrrrr Riiiiight. Stop. Go. Turrrrr Ri— Leeeeeeet. Stop. Go. Leeeeeeet. Riiiiight. Go. Go. Go. Stop. Back.

[The robot runs into Joanna Lamb, 14 months old, who promptly sets up an outraged howling on principle.]

TONI: It's only a robot, Joanna... ROGER: Anyway, that's the robot. I didn't make it all, you know, I assembled it out of various components. Here's a real neat toy... a commercial toy.

[He lugs a rectangular plastic box out of the closet. It looks vaguely like a Star Trek control board. Roger picks out three plaques from a rack on one side and inserts them in the machine. An odd flat voice comes out.]

MACHINE: Pretty — Sad — Baby.

ROGER: Now I'll try the Spanish and the French.

[The machine appropriately intones Pretty Sad Baby in those languages.]

It's got a hopper, too.

[He demonstrates various words.]

CHESTER: Hmm. That's an educational toy.

ROGER: You program it, and it computes. Yeah. Yeah. Six tracks. It has

MUSICIANS MAY COME & MUSICIANS MAY GO BUT

ROGER: It's too bad about the printed word, that's what I think. Because I'm a big fan of the unprinted word. The sound word. You lose so much that's on that tape by transcribing it into symbols. There should be a system where everyone has their own little hand recorder, and they just buy the tape. Because it's obvious that the printed word is obsolete already.

CHESTER: Not entirely. There are some resources that haven't even been explored.

ROGER: Nevertheless, it's inferior in effect to that

[Points to tape recorder]

and that is inferior to that.

[Points to color TV]

If you want to relate this experience that's happening. Now. If that's what you want to relate.

TONI: Eventually you get a three-dimensional recording.

ROGER: Well, there are still uses for the printed word that nothing can replace. You shouldn't give up a medium just because you've got a new one.

This is great. Instead of trying to hunt up a jack that I wouldn't be able to find, I'm fixing it...

[Roger hooks up his speakerphone to his stereo. He dials.]

PHONE: Bleep... bleep... THE TIME IS FOUR TWENTY SIX, EXACTLY. Bleep. THE TIME IS FOUR TWENTY SIX AND TEN SECONDS. Bleep. THE TIME IS FOUR TWENTY SIX AND TWENTY SECONDS. Bleep. THE TIME IS FOUR...

ROGER: I'm off twenty seconds. [Trying to synchronize his watch.] There. Perfect.

PHONE: Bleep. THE TIME IS FOUR TWENTY SEVEN, EXACTLY. Bleep. THE TIME IS...

ROGER: That's enough of that.

CHESTER: Roger, could you say something to sort of sum up the whole thing?

ROGER: Wow. I don't know what to say. I'm sittin' here, in my house, in this rocking chair, watchin' it all go down. Weird. And, uh, I think the best thing I can say is thanks for turning me on to that new way of fixing my speakerphone to my hi-fi, which I thought of, but I didn't think it would work because of feedback. So thank you.

Company we hooked our speaker phone up to the stereo, and the first call we got was from Thomas Cahill, a police chief of San Francisco, who was curious as to something we had published.

[Chuckles.]

ROGER: Where did you hook it up from,

[examining the speakerphone and his hi-fi set]

out of here or out of here?

CHESTER: Ummm . . .

ROGER: Put a jack out of here?

CHESTER [reluctantly]: Yeah, I didn't do it myself. Too busy grinding out propaganda.

ROGER: Well, it's an easy thing to do.

CHESTER: Make the telephone company unhappy.

ROGER: The telephone company ought to be unhappy.

CHESTER: It seems that anyone who has gone through the Village and East Side of Manhattan has got this thing about telephones.

TONI: We do seem to share a disregard for the seriousness of the whole thing.

ROGER: Yeah. Oh sure, any organized business in general.

[Roger starts looking for a jack, finds a broken one, gets a soldering iron, starts fixing it. Some idle rap about *Pigs & Fishes*; more on the Hieronymus Machine. Roger finds one of his boxes, a small plastic box that he hums when you press a button. He explains that the rest in the series are broken, along with their various hums, flashes, beeps, and written messages.

