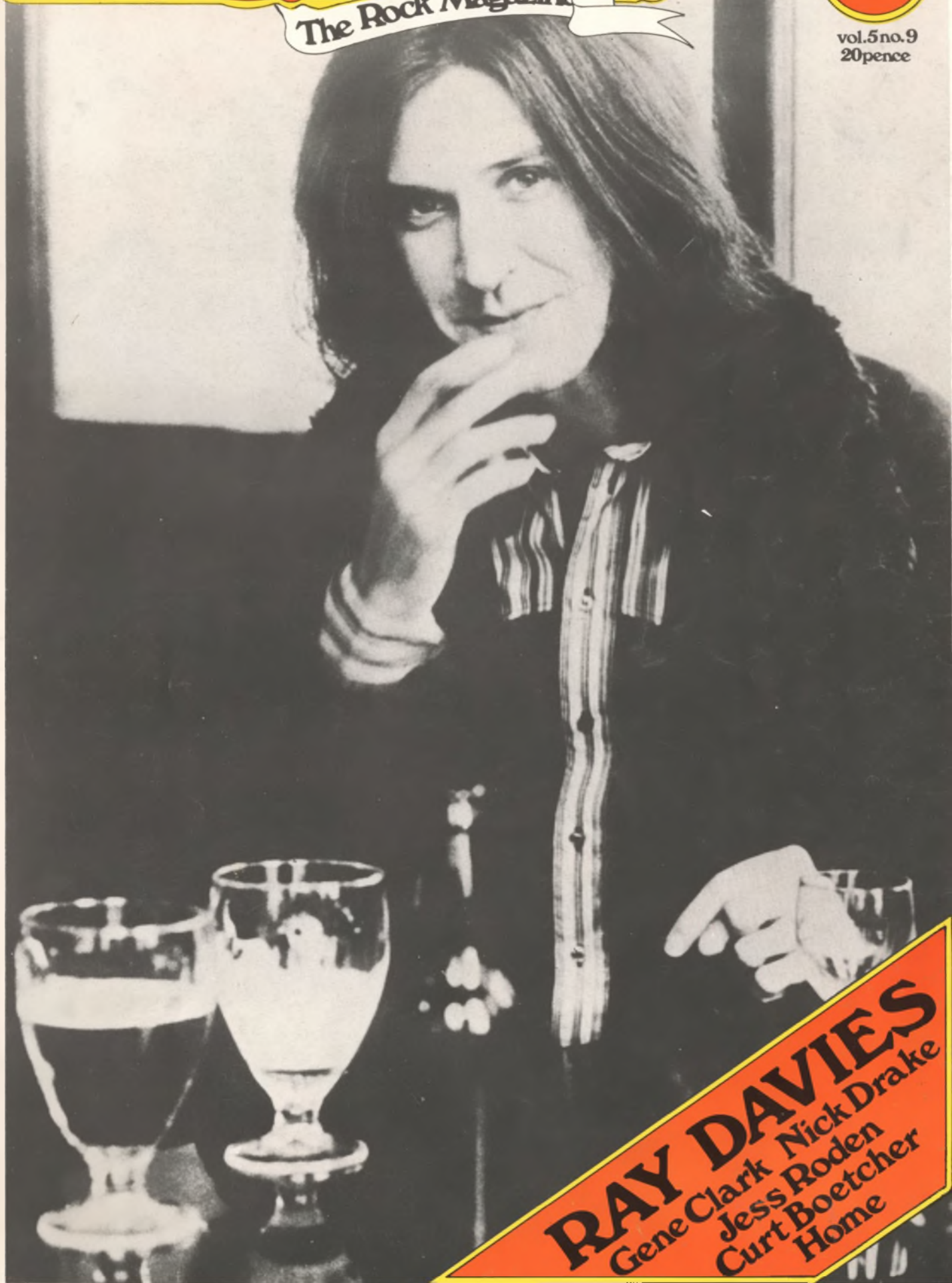


ZIGZAG

The Rock Magazine

