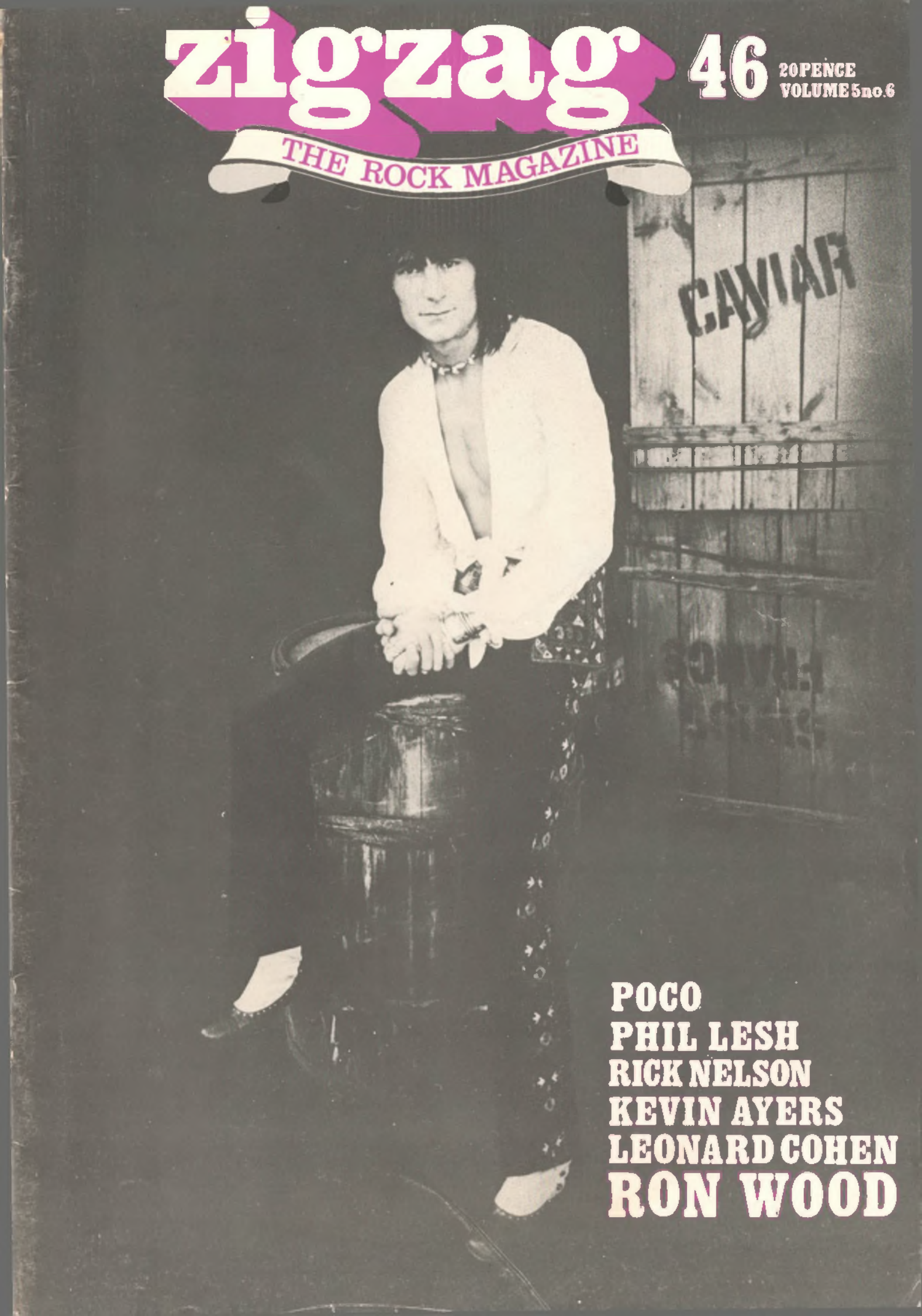
zigzag

THE ROCK MAGAZINE

46
20PENCE
VOLUME 5no.6



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37 SOHO SQUARE
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October 1974

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ZIGZAG IS PUBLISHED BY SPICEBOX BOOKS LTD PRINTED BY THE CHESHAM PRESS OF GERMAIN STREET, CHESHAM, BUCKS, AND DISTRIBUTED BY MOORE-HARNESS LIMITED, 31 CORSICA STREET, LONDON N4 (369 4126).

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happy trails
VOLUME 5 NUMBER 5 OCTOBER 1974 Published as a public service HOME EDITION

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

BURIED SPRINGFIELD

As you know, ZigZag never usually publishes readers' letters, but the one that follows is of particular interest to Buffalo Springfield fans (including me) and is indicative of the sort of correspondence we welcome with open arms. It was written in reply to John Tobler's criticisms, in the Mailbag page of MM Oct 5, of a 'Fanzine' piece on the Springfield that appeared in that paper.

Just to satisfy the assumptions made in your letter re Buffalo Springfield in MM, a few truths.

'Baby Don't Scold Me' was written by Stephen Stills and towards the end of the instrumental workout there is a direct rip-off from 'Day Tripper'. It was recorded with the original line-up for inclusion on the first album, 'Buffalo Springfield'. However, when 'For What It's Worth' became a hit and put Neil, Richie and the others in '16' Magazine, someone somewhere substituted one for the other whilst the album was being pressed. It's a shame it couldn't have replaced 'Good Time Boy' on 'Again' or the horrendous 'Carefree Country Day' on 'Last Time Around'.

As you doubtless know, 'Last Time Around' was put together mainly by Jim Messina and Richie Furay when Steve called it quits after a farewell gig in April or May 1968. They even had three hours (*six albums*) of songs to choose from. All three writers had recorded songs dating back to the first album. 'Last Time Around' came from a hotch-potch of these tapes. Some, such as 'On The Way Home' and 'Pretty Girl Why' were the original five-piece, and others sound like they could have been discarded from 'Again' such as 'It's So Hard To Wait'. Others like 'Kind Woman' were last-ditch efforts by Furay to get his own material aired, recorded by Furay, Messina, Rusty Young and (I think) Jimmy Karstein.

There are at the moment two further examples of Springfield in circulation. One is 35 extra minutes of Springfield in the studio, plus duos and solos. It consists of 'Down To The Wire' (Young), 'We'll See' (Furay), 'One More Sign' (Young), 'Come On Lover' (Stills), 'Neighbour Don't You Worry' (Stills), 'So You Got A Lover' (Furay), 'There Goes My Babe' (Young, 'Bluebird'—long version (Stills), 'Mr Soul—Take Two' (Young), and 'Don't Scold Me' (Stills). There's also some 'live' material doing the rounds half of which is of dire quality and the other half indispensable. The worthy half is made up of 'Pay The Price', 'Nobodys Food' (which you'd never recognise from the Poco version), 'Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing' (amazing), 'Rock'n'Roll Woman' (likewise), and 'My Kind Of Love' (a Furay song which was a Poco single prior to the release, of just after their second LP. One interesting point is that after 'Rock'n'Roll Woman' Stephen says, "That could possibly be our next single, we're working on it now," and Richie claims "that was written by Stephen and David Crosby". Mmm, and Crosby was credited on the track for 'inspiration'!

On the subject of 'Again', like the tapes, I have in my possession a vintage US poster advertising a Buffalo Springfield album called 'Buffalo Springfield Stampede'. The American catalogue number is the same as 'Again' so 'Again' replaced 'Stampede' —possibly more than just the title was altered.

Surely with A&M setting precedent with two sides plus one track of unreleased Flying Burrito Bros (the standard of which makes their second album look sick by comparison), Atlantic could do the same with Buffalo Springfield, and surely this can't be the only band no longer with us with quality material locked away from those wishing to hear. Surely Elektra must have material for a posthumous album with tracks by the original Love, The Doors, and 'Goodbye And Hello'-period Tim Buckley. The same applies to The Byrds. ZigZag itself admits that there is material in existence that has never seen the light of day. Around 1967 Crosby was allegedly writing songs all the time (seems far-fetched considering his output since 'CS&N'), but there must be something in those vaults!

And how about Neil Young? How many people have heard 'Winterlong', 'Look Out Joe', 'Wondering' and 'Bad Fog Of Loneliness'?

I'd be most pleased if ZigZag would write a piece on all the material locked in vaults which deserves release (and what in many cases only becomes available after the artist's death—such as Hendrix).

Yours,
David Procter

REVIEWS

This Happy Trails business is a good idea, I reckon, and here's one of my reasons. There are other fields which many of you out there are into, like films, books, TV, football, even maybe knitting, but our main concern is music. Now often there are peripherals that are on the edge of ZigZag territory, but which can't warrant full blown pieces. A couple I have in mind are the 'Stardust' film, and a particular book. Let's start with the film.

I don't get to the pictures as much as I'd like. Reasons like babysitters, arriving home too late and so on. But I went to the CBS Conference last month, and one of the things on was a preview of 'Stardust'. I didn't see 'That'll Be The Day', being put off by that double LP which appeared to be full of the wrong versions of the right songs, if you see what I mean. Rocky Prior went, and said that the story was faithful to the times it portrayed, and that he enjoyed it a lot. Now I've seen 'Stardust', and I think I know what he means. The film is the story of the rise of a rock'n'roll star, who starts off with his band, then loses them on an American tour due to the pressures of your money men to make him a solo star. The character drawing of the decision makers is frightening, and the similarities to all too many of my heroes in his eventual withdrawal into almost total seclusion and so on were quite depressing. Perhaps if more budding bands saw this film, the basis of which seems to me to be horrifyingly accurate there wouldn't be so many 'casualties' at the star end of the music biz. It would be silly to go through the plot here, but many ZigZag heroes can be seen in the film, like the Brinsleys, Dave Edmunds, Keith Moon (excellent) and so on. The principal actors are Adam Faith and David Essex, and considering what they have been, and are going through, it was a courageous decision to make the film at all. A final, and large, word of praise for Marty Wilde, who has a medium size part, but one which it could be said he was acting from the bitter experience of having been on, or near, the receiving end. Altogether, a fine film, and one you should see. But don't expect to come out very happy . . . .

Now the book. You may have seen the name of Martin Hall's Acme Tape Transcription Service at the bottom of our masthead. Well, let's get it clear—Martin is not a transcription service for all and sundry, he's a poet and a songwriter, and a good friend. When we're a bit short of time, Martin helps us by listening to our cassettes, and editing them out into a meaningful form, and his great advantage over your average secretary, is that he's interested in what he's hearing, and is well able to spell the names of American musicians correctly, and make sense of the mumblings. While we're grateful to Martin for his efforts on our behalf, we would rather that he was a star, because that's what he deserves, and apart from his legendary collaborations with Peter Gabriel, Eugene Wallace, Capability Brown and so on in the songwriting field, his first book of poems has come out, which should be advertised hereabouts. Now you'll have noticed that we don't plug the books published by our sister company, Charisma Books, unless there's a good reason in the minds of one of us. My reason is I like 'The Stan Cullis Blues' a lot. Not your poet wringing out his emotions stuck in a garret, bemoaning his fate, lost loves, inequality of opportunity, and all the rest of that claptrap, but Martin, with a smile on his face, producing little gems like this:

I've been writing this poem
For two hours solid,
And I've only done three lines.
Oh, four.

There are several chuckles of that nature, as well as shape poems, and noise poems, which you'll understand when you read them. I mean, you shouldn't expect the Spanish Inquisition, but witty poetry is a commodity like sugar at the moment, and while you can't stir your tea with the book (or sugar either, for that matter), it is good to see that Ogden Nash and the epigram are alive and well and living in Onslow Gardens. Here's another quickie, just to finish with, called 'The Boy Richard'.

'I want to be president when I grow up!'
you made it dick
you can grow up now

Martin Hall—'The Stan Cullis Blues', Charisma Books, 75p (cheap!)

JOHN TOBLER

WINDSOR

I have a confession to make. After a brief experience of the first two Windsor Larfs'n'Barfs Festivals, I approached this year's event with some trepidation, fully expecting it to be another disorganised fiasco, pleasurable neither as entertainment—which isn't the main aim —nor as an experiment in communal living—which probably is. In fact I was guilty of crass pre-judgement; and the barbed wit and cynico-chic which were to have flowed from my pen, mercilessly exposing the anachronistic naivety and organisational lunacy of the festival, have had to be shelved to make way for the qualified eulogy which follows.

For a start, the essential open-air ingredient of sunshine was generously supplied by the gods, who obviously were taking a more lenient view of proceedings than lesser authorities.

However, festivals cannot live by sunshine alone, and from what I gathered, advance preparation was considerably more serious than in previous years, when things had just tended to come together at the last minute. Clearly the illegal nature of the event and its shoestring budget make the prior arrangement of essentials like sanitation and food supplies difficult, especially as the local authorities and park commissioners weren't as helpful as they might have been; but publicity was thoroughly done at the expense of Bill Dwyer and two friends, and the organisation of the stages and bands was so superior as to make Windsor '72 and '73 seem like a bad dream.

The plan was to have no less than six stages spread over the mile-long site, each with its own stage-manager responsible for co-ordinating construction, sound equipment, electricity, bands, and apparently everything else within the area serviced by his stage. Again I must confess to hearty scoffing on hearing of this ambitious scheme, and again I confess to being embarrassingly wrong. From the first day, five of the six were running, and they continued to do so until forcibly stopped.

Yet for the most part, although very creditably held together (in both senses), they were standard Windsor fare, suffering from generator problems, and dubious sound quality, and featuring bands whose enthusiasm was their most endearing quality. In fact of all the bands I saw on the smaller stages only one—a Chilli-Willies type affair whose name I forget—tempted me to stay for more than a couple of numbers (!!!).

Stage C, however, situated at the furthest end of the site from the town, where the road and a wood formed an ideal apex at the bottom of a gentle slope, seemed somehow out of place at Windsor. Simon Renshaw, the stage-manager, had done a most impressive job in getting together a large stage, a lovely PA and a roster of bands, etc, which although without any really big names—not surprisingly as everyone played for free—had lotsa nice people, and was generally of a very acceptable quality.

Now Windsor isn't meant to be a pop festival. The first two boasted virtually no bands with any kind of reputation, and the 'stage' consisted of a length of rope in front of the amplification, with access to the mikes available to practically anybody. The people who came—and there were an estimated 20,000 over Bank Holiday last summer—came not to see their fave groups but simply to enjoy the experience of being there.

To a large extent this year was the same, for although with one exception the stages were actual constructions, none of them were monopolised by bands, as poets, dancers, theatre groups and people who thought they had something to say, all got their moments, and away from the stages there was evidence everywhere of what sets Windsor apart from your Buxtons and your Readings. Various voluntary associations provided medical care, legal advice, child care and contraceptives, while the people of the festival did amazing things with community kitchens, litter disposal, sanitation, collection of wood and water, and general sharing of supplies and energy.

In the shanty town of tents and ad hoc shelters which sprawled over the central area of the site, people widely differing in age, class, race, creed and background were gathered together for a few days in an environment where the less desirable barriers and values of society were unimportant, and althouth I'm not exactly convinced by idealist talk of a Windsor nation, it was reassuring to see that so many people could live together in a spirit of brotherhood and cooperation with hardly any hassles of their own making.

However, there were signs that Windsor is in danger of drifting away from its original aims and becoming different from run-of-the-mill festivals only by dint of its being free and illegal. Although there was no intention of having a 'main stage', it soon became apparent that stage C was the focal point of the festival, and that to many people the event comprised watching the bands, etc, on stage—which ran for about sixteen hours a day—and getting wrecked. Not that I blame them. After all, the majority of the kids were there to enjoy themselves, not to be a blueprint for social revolution or whatever, and stage C with the standard of its programme and production, and with the addition at night of the finest lightshow I've seen since Joe's left the Rainbow, was undoubtedly the place to be entertained.

The audience seemed to have an indefatigable appetite for music, responding even to the less-pleasing performers, and equally to the recorded sounds and the fantastic loonies who gravitated to the stage like lemmings to a clifftop. Most of the bands clearly rose to this inspirational atmosphere, and people like the Global Village Trucking Company, the Half Human Band and Byzantium turned in fine sets, provoking wild scenes among the audience, whose capacity for dancint was something phenomenal. Byzantium, in particular, just get better every time I see them, and with Martin the Roadie now operating like a fifth member of the band on the mixer and echoplex, they are a treat for the ears. Even eccentrics like Gong and Exmagma—the latter a very intense and Teutonic three-piece—who are not usually my cuppa, came across most impressively aided by the magnificently empathetic Acidica lightshow. If there's a criticism, it is that perhaps the line-up was a bit top-heavy with rock groups—certainly Friday, with Captain Lockhead, the Psychedelic Rowdies and Edgar Broughton would have been one for the downer freaks—but bands like Trax, who had everyone on their feet with some outrageously funky soul music, and Contraband, who did likewise via jigs'n'things, more than counterbalanced this tendency.

Unfortunately the level of organisation needed to collect and present a programme like this, and the security needed for smooth running—changeovers averaged about half an hour, which is pretty amazing—caused quite a bit of ill-feeling (and amateur jealousy) elsewhere. The Freek Press, which was published every day on the site, reported 'complaints about the management, hassles and sexism,' and there seemed to be a suspicion among the rest of the organisation that stage C was somewhat contrary to the spirit of the event. This situation highlights the dilemma in which Windsor Festival seems to find itself. It was evident that the majority of the kids there wanted, indeed expected, good music, and a consistent supply of it, but sadly it is impossible to provide this without a certain amount of discipline, and a certain number of people in positions of control. On the few occasions when security around the stage was relaxed, for example, chaos immediately ensued. The stage was surrounded by dancing bodies and people apparently suffering from advanced brain-melt, and had this been allowed to continue, organisation would have disintegrated.

The main bummer throughout the festival, of course, was the excessive police presence and activity culminating in the military operation which ended the event in anger and recriminations. I don't intend to ramble on about that though, as it's all been said already, but it does seem to be a puzzling state of affairs when the army is allowed to hold nearly a million acres of countryside in which to play its destructive games, and yet a group of well intentioned people can't take over a few acres for a few days in which to amuse themselves harmlessly without becoming the victims of unprecedented harassment in the name of law and order.

Still, despite this constant pall over proceedings—which in fact probably helped the feeling of unity—and the usual on-site bad news like rip-offs, destruction of trees, plastic hot-dog vans, etc, the Third Windsor Festival was a gas—good weather, good music and, above all, good vibes made it one of the nicest five days I've spent in ages. If they have one next year—and they almost undoubtedly will—go along and take in what's just about the last of the real festivals.

PAUL KENDALL

A CONVERSATION WITH PHIL LESH

Some of you out there probably think that ZigZag has just about OD'd on the Grateful Dead recently, which is a fair criticism considering that in the last ten issues we've had them on the cover twice, and carried a 21-page three-part history plus a feature on the technical aspects of their equipment. But with the advent of their visit last September I just couldn't, on any account, let the occasion slip by without talking to at least one member of the band, and for reasons which you no doubt know if you read ZZ35, I was especially pleased that it was Phil Lesh who I finally got to interview formally.

It was on the Saturday morning before the Dead were due to play Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday night at Alexandra Palace that the 'phone rang and the band's copyright/publishing manager and co-ordinator for their visit, Alan Trist, spoke amidst a riotous cacophony of noise from the other end. Before I had time to even imagine the purpose of his call, he asked me . . . in the sort of voice you'd expect if say a mate rang up and said come down to the pub for a pint . . . he asked me if I'd like to come over later in the day to the 'tour headquarters' just off the Fulham Road to chat with Phil Lesh. Unf***ingbelievable!! Just try and stop me.

Well, naturally, the rest of that day was spent in feverish anticipation preparing a load of questions and wondering whether he'd turn out to be the 'genius' I'd reckoned him to be. When I arrived at the house (appropriately enough, a huge four-storey building of the sort you'd expect to find in Ashbury, San Francisco), I was greeted by a variety of friendly Americans, all having the appearance of being . . . er, shall we say 'slightly out of the game', when, from the depths of the basement appeared a stocky live-wire of a figure sporting a full-grown beard and looking more like a cross between a studious university professor and Santa Claus than the bass player in a rock band. After all the introductions, we found our way to the quietest room in the house and there we talked for well over an hour, mainly about the different types of music from Lesh's experience that manifest themselves in the Grateful Dead at different times, and also about his own personal history and influences. Inquisitive as to why a proper interview with him had never appeared in print before, and why I had been given the opportunity to put that straight, I was well chuffed, as you can imagine, to find out that he'd read my articles in ZigZags 35, 36 and 37 and had been impressed enough to want to talk.

"I don't like to do interviews very much because everybody always wants to talk to Jerry, and I just sort of got off the trip. Besides, nobody ever asks me anything interesting. I used to get the same old questions, you know, how did you find the name?—that sort of thing. Did you guys really take all that acid? It just turned out to be boring. But after reading your articles it seemed that you might have another kind of slant. I'm sure you might want to talk to Jerry too, because you could say that Jerry has the big picture. Or he'll give you what he thinks is the big picture. Also Jerry's the guy who will always answer questions and always talk. He's always got something to say. Me, I've not always got something to say, I don't always want to talk, I'm not always interested."

Well, on that afternoon he had a hell of a lot to say, and fortunately for me he was very enthusiastic, going to great lengths explaining the more complicated areas of his musical interests. By the time we'd finished talking I'd learnt more about music in general than I probably have in the last three years, and my estimation of him as a person as well as musician remains unparalleled.

Okay, here it is, edited and arranged for consumption by Dead-heads and Zig-Zaggers, starting with . . . .