He continues to work on the jack.]

ROGER: You don't get any feedback on this?

CHESTER: None at all.

ROGER: Good. There's a certain amount of equalization built into the Bell box, anyway.

CHESTER: And here we are, doing horrible things to Ma Bell again.

ROGER: Well, anyone with a monopoly on communication deserves anything that happens to them. Toni, would you hold this?

[Hands Toni a wire and solder it to another wire.]

This soldering iron is really just like using a needle and thread. I've already kind of melted the speaker cabinet under the lamp, so I have no scruples

ROGER: I don't watch it, I just like the changing colors. Some of the commercials are neat. Stan Freberg.

CHESTER: I heard a commercial of Freberg's on KRLA the other night for marijuuana. Shocked the hell out of me.

ROGER: Oh yeah?

CHESTER: Oh, they called it grass, but there was no doubt about what they were advertising.

TONI: I've heard his commercials for God.

CHESTER: And the Presbyterians, yes.

ROGER: He's been on, talking about t, and he said that he would, you know, be into other artistic forms if there were any creative freedom in them, but there isn't, and so he does commercials.

CHESTER: Um, commercials get a much more, uh, particular clientele. Stories have all sorts of philosophic connotations involved, but a commercial is just a function. Anything that serves that function is good. Have the Byrds made any Coca-Cola ads?

ROGER: No, we were never asked to do Coke. We did get offered Fresca. But now we'd do commercials. We've lost our moral scruples about such things. That was when David Crosby was in the group, and he was completely anti-television and such things.

CHESTER: My only recent contact with David Crosby has been through an overblown article in the L.A. *Dragon*. Kind of David Crosby, boy guru. Nothing in it I disagreed with. I was just kind of surprised to hear it coming from David.

ROGER: Yeah. I didn't read that but heard about it.

TONI [to Chezi]: You're both Leos.

CHESTER: I consider that to be the merest sort of coincidence. There are millions of Leos.

TONI: Not really... well...

CHESTER: To have been born in August merely indicates a certain impatience on the part of one's parents. Imagine being pregnant through June and July. Wow! The worst time of the year.

TONI: It does hint at a certain characterfulness.

ROGER: You get to miss the cherry and the plum season. Football. Pumpkin pie.

TONI: You Cancers are the real summer people...

CHESTER: At the Communion

et bar.] They call this a wet bar because it has a sink in it. Ianthe, have you seen the tape that was in this box?

IANTHE: No, Roger.

[The search continues.]

HESTER: Perhaps we should forego Seems to be the start of a major arch.

ROGER [still searching]: It's called the Moog Raga. Synthesized sitar and tabla and tamboura. We didn't release it because it wasn't just right. But the effect, you synthesized the timbre of all the instruments correctly. So, you see, we can make music with this machine.

[The search continues, while we discuss the Hieronymus Machine, a record called *Urging Vaccinations on Roger and Ianthe before they leave for home*. Ianthe declines, not feeling so well. Roger searches and talks at the same time. Chester contemplates the seakphone. Toni and Ianthe discuss ramblings of all kinds. Bart takes pictures.]

ROGER: This is called Moog Raga. I don't know what it means, but...

[Sonorous and permeating as in-sea, a raga drones and thrums out of a tape recorder. It has a faintly unearthly sound, and is quite beautiful. Three minutes later it is over.]

ROGER: Anyway, it shows the capacity there.

TONI: It's only non-musical from a commercial standpoint. And not necessarily even that.

ROGER: I think we could get it better...

HESTER: Create your own sound with acoustical tinkertoys.

TONI: You built that entirely electronically?

ROGER: There's no acoustic sound in whatsoever. It's all transistors and tape.

TONI: Well, if you get good enough at your wall decorations

[half-a-dozen string instruments of quality] might end up becoming just wall decorations.

ROGER: Well, I hope not. I think they'll become exotic, uh —

[Some sort of outrageous afternoon show is in color on the silent giant screen. Little fat ladies and their little daughters modeling nighties.]