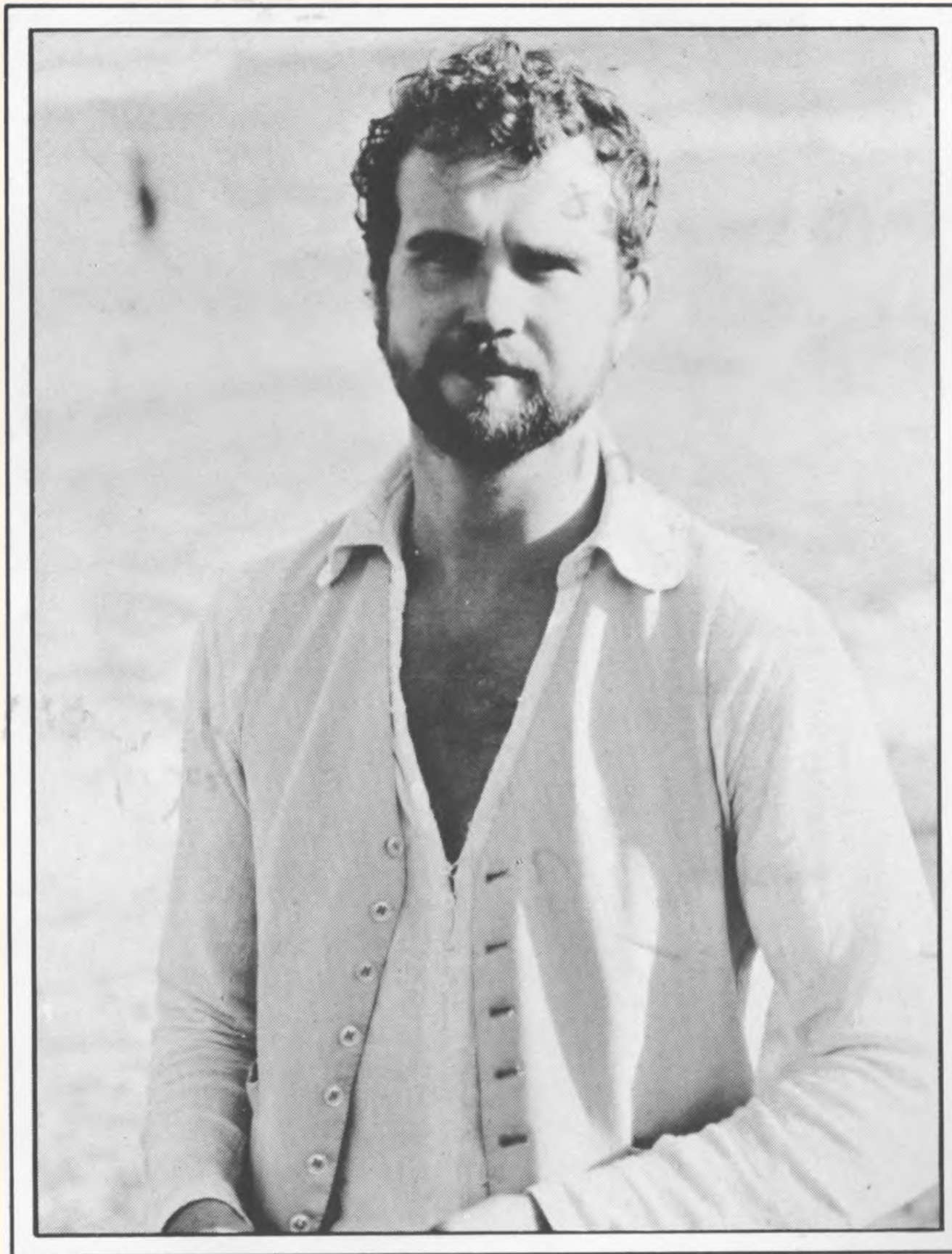
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ERIC CLAPTON