Early Days

"Well, I picked up the violin at about age 8 because one year at Christmas, the last school day before Christmas we had this big party in the third or fourth grade, this kid came and played the violin all by himself . . . that was his trip for Christmas . . . He played 'We Three Kings Of Orient Are', or something, and I thought "Wow, that's far out!" But even before that my grandmother had introduced me to music. When the Philharmonic would broadcast on Sundays over the radio she would invite me into her room to sit down and listen to the music, and the reason she did it was because one day when the music was on she happened to walk out of the room and she saw me sitting on the floor with my ear against the wall. My mother told me this, I don't remember at all. And so, she said, "Well listen kid, come on in and dig the pretty music." And I remember it very well—the first time. It was Brahms' First Symphony, played by the New York Philharmonic. What a flash! I think that's probably the biggest single flash I've ever

had in my life, except for the first time I took LSD. Which might give you an idea of how heavy it was for me. After that, whether it was subconscious or not, I knew what I had to do. I had to have something to do with that. It was just the heaviest thing I have ever imagined. And so I started taking violin lessons which wasn't very good at all, and I got to the point where I could play second violin parts in orchestra pieces. However, I'd always wanted to play the trumpet but my teeth were f***ed up, so after my teeth got straightened I started taking trumpet lessons which by then I was age 14. That lasted for about 6 years. I went all the way through Junior College playing in the jazz band and writing. That's where I started doing some real writing for the jazz band. And after that I came up to Berkeley, the University of California, Berkeley, and went into their music department, but it was so jive. I suppose it was like colleges everywhere. You have to take all of the stuff that doesn't really mean anything . . . they want to make you into a music teacher. If you get to talk to Ned Lagin he'll tell you about this, even in graduate school that's what they wanted to do to him. They wanted to make him conform so that he could go out and teach other aspiring musicians how to be music teachers. It was a circle of mediocrity which fortunately he wasn't into, I never even got that far, I dropped out of Berkeley in the middle of the first semester because it was incredibly lame. Even so I did learn, just being around a large university like that it is impossible not to learn something. So I was able to learn enough and keep my hand in enough so that when the time came I was ready, thanks to the intervention of my room-mate who was also a composer, who had gone to see Berio at Mills. He said, "Hey, Berio's gonna be at Mills," and even then I knew who he was. He said to Berio, "My room-mate is interested too, can I bring him along?" and the guy said, "Yeah". So I went along. The guy is so amazing (Berio), he doesn't teach you a f***ing thing, he just does his thing, and you have to do your thing. But he'll play tapes for you and we went through the Rite of Spring and that kind of thing. He doesn't teach you anything about composition because he knows it can't be taught. So after that it was like completely open and I kept composing and staying in that area of music for a couple of years, but it was like getting to be a dead-end both philosophically and practically, because in order to get anywhere in that area you just have to know somebody, and also you have to have the right credentials, and you have to have gone to school somewhere, you have to have graduated somewhere, and you have to have gone to graduate school. There are no short cuts. You can't be like Ives, although Ives is the wrong example because he actually went to school for four years and studied music and then he went into the insurance business because he knew music wasn't where it was at. While he was at school he played piano at the movies or in the bars. But you just can't come out of nowhere and get your music performed and so I just gave up and thought 'f**k it!' At that point I was out of music entirely. I had nothing to do with it except I was a great listener. Then I figured, well man, if I can't be a musician I'll be a great listener, and great listeners are very important. Without them some music might not survive. And then it turned out that a year later one of my old friends had this rock'n'roll band, so we all took some acid and went down to hear his rock'n'roll band at this pizza parlour in Menlo Park, California. Good God, it sure was a great scene! At some party, I guess a month before that . . . we'd just been to see the Rolling Stones, and The Byrds had been in town, this was in '65, their first gigs ever . . . and I just happened to mention in passing to Garcia . . . he was at the party too, we were both stoned out of our minds, he had the band even then, Weir came along with some grass and we went along to the car and got high . . . and I happened to mention sometime during that evening to Garcia, "I think I'll take up the electric bass and join a band." The next month, or the next whatever it was, we go down to hear the band, and Garcia takes me aside and puts a beer in my hand and says, "Listen man, you're gonna play bass in my band." "But I . . . er . . . who me? Well Jesus, that might be possible." Actually, it excited the shit out of me because it was something to do. And the flash was, "Oh shit, you mean I can get paid for having fun!" Of course, it was so ironic because before I'd gotten to the point where I just wanted to quit music entirely, I hated rock'n'roll music, I didn't think it was anything, I hated it, I thought it was so lame. I said, "What can you do with three chords?"'

ZZ: So that story about you learning to play in two weeks, is that true?
PL: "Two weeks before the first gig, yeah. I didn't play too good man, it was a real wooden sound, real stiff. But we actually did play a gig two weeks afterwards. And for three or four years after that when I would tell people how long I had been playing bass they would say, 'amazing!'. Now it's been almost ten years so I don't have an excuse any more."

Tunes and Musical Structure

ZZ: It seems to me and perhaps a lot of other people, that rather than Jerry, you are the musical centre of the group.
PL: "That's kind of hard to really pin down in my opinion, since Jerry writes most of the tunes, along with Hunter, although I have been getting back into writing tunes lately. I didn't do it for a long time, but we all sort of contribute to the evolution of a so-called tune. Before we were into doing tunes like with a whole bunch of lyrics and very little instrumental and a beginning and an end, that sort of thing, I always felt that I was able to bring into the rock'n'roll medium a little kind of highly structured symphonic kind of flow to the music which has been sadly lacking in rock'n'roll music for one thing and especially in our music since we started trying to focus it all down into tunes—or narrow it down to tunes. I personally think that tunes, that is songs with lyrics . . . you can only go so far with them, you can't take them into a new realm, and you can hardly ever develop them. In other words, all it is is the melody and the lyrics and a chord change, and if you're gonna have a tune that's comprehensible you have to more or less be musically repetitive. I personally have never been into that kind of music, although I love to play, and the part of playing when we get off the best is the part that's not structured like that, that is repetitive, over and over. I mean structure is necessary, some kind of structure is necessary in music if it's gonna be communicative at all. It just seems that tunes don't go past a certain level. That's just a personal opinion. There are some people who do tunes very well. As far as I'm concerned, I don't think that our tunes are that great. I think what we do best is improvise, with some kind of spontaneous structure occurring at the time of the improvisation going on. There are a lot of people who write really good tunes but that's all they are, they're tunes. And I suppose that's a criterion of value judgement at this point in time, especially since the Beatles and all that, who managed to put a lot of development in their tunes, as far as I can tell. I may have missed something between then and now, but there's nobody yet who has equalled what they did with a tune. I have always been kind of wary of us trying to do that ourselves because that's not what we do best. Eventually, there might be some musicians who come along, or a single musician, who can do all of those things, who can improvise and stretch out, in a meaningful manner, and at the same time condense everything down to a tune where every note is meaningful, and so on. I don't think it's happened yet. 'Cause when the Beatles first came along they weren't doing that, they learned to do it with a little help from their friends, I think. I don't know how they did their recording sessions, but George Martin must have had a hell of a lot to do with it. A hell of a lot. 'Cause after they broke up and they weren't using George Martin, even their last records when they were using Phil Spector it wasn't the same. It just wasn't the same. But anyway, enough about them."

Classical Influences

ZZ: Who else besides the people you've mentioned do you listen to, or admire?
PL: "I come from classical music myself, so my roots run back to Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy, Mahler, Chopin and Ives, and that's the kind of thinking that I would like to bring to any kind of music that I am involved in. It's a kind of larger scale kind of thinking. Since about 1970 the Grateful Dead hasn't been into that too much. It's been like I say more or less small-scale tunes that repeat themselves. As far as rock'n'roll music, or contemporary music, or whatever you want to call it, there are very few people I listen to. My collection consists of people like the Allman Brothers, The Band, Bob Dylan. I have a few Rolling Stones records and I have a lot of Beatles records. I have more jazz actually than I do rock'n'roll."

Jazz

"John Coltrane. When Coltrane was alive I would catch him every chance I had. Back in the late '50s when he was with Miles Davis I had the opportunity to catch that sextet with Miles Davis, Coltrane, and Cannonball Adderley 'live' in San Francisco in one of the old jazz clubs. That sort of thing, and in a more expansive vein Gill Evans Big Band recordings and Cecil Taylor in some of his more comprehensible moments. I don't know, the modern, or so-called avant garde jazz doesn't sound too much to me—I don't have too much of that. Weather Report is a really good band, but as far as Mahavishnu or say, even Corea . . . . Anyway, all those guys seem to me to be like boogaloo, or a super-hyperphonetic boogaloo. I don't know, I might be old fashioned but I really love to hear people swing, and it seems to me that it would be possible to combine that with the kind of frenetic, super-fast rhythmic trips going on in Mahavishnu and all those guys. Like in Mahavishnu there are two elements to it—there's the rhythm, and then there's the melodic line and that's all there is to it. It's super-primitive music, almost like Indian music. I don't know why people call it sophisticated because it isn't. It's just melody and rhythm which, in a way, is a highly evolved kind of music when the Indians do it, but it's certainly not as jazz musicians do it, it's not systematic in the slightest. Like Weather Report—they're into a more kind of polyphonic kind of music which makes a lot of sense to me. 'Cause then there's electronic music."

Electronic Music

"In my late college years which lasted until about '62, I was fortunate enough to get into a class in Mills College in Oakland, California, which was right across the bay from San Francisco, with Berio, and at that point he wasn't into electronic music too heavily, in fact he's done very little since then, he's more into the voice and instruments. And of all the people who are composing that music today—the three major forces, Boulez, Stockhausen and Berio—conveniently enough they're from each one of the major musical European countries—Stockhausen and Berio are the only ones who are still producing meaningful music. Actually, the last Berio work I heard in, I guess it was '68 or '69, was magnificent—'Laborintus 2' it was called. Since then he's brought out a recording of that which doesn't capture the power of this work which had tape—stereophonic tape, two drummers—jazz drummers, essentially, playing tape drum-sets instead of the regular percussion outfit, chorus, a speaker and some instruments like a fourteen-piece instrument ensemble. Stockhausen, of course, is getting more and more into this intuitive music, which is, amazingly enough, a lot similar to what we are trying to do. As far as improvisation is concerned, his style is a lot farther out than ours is, but the principles are the same, with the exception of the fact that he notates a lot of the stuff in intuitive ways like, 'Play the longest sount that you can possibly play,' or 'Play a flurry of the shortest sounds as fast as you possibly can, on a given cue'. 'Tune your shortwave radio to something that turns you on and work against it,' that sort of thing. Which is a lot like concept art, and I haven't really heard too much of that music so I couldn't tell how successful it would be. But everything he's done up to 1970 has been extremely impressive to my mind. My partner Ned Lagin, Mickey Hart and myself were involved in experimenting with electronic music, but Mickey's since dropped out so there's just the two of us. We perform it in the intermission at concerts. We do it as a break. Ned has a very evolved instrument which consists of a synthesiser, a modular synthesiser with keyboard, and electric piano, and a computer. The computer is like a score in a way, he lays out certain functions, let's say changes, that'll go down in the course of the music, and he programmes it into the computer and then when he starts the computer, the changes all occur automatically within a certain time period. This is the way he's planning to use it. It's the most primitive way because we just got the computer in June or July, something like that. The system that I was going to have built is not happening because the guy who was going to build it completely crapped out in the middle of the job. I have the bass with all the switching on it and I've got the frets for the console with all the tone modulation modules, and the foot pedals with all the switching on it and stuff, but that's it, and right now I'm using a ring modulator. So the contrast is pretty great 'cause he has under his control, I should say, virtually an infinite range of sounds and music that he can play, and I've got a very limited range, so it's really over-balanced. He'll tell you different, he'll say, 'Well Phil, you just haven't worked with that enough, you can do more than you have been doing,' and so forth, and he's probably right up to a certain point, but I know enough about it to know that there's no possible way that one guy with two pedals and a ring modulator can possibly compete with an entire computer/synthesiser system. That's even the wrong word, it's not even a question of competition, it's a question of polyphonic music. So, I essentially have to be the drone, relating back to Indian music, I have to be the drone, the ground, the pre-conscious state out of which the synthesister, which he's playing, rings thoughts, let's say. So that's sort of the stage we're at now. I personally don't think that the middle of a Grateful Dead show is the best place for this music, although in some places the response has been amazing. Hollywood, for instance, people were all pretty crazy 'cause there were some security people who were getting pretty violent, and so we went out and did out thing—everybody was pretty high in Hollywood, they just sort of relaxed, they just got into the zone, in the space of long slow changes which, if you're pretty high and feeling like killing, it might just change your thinking. I really don't know exactly what it will do to a person but the vibe was totally different after we'd finished. Tom could tell you something about it—he was there, he was amazed by it all—all those people, he said, 'You really got them into a good vibe situation, and that was the last thing I would have expected from electronic music.

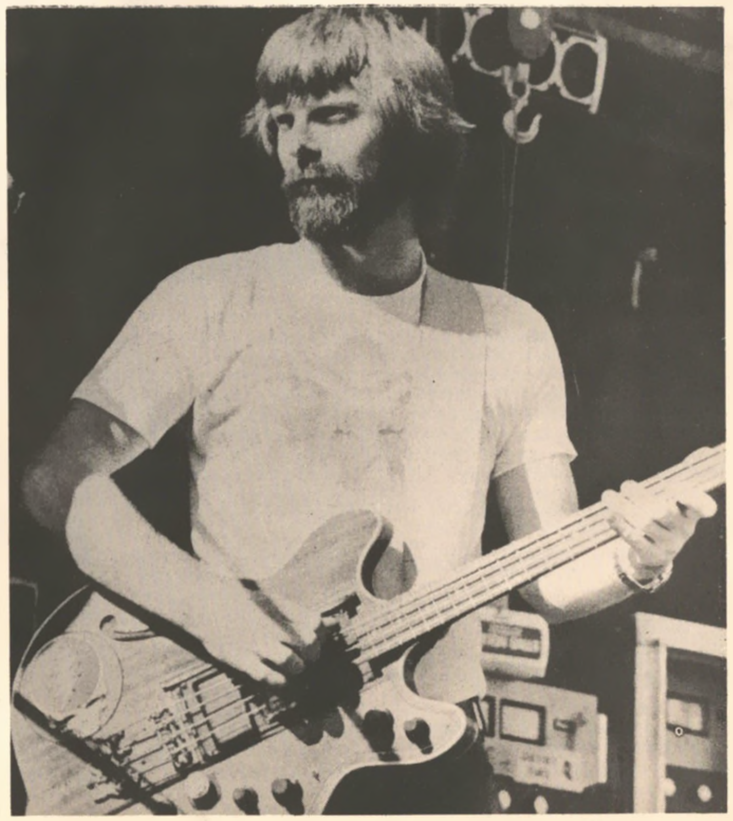
"I suppose eventually we'll get something out on record. Ned has already one composition that's almost finished, it's 45 minutes in all, so that could come out on a record. Ned has a composition that was complete about two years ago but now he wants to revise it. It's got David Freiberg, Grace Slick, Garcia, Spencer Dryden, Mickey Hart, myself and Ned, like an all-star cast you know, doing this electronic music which nobody except Ned and myself had any experience with before, and it was amazing how intuitively all these people were able to absolutely get into it. I mean, the way he [Ned] had us do it was he played white noise, or actually pink noise (pink noise is white noise that has been filtered), and he just had us improvise, more or less, upon this white noise. It was amazing how synchronised the whole thing turned out to be. It just totally blew me away. I would lay down a part, and then Ned would lay down a part, and then I would lay down another part, but none of us would ever hear what any of the others had done. We only had this one level, this one layer of stuff to work with, which was the white noise in the cans, and there was also a synthesiser track which was like bleeps and swoops and that sort of thing. Ned would not dig me saying it like that, but that's what it sounded like. Those two were the only things that everybody had in common to work with, and it all came out sounding incredible, especially the vocal parts. But now he wants to revise it and add the chorus parts, so he plans to do that probably by the end of the year, and so I don't know whether the record will ever get out over here. Of course, it's not going to be a big seller, or anything like that. Although, I really shouldn't say that, it could be. It could be crazy enough and 'heads' might decide that they really want this so that they can completely zone out. But anyway, some of it is going to be coming out on records in one form or another. As a matter of fact, the first step that we made towards that was using the synthesiser, using Ned playing synthesiser on 'Unbroken Chain' on the new album, which I thought was extremely successful. Not so much necessarily the tune itself as a whole, but the tune itself as a sketch of what happened when we finally laid it down. It blew me over I must say. Even though I had thought of using synthesiser in the beginning, what happened in the middle part when he started playing it like it was drums—that really made it."

ZZ: How much of the 'Feedback' track on 'Live/Dead' was your idea?
PL: "Most of that stuff originally was my idea. Because there we were with all those electronic instruments and it was starting to be obvious to me that it could be used for that, for those functions, in that kind of manner. Even though you can't control them too well, they more or less end up being pretty tonal, tonal in a sense that the sounds that usually come out tend to have the harmonic structure of tonal notes. When that got started, we only did that for a little while, it was for only about two years that we did that, and now when we do it it just doesn't sound right because people are on the wah-wah pedals. Weir actually was one of the masters of that stuff but he doesn't do it any more at all. I can't imagine why, 'cause he would just come out with this incredible stuff and it was absolutely off the top of his head, totally. That's why it amazes me that he doesn't explore that. Maybe he just thinks that it's too complicated or whatever, which it isn't. I mean, if you've got an ear, the whole range of any kind of music is open to you, you don't have to know what the rules are. This is my theory, anyway. Being a college drop-out."

Bass Playing & Improvisation

ZZ: You don't really play the bass like any other bass guitarist do you?
PL: "No I don't. I don't like that kind of playing 'cause it's too repetitive, most of it. I rarely, rarely hear bass players play stuff that's not a pattern, and in fact, that's the way people think of it. They say, 'OK you lay down the bass pattern for this one,' or the 'bass line' they sometimes call it, but it's still very repetitive. So I like to play it more in the sense of like the continuo bass of the baroque period, or the real bass line in classical music—Beethoven or Mahler, in a way that like makes the music move to different places even though in rock'n'roll music it just seems to be more convenient to play the root of the chord all the time. Unless you've got a specific kind of harmonic change that's happening like where you can play the fifth of the chord which becomes the root of another chord, being the same note."

ZZ: Do you think of what you play as



melodies, because in that sense it's counterpoint?

PL: "Yes I do, because the bass line always has to be like that. Although it's a little slower than the main melodic line which is up on top, or even some of the voices. Yes, I can see them like that—polyphonic counterpoint or as much as I can which, when you've got four musicians playing pitched instruments, that excludes the drums, it's real easy to step on someone else's lines or notes. In recent years I've slacked off a little bit in that concept, just because first of all we've narrowed it down to tunes, and Keith came along and he's very accomplished and can do all that stuff. Sometimes I like to just play on the high register of the bass and let Keith play the bass line. Which doesn't fit as well with the drums, but it's a different texture. I never have liked having the same texture in a band, or any kind of musical entity because where's it at if it's the same all the time?"

ZZ: Can you throw some light on this business of improvisation? There are times in your performances where one instrument changes the basic pattern and everyone follows one by one over a certain number of bars until you are doing something else completely. But there always seems to be somebody in charge.

PL: That's just the way our group does it. There are some people who can do it faster than that. Some bands, like jazz bands, can do it faster than that, although they don't very often, they've gotten to be more same-sounding. If we were more aligned in the jazz area it would be just like jazz music, that is solos, the head, the first melodic statement, then everybody takes a solo, and maybe there's a drum solo, and then the head comes back again and it's out. Which to me is a pretty lame structure, surely. Even in so-called modern jazz, guys do the same kind of thing. They play the head, although it's more complex, then they do a bunch of solos, then they do the head again and then it's out. I don't know, that's more simple than any kind of structure that was ever used in pre-classical music even, a baroque suite or anything like that. So we're not into that level. I think that my group improvisation is more interesting, that's what I've been trying to inject into the way the Grateful Dead thinks about things. Everybody in the band is more or less inclined towards that. It's just real difficult to do because some people just want to get into a rut, as it were. So group improvisation is real difficult to do because you just have to be super-intuitive about it. Although, like you were saying, it's true there's always someone that leads it into that direction and then the rest of the band will pick it up. Sometimes it's all at once, but mostly though it's one at a time as you say. I think it's pretty interesting the way it works out. The first idea comes out and then somebody else picks up the other end of that to a point where everybody's doing something completely individual, and then were do we stop? I don't know what will carry on from that. I hope a higher level of togetherness. Because there was one point when we were thinking as one person. None of that was ever recorded of course. The only good it ever did was that we knew we could do it. It's very fragile, it depends on people's state of mind, how many drugs they've had, what kind of drugs they've had in their system that day, how they're getting along with their ladies, how many stops you had to make on the flight, how many drinks you had, it's so gradual. On our last US tour we played Ohio, Chicago, Virginia, Washington DC, New York and Philadelphia and out of those six gigs there were three that were good. Unlike four years ago when our average was higher. The thing about the kind of music we play is that you can't do it that well every night. I seem to recall when I was playing in orchestras and stuff like that, when I was at classical school, I thought I'd become a conductor or something like that, I always thought that if I had been born a hundred years ago that's what I'd be. Anyway, our averages were just so much higher then, it was easier."

ZZ: How far have the possibilities of your instrument been extended? You've got probably the most sophisticated bass guitar anywhere, if you can call it a bass guitar.

PL: The instrument, as it was originally conceived, would have been at one end of the spectrum an electric bass with which you could play rock'n'roll music but with entirely different tone colours, new tone colours. Like every note would have a change in it rather than just being a note that was attacked, sustained and then died away. During that period it would change internally, that was what I was after on one end of the spectrum. On the other end of the spectrum it would have been a synthesiser which would have been controlled by the strings of an electric bass, so that I could still use my hands to play the electric bass, which I've learned to do fairly well in ten years, and still have a synthesiser to modify the sounds and make a new kind of music with this relatively simple instrument. Unfortunately, that didn't happen so what I have now is a super electric bass which is real easy to play, and has all kinds of great tone colours just for the electric bass, but it doesn't have that synthesiser capability of being able to change or like play around and say every note have a different tone colour and that kind of thing. That's what I was really after and it just hasn't happened. It's possible that something like that could happen in the future, but with the present synthesiser technology it's just real difficult because everything is voltage controlled and you get voltage out of an electric bass but it's voltage according to amplitude—how loud you play, not what you play, and the hang up of the system that I was going to have built was that we couldn't get a frequency to voltage converter. That is something that will pick out what note you are playing in the audio spectrum and convert it to voltage, a certain amount of voltage, which would then cause your filters, or whatever else you wanted to use, to track along with what you were playing. So it's like still in the future but I do have a great electric bass, it's just a flash, it's just a trip to play. The people from Alembic built it essentially. Rick Turner built the wood, built the instrument itself and the pick-ups, and George Mundy who is an electronic technician you might call him, he used to work for Alembic but now he's on his own, he's freelance."