TONI: Sort of like a living mural.

ROGER: What I could do is simply use a driver switch on the bottom so it doesn't go off until you pick it up. [He turns]

BART: You could use capacitance, body capacitance.

ROGER: That's a good idea.

[He turns in again. Time stops.]

ESTER: God, this is going to be difficult to get on paper.

[Roger brings out a box and a speaker, connects them, and touches front of the box.]

X: Hmmmiiiiineeeeeeeerrrrrrreee-aa!

NINI: What?

X: Squeeeeere. Squiiiir?

ROGER: It makes noises when you touch it. Here. Wet your fingers for a better contact.

[Toni produces pitiful all noises from the box.]

Press these studs. You have to touch both of them. It's the resistance that causes noise. The electricity is going through you, see? Or if you want to be even, you push these buttons on the e... as good, though.

NINI: Did you invent it or was it invented?

ROGER: Well, they intended it to be silent, but it didn't sound like a very loud siren, so I fooled with it, discovered by accident that with different resistors and circuitry it was this.

[The phone rings. A speaker attached to the telephone — allows Roger to hear the other end while he's on the phone.]

ESTER: Have you used any of this stuff for making music?

ROGER: You mean electronic devices? None I've made myself. We used a synthesizer. The Moog is a keyboard instrument, and you can add modules to it, so you get a spectrum of music — sound sounds.

ESTER: No one seems to have had a proper musical use for it yet.

ROGER: The Synthesizer? I don't know.

ESTER: They're still hung up on the concept of sound as abstract and...

ROGER: Well, we did something that's physical. It's not musical enough to replace, but it's more musical than a band.

[He starts searching in the...

ations, too. [He pushes the other buttons.]

CHINE: Who am I? Who am I? What color? How many?

SEER: There's very little tunes in there, they're insignificant.

CHINE: Whomp bonk bleep see bleep.

SEER: There's a little book that you how to put tunes together, if you want to know that, and it makes different effects, too. Leftovers from other Mattel toys. You could put a jack in to improve fidelity, hook them up in a parallel — you could make it do lots of things. If you took magnetic tape, you could get very high fidelity, and make it say anything. Have a own program. Or make a song-writing machine, you know? You just put in the little cards in and make a tape. Left over ends from their magnetic guns and dolls and stuff... it's the Mattel learning machine.

[He plugs out a large golden banjo. Chatterbox giggles.]

This is my new banjo. It's Fender imitation of Mastertone. Fender up, plays a short lick, hangs on the banjo on the wall.]

SEER: Have you ever seen Henry Kissinger's foot-operated banjo?

CHINE: No. Is there a long thing that goes down to the floor...?

SEER: A long thin cable with wheels, all sorts of things. A really obnoxious banjo.

CHINE: That's wild.

SEER: Do you still have that suitcase?