It's about half past eight, the lights go down, the curtains go up, and we can all see a dimly lit stage, with the drums on a raised rostrum centre and back, flanked by amps. At the front, the inevitable microphones, and at the sides of the stage, two comfortable-looking settees. Then the band come on—Carl Radle on bass (he knows which side his bread is buttered, and good for him), Jamie Oldaker on drums, Dick Sims on organ, and George Terry on guitar. By now, we were quite ready for Yvonne Elliman, but maybe less so for Marcia Levy, who stood by the right hand mike, with Yvonne at the left, flanking the man we were waiting for. It was about this point that I said to Pete Frame, "Wonder what it'll be like?" I don't think we were expecting too much. After all, it had been many years since we'd seen Eric Clapton as part of the Bluesbreakers, about eleven years since I saw Sonny Boy Williamson put his arm around Eric, and tell him how wonderful he was, five years since the over-rated Blind Faith, over three years since Bangla Desh and 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps'. A whole lot of dynamite to live up to, and a positive army of doubting critics and even some fair-weather fans waiting with their verbal pistols cocked. Then he walked on to the tumultuous roar—at least the audience weren't going to condemn him without listening for a while.

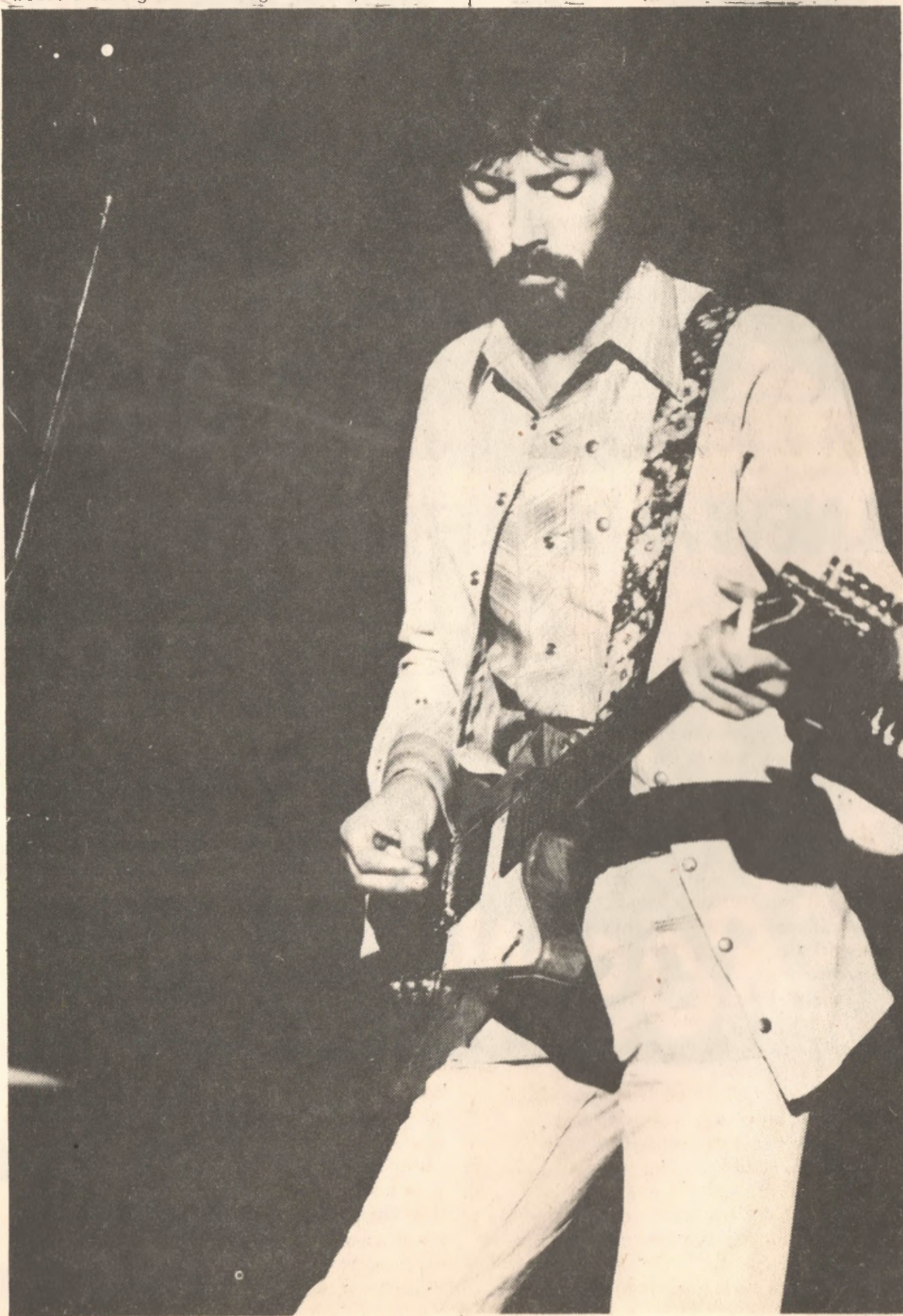
He picked up an acoustic guitar, and approached the mike. "Hello," was just about the right thing to say, in retrospect. Then it was off, with 'Smile' of 'Limelight' and Charlie Chaplin (world's most virile man?) fame. Uncertain applause, with an undercurrent of muttering, and then into 'Let It Grow' from the latest album. Still on acoustic, but I was getting into it anyway, the same way I like Delaney and Bonnie. Three good singers, nice backup, fine. Then Miss Elliman sings lead on 'Can't Find My Way Home', and Marcia Levy played some harmonica, while our man's still at his acoustic. Still pleasant, if less than earth-shattering.