Drugs

"I can't say for sure that the music would have been the same without the drugs, in fact, I'm not qualified to say. The thing about the audiences was that they were exactly where we were, we didn't even have to play good. It was like we were them, they were us, and when you're just standing there on the stage boogying away and you can see 5,000 people going up and down in a wave like an ocean, it tends to give you a feeling like you're doing something right. I guess that was where we got the idea that we could play whatever we wanted and it would still work. But the drug influence sort of diminished, and at a certain point there was none of us that would take any of those drugs, none of us. Like at the Monterey Pop Festival in '67, everybody was as stoned as they could possibly be except us, because we'd been there before, and nobody wanted to go on that trip at that time. I for instance, I do it all the time, acid I mean. All the time. I love it. I think that it's one of the greatest tools for learning about yourself. It's my quality knob. I take a few drops of acid and I turn up my quality knob. Listening back to what I've played later on a tape, because the drugs can't have any influence on a tape, I find that generally speaking the quality is just what I thought it was. Especially about what I, myself, was playing. The relationship between what I was playing and the whole band is not always that good because not everybody is always on the same plane. Or on the same trip. I've seen some people take acid and just get bombed out horribly, and I'm sure you have too. It all depends on your state of mind, but as for now, the drug influence now, I would say it's a lot lighter than it was at the peak. It's like we're coming down off the other side of the mountain, and besides the quality of available acid has gone down to such an alarming degree that you just can't get good shit, and apart from that there's all these other new drugs that have come around, whose names I don't need to mention I'm sure. Most of which I don't care to use. Cocaine, for instance, makes me evil and makes me hate music. I hate music when I'm under the influence, so I can't use it, it's just impossible."

The Rock Press

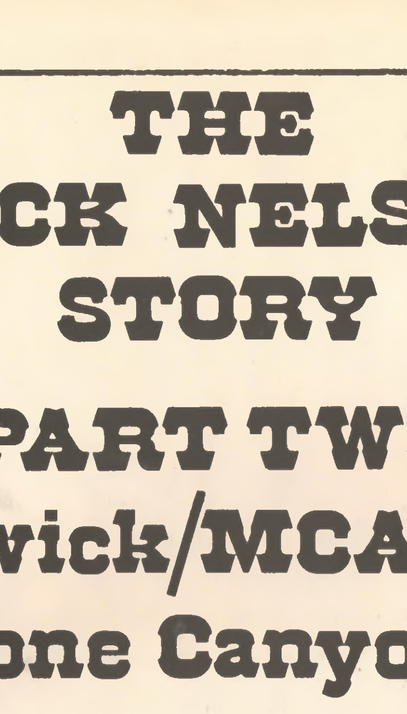
"In the United States we've got a million of them and they're just so jive. What I do, I usually pick up the classical magazines like 'The Gramophone', 'Records and Recordings', and stuff like that, and I've been noticing that our latest records have been getting a lot of flack over here. One guy in 'Records and Recordings' said something like, 'Well, this here band has been getting a lot of flack for the last couple of years and everybody seems to have forgotten how great they were when they came over here and played, and at that time everybody was getting on the bandwagon for superlatives. So why don't we just look at it as a sort of ongoing process. Just because it's not like it was, or not like you expect it to be, is that bad? That doesn't make it bad.' However, I would say that it's really difficult to perceive, just through the recordings, some kind of continuity rather than like we're just churning them out."

☐ **ANDY**

THE RICK NELSON STORY

PART TWO: Brunswick/MCA Before The Stone Canyon Band

Before we start, and you take the two part exam (orat and written) on the content of the first part of this epic, a few little oddments that have come up since then. First concerns Joe Maphis, who was (all together now) 'the guitarist on the first album'. Right, very good. Peter O'Brien (also known as Omaha Knox) thrust into my hand a Joe Maphis album, a fairly ancient one called 'Fire On The Strings', which has a magnificently fifties type picture on the sleeve, which I hope will be reproduced somewhere hereabouts. Note the twin necked Mosrite, with 'Joe' on the upper neck, and 'Maphis' on the lower, and also note that if you can visualise him without his hat, he looks a little like John McLaughlin's father might appear, even if he didn't have a twin necked thingy. Don't rush around looking for the LP, though, because it's frankly for Arthur Smith fans only, and quite sub-Ventures. Thank you, Peter, for the loan and don't forget, folks, 'Omaha Rainbow' is where you'll find the latest on John Stewart. The second point is that this time we're going to steam through no less than 11 of Rick's albums—dauntless readers continue, while others may make paper darts. 'For Your Sweet Love' came out in May 1963. The only real change since what went before is the label. Brunswick in its early days was the American Decca Company's English outlet, and of course Bill Haley was on it. There is still a Brunswick operating through English Decca, but it seems to be Brunswick/Dakar, a different thing altogether, the label for artists like the Chi-Lites. So when Rick said he'd signed with Decca for twenty years, he didn't mean the merry lads at Albert Embankment, but in fact the Music Corporation of American, now tied with Universal Studios. All this explains why 'Alias Smith And Jones' has an MCA logo at the end of it.



Now the record. Of the twelve tracks, I made three good, three OK, and the rest below standard. Dorsey Burnette was by now writing with Joe Osborn, although in fact brother Johnny didn't die until 1964. I suppose he was too busy performing to continue writing with his brother, and I think his toughness might have helped 'Gypsy Woman' and the frantic 'Everytime I See You Smiling' to get into the good rather than the OK class. Burton, of course, blesses both songs with fine introductions, but there's still a bit of something missing. Another stalwart, Jerry Fuller, also contributes an OK track, 'For Your Sweet Love', which comes on a bit like 'Travellin' Man Part Two', and there's also a 'Poor Little Fool Part Two' in 'String Along', although the writers involved are not the same. The other two good ones, apart from 'String Along', are 'Let's Talk The Whole Thing Over' and 'I Got A Woman', the latter of which is not quite the Elvis version, but has a great bass line and a fab solo. Listening to the record, one gets the distinct impression that the subject matter is identical to previous Nelson hits, but the songs generally fail to come through with the same strength, as if the writers were trying to create a specifically Rick Nelson type of song. In fact, three of the tracks mentioned, 'I Got A Woman', 'String Along' and 'Gypsy Woman' were single A sides of the time, although none of them were top ten. Quickies on some of the other tracks—'One Boy Too Late' was written by Tony Powers and Ellie Greenwich, who, with Phil Spector, also wrote 'Today I Met The Boy I'm Gonna Marry'. 'What Comes Next?' has a chorus like the bom-boms which herald 'I'm A Lumberjack', and 'I Will Follow You' was the male version of Petula Clark's 'I Will Follow Him'. Altogether, not exactly a landmark.

'FOR YOU'

If it's for me, I don't mind, because it's an improvement on the last one. Eight goods and three OKs only leaves the fairly unpleasant 'You're Free To Go', the sequel to 'He'll Have To Stay', which was, of course, the sequel to 'He'll Have To Go'. These songwriters certainly keep plugging away with original ideas, don't they? Good old Jerry Fuller occurs again, with 'Hey There Little Miss Tease' (good) and 'Just Take A Moment' (OK), the latter co-written with one Cissi Wilson. Dave Burgess, the ex Champ, turns up again with 'Hello Mister Happiness', which has very good guitarring, but a rather odd end (nevertheless good), and the three singles were 'Down Home', 'For You' and 'That's All She Wrote' (good, OK, and good respectively). The first of those were written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, and Rick's treatment is very straight, nicely enhancing the undoubted strength of the song, and another fine writer, Don Gibson, about whom Briggles threatens to write an article shortly, is represented by 'A Legend In My Time' (not as in 'leg end' or 'foot', as we call it). 'Fools Rush In', you know, where angels fear to treat, is on this album too, and James Burton plays a solo which he also played later when Elvis did the song, and even again when his (Burton's) solo album came out. More of that album later. The final track of the record is interesting in 1974, because it's 'The Nearness Of You', and what with Bryan Ferry murdering 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes', and Gary Shearston bruceing 'I Get A Kick Out Of You', it's pretty nice to hear an ordinary version of a good song. In fact, the singing is a bit suspect at times, but Burton's guitar work is exceptional, as opposed to outstanding. Yes, a nice album, and one to get if you can find it.

There will now be a short intermission while I quote from the sleeve notes of Rick's first two albums under his new contract. First: '"For Your Sweet Love' is the first album to be released by Rick Nelson under the Brunswick label. Deftly performed by this talented young artist, his highly personal style and amazing versatility have never been shown to greater advantage. Each of the twelve sides has a different quality and feeling yet each bears the unmistakable sound that is uniquely Rick Nelson; his voice and his music."

Second—"The amazing versatility of Rick Nelson was never more evident than on this, his latest release for the Brunswick label. Any one of the twelve selections could be a smash hit single on its own. This tremendously talented young artist handles all types of songs with equal ease and facility, without at any time losing his own personalised style. His distinctive and tasteful phrasing and vocal quality make it immediately evident that it is a Rick Nelson rendition."

Notice the odd similarity? In all fairness, and changing the subject, I should note here that Jimmie Haskell, who was to my ears heavy handed on the later Imperial albums as arranger and orchestra leader, reached on 'For You' a near perfect balance with the backing group of Burton, Osborn, Frost and Johnson. The function of orchestras in rock'n'roll seems to me to be necessarily non-intrusive, and this album contains no battles. So well done, Mr H.

'THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU'

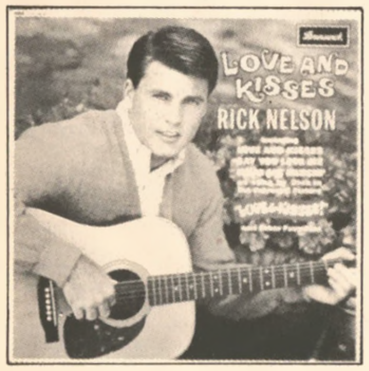
The very thought of me makes you yawn

—what kind of welcome is that for a lad like me? Four good and one OK out of twelve takes us right back to the first album in this section. Listen to the sleeve note—"With 'The Very Thought Of You', Rick Nelson, in a sense achieves the impossible . . . he tops himself. This is a great album, one of the best in the fabulous career of a young man admired the world over for his distinctive singing style and superb phrasing. His amazing versatility is once more in evidence as he presents a wide variety of exciting and interesting songs." That makes three versatilities so far—is that a record? No, but what we're discussing is, and you might call it the Ray Noble album, for that gent, a much respected name in easy-listening circles, provided two of the songs, the title track, which is nasty, with a cha cha treatment that Joe Loss might approve of, and 'Love Is The Sweetest Thing', which is OK, because it can withstand any sort of treatment. Then there's Dave Burgess again, with 'The Loneliest Sound' (good) and an also-ran called 'I Love You More Than You Know', which smacks of writing too many songs without enough good ideas. Charlie Rich comes into the picture with a good one called 'Just A Little Bit Sweet', and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil's 'I Don't Wanna Love You' is also good, with a lovely guitar line. The other good one, which is again good Burton, is 'I'll Get You Yet'. Among the rest is 'Be My Love', yes, that which Mario Lanza sang in 1950 in 'Toast Of New Orleans'. Did you know that Mario's real name was Alfred Arnold Cocozza? I thought not. Rick's go at the song is sheer catastrophe, and his slow version of 'Dinah', with very dubious low notes and cocktail lounge piano is almost as bad as Joe Brown's version is good. The piano in fact gets very irritating by the instrumental break, and I wondered whether Burton was ill for this track . . . Finally, there's something called 'I Wonder (If Your Love Will Ever Belong To Me)', which was written apparently by five people. You would have thought that that many people could have come up with something, however meagre . . . .

'SPOTLIGHT ON RICK'

This is the first one of this lot that Rocky Prior, who lent them all to me, had in stereo, and the sound is surely different, if primitive. This is a slight improvement on the previous one, even if the sleeve note says "The spotlight will grow ever brighter on this outstanding young man, for with his marvellous versatility, charm, good looks, and vitality, the future holds more and more promise." Maybe that's a bit better too. Right. Here we have 'I'm Talking About You', that Chuck Berry masterpiece, done here a la Ronnie Hawkins, and therefore good. In fact, the track has all the depth of sound that some of Berry's recordings seemed to lack even if Chuck's problems were down to recording quality more than anything else. Baker Knight returns to the writing scene with two good ones, 'Yesterday's Love', which seems to be the ultimate B-side, and 'Just Relax', a very appropriate Nelson song, which could have been a hit had it been released as a single. Sonny Curtis' 'Don't Breathe A Word' would have been more appropriate for Bobby Vee, but it's OK here, Jerry Fuller's 'I Tried' is good, and there's a 'Just A Little Too Much Part 2' in 'That's Why I Love You Like I Do', which you probably know is a line from the earlier song. Other noteables are 'I'm A Fool', which sounds like the Everly Brothers singing 'Game Of Love' (W. Banana), and 'A Happy Guy', one of whose co-writers was Kenny Rankin. Wonder if it was THE Kenny Rankin? On the whole, an average LP.

'BEST ALWAYS'
Burning through them now, aren't we? This one won't take long, because it's basically a list of notable songwriters having their wares performed in a bland manner, and I don't mean Bobby. Familiar songs are 'You Don't Know Me' by Ray Charles out of Eddy Arnold, 'I Know A Place' by Petula Clark (again!) out of Tony Hatch, and 'Since I Don't Have You' by, with and from The Skyliners. What cay you say about them? Respectively, nothing, the follow up to the excellent 'Downtown' also by Petula, and good song with near painful falsetto. Perhaps I should have included 'My Blue Heaven' in the familiar category, but it's dreadful, with only Burton surviving. The drummer seems to have escaped from the Dave Clark drum school. I don't think I'll even mention the other writers—I don't expect they remember their work with any great enthusiasm, and I feel the same about this album.



'LOVE AND KISSES'
A curious sleeve picture on this one, doncha think? Seemingly the album which goes with a film called 'Love And Kisses'—two tracks from the film, with ten others. Here there are two very good things, next to each other on side two. First is 'More', the familiar song, but with a brilliant intro, a double time instrumental break, and a lunatic drummer who sounds as if he might be speeded up. Then there's 'Raincoat In The River', which is just a very interesting song, well performed. Apart from that, the title track is a 'Good Timin' ' rip-off, a good Burton solo on 'Love Is Where You Find It', an average version of a beautiful song in 'Try To Remember' (the kind of September), plus a lot of very average stuff that's not worth much space, and therefore won't be getting any. But we haven't had a quote from Rick yet in this instalment, so here goes, on the subject of his film career, which started in 1952, with—"'Here Come The Nelsons' was a film that we did the year before the TV show, and from that film came the idea for the series. The next year I had a small part in 'The Story Of Three Loves', with Leslie Caron. But 'Rio Bravo' was the most successful film I did, followed by 'The Wackiest Ship In The Army', with Jack Lemmon. 'Love And Kisses' was a film that had been a Broadway show, a situation comedy. It was fairly successful in the States, but not totally. That was in my robot period, when I didn't know what I was doing. You know, wind me up, and . . . The album from that film lacked direction and everything else, because I didn't know what I wanted to do at all during that period." Yeah.

IMPROVEMENT
You may have noticed that the six albums so far discussed have been somewhat tatty—good points from time to time, but just as many bad ones. Well, maybe that thought occurred to our Rick too, because it's about here that his 'robot' period ended, and from this point on, despite the odd blind alley, everything improves. The first of the albums in this section is called 'Bright Lights And Country Music', and while the cover photo still leans back towards those 'versatility' days, the music is generally infinitely better. It's difficult to imagine a better song to start with than Terry Fell's 'Truck Drivin' Man'. Burton is quite unbelievable on dobro, and Rick and everyone else sound so much happier. Really makes me beam to hear it, and it's the kind of song that could be investigated with benefit by some of our better British country rock bands. In fact, one of the first of those,the much missed Plainsong, were fans of Terry Fell, and said as much on one of the occasions I saw them playing. Now on a record with a title like that, you wouldn't expect to find a Nelson original, but the next one, 'You Just Can't Quit' is just that, and it's by no means put in the shade by the great country compositions surrounding it. A taste, perhaps, of the goodies to come in the last part of this saga, and again, you can hear Burton's wild enthusiasm showing through. 'Louisiana Man' is next, and I've never been an avid Doug Kershaw person, although I can see the benefit of the song when it has a treatment like the one here. Even Jim Reeves can't spoil this, but 'Welcome To My World' comes over as a bit bland—keep smiling though, because 'Kentucky Means Paradise' (probably not the restaurants, I think) is great again, beating 'Louisiana Man' at its own game. The final track on a good side is 'Here I Am' which was written by Glen Campbell, and sounds like an Elvis song, especially when you read that the backing vocals are by the Jordanaires. Over we go, and 'Bright Lights And Country Music' is from the same league as 'Truck Drivin' Man', and therefore ace. Willie Nelson's 'Hello Walls' is next, and it's a familiar song, as is 'No Vacancy', a Merle Travis thing. More Jim Reeves next, with 'I'm A Fool To Care', then another Willie Nelson, 'Congratulations' which is somewhat in the country corn packet, but quite a good crying in the beer song. It has become fashionable to like Willie Nelson this year, which is fine and good, but Atlantic, who I believe have his contract, don't seem to release anything here. Twelve Eddie Harris albums, perhaps, but no Willie Nelson? Anyway, Rick's album ends up with 'Night Train To Memphis', a fantastic song with great picking, making altogether a superb track.

'ON THE FLIP SIDE'
This is the one we don't have anywhere. Rocky, to whom most of these records belong, has even advertised for this one, but without success. Does anyone out there have one, either to sell or lend? We'd be grateful enough to offer you a night out with Michael Wale, or Jim McGuire, or both, or even neither . . . We asked Rick about it—"Some of the tracks are 'Moonshine', 'Your Kind Of Lovin'', 'Take A Broken Heart', and 'They Don't Give Medals To Yesterday's Heroes', which came from a special I did, for which Burt Bacharach wrote the music. It was almost like music from a play, and I'm not on all the tracks. Joanie Somers was in it, and we do a duet . . . It was interesting to do a special, and the music was good, but Bacharach's songs are very difficult to sing. Trying to learn them is really a trip, because I don't read music, and they were really far out."

'COUNTRY FEVER'
Yes, some more of the goodies! Gib Gilbeau, yet, starts it off with 'Take A City Bride', and Rick sings the first verse

in French, or maybe Cajun, man, while Burton's dobro is making me run fast out of superlatives. 'Funny How Time Slips Away' was written by Willie Nelson again but the most famous version was by Joe Hinton. Rick's version is almost as good, while 'The Bridge Washed Out' is a terrific song, but I've never heard of the writers. Again there's a personal Rick song, 'Alone', and again it doesn't produce a drop in quality, although perhaps 'Big Chief Buffalo Nickel' does, because it seems to be nonsense. 'Mystery Train' is the end of side one, and the backing is dynamite, less economical than Presley's but with a superb Burton solo. Side two is even better. The songs are well chosen, singing and playing are well up to standard, and it's a veritable peach. What do you say, Rick?

"When I made those two country LPs, they were reasonably successful, but I never got around to going out live on the country circuits. I didn't want to get totally involved with that music, because it can be very confining, and all of a sudden, you can get to be known as strictly country. However, I always feel tremendously flattered that I've been accepted in that field, because it's a very hard one to get into, if that's your aim. Country rock has always been the most natural thing for me, and at that time, I didn't know what kind of music I wanted to play, and had no direction musically, so I got the idea of going back to where I started from, with a basic band of very good musicians. It was a lot easier and simpler than all those arranged things I'd got into."

Now both these two country albums are deleted, here and in the States, BUT you can still get them! About mid-1973, they were repackaged as a double album, unfortunately only available on import so far, called 'Rick Nelson Country' (MCA 2-4004). You should have it, really. The best thing is if we all write to MCA at 84 Baker Street, and ask them nicely to put it out. It won't take long, and it could save you a couple of quid, or even more. All right?

Anyway, was the double album your idea Rick? "Yeah, it was, they came to me, you know. It was my idea to do the country albums originally, about five or six years ago, and I recorded my favourite country songs of the time, and did them as country as I could, so that there wasn't any cop out with strings and all that stuff. I liked the way they came out at the time. Glen Campbell's on there, playing bass, I think, and singing harmony and stuff, and James is playing dobro. It was a lot of fun recording those, and I'm glad they're re-packaged. In fact, it wasn't done to fill a gap between albums, but both those records had been deleted, so they were brought out again, as a double package. It's the kind of thing that I don't think gets dated, although I'll probably be proved wrong eventually."

No, Rick, dead right. They're just great, and all you ZigZaglanders better get your pens and paper out . . .

'ANOTHER SIDE OF RICK'

More like another manipulation, although perhaps that's being a little harsh. After those two excellent country albums, Rick took up with a couple of brothers called Boylan, John and Terry. They in their turn were mixed up with Koppelman and Rubin, about whom John Sebastian had words to say which we didn't really like to mention in print. Now these latter two gents were tied up with several artists at the time, like for example Tim Hardin, John Sebastian and John and Terry Boylan. So 'Another Side Of Rick' has three Tim Hardin songs, one by John Sebastian, four by John Boylan and one by Terry Boylan, as well as a John Boylan collaborating with Rick Nelson song. Do you begin to get what looks like the publishing picture? Musically, the record doesn't seem to make it. I can't put my finger on it, but I reckon that basically it doesn't sound like a Rick Nelson album. The Tim Hardin songs are just irrelevant versions to my ears, and most of the Boylan songs come over as twee. Being constructive about it, there is one excellent song by John Boylan, called 'I Wonder If Louise Is Home', and there's something nice about 'Promenade In Green', the co-composition, that perhaps being the fact that Rick's twin sons, Gunnar and Matthew, get name checks in it. I won't go into a lot more detail about the record, but an example of the bad vibes can be heard in 'Georgia On My Mind', which starts off quite slowly, pleasantly relaxed, until some loony gets in there and over-produces it with saxophones and Las Vegas orchestras until it dies miserably.

Not unconnected with all this is a record called 'Playback' by the Appletree Theatre, which was out briefly on MGM, but is more than likely now deleted. I really couldn't tell you what it's all about, but maybe it's a rock opera? This is 1967, you know, before 'Tommy', but around the same time as 'Simon Simopath', with which you should all be familiar (by Nirvana, you know). 'Playback' seems to consist of a bunch of basically disconnected songs, talking bits and so on (stereophonic footprints and all that mung), with odd amusing bits punctuated by long confusing bits. In fact, there are three songs on 'Another Side Of Rick' from 'Playback', the one I mentioned before ('I Wonder If Louise Is Home'), which is recited by someone who sounds like the comic detective in 'MacMillan And Wife' (no, not Rock Hudson, he's not supposed to be funny), plus 'Don't Blame It On Your Wife' and 'Barefoot Boy'. The only other thing of interest to me about the Appletree Theatre is that their list of helpers includes Larry Coryell, Joe Butler, Michael Equine, Chuck Rainey and Rick Nelson. Can't hear him, though. To sum it all up, the Boylan songs don't suit Nelson's album, while the Theatre LP is so fragmented, that without explanation, which might have been given in an American fold-out sleeve, I don't know what it's all about, Alfie. Ray McCarthy, mind you, who lent me the Nelson album, thinks both the albums are pretty neat, and he has the kind of taste with which I don't care to argue, as you'll see when he starts writing in this mag soon.