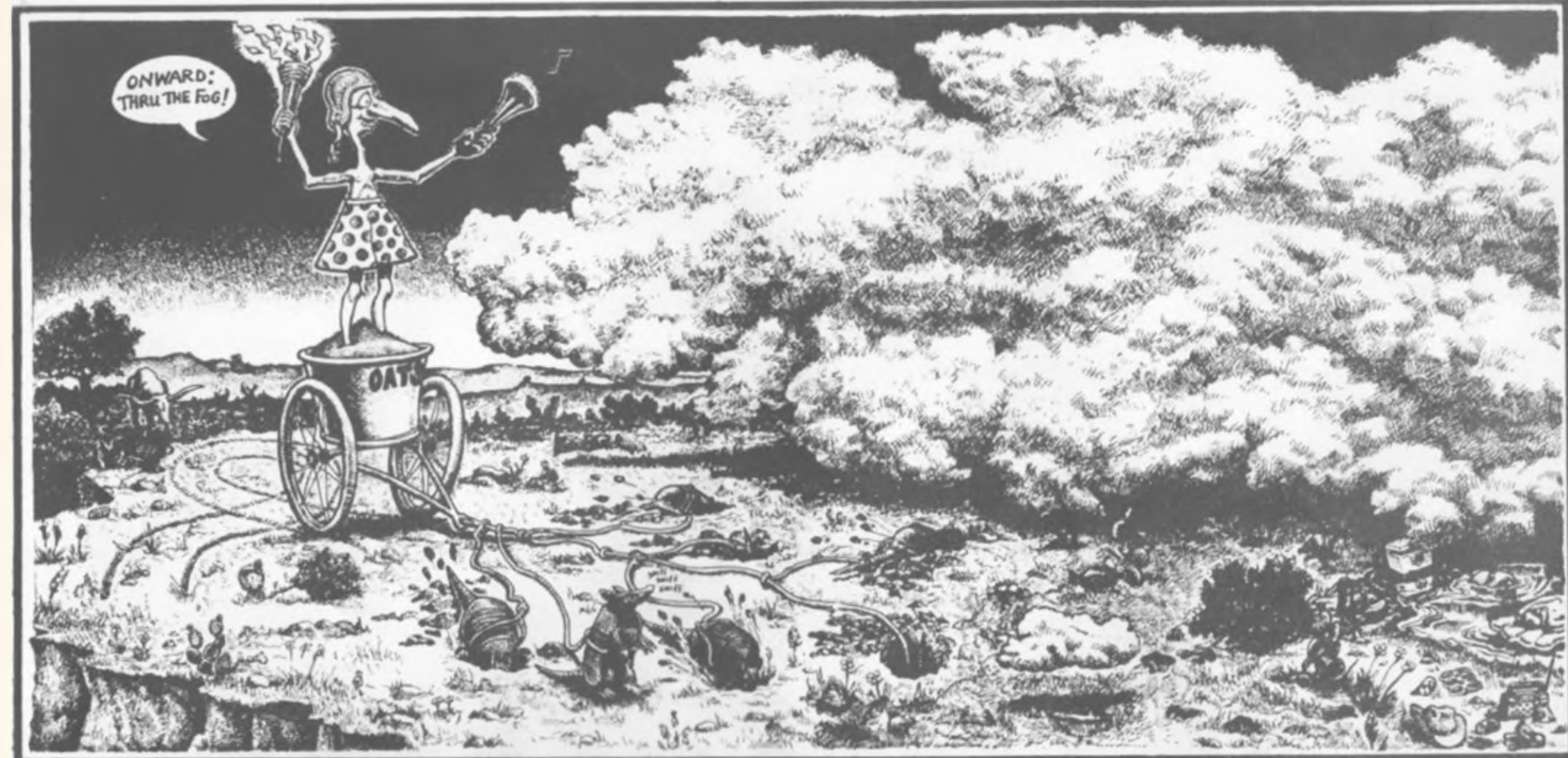
CHINE: Oh, yeah.

CHINE produces a smallish suitcase, with an airline sticker on one side. He sets it down and flicks an almost invisible switch. Colored lights begin to flash in random sequence on top of the suitcase. From inside, a continuous humming turns into a cacophonous Mimmim maddadadadadada whireeeee that fills the room, ever-changing and growing. Kids turn away in conversation. Bart frantically snaps pictures. Finally it stops.

CHINE: I designed it for carrying on planes, but then I thought they'd put me away for that, especially since they opened it and saw everything. It looks like a bomb of some kind. A bomb.

SEER opens it. Inside is a cassette recorder. He sees several lights, a hi-

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THE ZIGZAG WANDERER RIDES AGAIN

Hello hello, I'm back again (as the illustrious Mr Glitter, sweating and groaning beneath his five hundred pounds thinner girdle, was once heard to remark), having assumed the role of "guest editor", and believe me, it's a good feeling to be sitting here once more, quill poised and beard quivering, wondering just how the hell I'm going to fill up two whole pages with inconsequential garbage. It's just like the old days.

S'pose I'd better start by blowing our tarnished trumpet; through all kinds of trials and tribulations, hell and highwater, and similar clichés, Zigzag has actually been stumbling onward for five years. Yes, folks, five years old this month. A miraculous achievement – especially when you consider what a bunch of buffoons and halfwits have kept it going all that time a real Fred Karno organisation, I can tell you.