Then the shouting grew, and Eric picked up an electric guitar. The audience reaction was something like watching the Red Sea part, although it must be said that the motives were altogether different. "Yeah, I know," said the man. "Now, you watch this." And we did, so he blew our minds. Familiar territory first, with 'I Shot The Sheriff', which gained the obligatory applause after a few bars. All the time, it was a little disquieting to note that the band didn't seem to have any endings worked out, but this was the last time it affected me, because the next song was 'Ramblin' On My Mind', which comes from the Mayall/Clapton Bluesbreakers album. No, I'm wrong, it was 'Tell The Truth' first, very much a la the version produced by Phil Spector on the 'History Of Eric Clapton' album. Say no more, a gas. Back to 'Ramblin'". It went on for about twenty minutes, and was dominated by one of

the great guitar solos. I here is no way that words can describe just how unbelievable it was. I was taking notes in the dark, and Pete said, "Listen, he's shouting out the key changes." And he was. As far as we could tell, he played in F sharp, then A, then C, then D, and then E, and the band just kept going up and up on this bloody ridiculous solo. No words could come within a hundred miles of describing what he did. 'Willie And The Hand Jive' was all right, but I've never considered it one of the great songs, 'cos I can do the hand jive myself, and the song is an unnecessary additive. Then there was a new one, the title of which I don't know, but whose lyrics are approximately (excuse me, Eric) "Night after day, day after night, light after dark, dark after light, life after death, death after life, fight after peace, peace after fight." Although those lyrics

won't make Shakespeare decompose any further, the song is worth looking forward to. 'Blues Power' was a relevant choice for the next one, and the one after was one I didn't know, although it was still good. 'Singing The Blues' is a song by Mary McCreary, and it's not on the album I have by her on Shelter, so I can't tell you much more than that about it. By this time, in fact, I was down to just writing titles, due to the fact that the adrenalin was flowing so fast that writing seemed an unnecessary evil. Excuse me for that, won't you . . .

'Badge' was next in all its glory, and replacing the abrupt ending, a few lines of 'All I Have To Do Is Dream'. As Pete said, "What a fabulous way to end!" The next number was one I didn't know, but Eric sat down on one of the settees, next to Yvonne Elliman, and played his solo,



which was just as good as before. Then it was 'Layla' and George Terry, who had been playing all night like a king (Clapton was like a God), at least equalled Duane Allman's lines. And they played it faster than the record, it seemed to me, which must have really taken some doing. At this point, something should be said of the other musicians on stage.

Marcia Levy is going to be a star. Her voice reaches unworldly heights, and I've rarely, if ever, heard anyone wail quite so fervently. Watch out for this lady, and do the same for Yvonne Elliman, because I've got her other albums, and they're very good indeed. With the added impetus of supporting Clapton, she'll certainly sell a lot of records in the future. George Terry was unexpected, in that he is the perfect complement to Eric Clapton. At times his lead playing was nearly matching that of the master, and there is nothing better I can say. Radle, Oldaker and Sims were content for the most part to just be proud they were there. Obtrusiveness on any of their parts could have blown it, so gentlemen, thank you for doing just exactly what you did.