Rick: "At one time I was involved with John and Terry Boylan, and apart from getting me into the Appletree Theatre record, John produced an album of mine called 'Perspective', and was also involved in 'Another Side Of Rick'. They were involved with Koppelman and Rubin, in that John was the liaison man, while Terry is a really good writer. The album with Hardin and Sebastian songs was done because I really liked the songwriting, and I didn't know whether I could sing that sort of stuff. Actually, John Boylan was very influential on me doing those songs, as were Koppelman and Rubin, who were music publishers for Hardin and Sebastian. So I was introduced to them in that way, but I'm a big fan of both writers—I'm not sorry I did those things, because, if anything, it made up my mind as to the way I wanted to go. Jack Nitzsche arranged 'Don't Make Promises', and although it's a very good arrangement, it doesn't work for me. 'Perspective' with the Randy Newman songs was a total experiment, and those Steve Miller type sound effects between the tracks were my idea."

'PERSPECTIVE'

The last album of Rick's that we'll be dealing with in this section. Again, the Boylans, or rather John Boylan, are involved in production and songwriting, but there are some very good songs on this one by writers like Nilsson ('Without Her'), Paul Simon ('For Emily Wherever I May Find Her'), Richie Havens, and dominating the whole thing, Randy Newman, several of whose greatest hits are performed. With a bit more meat here, and a lot less wispiness in the production, this is really rather good, which makes it all the more surprising that it was never released here. There's even a painting on

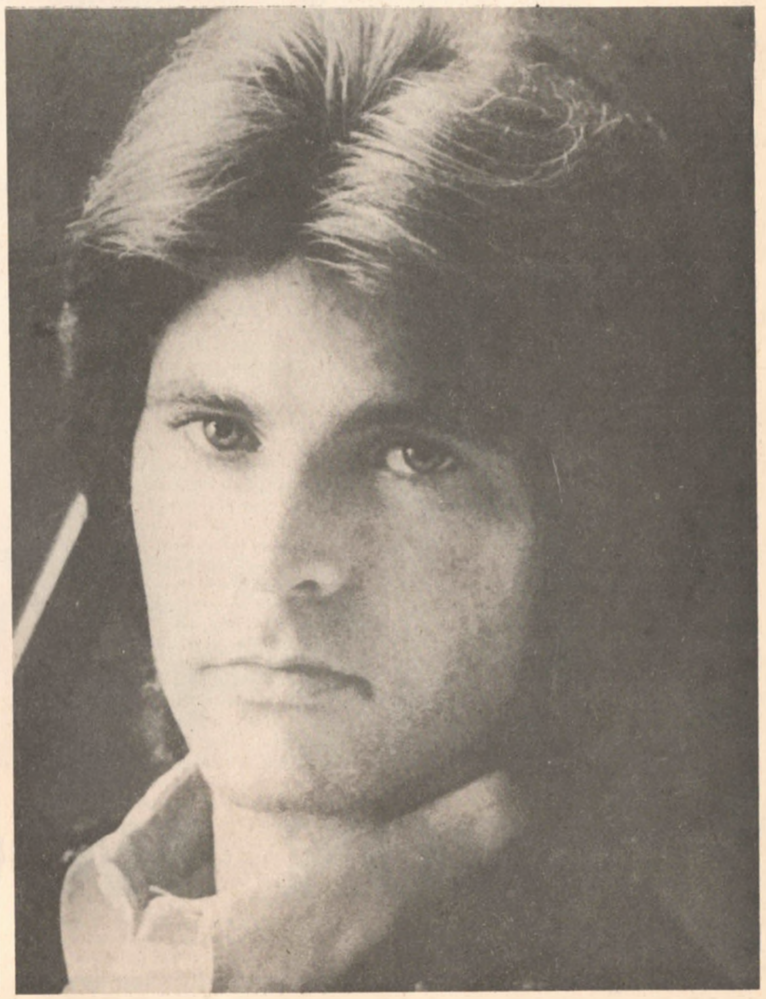
above James Burton

the back by Mrs Nelson, Kristin, and those sound effects referred to are pleasantish Hawkwind sort of noises, which connect most of side two. But it's the Newman songs that dominate the album. 'Wait Till Next Year' has a lot of nattering people behind, while 'Love Story', which is one of the most amazing songs I've ever heard, is introduced by someone stereophonically sploshing about in some water. After that, a car drives away, then an aeroplane does the same, and 'So Long Dad' starts, and that's another superb song. A bit of kids' noise, and then a bit more of 'Love Story', then a thunderstorm heralding—well, what would you think? Yes, 'I Think It's Gonna Rain Today', and while I don't really approve of Rick's phrasing, particularly with regard to the title line, this is a song that couldn't be ruined, even by Bryan Ferry, if you see what I mean. A fine album, and a fitting way to end this part of the story, on an up.

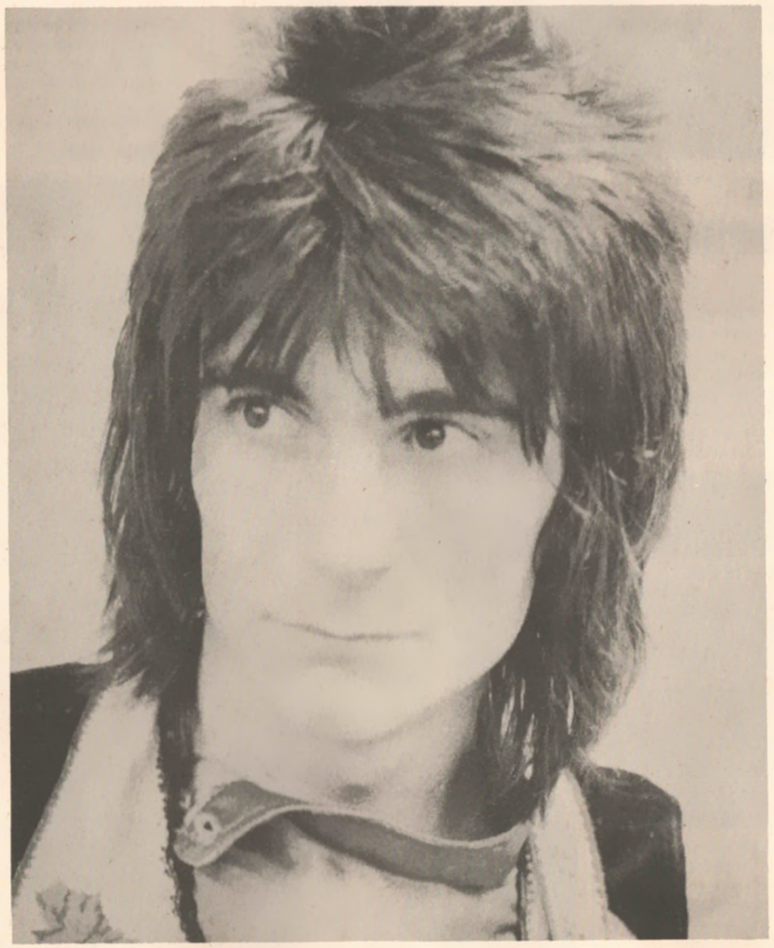
ONE MORE THING

Yes, James Burton, who has featured fairly heavily thus far in the story, and with good reason. As Rick said in the previous part of this, "James really got to be a security for me at one time, to the extent where I didn't know whether I could do a show without him." Now anyone that reads this, and many more besides, like Mick Grabham, have the utmost respect for the man's guitar playing—he's among the top three guitarists there are, and he has been since 1957 or so, which is quite a time. So when a James Burton solo album came out a couple of years ago on A&M, a lot of us were holding our breaths. Unfortunately I don't think it makes it as the scorcher I would have liked and expected, but Rick was more philosophical. "I haven't heard James' solo album, but I can imagine it might not sound too good, because you can get trapped in doing sessions all the time. That's why I think it's important to get out and play live, because sessions are very confining. He's got into a thing of playing what's needed to be played, rather than creating. He's such a talented musician, it's a shame." All I can really say about the Burton solo album is that it's a repeat of many of the riffs that he created in the past behind various singers, and I suppose it goes to prove something that I've so far neglected to say—Rick Nelson and James Burton complemented each other quite perfectly, and without Rick's voice, James seems kind of lost. Undoubtedly, at this point in Rick's career, that is, up to 'Another Side Of Rick', his records would have been measurably worse without James, while without Rick, there might be no James Burton legend with quite the same strength the name holds today. And that's all for this time, the middle (and least interesting) period being finished. Next time, up to date with Rick and the Stone Canyon Band.

☐ JOHN TOBLER



I'VE GOT MY OWN STORY TO TELL



RON WOOD

Earlier this month Warner Bros released Ron Wood's first solo album, appropriately titled 'I've Got My Own Album To Do' (K 56065), so we thought that it would be an opportune time to chat with Woody and trace his musical adventures and steady rise to fame which began with The Thunderbirds (not Chris Farlowe's band), and reached some sort of peak with his two 'solo' gigs at Kilburn a couple of months ago, and the release of this album.

In this issue we'll talk about the first part of his career up until the beginning of The Faces, and those of you with back issues of ZigZag all filed away neatly may want to refer to the articles on Rod Stewart and Jeff Beck in issues 19 and 20 respectively which will provide a useful cross-reference for the latter section of this part.

When I found out that the interview was to take place in a room at the Hilton specially booked for Woody by Warner Bros, it didn't come as much of a surprise. But to get there and find Dave Walters, usually a perfectly respectable well-behaved model of a press officer, as drunk as a lord on Ron's favourite champagne . . . well, it's not the sort of thing you'd expect is it? (No, it's all lies really, Dave was in complete control of himself, and organised the proceedings in his usual efficient manner. The champagne was quite nice though—and so it bloody should have been at £16 a bottle.)

Anyway, not long after I arrived there, the man himself came literally bounding into the room like some exotic-looking parrot on speed, bubbling enthusiastically about the events of the night before when apparently Neil Young, various members of the Band, and himself got together for a jam. After just two minutes in his company, that image of an excitable fun-loving nutter—quite probably the instigator of most of The Faces' humour, proved to be accurate. The thought of delving back as far as the Birds provoked fond reminiscences for him, and he talked objectively but with great enthusiasm about all those early days.

THE BIRDS

"We were originally called The Thunderbirds. Chris Farlowe's lot were doing well (Chris Farlowe & The Thunderbirds), so us being just a local little group, we knocked the name off. It started off as an art college group based in Ruislip Manor doing kind of Dave Brubeck material. I was the drummer! The Thunderbirds lasted for a couple of years and then while I was at Ealing Art College we became The Birds—around 1960/61. Same line-up (Ali McKenzie (vcls), Ron Wood & Tony Munroe (gtrs), Kim Gardner (bass) and Pete McDaniels (drums))—we just knocked the Thunder off. Then came all that trouble from the BYRDS about the name . . . our manager was being petty about the whole thing, causing a big stink, probably to get us publicity, which he did. We were already doing alright. We got about £70 a night, Loughborough University and all that."

Now, I actually never saw The Birds 'live', but I know a couple of people who did, often, and such is their unshakeable enthusiasm that I'm now convinced that I missed out on something special. I could kick myself for only being about 12 years old at the time, especially when it was all happening just down the road from where I lived!

THE BIRDS in Autumn 1965. Ron Wood is second from the right.

"Back in the early Birds days, we played a lot of Motown stuff—'Need Your Love' (Marvin Gaye) and 'Needle In A Haystack' (Velvelettes), etc. We also did a lot of Beach Boys stuff—'Pet Sounds'-type stuff . . . 'God Only Knows'. I used to sing that. I also used to sing all those Chuck Berry numbers too . . . 'Talkin' About You', 'Maybaleen', 'Too Much Monkey Business', etc."

In their short lifespan the Birds made just four singles. They were:— 'You're On My Mind' c/w 'You Don't Love Me (You Don't Care' (Decca 12031) Nov. 1964. 'Leaving Here' c/w 'Next In Line' (Decca 12140) April 1965. 'No Good Without You Baby' c/w 'How Can It Be' (Decca 12257) Oct. 1965. 'Say Those Magic Words' c/w 'Daddy, Daddy' (Reaction 591005) Sept. 1966.

'You're On My Mind', written by Ron Wood, is pretty straightforward British R'n'B . . . lots of harmonica, a thumping beat, and a vocal sound that could easily have been early Yardbirds. Not an outstanding record by any means but quite indicative of mainstream R'n'B of the day. I much prefer the 'B' side, a scorching slice of Bo Diddley with that classic, almost hypnotic beat providing the backbone for some more good harmonica work, and splended vocals by Ali McKenzie.

The second single, 'Leaving Here', a Holland/Dozier/Holland composition, was apparently recorded by The Who for inclusion on their first album, but when that album, 'My Generation', was released, a good seven months after The Birds' single, the song was not included. A shame really because it's ideal Who material. It opens with the sort of ferocious chords that Pete Townshend has since developed and perfected to a frightening quality, and the guitar work throughout is hard, rhythmic, and very inventive. A great single, which is thankfully still available on Decca's 'Hard-Up Heroes' album—see ZZ 42. On the other side is another Ron Wood composition 'Next In Line'—still in the R'n'B mould with once again predominant harmonica, lots of echo on the voices, and solid, crunching guitar work. Well up to standard. Curiously enough, Ron Wood found a copy of 'Leaving Here' in Australia . . . "but the 'B' side by a completely different band—it was 'Can't Let Maggie Go' by the Honebus. I'd like to know what was going on there."

Every track that The Birds cut was as uncompromising and forceful as almost anything you'll find from that era, and their third single, 'No Good Without You Baby', is possibly the best they ever did. It's apparently an old under-exposed Motown gem written by someone called Stevenson who I know nothing about, except that if he wrote more songs like this I want to hear them as soon as possible. Superb vocals, stunning guitar work (including a devastating short solo, so inane in concept, but delivered with such a vengeance as to knock you right over), and a rivetting chorus line, are the main ingredients that make this such a classic. If I had to illustrate mid-sixties British rock music to someone completely ignorant in such matters, this is one of the tracks I'd play him. The flip side is another Ron Wood composition called 'How Can It Be', and comprises the same features as all the other tracks I've mentioned. As I play through them all one by one, the quality of the guitar work especially is consistently fabulous . . . old Ron certainly has a keen sense of dramatics, tearing out chords and short solos like the electricity is gonna be turned off tomorrow, but with the taste and imagination that suggest he is one of the surprisingly few people who realise that you don't have to be dull to be heavy. This particular track, 'How Can It Be', demonstrates that point as well as any of them, and coupled with the 'A' side, makes a great single.

By the time their fourth and final release, which incidentally went under the name of The Birds Birds—Robert Stigwood's idea, they had changed record labels (more about that in a minute), and they'd also developed away from the basic R'n'B mould that they started out in. 'Say Those Magic Words', is a thumping rocker, very attractive from a chart-sales point of view, and distinguished by some particularly fine guitar work yet again. It's not exactly my favourite Birds single but I can see its appeal and appreciate its musical qualities; maybe it's the song itself (written by Pomus/Shuman) that renders it so undistinguished in comparison with everything else. The main attributes of the 'B' side, 'Daddy, Daddy' (Wood/Munroe) are the uncharacteristically melodious vocals and a strange section of fuzzy 'psychedelic blues' guitar tacked onto the end when you think the whole thing has come to an unmemorable conclusion. Strange stuff.

All four singles are, of course, deleted, so if you do see any copies around pick

THE CREATION. left to right: Jack Jones, Kenny Pickett, Ron Wood, Kim Gardner.

'em up and keep hold of them, they're collectors items. I haven't even got them myself, so I'm grateful to the Willis' manager, Jake, for lending me his for the purpose of this article.

That bit about the Birds' changeover from Decca to Reaction is quite confusing because apparently, apart from 'What Hit Me', which was never released, 'Say Those Magic Words' which came out on Reaction, was supposed to have been released by Decca, and a song called 'Good Times' was due to be the band's initial release on Reaction. Christ only knows what happened there—it all seems to have been lost in the mists of time.

Anyway, The Birds finally split up, Ron Wood and Kim Gardner going off to join The Creation, and Pete McDaniels, Tony Munroe and Ali McKenzie leaving music altogether.

"I don't know where Pete McDaniels is. Tony Munroe is doing alright for himself, I think he's a kind of computer salesman or something, and he still lives in West Drayton. Ali McKenzie still lives in West Drayton too; he's a glazier. He came over and did some work on my house recently. We did a bit of work in the studio, I was trying to get him to go back into singing, not to lead him astray or away from his family or anything, but just because he showed he wanted to do it again. So I got him a studio band together of Tetsu, me, Mick Jagger on guitar and Ian McLagan, and we made a couple of demos for him. But all those boys, except Kim and myself, have never done anything since."

That The Birds never existed long enough, and that the turbulent, insecure state of British rock prevented them from making an album is a real pity because I'm sure that they could have developed into a very superior rock band, on a par at least with some of the super-star studded outfits who rose to fame in their wake.

One last thing before we leave the Birds . . . in 1967 they appeared in a film called 'The Deadly Bees' and performed a song called 'That's All That I Need You For'.

"I wrote the film music—three tracks, one of which, 'You Shouldn't Do That', I've just reshuffled and it's now called 'Money, Money'. It was one of the tracks I didn't use on the new album, but I'd still like it to see the light of day."

THE CREATION

Ron Wood's next step, and Kim Gardner's, was to join The Creation, who by now had reached the pinnacle of their success and were coming down the other side. Their original line-up when they were called The Mark IV had been Kenny Pickett (vcls), Jack Jones (drums), Eddie Phillips (lead gtr), and John 'Nobby' Dalton (bass), but by the time they became Creation, Dalton had left to become a Kink and was replaced by a guy called Bob Garner. Then Kenny Pickett left, Bob Garner switched from bass to vocals, and Kim Gardner joined. The next change came when Ron Wood joined them replacing Eddie Phillips. Apart from the now complete loss of the Eddie Phillips/Kenny Pickett songwriting team, Phillips' departure left a considerable onus on the head of Ron Wood. Phillips had given The Creation a distinctive guitar sound which incorporated the use of feedback and other innovatory techniques, including playing the guitar with a violin bow—an idea of which he was almost definitely the first exponent. So Woody was obligated to carry on the tradition, and how well he pulled it off is known only to those people who saw them. He didn't have to do it for long however because The Creation broke up in the summer of '67, which meant that he was only with them for a matter of a few months . . . just time enough to do a couple of tours and make two singles, put out a long time after they'd split and only one of which was released in this country. The singles were:— 'Midway Down'/'Girls Are Naked' (Polydor 246) (May '68). 'For All That I Am'/'Uncle Bert' (Hit-ton 300-235—Germany) (not released here). Unfortunately, I don't possess either of the two records so I'm ignorant of the quality and nature of both, but somehow I'd be surprised if they were stunningly brilliant. Of historical interest nonetheless, so if any of you out there have copies, I'd be pleased to hear from you. Towards the end of The Creation's career, Ron had already flirted with the idea

of joining a group that Jeff Beck was getting together . . . he'd played with them on and off and gone to a few rehearsals . . . so when he became free it obviously seemed the natural thing to do.

THE JEFF BECK GROUP

The idea and formation of the first Jeff Beck group followed the considerable commercial success of 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'/'Beck's Bolero' (Columbia). This single, if not the best piece of work that Beck has been responsible for, is certainly the most well-known and is still very popular at discos and other such establishments, where admittedly your average punter wouldn't know about 'Truth' or any of the other gems that were to follow.

Anyway, Jeff Beck got his band together, the first line-up (or first tentative line-up really because they never actually played a gig) being Jeff Beck (gtr), Rod Stewart (vcls), Ron Wood (gtr), Jet Harris (bass), and Viv Prince (drums).

Well, for one reason or another, neither Harris nor Prince stayed for very long and so Dave Ambrose was brought in for a short while on bass, and Roger Cook joined on drums. However, that didn't last long and Ambrose and Cook left, leaving

Ron Wood to switch to bass, and the third in a succession of six drummers, Rod Coombes, joined. He was then replaced by Aynsley Dunbar who in turn was replaced by Micky Waller who was eventually fired to be replaced by Tony Newman. Quite definitely though, it was the band with Micky Waller that had all the success and lasted the longest. Beck's follow-up single to 'Hi Ho Silver Lining' was a Graham Gouldman composition called 'Talleyman'/'Rock My Plimsoul', still a catchy commercial single (mainly his producer Mickie Most's doing), but still hardly a respectable indication of the man's talent. In fact his next single, 'Love Is Blue'/'I've Been Drinking' is a truly horrible piece of dreck (the 'A' side anyway). The 'B' side is the first time we get to hear the Beck/Wood/Stewart/Waller line-up, ('Talleyman' and 'Rock My Plimsoul' featured Aynsley Dunbar on drums), and although it's scant indication of what was to follow, it's still a million times better than the crap on the other side.

Following that came the classic 'Truth' album (Columbia SCX 6293). From the opening track, 'Shapes Of Things'—the old Yardbirds' hit but rearranged for maximum intensity, right through to 'I Ain't Superstitious', Beck's quality and style as a guitarist shine through at last. Ron Wood does remarkably well on bass, forming a really powerful rhythm section with drummer Mickey Waller, and apart from maybe a couple of 'filler' cuts that are not up to standard, ('Greensleeves' in particular), the album is still one of the milestones of British rock. 'Beck's Bolero' (Page) and a reworking of 'Rock My Plimsoul' (Stewart) are included and there are two more songs written by Rod Stewart—'Let Me Love You' and 'Blues De Luxe'. The album is produced by Mickie Most and although I'm not a great fan of his, I feel he did rather a good job here, much better let's say than the band's second album 'Cosa Nostra Beck-Ola' (Columbia SCX 6351) which sounds at times as if it was recorded thirty years ago in an old tin shed with dodgy equipment. Miraculously though, it's still a very good album, but more about that later.

If the band got on well together musically, then as Rod Stewart hinted in ZigZag 20, it was socially very unstable. Various squabbles and problems that had presumably been going on for quite a while came to a head in February 1969 when Beck fired both Ron Wood and Mickey Waller as Ron recounts:

"As soon as I got fired I went to see Ronnie Lane because I thought there's only one other band I would join and that would be The Faces 'cause Rod and me really dug the Small Faces. Steve Marriott had left them and I went to see Steve too because I really got on well with Steve and I nearly formed a band with him. But I thought no, Steve's alright, he's going to be alright, but the other three maybe won't. They might split up and I thought that would be a shame. So as they were still together we had some workouts. It was pretty embarrassing at first—it was in Ronnie's flat in Elsham Road in Kensington. I felt the ground out with them and I knew it would be alright eventually because we'd just scratched the surface. Then I got a phone call from the States from Beck saying 'come back'. The new band had fallen apart and they needed me back Tony Newman, Micky Waller's replacement, was staying but Doug Blake and Junior Wood (from Tomorrow), both of whom had been brought in at some time or another, had got the boot. Tony remained constant, although he nearly exploded at any moment, and I went to join that new outfit, having a much stronger footing because I'd been fired and asked back. But I knew it wouldn't last very long and we finally broke up just before Woodstock, two weeks before Woodstock. We were scheduled to play there."