Mind you, the more perceptive reader will notice some discrepancy; since we're a monthly mag, surely this should be number 60? Well, I can't tell a lie - it's all McKnight's fault... we were running on schedule until he took over, and that's the God's honest truth.

It's that Old Compton Street office which is the root of the trouble; how anyone can work down there in the depths of that festering hub of perversion and sin is beyond me. . . . desperados, child molesters, faded pop stars, blokes with long hair, prostitutes, flashers, strippers, gunfighters, pimp hustlers, Glen Colson, Australians

even. I tell you, if you hang your head out of the Zigzag office window for half an hour, you'll see every kind of freak and reject that was ever invented. Is that any environment in which to work? Good God, you have to walk about a mile before you can find any trace of the earth's crust, which just about manages to poke up for a few square yards in Soho Square. All the rest is covered up with tarmac and concrete and buildings and all sorts of rubbish - not conducive to work. Mind you, I'm not at all sure that McKnight ever did any work. He played a lot of

golf though, and he was beginning to achieve some notoriety as the 'Lt Columbo of the Wardour St Amusement Arcade', dirty raincoat and all.

Anyway, my title of "guest editor" is merely a euphemism for "stop gap". Really, I'm just filling the hole between Connor's departure (he's resigned and plans to start a rock group called Connor's Kangaroos, but that's after he's been to India for six months to meditate and get his tambourine playing together) and the arrival of the new editor... that jovial, genial, effervescent lunatic Andy Childs.

Yes, folks, from next issue our Andy will be at the helm. As readers of Fat Angel and his Zigzag articles will attest, he's a good man and true, a rock freak and music loony, and he is going to take the old mag up there where the air is rare (as Joe Niagara would say) – and we'll all be behind him (jabbing him up the bum with a pointed stick).

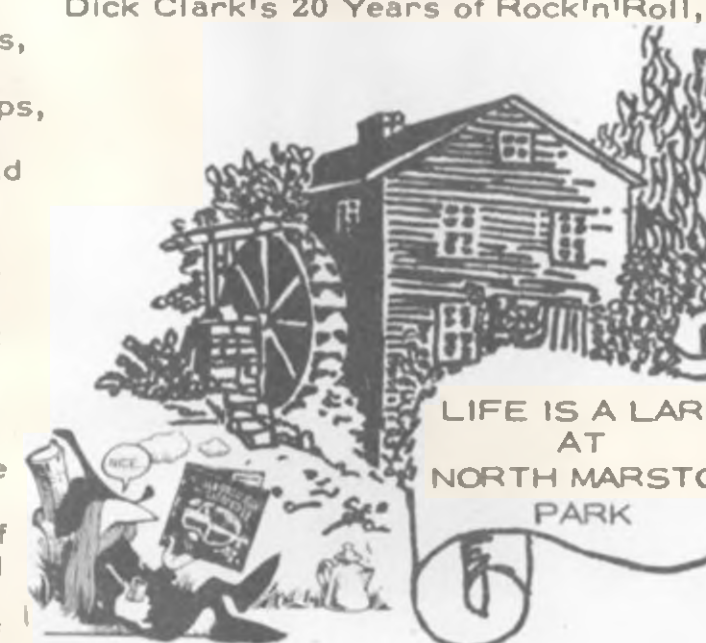
As you can see, I'm starting to veer under the pressure of filling up all this space - so here's where I insert the Patent Tobler List of Records You Gotta Check Out (if you're a millionaire with a few years at your disposal): David Ackles, Hoyt Axton, the Beach Boys Live, the Blues Project Live, Jackson Browne, Buffalo Springfield, Canned Heat, the Carpenters, the three volume Chess Golden Decade, Dick Clark's 20 Years of Rock'n'Roll,