The end of 'Layla' was another bit of 'All I Have To Do Is Dream', and then it was encore time, and the lucky song was 'Steady Rollin' Man', again from '461 Ocean Boulevard'. After nearly two and a half hours (I think), we were satiated, destroyed, tired but happy. Pete and I looked at each other, and were totally at a loss for words to describe the brilliance of the music we'd just been digging. Up to that point, my most memorable gigs had been John Sebastian at the Isle of Wight, The Doors at the Roundhouse, Van Morrison's first tour at the Rainbow, and Johnny Rivers at the Valbonne. This was one to add to my list. Come back soon, Eric.

□ JOHN TOBLER

JOHN D. LOUDERMILK

It was not my intention to watch John D. Loudermilk on the box, because I didn't know until I arrived home that he was on. However, he was on, and I was in, and there he was, looking like a successful businessman, around forty-five, clean shaven, and just about recognisable from the (generally) bearded pictures on his album sleeves. Not a bit like a man who wrote 'Ebony Eyes'. Then he started with 'Tobacco Road', a version almost totally dissimilar to those by The Nashville Teens (who should nevertheless be congratulated on discovering the song as early as 1963) and Edgar Winter. The middle eight was like a different song, and the combination of acoustic guitar (single stringed on the intro) and harmonica was simple but effective, despite the fact that he looked, with his guitar and harness, like a sixties time warp. Straight into 'Google Eye', done very much like the version on 'Elloree Part 1', the most recent album of his I possess, but with a much longer story line. Very good.

At this point, he introduced himself. Seemingly he's from Nashville, has written between six and seven hundred songs, and was going to play what he thought were the best of them for us. Then he introduced his band—his guitar, voice, harmonica and foot. The latter achieved a close-up during 'Rick's Tune', which was what I would describe as a ragtime instrumental,

but that description may be because I don't know of any other way to describe it, and I've been conditioned to think that all instrumentals are rags. Still, I liked it. Then was 'Ma Baker's Acre', a song, apparently, about the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) doing compulsory purchase numbers on people's land. On this song, John D. sounded to me like a smoother, updated, more authentic Lonnie Donegan, although that's not to put Lonnie down, because he, along with Buddy Holly and the Everly Brothers, was my first hero.

A medley was next, a couple of snatches from 'James, Hold The Ladder Steady' and the quite fabulous 'Abilene'. The former was recorded some years ago by a lady, or ladies, whose name eludes me at the moment, although it may have been someone like Janie Marden, Kathy Kirby or the Kaye Sisters, or even, upon reflection, Dorothy Provine. 'Abilene' has been done by many people, most notably, I think, by George Hamilton the eighty-seventh. Good songs, anyhow. Finally, Loudermilk did an amusing song called 'Roadhog', very much in the spirit of 'Jaguar And The Thunderbird', except that the storyteller turns out himself to be a cop in an unmarked car, and, in a way that Frame and I are likely to remember for the rest of our lives, says something like "You're going to jail". Musically, siren effects are produced with the harp, and the song is certainly a good one to end up with. But that was the main complaint—twenty-five minutes in the company of a man like this is insufficient and my cries of annoyance were only subdued when the nice announcer said that this programme was the trailer for a series which should happen in the spring. I shall make every endeavour to watch it, and you should too. Until then, there's that 'Elloree' album I've already mentioned on Warners, and a 'Best Of' on RCA, both of which are well worth checking out. I shall shortly be looking through your collections . . .

□ OCTAVIUS KNOX

ELTON JOHN

The subject of this piece is a man who could justly be called one of ZigZag's favourite people, Elton John. It has not been my wont to attend many gigs recently, other than those at which the rather amazing Starry Eyed and Laughing have been drunk, no, playing, and this has been the result of a couple of things. Firstly, I've been rather busy doing other things, and secondly there seems to have been a preponderance of gigs recently by the kind of group that Jake, manager of the Willis, would describe as 'Mindbeast', and I would rather watch the telly than endure that sort of pain. However, as you will hopefully read elsewhere, I did attend and enjoy Eric Clapton's Hammersmith gig, and I'm most pleased to relate that I also caught Elton at the same venue on Christmas Eve, before donning my red overcoat, bleaching my beard and changing the spark plugs in my reindeer. No doubt, some of you will have seen this occasion on the box, and simultaneously heard it on the radio, and equally without doubt, you'll have mixed views. I say that because my wife was watching it, and described it as messy, and while I don't necessarily regard her as average in her tastes, 'tis conceivable that others thought likewise. With the ad-

vantage of being there, I will now endeavour to put the concert into perspective.