During that period though, the new band managed to record 'Beck-Ola'. By this time the band was further graced by the full-time presence of pianist Nicky Hopkins. Hopkins has played on 'Morning Dew' and 'Blues De Luxe' on the 'Truth' album but had now decided to tour with the band (in preference to Led Zeppelin)—which must have been a welcome change from being couped up doing studio sessions all the time. To wander off the track a little, Hopkins has always been a great hero of mine, and one of my pet projects for the future is to make a list of every record he's played on . . . the Who, Stones, and Quicksilver are obvious bands with which he has had strong connections, but he's also appeared on albums and with bands so obscure they'd make the most ardent collector wince with trepidation at the thought of searching them out. Perhaps you can help . . . if you all make out a list of records that you know Nicky Hopkins has played on and send them to me, I'll correlate all the info, get an article together, and maybe we can do the guy justice.

Now badk to the story. 'Beck-Ola' was, as I've said, cocked up considerably by a Mickie Most production, but there are some very powerful tracks to contend with. 'All Shook Up', 'Jailhouse Rock', 'Plynth', and 'Rice Pudding' are all rhythmically very strong, full in sound, and brilliantly played, while Hopkin's 'Girl From Mill Valley' is equally appealing on a less frantic, more lyrical level. Ron Wood's contribution to the band's sound is again considerable, and this time he also gets a chance to air his songwriting talents. He part-wrote 'Spanish Boots' with Beck and Stewart, 'Plynth' with Hopkins and Stewart, 'Hangman's Knee' with Hopkins, Beck, Newman and Stewart, and 'Rice Pudding' with Beck, Hopkins and Newman. So you can see that each member of the band was actively contributing ideas all the time, although Beck was obviously the guv'nor and the STAR, and what's maybe rather unfortunate is he knew it. He still had ambitions about making hit singles and went on to record 'Barabajagal'/'Trudi' (Pye) with Donovan . . . a quite unmemorable piece of tripe that is best forgotten I would think.

"When the band finally fell to pieces, I went back down and rehearsed with the Small Faces in the Stones' Bermondsey Studio. We had a very dim future ahead full of contracts, monies owing and monies owed and all that. Billy Gaff sorted it out really well for us, well for them anyway. I had no problems, but they had terrible problems, although I thought it was all worth it just for the music, if we could play together. Rod would stand upstairs and listen at Bermondsey and then creep down, join in, and creep out again. On our way back from the last Beck tour I spoke to him at the airport and said, 'Why don't you come with me?" And he said, 'Yeah, I can't see us staying here much longer,' because Beck was lined up to play with Bogart and Appice. Beck had that going without telling anybody except Rod, and Rod felt bad about holding it back from me, so he came over eventually and the whole thing exploded in Alvin Lee's mews cottage in Gloucester Place Mews. I was staying there while Alvin was away and we were having meetings with me and Ronnie Lane and Kenny Jones about Rod, about whether we should have him, whether he would be another Steve or not. I was convincing them that he wasn't. Funnily enough we all had a blow with Beck recently, Rod, Jagger, and me. I was playing drums, Mick was playing piano, Rod was singing, and Beck on guitar. The police busted that up after about two and a half enjoyable hours . . . we were in Portobello Road in somebody's flat. But the police were alright about it. That was the first time that Rod and Jeff had really had a confrontation since those days and that was only within the last six months. There was some animosity between Rod and Jeff. Jeff really isn't that keen on bad vibes. In those days he was kind of thrown into it from a number of different ways like accountant, record producer, manager, and so on, and they were all trying to single him out in different ways. And although he didn't really want to do it he thought it was about time he made a solo stand on his own. Therefore Rod and me and everyone got trodden on, so that was where the animosity came from."

Incidentally, there's an album that I borrowed off John Tobler called 'The Best Of Jeff Beck' (Columbia 5C054-92207)—which it isn't, but it contains 'Hi Ho Silver Lining', 'Tallyman', 'Love Is Blue', 'Rice Pudding', 'Rock My Plimsoul', 'Shapes Of Things', 'I've Been Drinking', 'I Ain't Superstitious', and 'Plynth'. And also, 'Beck-Ola' has long since been re-released as 'The Most Of Jeff Beck' on the budget-price Music For Pleasure label (MFP 5219).

Next time (maybe even next issue . . . you never know), Ron Wood with The Faces, and Ron Wood the solo artist.

☐ **ANDY**

THE WORLD STILL HASN'T CAUGHT UP WITH POCO

When George Grantham, the quiet member of Poco opined that a hit single would really get Poco away as far back as the Summer of 1970, he unwittingly came halfway to predicting why the band would never break into the big league.

The commercial success has gone to the Eagles and Loggins and Messina whilst the Buffalo Springfield and the Flying Burrito Bros became underground legends. Poco, a sort of LA/Colorado generation/credibility gap didn't rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the Buffalo Springfield nor, despite the increasing friction between Richie Furay and Jim Messina, did they threaten to become the musical dinosaur that could so aptly be directed at some of their overweight peers, in a state of 'productive conflict'.

It's been a rough ride for Poco sure enough, and now the beleaguered band, who were individually unknown before they became a part of Poco (if you discount the modest success of Paul Cotton's Band, the Illinois Speed Press), soldier on with no apparent drop in support but no real sense of purpose either.

As though administering a hasty cover-up job, they've been working overtime at the Record Plant to rush out their new album hard on the heels of 'Poco Seven' and Rusty Young and Timmy Schmit, in particular, are anxious to prove "we're still a country-rock band really".

Were Poco ever a country-rock band? Richie certainly hadn't figured it that way. "Jimmy made the group more country than I had ever envisaged it. I wanted it more rock'n'roll right at the beginning but Jimmy was more definitely a country player than a rock'n'roll player."

Much of the problem was based on the fact that if Richie was to be the supplier of the material, then Jimmy was determined to dictate the overall sound. An accomplished bass player who had learnt his trade at an early age from studio men such as Joe Osborne, he insisted on playing lead guitar in Poco. It worked OK within the chosen framework but his limitations were such that it took remarkable skills from Rusty Young, playing a pedal steel through Leslie speakers to achieve organ-like sustain, to hold that first album together.

Then there was the question of management. The band had formed in '69 as the result of the Buffalo Springfield's 'Last Time Around' which Jimmy was producing. Rusty Young from Denver came in to add some steel on Richie's 'Kind Woman' and it was he who drafted drummer George Grantham into the band. After all the hassles with the group name which eventually evolved from Pogo into Poco and the nature of the deal whereby Poco went vicariously to Epic in an exchange deal with Graham Nash, record company and management swiftly reached a head-on collision which resulted in that all important first album being sunk without trace.

Poco's first manager was a guy called Dickie Davies, presumably no relation to the football commentator. But judging from the credits on their second album, maybe Poco almost went from the start with David Geffen, with whom Richie Furay was to wind up with five years later.

The band duly signed with Todd Schiffman and Larry Larson, and Poco, with Timmy Schmit from Sacramento having become a full-time fifth member after Randy Meisner had depped on bass for the first album, became a band of the road.

They worked extensively and devised a rivetting stage act which was to break them on the east coast, where they had already become something of a legend. "Things were slow in California but when we went to New York it just blew up which was really weird," recalled Richie.

The one event which enabled Poco to saturate the eastern seaboard was the 1970 Shea Stadium Peace Festival which was of enormous significance and considered by speculators to be an automatic springboard to the top for Poco.

Their stage act was two hours of continuous energy as we saw ourselves in February 1972 when they played two shows at the Rainbow Theatre; characterised by that cow-bell intro from George Grantham paving the way to 'I Guess You Made It', Poco won their way into everybody's hearts. And yet they have not been back to England, on top of which, it should be added, promoter Johnny Morris had to pull a miracle stroke to get sufficient people along to the Rainbow in order to avoid embarrassment. Poco had a lot going for them musically but they sure weren't a box office attraction.

"The thing Todd and Larry were good at was booking," qualified Richie. "What I mean is they could keep the group working but they just couldn't create any kind of aura around Poco."

The band adroitly kept a place in their repertoire for 'Child's Claim To Fame', 'C'mon' and 'Kind Woman' as a fond reminder of the last days with Buffalo Springfield but Richie was ostensibly a writer of love songs with none of the hard-headed extremities of Steve Stills and Neil Young. Friction within Buffalo Springfield would trigger off a creative surge whilst within Poco it would only induce petty squabbles. The band slipped too easily into an easy-paced country smiles band and Richie Furay inevitably missed that flow of energy which had bounced between the members of Buffalo Springfield.

"Yeah, I write love songs," Furay concurred. "I've never really been politically orientated and if I don't have solutions then all I could do would be to throw more coal on the fire.

"I've sorta touched it in general terms with 'Keep On Believin'' on the second album and I sorta touched it a little bit with 'You Are The One', which is a 'Take A Look At Yourself' type song and asking do you know what you're really thinking?"

Poco came right off the road and went straight into the studios to cut 'From The Inside' towards the end of 1971. The band had already lost their lead guitarist/producer Jim Messina, who had grown sick of the extensive touring programme that Poco were undertaking. He decided to go to work in the studios and his initial project was an album with a young Californian songwriter called Kenny Loggins. "I think Jimmy would produce Poco a whole lot differently now," opined Richie a little later on, but after the arrival of Paul Cotton from the Illinois Speed Press (which also featured the Fabulous Rhinestones' Kal David) Poco took their music back to the drawing board for a rethink.

Cotton took the songwriting onus off Richie's shoulders and Poco believed that by taking their music down to Memphis

AND NOW THEY'RE PICKIN' UP THE PIECES AGAIN

with the outside influence of Steve Cropper, 'From The Inside' would be their best ever album—but nothing could be further from the truth as travel-weary Richie Furay later admitted.

Rather than harking back to their earlier soulful sound, Poco shunned the use of horns and thick Rusty Young sustain. "In fact it was the reverse—we went very country on that album. It was the most country thing we'd done but I *still* wanted to do a rock'n'roll album because that's where we're at. Even when we did 'Deliverin'' three months later we were so far past that album and the songs were changing all the time."

Richie resented the fact that Poco had been allowed no time to prepare 'From The Inside'. He was mentally drained and on top of it all Steve Cropper and Poco just weren't compatible. "We realised we were still looking for that outside person who can objectively look at us and help us in the studios. Steve Cropper didn't understand our music at all."

Richie Furay's song contribution to that album was of little significance although Paul Cotton made a strong debut with 'Bad Weather', 'Railroad Days', and 'Ol' Forgiver', but neither of the two singles released from the album gave Poco a hit and Richie became even more disillusioned.

He talks of a strange period of intensive touring at this point where he lost all concept of time and began writing songs which he was later to live out. "A year after I'd written songs, especially for 'From The Inside', I started to live out these situations which was weird and scary," he explained. Unwittingly he had already composed the title track of the forthcoming 'Crazy Eyes' album for Gram Parsons, basing his sentiments on their relationship at that time. For some reason he'd dedicated that epic to Gram Parsons, wrote it in 1969 but could never decide on a performing milieu for the song. Finially it became orchestrated and went out in the summer of 1973.

Firstly it was generally acclaimed as the best Poco track of all time, secondly Richie sang the words 'You sing songs about brass buttons and shiny silver shoes . . .' and to explicate matters also recorded Gram's own song 'Brass Buttons' which dates back also to 1969. But within days of the release of 'Crazy Eyes' and Richie's strange four-year-old dedication to Gram Parsons, Parsons was dead.

It had been really weird. One night we'd sat over dinner in a Los Angeles restaurant while Richie explained how this song and visions of Gram had suddenly resurfaced to the point where it had become almost a compulsion for him to get 'Crazy Eyes' out of his system, and then a few days later the all-night TV woke Los Angeles with the news of Parsons' death. In Los Angeles folks delve blindly into the mystic for convenience but you can read whatever you like into that little set of circumstances.

POCO

Standing left to right: PAUL COTTON, GEORGE GRANTHAM, RICHIE FURAY, TIMOTHY B.SCHMIT. Sitting: RUSTY YOUNG.

Alright. Back to February 1972 when Poco hit London for their two Rainbow concerts. It had been a keenly anticipated visit and everyone knew that Poco were going to be good. But they weren't proving a box office draw and a frantic Johnny Morris had to pull a master stroke at the eleventh hour to draw the fans in with a timely ticket incentive in one of the trade papers. Yet Poco, on the second night especially, gave great value for money.

Richie was already pondering Poco's next recording move. He really wanted Richie Podolor to produce the band, but for political reasons which angered him tremendously, they were unable to pursue a working relationship. Podolor in fact cut studio tracks of 'C'mon', 'A Man Like Me' and 'Hear That Music', but since he was tied up with ABC and Three Dog Night at the time Columbia refused to issue any of the material.

Richie then considered using Jim Messina on the grounds that after six months away from the band he could find a level of objectivity that had been missing earlier.

But within a few weeks Furay wrote from Los Angeles to say that Jack Richardson was the man that Poco had picked to produce them next time around (although significantly Furay ended up working with Podolor in the SHF Band on Asylum).

Todd Schiffman and Larry Larson continued to manage Poco and since mentioning the impending involvement of Jack Richardson, time to give a plug to another amazing unsung group managed by Schiffman and Larson and produced by Jack Richardson called Manna.

It was Nazareth who came back from an American tour raving about this band called Manna with whom they'd shared the bill. A check through the CBS catalogue revealed a 1972 album (as far as I know they're still together)—but it's one of those great once-off albums pre-destined for immediate obscurity (which is why it's all the more

worth having). Digression over, back to the central theme.

'A Good Feelin' To Know' saw Poco working towards the apogee that they had been threatening for so long. It was the first time they had been properly produced and Paul Cotton came of age as a songwriter, fully justifying the recommendation of Pete Cetera when Rusty Young had told him the band were seeking a new lead guitarist. On any level you care to take it, 'A Good Feelin' To Know' was the best album the band ever recorded but again they failed to sell beyond a certain point—respectable figures, a middle of the road chart position but it was scant reward for the band who were consistently holding their audiences spellbound.

They even found a place for Stephen Stills' old Buffalo Springfield favourite 'Go And Say Goodbye' but the highlights were the Paul Cotton songs 'Early Times', 'Ride The Country' and 'Keeper Of The Fire', and Timmy Schmit's beautiful 'Restrain'. Personally I don't think Richie Furay has ever emulated his early successes—certainly his contributions to 'From The Inside', 'A Good Feelin' To Know', 'Crazy Eyes' and 'The SHF Band' have been generally uninspiring ('Crazy Eyes' remember, had been written back in 1969 when Richie was still in the Springfield and writing songs like 'Kind Woman', 'Child's Claim To Fame', 'Good-time Boy', 'Sad Memory', 'In The Hour Of Not Quite Rain' . . . what else, what else, over to you, Pete Frame).

Before 'A Good Feelin' To Know' was completed, rumours that Rusty Young and Richie Furay were leaving Poco variously began to circulate. Both, it was proved, were with foundation but happily both stayed on.

Friends of Poco felt that if 'A Good Feelin' To Know' didn't make the grade Richie would be off, and these rumours were underlined by the growing belief that the Buffalo Springfield would re-form that year. "Richie's certainly got nothing to lose," commented observers, whilst others were already predicting a move by Furay, with or without Poco, into the Geffen-Roberts stable.

Richie and his wife Nancy bought a ranch house in Boulder, Colorado, and he was rarely to be seen in Los Angeles after that.

By Christmas 1972 Richie Furay was restless again. Sales on 'A Good Feelin' To Know' were no better or worse than any of Poco's earlier releases. "It means we're still just reaching the same old ears," he complained. "Yet we turn more people on wherever we play. I just can't understand it."

Nine months later he looked back at that monumental album and still couldn't account for its failure to break the ice. "I'd have stuck anything on that album. I thought that was it—it had everything you could want and I really feel we did our part in producing a good album."

The alliance with Jack Richardson was a winner and thus they returned to the studio in the Spring of '73 to record what was to be the last Poco album with that line-up.

Ironically it is an album that had the same foreboding that the Springfield's 'Last Time Around' had—an acute pointer to the fact that it was all over . . . a good album of quite disparate songs with no real sense of unity, just like when Stephen Stills, Neil Young and Richie Furay would come into the studios on separate days, put down their contributions to that final album quite independently and then leave. This time Poco used a bunch of session men, Bob Ezrin, Jack Richardson's partner doing string arrangements on 'Crazy Eyes' and aside from doing Gram Parsons' 'Brass Buttons', Richie's 1969 dedication, and a Rusty Young instrumental, they also cut J.J. Cale's song 'Magnolia'.

By the time the album was released Poco had come firmly under the wing of David Geffen, 'Crazy Eyes' was expected to be the last album on CBS and once Poco hit the Asylum label there'd be no stopping them. Rumours of a Buffalo Springfield Revival had blown over, and it finally looked as though Poco were going to come good. Like hell it did.

It didn't take any great powers of perception to see David Geffen's ulterior motives.

In September '73, a matter of days before the story of Furay's departure leaked, Richie had admitted that he was planning an album with Chris Hillman and John David Souther, but he qualified it thus: "It'll be fun and a healthy thing to do—but that doesn't mean that Poco's going to break up or that I'm leaving the group, I think it's fair that each one of us should have that opportunity.

"It's like Traffic: I'm not sure if there're better now than before but I'd like the situation with us to be improved by what I'm doing rather than be torn apart."

They'd already decided to play a series of live dates as the SHF Band and yet it was somehow hard to ignore the faith that Richie was apparently pledging in Poco in forecasting its longevity.

But at the same time: "I can't deny the rumours that I was going to split. The band had been together for six years and sometimes you just lose perspective playing with the same people over and over.

"Our combination was great but it just wasn't progressing the way we wanted it to grow—we needed to expand and if one member of the group wanted to go out and do a solo album then the rest of the group shouldn't feel intimidated. That would be a healthy situation after six years."

And a year later, with the guts and driving force of Poco taken out, Geffen having effectively caused the schism, the SHF Band had found immediate commercial success on the strength of a bunch of very chequered live reviews and a pallid album which somehow epitomises the very nadir of California wishy-washy music. At last the bucks came rolling in for Richie Furay, but in a sense his life-line was gone.

I'd scarcely boarded the plane back to London, carrying my interview and bearing good tidings for Poco's future when Timmy Schmit admitted to Melody Maker writer Toby Atlas that it was all over between Poco and Richie Furay. Scooped again, damn it!

The final 'Crazy Eyes' sessions had opened Richie's eyes and underlined his necessity to play with other musicians. In a sense it was a reconciliation with some of his old LA friends who had equally helped to shape the course of Californian rock in the late sixties.

On the possibility of a Buffalo Springfield reunion . . . "It would be ideal but it would have to be better than the way the Byrds did it because they simply didn't spend enough time. Y'know, some of the people in the Springfield . . . people have memories of how it was and how it should be and sometimes I think it's best to leave well enough alone."

On his need to play with other musicians . . . "Whereas people look for political asylum when they run away I'm looking for musical asylum. Steve [Stills] has one of the finest bands going and yet he won't let them play." (Stills had also been called in on 'Crazy Eyes' sessions but, says Richie, he couldn't control his intuitive desire to take over total control—in spite of the fact that he didn't know the producer or any of the musicians bar Richie!)

The studio relationship with, say, Paul Harris had been far more compatible. "He's one of the finest musicians and people I've ever met in my life although I'd say I'd learnt more from Stephen than just about anyone else—just watching him, the way he writes. The problem is he's so afraid, so unsure, but I don't know why because he's so talented. I could work with Neil [Young] again though—the last few times I've seen him he's been super, he's just been the same old person I've always known but I haven't seen Dewey or Bruce in years."

On the song 'Crazy Eyes' and his relationship with Gram Parsons . . . "The song was five years old and I'd been holding it because I was never quite sure how I wanted to play it. Then Bob Ezrin heard it and liked it and came up with something unique.

"I originally wrote the tune for Gram years ago, in fact we nearly formed a band together before Poco and the Burritos, and it was during that period that I wrote some feelings about Gram, but whether they apply now or not I don't know." Neither did he know the imminence of Parsons' death.

Timothy B. Schmit says that it only took Poco five minutes to decide to continue as a four piece after Furay's departure. He was adamant that they had been the victim of a political plot to prise Furay away from the band and that Geffen-Roberts never had any real interest in managing Poco.

Musically, everyone has suffered, although Furay's bank balance and undoubtedly David Geffen's will have benefitted from the move.

Fittingly Poco wound up being managed by Harlan Goodman and John Hartman, themselves exiles from the Geffen-Roberts camp, and although Poco have been going down equally well on stage, and 'Poco Seven', a consciously planned attempt to get across to more people, followed the same familiar sales pattern, the band are looking to recapture the spark that they found on 'A Good Feelin' To Know'.

They're all living in LA and have been working harmoniously in the studios producing a hasty follow-up album which will be a return to their more country oriented music. All four guys have been writing a lot of material and Rusty has been reportedly taking charge of the overall sound in a production capacity.

And thus we await the next evocations of Richie Furay and Poco with mild trepi-

dation.

Poco's story is one of ifs and buts . . . you know, if Jimmy had stuck to bass and Paul had joined earlier and just one single had taken off . . . as it is they look destined to miss that goal that they have so richly deserved over the past six years.

☐ **JERRY GILBERT**

RIDER TO THE 'OH-NO-NOT-ANOTHER-POCO-FEATURE-IN-ZIGZAG' ARTICLE

In apposition to Pete Frame's remarkable literary and pictorial Poco sketches in Zig-Zag, I have attempted to collate significant fragments which may or may not add weight to the final analysis of Poco's comparative failure. I'd be interested to hear from ZigZag readers who have more coals to throw on the fire or if, on the other hand, you feel I have been a little harsh, resorting to red herrings to make the argument stick. Comments are welcome.

The feature is not designed as a chronological blow-by-blow account of Poco's career as that has already been covered far more comprehensively than I could ever manage by Pete. I have deliberately diverted from any attempt to dissect Poco's musical accomplishments track by track through seven albums'-worth of material because I do not believe that it has ever had a direct bearing on their measure of success or failure at any one time.