both Chi Coltrane, Country Gazette, the Dillards, 'Cookin with Fats', Bob Dylan, David Gates, Marvin Gaye, Dobie Gray, 'The golden age of comedy', Ellie Greenwich, Horslips, Jan and Dean, Elton John, Casey Kelly, Gladys Knight's Anthology, Gladys Knight on Buddha, Dyke Leotard (who's that?), Lindisfarne, Loggins and Messina, Harvey Mandel, 'The many sides of rock'n'roll, Vol 2, Dave Mason, Ian Matthews, Mayall with Don Nix, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison's astonishing live double, Mott, Maria Muldaur, Rick Nelson, Michael Nesmith (and thanks a million for your replies), the New Riders, Painter, Van Dyke Parks who certainly did help us to discover America, Gene Parsons, Gram Parsons (who's funeral party I went to, Carl Perkins, Bonnie Raitt, Phillybusters, Lou Reed, Smokey Robinson's Anthology, Linda Ronstadt, Carly Simon, Paul Simon, Southwind, Peter Ustinov, the Bobby Vee and Ventures Legendary Masters, Loudon Wainwright, Wendy Waldman, Clifford T. and Doc Watson

I presume that the above is a list of the best of Tobler's hustlings for the last few weeks. . . . I've never known a bloke like him for hustling albums. "Let's have a look in your cupboard" he says, whereupon he gathers up great armfuls of records and leaves hurriedly. I swear that I wouldn't be at all surprised to see old Tobler coming out of Warner Brothers leading a donkey laden down with albums.

He also says you ought to go and see 'American Graffiti', which features the astounding Flash Cadillac. We saw them in LA, and they were great... made Sha Na Na look like the BeeGees.

Meanwhile, back in the pastoral wastelands of Bucks County, I'm struggling to type out all this tripe. My style has been severely cramped by the infliction of a fierce wound to my typing finger; I'm a one finger typist and it just happened to be the nail of that finger which one of my dogs chose to bite through...'. I was attempting to take a stick from the beast's



gob at the time, savage hound. Actually, he's an ace dog; Ian Hunter got him off a barrow in Shepherd's Bush Market, as a floppy-eared sweet-faced mongrel... paid four quid. Then, just like in 'The Ugly Duckling', he turned out to be a beautiful ~~Swan~~ alsatian... and he got so big that his landlord made him get rid of it. So now he eats me out of house and home... he won't eat that Clement Freud stuff though, doesn't like that at all. His name's Dude. (You see, John Peel isn't the only one who gets bitten by dogs).

Devastation reigns at Yeoman Cottage - "the Zigzag room" looks like one of those ransacked post-burglary efforts favoured by the producers of Z Cars. Paper, photographs, albums, pens, bottles, a mess. No sophisticated equipment for us - we work on the floor. Consequently, after hours and hours of resting the entire weight of my bulbous body on the patched knee-caps of my jeans, my knees are well and truly finished. Next stop, the knacker's yard. This physical aggravation, compounded by the involuntary shuffling of cow-gum fumes as I laboured over the drawing board with typed strips and t-square, was bad enough but my nubile assistants made up their minds that I be Allman Brothered to death. If I hear that bloody 'Mountain Jam' once more, I'll run amok through the streets of North Marston tearing out what's left of my hair.

But it was great fun getting this issue together... hard work, but better than watching 'Crossroads'. Better still because I was aided and abetted by the terrifying trio of Chloe Nina and Dinah (young girls are coming to the canyon); schoolgirls of Highgate and Crouch End. They often come up to vent their passions and fantasies on my tired body (daydreaming again Frame). Nina wants to be a sausage roll seller when she grows up (if she grows up... I never did) and is practising at the Rainbow now and then, Dinah pours Southern Comfort down her gullet as if there were no tomorrow, and Chloe is an aspiring artist (if she plays her cards right, I might allow her some practice with the old brush - she can daub a couple of coats of Cementone No 9 over the green mould threatening to envelop Yeoman Cottage). Actually, Chloe's put a lot



of hard work into this issue... a big round of applause for her unflinching devotion (she thinks she's going to get paid).