A late start, perhaps inevitably, which was blamed on the fact that cameramen abounded. The next thing should have been Bob Harris doing a poor impersonation of Great Uncle Bulgaria (or was it that Easter Bunny fellow?), but for me was in fact a slightly annoyed lady enquiring whether I would cease to, as she put it, "knee her in the back". Ever the gent, I assured her that such was the last thing it had occurred to me to do to her, and her words had scarce broken from the bubble emitting from her mouth, when the aforementioned Harris came on, explained something or other, and then left. Shortly thereafter, young Elton, bathed in a spotlight, and suspended from a wire, zoomed on to the stage from the upper circle to a roar of applause. All alone, he performed the song I've often wanted to hear him do on stage, 'Skyline Pigeon'. The song is incredible, and to hear it in a live environment was no disappointment. Similarly solo, 'I Need You To Turn To', then the original band of Dee Murray and Nigel Olsson came out, and they did 'Border Song', which is another golden great from the John/Taupin songbook. In the increased light, it was possible to see that name plaques were displayed so that we knew that the Muscle Shoals Horns would be around later, as well as Davy Johnstone and Ray Cooper, who in fact hit the stage for the next song, 'Take Me To The Pilot', where Johnstone played the first of what turned out to be a whole series of blistering, brilliant solos. In fact, on the next number, 'Country Comforts', the thought 'Eat your hearts out, Rod and Ronnie!' came to mind, as Elton and Davey cut the 'Gasoline Alley' version to ribbons.

Next is one that to me at least was a little obscure, 'Holiday Inn', which oddly enough is from my favourite Elton John album, 'Madman Across The Water', and that was followed by 'High Flying Bird', and then 'Burn Down The Mission'. At this point, I discussed with my next door neighbour just what one could say about it all. We agreed that there really wasn't anything to say, because everything was so excellently performed and rehearsed.

Now to me, that isn't in any way a downer, because I've seen more than a few of my heroes reduced to shambling nobodies in my personal poll after a duff gig, when it has crossed my mind that most of the people on the stage don't seem to have ever heard the record they're trying to play. So full marks was what we decided, while the interval wound inexorably to a close, and the thought of Ray Cooper going berserk again, as he had at the end of the first set, was enough to whet the appetite.

Back again, with dry ice and presumably mellotron on 'Funeral For A Friend', the instrumental from 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road', then, just like the record, we had 'Love Lies Bleeding' and 'Candle In The Wind'. All, as I hope you know, quite excellent. At this point, it seemed to me that I should try to evaluate the band members, and my deliberations came out as follows: Nigel Olsson's drumming, which in the past had been somewhat weak, was tonight quite up to par. He seems to have forsaken a double bass drum kit for its smaller cousin, and he was really making hits. No need now for those Blue Mink people, Nigel. Ray Cooper on percussion. Well, if anyone could upstage Elton, it's him. A gripping performer, so much into