–J.G.

POCO DISCOGRAPHY

U.S. SINGLES

Pickin' Up The Pieces/First Love (July 69)
My Kind Of Love/Hard Luck (Nov 69)
You'd Better Think Twice/Anyway Bye Bye (July 70)

C'mon/I Guess You Made It (Feb 71)
Just For Me and You/Ol' Forgiver (Oct 71)
Railroad Days/You Are The One (Nov 71)
A Good Feelin' To Know/Early Times (June 72)
Go And Say Goodbye/I Can See Everything (Feb 73)
Here We Go Again/Fool's Gold (Oct 73)
Magnolia/Blue Water (March 74)
Faith In The Families/Rock Mountain Breakdown (June 74)

U.K. SINGLES

You'd Better Think Twice/Anyway Bye Bye (Aug 70)
C'mon/I Guess You Made It (April 71)
Just For Me And You/Ol' Forgiver (Dec 71)
A Good Feelin' To Know/Early Times (Jan 73)
Go And Say Goodbye/I Can See Everything (March 73)*
And Settling Down/I Can See Everything (March 73)

POCO ALBUMS

PICKIN' UP THE PIECES 1969**
POCO 1970
DELIVERIN' 1971
FROM THE INSIDE 1971/72
A GOOD FEELIN' TO KNOW 1972/73
CRAZY EYES 1973
POCO SEVEN 1974

*Issued in Britain to coincide with American release but withdrawn almost immediately. 'And Settling Down', a far strong track from 'A Good Feelin' To Know' was rushed out but bombed with true Poco consistency.

**Inexplicably never released in Britain in the summer of '69 and never subsequently released. A collector's item here, a flop in the States but a great debut nevertheless. "I'm hurt, disappointed and bitter that due to conflicts between our manager and the record company we never had any sort of push in the beginning right when we needed it most," Richie Furay said in qualification of that first album.

Let's Drink Some Wine And Have A Good Time CATCHING UP WITH KEVIN AYERS

Your intrepid reporter and his photographer pressing Southwards along the French motorways, literally soaked to the skin on a motorbike, in search of The Artist in order to retrieve The Article. Five hundred miles later it's still pouring with rain, your ZigZag team grit their teeth against the storm, and ask themselves feebly where the sun that the South of France is famous for had disappeared to. An image was fast deteriorating; that of Kevin Ayers sitting outside his Drhome valley home, drinking wine and writing beautiful songs in the sunshine. However, the next day, on which we were due at the Ayers residence, the sun was shining and spirits lifted. After traversing narrow mountain roads that seemed almost to fold back on themselves, arriving at the wrong secluded cottage and being redirected across the fields to a house on the other side of the valley, we established the location and subsequently arrived. We knocked tentatively and were beckoned to enter by the man Island Records PR managed to describe thus: "Apollonian grace, svelte physique, cosmopolitan airs and a voice that melts hearts; these are just a few of the attributes that cause quickened breath and flushed breasts wherever the fairer sex gather to discuss and moon over eminent matinee idol KEVIN AYERS." (That seems a pretty accurate, if restricted, description of friend Gill and other female colleagues' reaction to the man!) The culinary prowess of Kevin Ayers and his female companion Martha were amply displayed in the delights laid before your weary travellers, as it was to be over the remainder of the two days we ended up staying at the Ayers' retreat. He bought the cottage from Daevid Allen, ex-Soft Machine associate and now leader of Gong, about eighteen months ago. Since then he has been gradually rebuilding the place that was little more than a shell when he first moved in. As he points out himself, it's easy to see why he quits London at every possible opportunity to return to the valley. There is the quiet, the mountains on all sides, a relaxed pace of living that it takes him two weeks to settle down to on his return from London. There is no electricity or gas laid on, water is supplied by a hose running from an up-mountain spring and in the evening a warm atmosphere is encouraged by the use of paraffin lamps and candles. While we were there it was possible to see Kevin Ayers working, in what seemed likely to be a characteristic manner, on a new song. One evening we called on another homestead across the valley for a chat and some wine (something we were not short of for the whole two days). Kevin taught our host a chord sequence to a song he was working on so that he could try out some ideas for a melody line before the two of them launched off into 'What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor?" Back at the Ayers' abode we eventually dropped off to sleep to the sound of Vivaldi's "Seasons" playing on a battery-powered cassette machine that had been playing reggae music all day, and even that sounded very pleasant in those country surroundings . . . .

Before embarking further it should be pointed out that some areas of this article may appear a little skeletal, hopefully by reading this alongside the Ayers articles in ZigZags 9 & 28 (to which this interview is intended to be complementary) a fuller picture will emerge; I was very aware of not wishing to duplicate material here though.

ZZ: How did you come to meet up with Robert Wyatt, Mike Ratledge and the early Canterbury scene that spawned

the first Soft Machine?
KA: After I'd left home I'd been sent down to Canterbury to live with my mother by the judge because he said London was a bad influence on me: I'd been on one of those fake drug charges. I moved down to Canterbury having lived most of my early life in the Far East, and not really having anything in common with the English teenage youth at all and very few points of reference; I hadn't a f**king clue about music at all, I'd never heard anything. The most interesting people around Canterbury at the time were people like Mike and Robert. They were very much into the very avant garde jazz . . . it just sounded utter gibberish to me. When I heard it first I thought 'What the f**k is that?' I later made myself listen to it because I liked the people, and I gradually came to like it, and wanted to be involved in music. So I started to play anything, I mean we all used to play around on pots and pans and anything really; we used to get very drunk—the story of my life! That was it, they were there, they were at school in Canterbury. I think when I met Mike he'd just come back from Oxford, Robert was still at Simon Langton school—the boys' school. And we just had mutual interests, a lot of our interests were in literature as well; there was a literary and musical affinity that we shared.

ZZ: And out of that a band evolved rather than at some point a definite decision being made to form one?
KA: Yeah, I think so. We just messed around together and then gradually became a bit more organised in our messing around. That's the whole evolution of it. The more we messed around the better we got at it, whatever standard it was at that time. And then we decided we could actually present it to the public as it were, actually do something with it, perhaps make some money out of it and enjoy ourselves at the same time.

ZZ: Are those BYG "History Of Pop" tracks pretty representative of the band's music at that time?
KA: Well those things they put out were demos we'd made in the studio, and not even whole demos. We'd sort of start a tape and say, "Oh f**k. It's awful." And they put that together on a tape, which is rather sad, but I suppose to the people who're interested in the development of certain things it's interesting.

ZZ: I hear Daevid Allen's quite embarrassed by the guitar playing on some of those tracks.
KA: We're all embarrassed about various parts of it, but there you are, it's there, once you put something down on tape you're at the mercy of the people who distribute it or whatever. It's their property and they can do whatever they like with it. By the time those demos were made we'd started gigging, I remember we went to St Tropez and had a ball.

ZZ: And that was when you were tied up with Picasso's play 'Le Desir Attrape par la Queue' ['Desire Caught By The Tail']. How did that come about?
KA: Well, we'd been hired to do a gig in a discotheque at a German beer festival on the beaches of the Côte d'Azur. It didn't pay. There weren't

enough young people around to go to it, they were all heavy beer drinkers and they weren't in the least bit interested in the music we were playing. And so we got fired. We were sort of abandoned in the South of France with no money, we had all the gear and stuff with us though. The promoter of this play by Picasso thought it would be a good idea to have us as a first part to the show to make more of an evening of it, and it worked very well. So we were hired, sort of for nothing, peanuts, but we had a great time, it was very good. And the next event was the Hendrix tour in the States, which was quite shattering and I was shattered enough to leave at the end of it and want to get out of it.

ZZ: Wasn't it during the tour that the first album was recorded?
KA: It was made in about three days. That album was virtually a live set just straight recorded. We did a few overdubs but with very little technical or production work on it.

ZZ: It worked very well on that album though.
KA: Yeah, I think it's because it's got a spontaneous feel to it. It was a live band at the time . . . a lot of ideas. That was when there were three of us. We were much closer with three than when there were four or five.

[See ZZ28 for Soft Machine Family Tree.]

ZZ: When you left the Soft Machine had you any definite idea of what you were going to do or were you just getting the hell out of the band?
KA: Well, I'd picked up some money in the States for the tour and advances on the first album so I just went and lived in Ibiza. And that's basically what I've been doing ever since, although I did it before then . . . even when I didn't have any money. Always spending as little time as possible in the cities and getting out to the sea or the country. And I've managed to buy a house now.

ZZ: At what stage did you decide to make another album, 'Joy Of A Toy'?
KA: In Ibiza I think. I'd made quite a gesture when I left the States. I mean I'd sold my bass and said "Right. That's the end, I'm through with this scene, I'm going to become a fisherman or something." But I still had a guitar and found that I started writing songs just for amusement in Ibiza. I made a whole tape of these songs, put them in some sort of order, and took them to EMI and they liked it. I got a contract and carried on from there.

ZZ: How does Blackhill fit into this picture?
KA: Well I met the two guys from Blackhill [Andrew King and Peter Jenner] who were very kind to me at that point. They took an interest and took me to EMI. They had connections with EMI through the Floyd because they were the Floyd's managers at that time, or the Floyd had just left them I think. And I stayed with EMI rather unsuccessfully. They're not very good at pushing anything, they're very good at following up on a natural success, something that just happens, they're good at that, but no good at pushing. Their efforts are usually quite disastrous; they spend a fortune and nothing happens.

ZZ: They seem to have such a large output that they don't really know what to push where.
KA: They don't really need any more money I don't think. Someone told me that the amount of money they can earn is like filling up a cup with sand . . . you can only just fill it up to a certain

point then it all runs over in tax loss. And their cup is always full, there's all this stuff pouring off the sides all the time that they can put into any project they like. But they can still only actually earn that much.

ZZ: Peter Jenner described in an earlier ZigZag article [ZigZag 9] the recording of 'Joy Of A Toy' and said it was difficult because you had so many set ideas down on tape, that it cost a small fortune to make.
KA: Not really, only £4,000, that's nothing—they spend that on a single nowadays. But I'd made a whole tape, almost a demo tape. With some of the money I got in the States I'd bought a good tape recorder, one you could multi-track on, and I'd made up a whole LP myself with this thing, playing all the instruments and all the harmonies, so it was very hard. In fact I think the demo tape was better than the LP, it was more natural and more spontaneous.

ZZ: Then you put together The Whole World . . . .
KA: Yeah. We had times that were really good when it came together, when we weren't completely pissed out of our heads.

ZZ: I remember promoting a gig with The Whole World and we didn't manage to draw enough people to cover the expenses of the concert. It was a great shame because the music that night was phenomenal.
KA: But we were very erratic in those days because I used to get a bit pissed all the time. I don't do that any more. I feel much more responsible in putting on a good performance, singing in tune and having good musicians to play. I think that's payed off now, people realise that I'm not going to stagger about and play an out-of-tune guitar. It happens very rarely now.

ZZ: On that group's album, 'Shooting At The Moon' I think one of the nicest surprises was the song you did with Bridget St John ['The Oyster And The Flying Fish'].
KA: I meant to do a whole lot more things with her but she disappeared and I sort of disappeared and we never did any more. I had a whole bunch of songs that were a bit gentle for a rock band and we were going to do them and make a sort of kids' album I suppose. But we never did that. Maybe we'll do it some day. Yes, I'd like to do that. I'd like to do a lot of projects. I think it's very limiting just to do one area of music you know, it's very nice to collaborate with other people to do things. But it's a case of finding the right people who're going to pick up the bills, it's got to be worth their while for them to do it.

[In fact The Whole World consisted of a veritable host of superstars as that family tree testifies, including David Bedford, who did the arrangements for 'Joy Of A Toy', the iconoclast Lol Coxhill and the young Mike Oldfield who, according to Kevin, used to use his solos with The Whole World to work out the themes that later turned up on 'Tubular Bells', and was at that time lately of Sallyangie, a folk duo, with his sister.]

ZZ: After the demise of The Whole World I saw you play a gig in Cambridge with just Archie Leggatt . . . there was almost a pub atmosphere, people singing along and joining in. The songs you did that night really came over well in that kind of an atmosphere.
KA: Yeah, I think they do. I think a lot of songs I write start off like that, they come out of drunken parties. Down here I've had a lot of songs come out of just sitting around, drinking a bit of wine, singing silly songs. Quite often the germ of a good song comes out of that and then I come home and work on it and apply craft to it, making it into something. But the actual inspiration for it, the best songs, comes out of just a good feeling, unless it's one of the deliberate downer songs which are intellectual, then you put a ton weight on your head and squeeze something out.

ZZ: Which songs would you describe as your 'downers' then?
KA: 'Downers' is probably not a very good word. What I mean is songs that people term cynical, but really aren't, they're just observations,—observations as opposed to a fantasy-creation which is just sort of fun . . . amusing. I suppose 'Whatevershebringswesing', 'Shouting In A Bucket Blues', 'Decadence'; there's elements of it in every song, even songs that pass as being sunny and gay, there's always a little barb in there thrown in to make it less syrupy whether people see it or not . . . . I work at the music when it's around to work on. Sometimes I try and force it but it never works. I'm not really doing very much at the moment because I think it's not the time. Sometimes I think I'll never be able to write another song again, and then I'll go ahead and write and throw myself into ludicrous emotional situations, or create situations just so there's some feedback to write about. But then that doesn't work all the time. Basically the two stimulation points are (a) personal emotional reactions to another person, or to a collective situation, and (b) reasonably objective observation of behaviour in general, the collective behaviour of us all. I don't really get inspired by mountains or streams as it were. I get very little inspiration in fact from natural things like storms, I think they're beautiful and I live them at the moment. I don't have to recreate them, I don't feel any need to recreate them because I understand them. But situations that are misunderstood, personal, emotional situations, where I feel there's been some misunderstanding I need to make it clear with words; or of humanity in general, people, their collective misunderstandings or narrow-mindedness, something like that. Because they're not immediate for me, I reflect on them and think of them afterwards and that's what brings lyrics about. The music, that's something else entirely, I don't know where that comes from, that's in the air and if you manage to latch onto it anybody can do it. I've always been basically a word man, more so than a tune man, although less so now because I have less and less that I need to say.

ZZ: It was about the time of 'Bananamour' I saw you with this incredibly huge band at the Roundhouse.
KA: There've been a few strange amalgams of people. Sometimes I haven't even known who's playing. I'd look around and suddenly see two saxophone players and think, "Who thought of adding those? Where did they come from?" But that was the thing about The Whole World, it was very open, anyone could come and sit in as long as they could keep time and play in tune.

ZZ: Robert Wyatt joined at one time, didn't he?
KA: Yes. But it wasn't really what he wanted. I have great difficulty with drummers. I loved working with Robert in Soft Machine but I had real difficulty in finding drummers for The Whole World. We must have got through four or five drummers I think, whereas the others stayed. The drummers were always the weak point. Probably the warmest drummer I've worked with is a guy called Eddie Sparrow who's on 'Bananamour'. He's really economical and has a good sound. But Robert is probably the most exciting and interesting creative drummer I've worked with.

ZZ: Even at the Rainbow concert [preserved in vinyl as 'June 1st 1974'] the little bits he added were superb, he seemed to know exactly the right moment to add to it.
KA: Yeah, he's very good at embellishing, at listening to a song and picking up a little thing to add—a clack or a bang. Very good at that, always has been. That's one of his great assets, that he does listen. So many drummers don't listen, they just play. I feel very much for drums, I'm very rhythmically orientated, probably more than melodically.

ZZ: 'Bananamour' was your last album for Harvest, wasn't it?
KA: Yeah. I wish that it had been on Island because I'm sure they would have done much better with it than Harvest. It's the album I'm happiest with because I had virtually total control over what was coming out and there were no other opinions to take into account. I was very foolish to take in a producer with this last album, it was mainly the record company who had the say.

ZZ: Was the move to Island a positive move on your part or were Harvest becoming less interested because you hadn't produced an instant-smash-hit-million-selling LP?
KA: No, they were quite keen to take it up again, but Island had a better offer. And I'm really glad I changed to Island, really glad, I mean as far as the business side is concerned. And they're really nice people, there were a few nice people in the Harvest section at EMI, but it's so bureaucratic and Kafka-esque, all these little departments and endless corridors and decisions to be made before anything can happen, whereas at Island, people are given a position of authority and they make their own decisions. It's a much more compact and faster moving company.

ZZ: Although none of your albums have been instant hits I would imagine that they all sell pretty consistently.
KA: Yeah, they sell. They sell very slowly but they keep going. It's a bit like the story of my whole career in this business, there's never been any enormous jump, except perhaps joining Island, because Island have pushed. It's been a very gradual slow rise upwards, getting a bit better each time, each record selling slightly more than the last one, and then suddenly there's a very major jump because of Island, and they're hoping for an even larger jump with the next. But certainly in terms of live appearances the drawing power is much bigger than it ever was.

ZZ: The 'Soporifics', your latest group, consists of Eddie Sparrow (drums), Archie Leggatt (bass), Rabbit (keyboards), and Ollie Halsall (guitar); how did you assemble the band?
KA: They were available basically. Rabbit and Ollie were around because of being connected with Island. Rabbit was introduced. I'd never heard his playing, he was recommended by Archie, but Ollie I had heard playing and I liked very much—I was very pleased to meet him and get him in there.

ZZ: Archie of course was a long-term compatriot and Eddie was from the 'Bananamour' sessions.
KA: Yeah. He saved me from the problem of drummers. You see my sets are very varied, although I've made them less varied now because that's what seems to go down best. In a way I've moulded the music I play now to what seems to get the best reaction. I feel I owe that to the record company in a way because they're putting a lot of energy into it. I don't think I'm losing any integrity, I never really thought about it in the first place, never having any.

ZZ: Many critics have suggested 'The Confessions Of Dr Dream' is your best album, would you agree with that?
KA: No. I was very distant from it because there was a producer between me and the record. I'm not really criticising the producer so much as stating I shouldn't really have a producer. The less there is between me and the original ideas the better as far as I'm concerned. I felt very distant from it and thus it wasn't made with much love, it was made with a very cold, deliberate attitude. Some things were good on it but on the whole it wasn't what I intended it to be. I intended it to be what the next album will be, which is a collection of songs on one side and then a piece of music on the other. One whole piece instead of a collection of short pieces.

ZZ: So the 'Dr Dream' side was intended to be one long musical piece?
KA: Well it is that virtually, except it doesn't follow musically as well as it should have done if I'd thought about it more. It's bits and pieces chopped together. The beginning and the end are fine, it's just what went in the middle was fairly arbitrary. The only things that work together musically is how the tune for the beginning of 'Dr Dream' becomes the bass line for the ending, but with a whole different feeling to it; there is that link. I hope the next piece . . . I've just started on it, I've got a good beginning and a good ending, but once again it's the middle; I don't want to just fill it up with crap, I want it to really relate and sound good.

ZZ: Why did you re-record 'Why Are We Sleeping?' on that album? [It was on the first Soft Machine album.]
KA: I always wanted to do it. I always want to re-record everything once I've done it because everything seems like a demo. I'm sure everybody says that. Once I've actually got a version of something down I always feel like saying: "Right. Now let's do that again," but because recording is so incredibly expensive (something like £30 or £40 an hour), it's just not feasible to do that unless you're very, very rich.

ZZ: Do you think it was an improvement on your first version?

SEPTEMBER 15th 1974

This interview took two years to arrange. In the end it was not arranged, it just happened. My thanks are due to my friends for their patience and to my enemies for their stimulation.

September 15th this year was a Sunday. The day after Wembley. It was pouring with rain when we left Aylesbury and pouring with rain when we reached Bristol. We had been told that the tour party were staying at the Royal Hotel but they were not expecting us. At 3.15 in the afternoon we stood in the foyer of a deserted hotel and asked for Mr Cohen. After a brief telephone call by the receptionist we were sent up to the second floor. The door of the room was open and there laid on the bed phone in hand was Leonard Cohen. We were asked to wait in the next room and talked with John Miller, the bass player. The tour had opened at the CBS convention in Eastbourne the previous week. From there the band travelled to Paris to play at the Fete de L'Humanite, a gathering run by the French Communist Party, which was attended by 300,000 people and featured Theodorakis, Cohen and other literary figures. The British tour had opened in Edinburgh and the previous night had played Liverpool. Everything had gone smoothly until the tour coach got within twenty miles of Bristol. At this point it broke down, its cooling system having totally failed. So they got out and hitched. Only nobody would stop —it was pouring with rain you may remember. Eventually Leonard and John were given a lift by a kindly man who happened himself to be a coach operator. The rest of the party didn't get in until much later. By this time they had missed lunch and the hotel had no food on a Sunday afternoon, so John went out to look for something to eat. He found a Wimpey Bar and returned with four hamburgers, four Cokes, some tiny chips and a piece of chocolate gateau. We ate and interviewed at the same time. John the bass player showed a lively interest in photography and proceeded to take shots of us from the most unlikely angles. He was particularly fond of one taken from inside the wardrobe.

The Hippodrome is a delightful theatre, more like an operahouse than a concert hall. There is a back street which runs past the stage door at the side of the theatre. Almost opposite the stage door is a seedy snack bar. Five minutes before the performance was due to start an observant passer-by would have noticed a familiar figure sat at a table drinking a cup of coffee. It was Mr Cohen. In the dressing room there was no alcohol and no cigarettes. Nothing. Just the artists waiting to go on stage. Only the tour manager appeared in the slightest way nervous. The theatre was full, the audience warm and responsive, and at the end of the evening they could not leave. Audience and performers alike, sang the words of the songs they all knew so well. 'That's no way to say goodbye.'

Leonard Cohen was born in Montreal in 1934. He has a sister. His father died when he was nine years old. Leonard describes his upbringing as strict in a Victorian sense. The family were of a conservative Jewish tradition. They made full observance of Jewish faith and customs without the rigidity of the orthodox tradition. Leonard's grandfather was a Hebrew scholar. An imposing figure with long uncut hair, Rabbi Solomon Klinitsky was greatly revered by his grandson. Leonard was educated at a Christian school. These years are remembered but without feeling. Schooldays were boring. He edited the school newspaper, played hockey and was a cheerleader. At college he played guitar in what he describes as a "barn-storming" group. At the age of fifteen he left school to take a course in English literature at McGill University. At the same time he left home to live in a flat in downtown Montreal. The novel, 'The Favourite Game', deals with this period of his life.

ZZ: Nobody got thrown out or anything like that?
LC: The worst that could happen to you was that you'd fail a year and you'd start over again. The life was downtown—meeting the artists and the poets and discovering what cafe life was. I was young in those days. There was no oppressive tradition or anything so you were doing it yourself. It was fun. Just a few people around.