They came up the other weekend, when the clocks were put forward, and we were sitting watching TV to the bitter end. BBC 1 and 2 and ITV had finished, but through some atmospheric freakiness (assisted, I understand, by a booster in Newbury), our telly sometimes gets Southern TV - beaming all the way up from Southampton or somewhere. Anyway, we were just in time for the pre-closedown Godslot... and there on the screen, all phased out with flickering bad-reception psychedelic type dots and flashing colours, was Barry McGuire! I couldn't believe it... Barry McGuire, in person, playing a Guild 12 stringer and singing about what an ace cat JC was and how he changed his life. He almost converted us - he was great.

Since my abdication rant back in Zigzag 30, I've mellowed out somewhat but my musical tastes have got even narrower. Nevertheless, I know what I like and I like what I know, as the man says, and there's still a lot of great stuff around. Coming soon will be lengthy tracts about some of the best - Little Feat, Starry Eyed and Laughing, Chris Darrow, Linda Ronstadt, Sons of Champlin, etc... If Andy approves, that is. And John Stewart, of course; he and Nik Venet (see Bloodlines article in Zigzag 38) got back together last month to record a live double album in Phoenix - 'The Last Campaign'... it'll be great.

Some magazines you'll be interested in:

Hot Wacks is a new publication packed with fax and info and written by good guys. Send 20p including post to Bert Muirhead, 104 Spring Gardens,

Edinburgh EH8 8EY

Omaha Rainbow No 2 is even better than No 1 and has a great family tree of Country Joe executed by David (not Diddy) Hamilton. 20p from Peter O'Brien, 10 Lesley Court, Harcourt Rd, Wallington, Surrey.

The Rock Marketplace is a good mag for obtaining rare American rock masterpieces. Send blank 30p postal order to Alan Betrock at PO Box 253, Elmhurst-A-N-Y, 11380, USA for a sample copy.

Sounds Interesting lists various albums and singles for sale. 25p from Bruce Thompson, 43 Horton Rd, Brafield on the Green, Northampton.

A note from Lynne in the office. She says will subscribers, when notifying changes of address, please quote their subscription number? Thankyou.

Got a cassette from Gene Parsons the other day... he was chatting away, telling me what's been happening (and sounding for all the world like an excerpt from that Woody Guthrie Library of Congress talk album). He's got a new band: him on banjo/drums and pedal steel, Joel Scott Hill on guitar and vocals, Graham Keeley on bass/guitar/vocals, and a picker with the Clarence touch, Stevie Gurr on guitar/drums and the "best harp I've ever heard, bar none". They're playing "a lot of boogie, some rock'n'roll, some blues stuff, country and bluegrass too... it's pretty doggone good". At a recent gig in Mendocino (where they hang out), there were "more people than I've ever seen round here... we're getting ourselves quite a reputation locally". Bring em over!

Right now, we'd like to see as many of you as possible at our great 5th anniversary gig. A lot of people (mainly Paul Conroy of Charisma Artistes and that good man and true, Tony Stratton Smith) have toiled selflessly to get this epic extravaganza off the ground. Subscribers have already had a couple of letters and chances to buy tickets, but because this issue is only published days before the gig, the rest of you will have to charge down and pay at the door.

Needless to say, this will be one of the gigs of all time... unique in its magnificence. Michael Nesmith and Red Rhodes will be picking and plucking and singing selections from 'And the Hits Keep On Coming' and other albums described in great detail last issue. John Stewart is just one of the greatest songwriters/singers on earth and I just can't believe that we've been lucky enough to get him. Chris Darrow is of course the living legend, played in Kaleidoscope and survived... he's great (and may be bringing Mark Naftalin and the terrifying Fenrus Epp!). Help Yourself, with Deke Leonard, will be re-forming especially for you... Deke, Malcolm and Ken are flying back from Switzerland at their own expense - just for you! Charley Riley & the Red Hot Pokers are a gas, Starry Eyed and Laughing are definitely a killer band, and Kilburn & the High Roads aren't bad either.

We'll all be there, and we want it to be a really friendly, happy, Zigzaggy event - so please come along. See you there.



Starry Eyed and Laughing as I recall when we were caught

John Tobler & Pete Frame in association with Charisma Artistes present at the ROUNDHOUSE CHALK FARM LONDON NW1 on Sunday April 28th 1974

from 3.30 till 10.30

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