his music that you feel he's been looking forward to it all day. Catch him if you can. The best thing I can ever say about bass players is that they are unobtrusive. On this night, Dee Murray was that, but rock solid, never missing anything as far as I could tell, and playing his part magnificently. And Davey Johnstone—well, it would probably not be right to say that he played like Clapton, but if you close your eyes, the sound is pretty close, and Clapton's one of my longtime heroes. A bloody good band, then, and led by a man who deserves every accolade that this business can provide. Say no more, squire. After this, in quick succession, came 'Grimby', 'Rocket Man', 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road', 'Daniel' and 'Grey Seal'. A bunch of hits, to precede the return of R. Harris and the start of what you saw on the TV, which started with 'Bennie And The Jets', which was actually my least favourite song of the whole evening. But then the horns arrived with, as I recall, two saxes, a trumpet and a trombone (there were certainly four of them, anyway), and then came 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', which excited the audience a lot, but not quite as much as 'I Saw Her Standing There', which followed. The entire ground floor, and maybe upstairs as well, were straight on their feet, and however many voices it was screamed out those ancient lyrics—word perfect and incredible. We sat down again for 'Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me', but got up again for 'Honky Cat' where Ray Cooper, as well as doing a positively lunatic kazoo solo, performed with the help of a roadie a highly diverting tambourine swap which I hope you were all watching. 'Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting' was next, and I noted almost illegibly that the sound, which up to that point had been exemplary, was a little indistinct. Loud, certainly, but unclear too. Everyone moved about a lot too, although only Elton's movements were constructive really. Also, Dee Murray's bass strap broke, and he played manfully on to the end of an epic version. Then they left, and Brian Southall, press officer for Tamla Motown, remarked to me that there would have to be an encore, as it was only 10.47, and the broadcast went on till eleven. He was right, of course, and back they came to do 'Crocodile Rock' and 'The Bitch Is Back', but this time, I seem to recall that the horns weren't with them. Off again, and then back for 'Your Song', greeted with 'aahs' of approval from the audience, some of whom had been waiting for it all night, so it seemed. At the end of that, R. Stewart, G. Glitter and B. Taupin came on stage, and a raucous version of 'White Christmas' ensued, with the downstairs audience being showered with polythene snow in seemingly endless profusion. Last year, the snow fell on the stage, and jammed Elton's piano keys, so this year, we got it. And I didn't mind a bit, despite the rather strange looks I got on the tube back to my batmobile, waiting in the cold in trendy Osterly. But altogether, a night to remember, because Elton John is in no way a here today gone tomorrow performer—he's a consummate professional, who, apart from writing extraordinarily memorable and enduring songs, is able to stage a live concert which few, if any, of the audience would dare to leave without a contented smile. Elton, a very happy and groovy New Year to you especially. I'm sure

that your shows made a lot of people have a happier Xmas than they otherwise would have.

□ JOHN TOBLER



There's a relatively new band looming fast over the horizon that a couple of us here at ZigZag predict will 'make it' this year. Their name is the Kursaal Flyers, and if you know what a Kursaal



Just a reminder that you can see, in one fabulous package, three of the best bands in the country on the 'Naughty Rhythms Tour'. Chilli Willi you already know a lot about, and the other two bands, Kokomo and Dr Feelgood are certain to break in a big big way during the coming year. Kokomo, managed by the unshakeable Glen Colson, and with Mel Collins back in their line-up, have made an album that is due to be released in a couple of months, and Dr Feelgood, with their able manager Chris Fenwick guiding them to stardom, have a

is, you'll have guessed that they hail from sunny Southend. I've seen the band two or three times and have been suitably impressed on each occasion. They have unlimited potential with both their material and their musicianship, and in six months' time I can see them being in the same position the Willis were around the middle of last year. They have that same good-humoured rapport with the audience, the same lunatic sense of theatrics (they dress up funny), and they demonstrate the ability to handle the same scope of material—everything from bona-fide rock'n'roll to an hilarious piss-take of all that Kung Fu codswallop. But let's not make restricting, pretentious comparisons; the Kursaal Flyers are very much a unique band... one to go and see when the opportunity presents itself. They are being 'looked after' by Paul Conroy, who knows a killer combo when he sees one.

dynamite album out now which you'll be able to read about next month. The dates for the 'Naughty Rhythms Tour' are 1/2 Guildhall, Plymouth; 2/2 Johsone Hall, Yeovil; 5/2 Sheffield City Hall; 6/2 Leeds Polytechnic; 8/2 Ewell Tech College; 12/2 Sussex University; 13/2 Cheltenham Town Hall; 14/2 University of East Anglia, Norwich; 15/2 Rainbow, London; 21/2 University of Cardiff; 22/2 Eastbourne Winter Gardens; 23/2 Chancellor Hall, Chelmsford; 25/2 De Montfort, Leicester; 27/2 Cambridge Corn Exchange; 28/2 North London Poly.