ZZ: I was wondering if you went through the business of reading all the Shakespeare plays. Whether you read a lot of more stylised poetry.
LC: I read a lot of poetry—but not specifically connected with the course I was taking. There are some Shakespearean plays I haven't read, there are some I have read very very thoroughly. I went out with a Shakespearean actress for a while so I used to have to learn all her plays so I could follow what they were about. But I didn't have a very thorough background in English literature at all.

ZZ: Do you have any favourite plays, particularly, say, Shakespearean plays?
LC: I like 'Timon of Athens' very much. I think that's quite a late one.

ZZ: I'm thinking of the tragedies like 'Lear' or 'Hamlet' or 'Macbeth'.
LC: Well do you know to me it's like saying how do you feel about the high Himalayas or something. They're great, huge articulations of human experience, by the master poet of our race. It's hard for me sitting here, eating a hamburger to say what I like or don't like. I stand in a certain reverence to these masters. Those people I don't take casually at all.

THE OLD REVOLUTION
I fought in the old revolution
On the side of the ghost
and the king
Of course I was very young
And I thought that we
were winning
I can't pretend I still feel
very much like singing
As they carry the bodies away.
Into this furnace I ask you
now to venture
You whom I cannot betray.

ZZ: Can I change the subject and ask you about your political involvement, particularly with, shall we say, revolutionary movements?
LC: I guess my interior connection with these movements approximates to Camus' experience, although of course I didn't take any of his risks. I went down to Cuba to observe and associate myself with that revolution just before the Bay of Pigs.

ZZ: Did you meet Castro?
LC: No, never on that level. Just as a foot soldier. It's hard for me to speak about those things. My feeling these days is very different. I don't think that armed revolution should be encouraged in industrial societies. I think it would be a disaster if such a thing ever happened. It really would be awful. What do you feel?

ZZ: Yes, I don't see revolution as achieving very much in those terms. More through infiltration than armed uprising.
I believe you were involved with the Black Power movement at one time.
LC: Well I knew some people in it. Michael X I knew very well. He's just waiting to be hung. Well I had many talks with him. For some races there are men of imagination who are really oppressed and there is absolutely no other way. They have got to take up this position whether they really believe it in their hearts or not. They have to have a structure to which they can attach themselves. To wait and see, it just doesn't satisfy their hunger or their imaginagion. They can only see themselves extended through society with that kind of thrust behind them. There's no argument you can have with them. You can't say cool it out, or whatever is achieved by this or that except more violence? OK, let us be the ones who are making the violence on you guys, we're tired of being on the other side. But he himself knew the limitations of this position. That's what we don't understand. The leaders of the Movement (to have that kind of power in the Movement means they're quite bright)—understand perfectly the limitations of their position all the time. Michael said to me—

Phrynia and Timandra. Give us some gold, good Timon: hast thou more?
Timon. Enough to make you both. *Act IV. Scene III.*

he was completely against arming the blacks in America—he said it was crazy—they would never be able to resist that machine. They own the bullets and the armament factories and the guns. So you give the blacks a few guns and have them against armies? He was even against knives. He said we should use our teeth. Something everybody has. That was his view of the thing. It was a different kind of subversion. The subversion of real life to implant black fear. He would invite me over to his place and he would serve me a drink, a delicious drink. I would say, "God, how do you make this?" He would say, "You don't expect me to tell you. If you know the secrets of our food, you know the secrets of our race and the secrets of our strength." You know it was that kind of vision that he wanted to develop. Pretty good too.

ZZ: How do you feel about your position as a Jew? Do you support, for instance, the movement to free Jewish prisoners in Soviet Russia? Particularly artists like the Panovs.
LC: Yes I do. Also Ukrania. I would like to see the break-up of the Russian empire. I think there are a lot of Russians who feel that way too. A lot of Russians are not really interested in the domination of Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Ukrania and Latvia. It's a difficult position they've got themselves into. The Jews come under that kind of heading also.

ZZ: Do you actively work in this sort of area? Do you really lend your support?
LC: No. No, I give my name if anybody asks for it. I don't feel that my talents run in those directions. I've never disguised the fact that I'm Jewish and in any crisis in Israel I would be there. I was there in the last war and I would be there in another war. I am committed to the survival of the Jewish people. I have a lot of quarrels inside that camp with Jewish leadership and Jewish value and that sort of thing. I am committed to the survival of the Jewish people and I think that survival is threatened in places like the Soviet Union. I think it's threatened in America on another level. It's just a tribal feeling, there's nothing enacted.

ZZ: You mentioned that you went back to Israel at the time of the last war and you sang. Can you say a bit more about that? How did you actually take part?
LC: I just attached myself to an air force entertainment group. We would just drop into little places, like a rocket site and they would shine their flashlights at us and we would sing a few songs. Or they would give us a jeep and we would go down the road towards the front and wherever we saw a few soldiers waiting for a helicopter or something like that we would sing a few songs. And maybe back at the airbase we would do a little concert, maybe with amplifiers. It was very informal and, you know, very intense. Wherever you saw soldiers you would just stop and sing.

ZZ: It strikes me as being rather dangerous. You didn't feel any personal anxiety about being killed?
LC: I did once or twice. But you get caught up in the thing. And the desert is beautiful and you think your life is meaningful for a moment or two. And war is wonderful. They'll never stamp it out. It's one of the few times people can act their best. It's so economical in terms of gesture and motion, every single gesture is precise, every effort is at its maximum. Nobody goofs off. Everybody is responsible for his brother. The sense of community and kinship and brotherhood, devotion. There are opportunities to feel things that you simply cannot feel in modern city life. Very impressive.

ZZ: Obviously you found that stimulated you. Did you find it stimulated your writing at all?
LC: In a little way. But not really. I wrote a song there.

ZZ: Wars have in the past been times when people have written great things after or during.
LC: I didn't suffer enough. I didn't lose anyone I knew.

The conversation at this point turned to Leonard's experience of singing to patients in mental hospitals. He believes that it is good for a band to play free concerts and he has done a lot of this work in Canada.

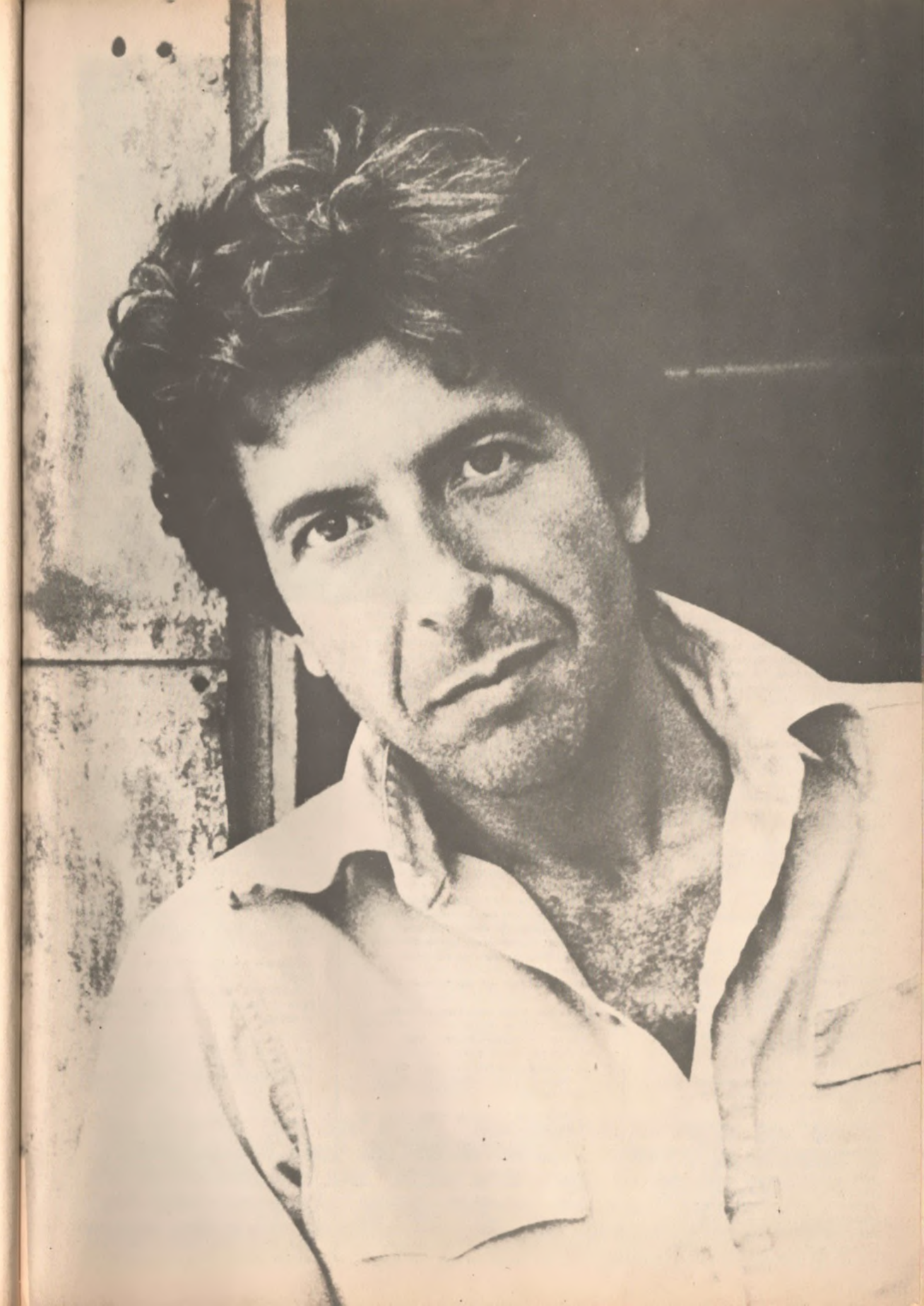
ZZ: Do you see yourself then as an entertainer or as a therapist?
LC: I have a lot of admiration for the professional point of view. I think a therapist should be an entertainer. Whatever you are you should be an entertainer first. If you're going to present yourself to people they have to be entertained. Their imagination has to be engaged and they have to enter into the vortex of imagination and relaxation and suspense that is involved in entertainment.

ZZ: I'm thinking that if you go into a group of people and then you go away from it, perhaps without any measure of supervision, it might be difficult. Or would you expect the professional staff to take part in the entertainment as well and then to be able, perhaps to catch up anything that happened as a result of your work with them? It would be a very fleeting visit, wouldn't it?
LC: It just takes a tiny moment to receive a scar. It can be with you for the rest of your life. Similarly I think the things that touch us—I don't know incidentally if I'm one of these people, I'm just in a tradition—I'm probably just like a ninth rate operator in a great tradition. I also have very clear ideas about where I stand in a great tradition. The kind of healing that goes with song or with art or whatever you care to mention is almost impossible to talk about because it happens to one person in an audience. Something out of the work touches them in some way. In any ordinary audience also. Some connection is made. I don't think it's anything that all but the most sensitive doctor or worker could ever pick up on. And certainly, not guarantee that it will happen to very many people. Mostly it's just entertainment for an evening. To get through the night.

ZZ: I just wondered whether possibly it might not be rather frightening and alarming if this particular spark did happen to strike and you were there, and then you'd gone and whatever had happened wouldn't have been supported by your presence again. And this is something that could really destroy what little bit of strength they had.
LC: I agree with you. I agree with you. This certainly happens outside of the hospitals, if you're dealing, as I do, with a certain kind of material. It happens to even the most casual of pop singers, you don't have to be dealing with very rarified or specialised material. Every singer has had this experience. Tom Jones has it. The people start to see the work as having a special kind of healing or visionary element and they assume that you are the master and the creator and the engineer of this bomb, this unguent, this healing substance, and somehow that contact with you will guarantee the cure. They come forward in a certain kind of way through letter or through the person and of course they are doomed to disappointment and after all of course the artist himself can't function in the capacity of a healer, in a professional sense. So it does, as you say, often throw people into states of mind that are difficult. I had this happen just a couple of days ago. Did you see that girl John? That black girl? Her manuscript called 'A Pyramid Of Suffering' is a document of suffering.

JM: Where were you in it?
LC: All through it. References to my songs. She is a mental patient.

ZZ: How about Daphne Richardson whose letter you had on the back of the live album. Could you say something about her, because this seems possibly to tie in with this area.
LC: I knew her first of all through the mails. I try to read everything I get and I was struck by the power of her communications. She was at that time trying to get published a book of poems that were very experimental and were collage poems. And they weren't by any means inept. They were highly skilled. They were a collage of Dylan, myself and her own work. And Dylan wouldn't give her permission to publish his work in scraps. And I did. I entered into this communication with her. I knew there was an edge to her letters that was so fanatic and so intense that she would experience great floods of disturbance. On the other hand, there was something about her mind that I found immensely attractive and delightful. Then her story started to emerge. She sent me long, long letters and books that she'd written to me and of course there were these excessive kinds of letters that she would write to me that she wanted to come and stay with me or,—you know. On the other hand, her doctors and the people in her hospitals that she would come in and out of—they didn't believe that she was in communication with me at all. They thought that this was a complete pipedream. So she was living a completely strange sort of life. They were strapping her down and that sort of thing and she would say, "Leonard Cohen, I'm going to be working on his book." I said, "I'd like you to illustrate my book,"—she was a very fine draughtsman—and I had intended her to illustrate my last book, 'The 'The Energy Of Slaves'. She'd be screaming at the doctors, "You've got to let me out I'm illustrating Leonard Cohen's next book." I did go over on my last tour and we arranged to meet and I met her for the first time and she was a very attractive girl in her thirties, and really nice and of a style and bearing that was very close to people that I know. I knew she had experience in mental hospitals. We arranged to do this book together and I looked at more of her drawings and I was very impressed. Then I went back to



America. And it was just one period when I was out of touch with my correspondence and I came to this correspondence and I found telegrams and letters saying, "Please help. I've been put away again, they won't believe me. I need your help, please help." I got on the phone to my agent in London and I said, "Get ahold of Daphne right away, she's in trouble. I'm already late, it's a month since these telegrams had come." I said, "Tell her that the work on the book is on and I want her to start these illustrations. I'll get the manuscript to her."

And she'd just committed suicide three days before.

I was just too late.

Another three weeks or a week or anything. She was just holding on to this kind of activity.

ZZ: Yes, I can see that.
LC: She mentioned me in her suicide note. It was horrible.

ZZ: Why did you put it on the back of the record?
LC: Oh she always wanted to be published. She couldn't get anyone to publish her. The letter was to me. There was a book she wrote to me from the mental hospital. I tell you it was shattering. A testimony of pain. I've never read anything like it.

JM: What's the difference between that and the 'Pyramid Of Suffering'?
LC: Very close, but a suffering that is not enlightened. Daphne was like somebody sitting in this room. She was completely aware. There were no blank spots. She was not a compulsive or an obsessive kind of person. She went into pain that was so overwhelming that she couldn't function. But she always knew where she was and what she was doing. This girl is like under it—it's really a pyramid—that's a beautiful description of where she is. She's buried under a pyramid of suffering like there is no other. Daphne, however, had a sense of humour. She was attractive. She was a much more attractive figure. Warm. This girl was insane. The black girl was insane. There was no question about that. Daphne was . . . I really blew that. I felt bad about that.

But you're right, and it's made me much . . . the point that you just very delicately suggested that I ought not to meddle around with these things if I'm not going to be there day after day to really follow through. I really feel that way now.

ZZ: Yes, I think one thing one has to learn as a therapist is to be very careful to prepare one's patient for the time of parting if that is going to happen. It can be very painful.

Well, perhaps if I could change the subject again and ask you about one or two of your songs. About 'Suzanne' and about Pearls Before Swine. Am I right in thinking they recorded that before you did?
LD (to JM): Did you ever know that group?
JM: I never knew that. They recorded 'Suzanne' before you?
LC: They recorded 'Suzanne', yes.
JM: But not before you?
LC: Around the same time, very early.
JM: They were very interesting, Pearls Before Swine.

ZZ: Were they friends of yours? Or how did that come about?
LC: I think the song was just making its way through New York at the time. They just picked up on it. Are they still together? Is there such a group?

ZZ: I don't believe so. You know, when I went to school there was a Buffy St Marie concert and I reviewed it for the paper and she sang 'Suzanne'. I wrote in my article that I swore she said, "I'm going to do a song now that *I* wrote." Was there any question as to who wrote 'Suzanne'?
LC: Not really, no. The song was stolen from in terms of legal copyright, but nobody has ever suggested I didn't write it. You may have got it wrong, but she is fantastic. I actually taught it to her mouth to mouth.
JM: She did it great.
LC: She is a greatly underestimated singer. I think she's one of the greatest.

ZZ: She has recorded one or two of your songs that you haven't recorded, is that right?

LC: She did a version of a long passage from 'Beautiful Losers' called 'God Is Alive'. She did a beautiful job with that.

ZZ: And there is a song called 'Bells' I think.
LC: She recorded 'Bells'. An early, early version, which we do. I just recorded that now. It's a version completely changed from the one I taught her.

ZZ: Could you say something about Nico?
LC: I hope I can see her when we get back to France. Or in London, if she's in town.

ZZ: She's been recording in London.
LC: She's incredible. She's a great singer and a great songwriter. Completely disregarded from what I can see. I mean, I don't think she sells fifty records, but she's I think one of the really original talents in the whole racket.

ZZ: Is it right that you wrote 'Joan Of Arc' particularly with her in mind?
LC: Oh I wouldn't say that. How did you know that?

ZZ: It appeared in one of your recent interviews.
LC: Oh really? I don't remember if that's true. I know that I was after her—I was sniffing around. I was very taken by Nico in those days. I did write that song around that time.

ZZ: How about Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground?
LC: I knew those people in New York. When I first came to New York—I guess it was around 1966—Nico was singing at the Dom, which was an Andy Warhol club at the time on 8th Street. I just stumbled in there one night and I didn't know any of these people. I saw this girl singing behind the bar. She was a sight to behold. I suppose the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen up to that moment. I just walked up and stood in front of her until people pushed me aside. I started writing songs for her then. She introduced me to Lou Reed at that time. And Lou Reed surprised me greatly because he had a book of my poems. I hadn't been published in America, and I had a very small audience even in Canada. So when Lou Reed asked me to sign 'Flowers For Hitler', I thought it was an extremely friendly gesture of his. The Velvet Underground had broken up at the time. He played me his songs. It was the first time I'd heard them. I thought they were excellent—really fine. I used to praise him.

ZZ: How well did you know him?
LC: I can't say I know him well at all. He was an early reader of 'Beautiful Losers' which he thought was a good book. In those days I guess he wasn't getting very many compliments for his work and I certainly wasn't. So we told each other how good we were. I liked him immediately because Nico liked him.

ZZ: Could I ask you about other people in the music business like Van Morrison?
LC: I'm very fond of his work. I don't know him. I love his work as a matter of fact. Do you? (to John)
JM: Great. He's another one who's great and will never be a great star and possibly doesn't want to be.

ZZ: Could I ask you about the Rolling Stones? Whether you've ever had any contact with them, whether you think anything about their music?
LC: I met Mick Jagger once in the lobby of the Plaza Hotel and he said, "Are you in New York for a poetry reading?"

There's some of their songs I like very much. I think it's wonderful the phenomenon of the Rolling Stones—the figure of Mick Jagger. They are the bread and wine of the pop groups. I was a little bit older than other people when I came into contact with these figures, and I'd already had my mind blown by older and much more outrageous people that I'd met in my youth, so I wasn't about to succumb to the kind of fever that they produce in younger people. But I've always admired them from the slightly humorous point of view. I never did seriously ask myself if Mick Jagger was the Devil. But I think as figures they're quite interesting.

ZZ: You are in some senses rather an alien figure to a lot of people in the music business and I wonder to what extent you do consider yourself as quite separate from it.
LC: I feel totally separate from it. I love the phenomenon, but I don't live as one of those figures. My own personal style is very, very different. I don't perform in the same kind of field. My life is completely different and it developed on different grounds that came to my mind much earlier than the pop movement. My lifestyle was formulated in the middle fifties and has changed very little since then. The kinds of rooms that I could find myself in.

ZZ: Could I ask you about one or two more songs? 'The Story Of Isaac' for instance. Could you describe a little how you came to write that? It does include a reference to a father. Is this your father?
LC: It is hard to step outside the centre of a song when you've written it and explain it to anyone, including yourself. All you know as a writer, as an artist, or as someone who deals and manipulates

'Then his father Isaac said to him "Come near and kiss me, my son." So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine."'
Genesis 27 v.26–28

symbols is whether it has an interior integrity. I think this song does have that kind of interior integrity, it has fathers and sons in it and sacrifice and slaughter, and an extremely honest statement at the end. And that's all I can say about it. The anti-war movement claim the song as their own and that's fine. The Fascist Party movement could also claim it as their own, and that's fine. I know that song is true. It does say something about fathers and sons and that curious place, generally over the slaughtering block where generations meet and have their intercourse. As to its meaning or anything else, I don't know, except that it exists as a psychic reality. That's about all I can say about it.

THE STORY OF ISAAC
The door it opened slowly
My father he came in
I was nine years old
And he stood so tall above me
Blue eyes they were shining
And his voice was very cold
Said "I've had a vision
And you know I'm strong and holy
I must do what I've been told."
So he started up the mountain
I was running, he was walking
And his arc was made of gold.

ZZ: There wasn't a particular circumstance at the time that you wrote it?
LC: I think probably that I did feel that one of the reasons that we have wars was so the older men can kill off the younger ones, so that there's no competition for the women. Or for their position. I do think that this is true. One of the reasons we do have wars periodically is so the older men can have the women. Also, completely remove the competition in terms of their own institutional positions. I also understand that the story of Isaac in the Bible has other significances, which have to do with faith and absurdity and what they used to call, in the fifties, existential religion. Outisde of all those cultural attachments which the song has gathered to itself as it moves through society in its limping way, I just know that as an experience it's authentic psychically. It doesn't betray itself That's all I mean. The song doesn't end with a plea for peace. It doesn't end with a plea for sanity between the generations. It ends saying, "I'll kill you if I can, I will help you if I must, I will kill you if I must, I will help you if I can." That's all I can say about it. My father died when I was nine, that's the reason I put that one of us had to go.

ZZ: Would you like to say anything about 'The Butcher'?
LC: 'The Butcher' is another one of those little songs that has that kind of psychic integrity. You could dignify it with a religious interpretation. I'm not interested in that, if people want to do that. If they want to dignify it or elaborate it on altars or dissecting tables or whatever it is—it's cool with me. Everybody's job should be protected. To me, when the energy is somehow generated within somebody to create something, the thing has to stand or fall by its own internal construction. To me that's another little song that has an internal authenticity or accuracy that allows it to exist.

ZZ: How about drugs?
LC: I don't use them myself. I think they're very bad for you. I think grass is terrible. I don't say this to anybody because nobody believes me. There's a great grass culture and far be it for me to intrude upon the pleasures of the young. I smoked grass for a long time, I know what it is, I know what it does and I think we're a culture that is not yet wise enough to handle it. I've spoken to Moroccans who've observed Americans smoking and they think we're crazy. And they smoke a lot.
JM: Why?
LC: Because we smoke all the time.
JM: We smoke less than they?
LC: Much, much more. We smoke all the time.
JM: Am I wrong to think that in Morocco all they do is sit around with hash pipes?
LC: I am sure that there are those who do that. I could find those guys in Ireland who sit around in pubs drinking all day. But by and large we handle our alcohol. But American youth will smoke all the grass they have, all the time, until it's gone. I think there are other peoples who handle it better. I don't want to make a point about this, as far as I can see they're not in such good shape either. The inscrutable Orientals are not that great in the handling of these problems either. Obviously people use grass and write beautiful things on it. I don't dispute any of the excellent and magnificent products that the thing has done. To me personally, I have seen the damage that it has done to myself and others. I don't think it's all that great. And that's the one that's supposed to be harmless.

THE BUTCHER
Well I found a silver needle
I put it into my arm
It did some good
Did some harm.
But the nights were cold
And it almost kept me warm
How come the night is long?

ZZ: I asked you that after we were talking about 'The Butcher' because of the line in 'The Butcher'.
LC: I have used drugs. I have used almost everything that I could ever get my hands on. I have taken them in every possible way. I think that drugs without a sacrament, without a ritual, without a really great understanding of their power are dangerous. I'm not talking about banning or not using drugs. I'm talking about the casual and indiscriminate and social use of drugs can be very, very dangerous. And is dangerous. I think that LSD is by far the most powerful substance in society There's no question about that.

ZZ: Is it true that you were in a monastery?
LC: I have ties with certain monasteries that I visit from time to time.

ZZ: Do you visit as a retreat or do you visit as a novice, or would you consider taking vows?
LC: I visit them as a friend of the abbot rather than in any other capacity.

ZZ: What order is the monastery?
LC: There are one or two trappist monasteries that I have visited and one or two Buddhist monasteries that I have visited. I don't like to speak too much about it—it tends to advertise myself as a virtuous person or something and my feeling has nothing to do with virtue. There are a couple of men who are very strong and interesting, whose company I enjoy tremendously. They happen to be in the religious industry or whatever you want to call it. They put you through changes, they make you work and you're not likely to sleep more than three or four hours a night.

ZZ: You observe their rules?
LC: Oh yes. I observe their rules. If you want to study with a very good professor at Heidelberg you'd have to learn German It's just their vocabulary. I'm more than willing to learn their vocabulary in order to enjoy their company. It's just the way they operate. It's something they've inherited from their own tradition and are very good at it. Outside of that tradition is another situation. Within their tradition they really flower and they flourish. To get the benefits of their personalities you have to learn their vocabulary.

ZZ: We had a broadcast last Sunday—or was it the Sunday before—in which Mick Jagger had to pick twelve records. They were really very interesting because he picked some classical Indian music which he liked to listen to, and as one can imagine a lot of black American music. But you probably couldn't do anything like that?
LC: I'm not too interested in music. I don't know what I'm interested in particularly. I don't have a record player most of the time. I'm not that close to that side of things. If you asked me if there were some songs that I would like to remember, that I would like not to forget if the world was going to be overwhelmed by a vast amnesia, six songs that I would like to remember, I might be able to do that. But in terms of records and books—it would really be an effort to sit down and write an authentic and accurate list.

It is unlikely that we shall see Leonard Cohen touring in Britain again in the near future. He plans to reappear every few years to show us what he is doing. He believes that an entertainer is likely to develop an inflated idea of his own importance if he is constantly recording and touring. In any case, it takes him about three years to complete a song. He does not like the commercial hassles of the music business. In fact, he prefers his earlier film, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Leonard Cohen', to his latest, 'Bird On A Wire'.

The British tour ended at the Albert Hall on September 19th. He did not say goodbye. His last words to the audience were:

"Thank you for remembering the songs which I wrote, all those years ago, in a room."

Robin Pike

I would like to remind
the management
that the drinks are watered
and the fat-check girl
has syphilis
and the band is composed
of former SS monsters
However since it is
New Years Eve
and I have hip cancer
I will place my
paper hat on my
concussion and dance.

Just returned from my two week stay in Britain, and I'm all ready to go back again. Thanks to everyone for making my first time over so nice. I'll do my best to let you know the types of things going on over here, hopefully things which you may not read about in 'Rolling Stone' or the American news section of 'Melody Maker'.

For the first instalment of these newsletters I thought it would be a good idea to describe a particular local scene—in this case that of the city in which I live, Washington, DC. This area has been fairly prolific in contributing to the world of music. There have been talents as diverse as Marvin Gaye, Jim Morrison, Roy Buchanan, Grin, Mama Cass and John Phillips, Jack Casady and Jorma Kaukonen, Roberta Flack, Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert (John Denver's buddies who used to be called Fat City); as well as the Canned Heat's Henry Vestine. John Fahey came from there, and I believe this is the origin of Takoma Records.

There is a good rock scene currently happening in DC with several top-notch bands. There really always has been one, except that the lack of proper venues has inhibited the growth of many otherwise excellent musicians.

Most bands don't get the opportunity to be put on the bill at concerts with national level bands, and those that do have that blessing only once or twice a year. Strangely enough the colleges aren't fond of booking local bands for their concerts (which are fairly infrequent here, except for the huge University of Maryland, which has many good concerts, most of which are unpublicised). Up until around 1972, bands used to get a lot of work at high school dances, but that doesn't happen any more. The main place to gig, then, is the bars. There are between ten and fifteen places in the area that have regularly scheduled rock music. Usually the music is the only worthwhile feature of the place. Washington has an 18 year old drinking age, differing from most of the nation's 21 age minimum. This helps the local bands in drawing younger people —whereas if they lived in, say, Philadelphia they would be cut off from most of the under-21 audience.

The fact that pubs must close by 11 pm would freak out most Americans, who are used to their bars opening in the morning and staying open clear through until 2 am. A band will usually play their first set around 9.30 or 10, and will play until close to closing time; so with breaks it amounts to about two and a half to three hours of music.

As you probably know by now, Grin no longer exists. They finally packed it in after a six-year rise to near fame (and damn few record sales). Nils Lofgren still lives in the area from what I gather, but I haven't seen him around lately and don't know what he's doing. For quite a while now he has regularly been jamming at a club called Apple Pie with a band of his friends, The Dubonettes. This band is very English sounding, doing a mixture of early sixties r&b and Yardbirds-type stuff. Their guitarist, Michael Stern, is definitely one of the two or three best in the city, and there are ***lots*** of good guitarists here. Hearing Michael and Nils work out on something like 'Route 66' is really a treat. Right after Grin broke up (their last concert was June 8 at DC's Kennedy Center), drummer Bob Berberich joined The Dubonettes. He was a perfect drummer for them, but he left soon after and is now reportedly driving around the country. The whereabouts of bassist Bob Gordon and Nils' brother Tom are also a mystery to me.

When Grin was doing the local band circuit in 1968-71, their good friends and contemporaries were a beautiful bunch of musicians known as Claude Jones. Claude himself was not a member of the band, but he got them together and functioned as their electrician and sound mixer. I could fill volumes writing about Claude Jones—and indeed have over the years in various local publications—but, briefly, in the three years they existed they produced some of the most incredible music I've ever heard. They had a Grateful Dead/community/people's band image, often playing benefits or free concerts in the parks, living together (when they moved off their farm in Virginia, Grin moved in), and playing music which was similar to the Dead's. They had a wide repertoire of originals by keyboard player John Guernsey, as well as non-originals encompassing 'fifties rock'n'roll, Motown, rockabilly, lots and lots of Dylan (especially from the basement tapes), and even a Traffic or Dead song here and there.

There are a couple of offshoot groups from Claude Jones now: one is The John Guernsey Group, which has four of the seven members from Claude Jones, with John playing piano and writing ***all*** the material. John is also at work on a jazz ballet, 'The Water Song', which features the horn work of John Payne, former sideman to Van Morrison, Bonnie Raitt, and David Bromberg. The two Johns met in Boston at the Berklee School of music in 1973, and Payne offered his help to Guernsey whenever possible. Peter Ecklund, also from the Raitt/Bromberg axis, plays on 'The Water Song' as well.

The other offshoot band is a country-rock outfit, The Rosslyn Mountain Boys, featuring Claude's magnificent lead singer, Joe Triplett, as well as two other people from Claude Jones. They have an accomplished pedal steel player in Tommy Hannum, formerly with Emmylou Harris, another semi-famous DC singer who will be discussed shortly. A few nights ago there was a concert in a small hall 50 miles outside of DC featuring the John Guernsey Group, the Rosslyn Mountain Boys, and the one-off reunion of Claude Jones. It was an incredible night, about which I'd only get over-enthusiastic if I babbled on any further about it.

In 1971, a few months before the break-up, Claude Jones released an EP locally on their own label, Sweet Breeze Records. On it was a country-rock song called 'Sykesville', which subsequently found its way to Britain, where it was heard and liked by Brinsley Schwarz and Bees Make Honey, who both considered working up the song but still haven't done so, and Ian Matthews, who ***did*** record it for a radio show and performed it on stage with Plainsong. This year a couple of singles have been released on Sweet Breeze. One is 'All The King's Horses', a lovely ballad with Emmylou Harris on vocals (for contractual reasons she is called 'Hannah Brown'), John Guernsey on piano (he wrote it) and several other local musicians. On the flip side is 'King Of Slang' by Claude Jones, another Guernsey composition. This song with which the band used to close their sets, has to be about the catchiest song I've ever heard. The other 45 is 'Streakin' USA' which has a quite interesting line-up. The song's authors are John Guernsey and his brother Tom; the latter played guitar, and John is on piano. For their rhythm section they used Bob Berberich and Bob Gordon of Grin, with Berberich taking lead vocals. The flip is a great ballad, 'The Nighttime Of My Lifetime', written by Tom and done by his old band, The Reekers, which was actually the first Claude Jones off-shoot group. They lasted one year—summer 1972—summer 1973. Joe Triplett was their vocalist and Tom played guitar, with Claude Jones' keyboard man Mike Henley also aboard. This track features the basic Reekers line-up, augmented by John Guernsey and Bob Berberich. Incidentally, in the ***original*** Reekers (and we're talking about 1965-6 now) besides Tom Guernsey and Joe Triplett, Bob Berberich played drums. They also boasted in their ranks a future roadie for Jefferson Airplane, Paul Dowell. (Paul Dowell later had a group called Paul Dowell & The Dolphins which included Nils. They did a couple of singles for Sire.) This single is pretty rare at the moment since most copies that were pressed have been sold, but there are many copies of 'All The King's Horses'/'King Of Slang' available, and possibly we could work something out to sell copies through ZigZag for a nominal fee. Watch these pages for details, as they say.

Emmylou Harris and the Angel Band are making the local circuit regularly. Emmy had been singing on stage and on record with Gram Parsons, and after Gram's death returned to DC to put together a band. She's a fine country music singer, and now she's been signed to Warner Brothers and will be produced by Brian Ahearn of Anne Murray fame.

Her bass player is Tom Guidera, who was in a great late sixties DC group called Sageworth and Drums, which also included Walt Egan, who played guitar for Chris Darrow on Chris' recent British tour.

There are several other high quality groups. Rent's Due is an especial favourite of mine, led by piano player Bill Holland, who is also a writer for one of Washington's daily newspapers. They are a quite funky group playing rock heavily influenced by be-bop and shuffle. Individually, there are all strong musicians, particularly guitarist Gerry Mule (who played on 'All The King's Horses' and 'The Water Song') and sax player Curt McGetrick, who has played with James Brown. Besides rock, they also do some straight jazz instrumentals. The Nighthawks (I guess that every city has a band called the Nighthawks) come on like early J. Geils Band, and play some super-tight blues and rock. Bobby Radcliff leads a band with a very eclectic repertoire, and Bobby is one of the few white musicians who sound credible playing reggae. Liz Meyer and Friends play rousing bluegrass and country rock, making great use of pedal steel

guitar, banjo, and mandolin (though never all at the same time). When pedal steel great Bill Keith used to venture to Washington with Jonathon Edwards, he would always make it a point to sit in with Liz and her group. An off-shoot of Liz Meyer's is Danny Gatton and the Fatboys, another quite eclectic bunch. Guitarist Gatton is particularly impressive. Now in the group is keyboardman Dick Heinze, formerly with Roy Buchanan, who no longer gigs in the area.

This account has completely omitted the soul scene, which is always thriving due to DC's large black population, and the bluegrass scene, which thrives because Washington is on the edge of the South and retains many aspects of Southern culture. There are a few clubs here which feature live bluegrass every night of the week. There's lots going on in jazz, too, but I'm not sure how interesting you'd find all of this. In any case, there's your profile of a local scene, and I'll keep you informed if something good happens. In the meantime, have fun, and I'll see you again next month.

☐ **BRUCE ROSENSTEIN**

ALBUMS

SHANKAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS (Dark Horse AMLH 22002)
CREATURES OF THE STREET—Jobriath (Elektra K42163)
VERITIES AND BALDERDASH—Harry Chapin (Elektra K52007)
IAN THOMAS—Ian Thomas (DJM DJLPS 440)
THE SHIP BUILDER—Bob Pegg & Nick Strutt (Transatlantic TRA 280)
MIRROR IMAGE—Blood, Sweat & Tears (CBS 80153)
ROAD—Johnny Rivers (Atlantic K50063)
MAMMOTH—Decameron (Mooncrest Crest 19)
MILL VALLEY JAM SESSIONS (Polydor 2310 300)
I CAN STAND A LITTLE RAIN—Joe Cocker (Cube Hifly 18)
BLACK HOLE STAR—The Newtrons (United Artists UAS 29652)
SAILOR—Sailor (Epic EPC 80337)
JESS RODEN—Jess Roden (Island ILPS 9286)
TIM HARDIN 1 & 2—Tim Hardin (Verve double 2683 048)
CRIME OF THE CENTURY—Supertramp (A&M AMLS 68258)
CHESS GOLDEN DECADE VOL.4 1958-1959—BOOK OF LOVE—Various (Chess 6445 200)
SKIN TIGHT—Ohio Players (Mercury 6338 497)
CHESS GOLDEN DECADE VOL.5 1959-1961—GOODMORNING LITTLE SCHOOLGIRL—Various (Chess 6445 201)
THE PLACE I LOVE—Splinter (A&M AMLH 22001)
THE LAST COWBOY—Gallagher & Lyle (A&M AMLS 68273)
ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT—Various (Oval OVL 3001)
LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER—The Stylistics (Avco 6466 013)
ALICE COOPER'S GREATEST HITS—Alice Cooper (Warner Bros)
WHEN THE EAGLE FLIES—Traffic (Island ILPS 9273)
LEGEND 1936-1959—Buddy Holly (MCA Coral CDMSP 802)
GEORGIE FAME (Island ILPS 9293)
HOT AND NASTY—Black Oak Arkansas (Atlantic K 20083)
DANCEHALL SWEETHEARTS—Horslips (RCA APLI 0709)
LIVE IT UP—Isley Brothers (Epic 80317)
ILLUMINATIONS—Devadip Carlos Santana/Turiya Alice Coltrane (CBS 69063)
THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM—The Alex Harvey Band (Vertigo 6360 112)
ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL—Carla Bley & Paul Haines (JCOA JT 4001) (3 LPs)
THE JAZZ COMPOSER'S ORCHESTRA (JCOA JD 3001)
C'EST LA VIE—McGuinness Flint (Bronze ILPS 9302)
SNEAKIN' SALLY THROUGH THE ALLEY—Robert Palmer (Island ILPS 9294)
FEAR—John Cale (Island ILPS 9301)
LORRAINE ELLISON (Warner Bros)
BEST OF KEEF HARTLEY (Deram DPA 3013/4)
WRAP AROUND JOY—Carole King (A&M)
I'VE GOT MY OWN ALBUM TO DO—Ron Wood (Warner Bros K56065)

ODDS & SODS—The Who (Track 2406 116)

It's a bit hard to believe that it's taken at least two, and at the most ten years for all of the material on this album to become easily available. A few of the tracks have been around for a while on bootlegs, or, as with 'I'm The Face', originally released as a single when they were known as The High Numbers, and has long been deleted making it rather difficult to obtain (anyone out there got any spare copies?) It's a straight pinch from 'Got Love If You Want It' by Slim Harpo with new words by Peter Meaden.

Nearly all of the best material on 'Odds & Sods' has been heard or heard of in one form or another before, with the real surprise being 'Glow Girl'. It must be all of two minutes long and it's perfect. Townshend plays one of those breaks where he doesn't actually hit any particular notes, but it just builds and builds (similar in style to the break in 'Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere') to a rivetting climax.

About half the album is up to the same standard as 'Glow Girl', with the other half being good or just interesting. 'Faith In Something Bigger', 'Too Much Of Anything', sounding like something off Daltrey's

solo album, and 'Postcard', which has been available on a few bootlegs, are, I think, the lowest points, but they're still enjoyable nonetheless. 'Put The Money Down' is a fairly straight Who song, and 'Now I'm A Farmer' was recorded around the same time as 'Dogs' and is about the closest thing they've recorded to it.

'Long Live Rock' is as you'd expect it with a title like that. They performed it on 'The Old Grey Whistle Test' along with 'Relay' and it was recorded by Billy Fury for the film and soundtrack record of 'That'll Be The Day'. This is an infinitely better version . . . rock'n'roll at its very best, and if anything off 'Odds & Sods' was to be released as a single, this would probably be the best choice.

'Little Billy' was originally recorded to be broadcast on American radio for the American Cancer Society to try and prevent kids from smoking, and to be eventually released as a single, but nothing happened. They did perform it 'live' before it was to be used on the radio, and a 'live' version can be found on a bootleg taken from a concert at the Fillmore East in 1969.

'Pure & Easy' and 'Naked Eye' along with 'Glow Girl' represent the album's highest moments. 'Pure & Easy' is more or less the same as on Pete's solo album 'Who Came First', and 'Naked Eye' is fairly familiar to anyone who's seen them 'live' within the last three or four years. This version is the original one, a shortened version being available on the same bootleg as 'Postcard' has appeared on. It hasn't been available until now because a better 'live' version was intended to be used, and judging from how well they played it at Charlton, it seemed like a good idea. The instrumental part of 'Naked Eye' appears on 'My Generation' off 'Live At Leeds' and just that small piece indicates how much it is improved by a 'live performance, but then The Who have always been at their best onstage.

In all, 'Odds & Sods' is an important album, capturing England's foremost rock band in various stages of their illustrious career.

☐ **ANTHONY OLIVER**

BONGOS OVER BALHAM - Chilli Willi And The Red Hot Peppers. (Mooncrest Crest 21)

This is it my friends, this is the album that everyone with an ear for good music has been waiting for. From a 'live' repertoire of something like thirty songs, they've chosen eleven of the best, some old, some new, for a set that is as good as you could possibly expect it to be if you've seen them 'live'. Don't hesitate about lashing out your bread for one second..... 'Bongos Over Balham" will be a treat for your jaded ears.

SYD BARRETT (Harvest SHDW 404)

The most recent press photo of Barrett pictures him in a now characteristically confused state with a bunch of spring onions dangling from his forehead, as if to emphasise all our worst fears concerning his mental health. However, current reliable information indicates that he is back in the studio recording new material with the help of, amongst others, Robin Trower. I await the results with much interest and with all my fingers crossed, but until then, we can be content with this double album re-release of Syd's two solo LPs, 'The Madcap Laughs' and 'Barrett'. His style of writing, singing, and playing is consistently demanding on the ear..... stark, jagged, frightening, but above all, human. And while the near-fanatical interest in him and his work is maintained and the dearth of truly original songwriters continues, Syd Barrett will remain unique and important.

L.A.TURNAROUND - Bert Jansch (Charisma CAS 1090)

SALLY CAN'T DANCE - Lou Reed (RCA APL1 0611)

G.T.MOORE & THE REGGAE GUITARS (Charisma CAS 1095).

COMPILED BY ANTHONY OLIVER & ANDY CHILDS.

VIRGIN IMPORTS

HAPPY ENDING
Terry Riley

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

VEEDON FLEECE
Van Morrison

WAITRESS IN A DOUGHNUT SHOP - Maria Muldaur

REEL TO REEL
Arthur Lee & Love

NO OTHER
Gene Clark

DRAGONFLY
Jefferson Starship

BOOGIE BANDS AND ONE NIGHT STANDS - Kathy Dalton

SOME OF US
Chip Taylor

QUAH
Jorma Kaukonen

BLABBER 'N SMOKE

As I write this, it's about 80 degrees outside, there's a baseball game on TV, soul music on the radio, and another bottle of booze is about to be broken into. After three days of nothing but aeroplanes and hotels it's nice to be able to relax for a while.....not that I'm complaining you understand, because all this groovy grist is being written in a Holiday Inn room in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. In their infinite wisdom and irreproachable generosity, ABC Records have seen fit to fly six of us journalists and the charming, redoubtable Miss Penny Valentine (who's looking after us all splendidly) out to the States to see a band called Rufus who you'll no doubt know have an excellent single out at the moment called 'Tell Me Something Good'. My fellow travellers on this action-packed trip are Mike Flood Page from Sounds, Sue Byrom the editor of Record Mirror, Adam White from Music Week, Neil Spencer from the NME, and Carl Gayle from Black Music....good people one and all. A full report of how we werestranded in New York for the night, saw Stevie Wonder and Little Richard, missed Randy Newman and Ry Cooder, plus of course Rufus, will appear next issue. Can't wait can you?

As you can see, this is a drastically shortened Blabber'n Smoke so all the rubbish I was going to write (the Wembley gig, Starry Eyed's debut single, our luxurious new office, books, mags, etc) will have to wait until next month.

Something you might be interested in though, John Tobler is about to auction off some of his vast record collection, so anybody interested should simply send a stamped addressed envelope to John care of Zigzag.

OK that's all this month, but an extra-large wanderings next time.....I promise.

Andy.

Nico

THE END...

ILPS 9311

PRODUCED BY JOHN CALE

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