BYRDS MAY COME AND BYRDS MAY GO BUT GENE CLARK

Nine years after first becoming known to the public eye via the 1965 explosion of The Byrds, Gene Clark has not yet received the recognition he deserves. However he has been only seldom absent from the scene during the past decade. After leaving The Byrds in 1966, he started a solo career, but twenty months later he was trying it again with his former mates; by 1968 Gene formed one of the first country-rock outfits, Dillard & Clark, which later evolved into The Dillard & Clark Expedition; in 1970, after the disbanding of the ill-fated Expedition, Clark was hanging around with The Flying Burrito Bros. He found the energy in 1971 to begin a new career and record some memorable stuff for A&M. 1972 saw the long-awaited re-formation of the original Byrds, with Clark contributing fine vocals on the group's album for Asylum, but a concert tour failed to materialize, and Gene found himself alone again. In 1973 with his signing as a solo performer to Asylum, great hopes were expressed among his die-hard fans, yet nothing came out... surely 1974 should have been Gene Clark's year! A new album has just been released, called, aptly enough, 'No Other'. But let's start from the beginning.

* * * * *

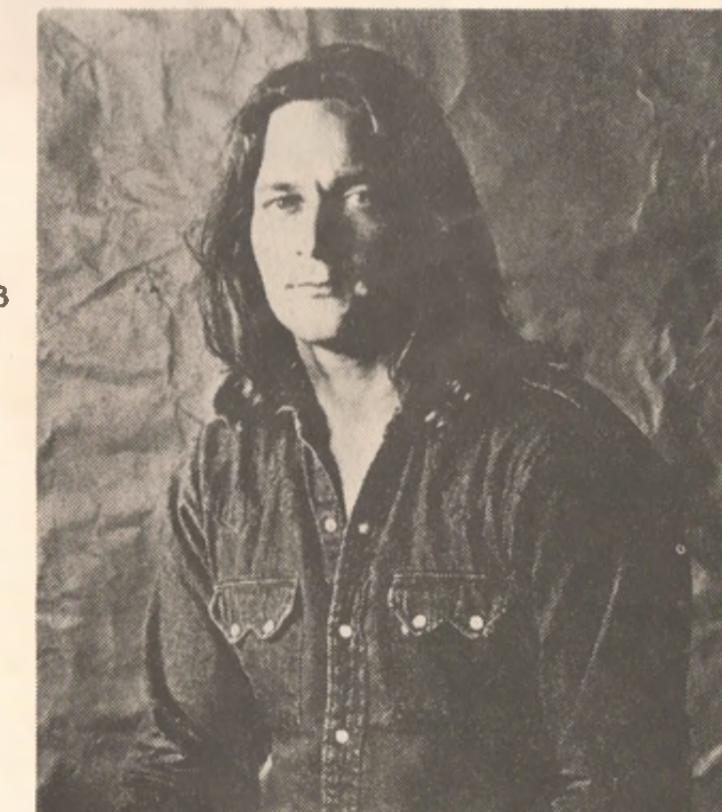
Gene Clark was born in Tipton, Missouri, on November 17th 1941. His musical background was of the back-porch variety for a long time, and then he fell into the local high-school rock band circuit. "I have always dug country & western music" claims Gene, and admits that at the age of four he used to go out and sit on a saw-horse in the backyard and pretend he was appearing on Grand Ole Opry.

"I didn't begin to play till I was 11. My Dad played guitar, tenor banjo, mandolin, and harmonica, so naturally I was influenced by all this 360-degree music".

Gene began writing and singing at 11, but instead of playing the traditional country songs, he began "finding new chords and improvising new melodies and lyrics using a country & western base". He had his first band at 14, and from there he was initiated into the

professional world via a group called The Rum Runners, which he explains away as "just a bunch of college kids making music for other college kids". He then went on to The Surf Riders... "a pretty weird name when you consider that Missouri is about as far from the ocean as you can get in the USA. The only surfing is maybe wake surfing on the Missouri River".

Gene eventually moved to Kansas City and his next stop was the small folk circuit in this area. Folkies from there remember Clark and Brewer & Shipley and a few others who are well-known, hanging out and picking in the



clubs there. It was in this scene that the proverbial bolt of lightning struck Clark. Randy Sparks and The New Christy Minstrels came into the region and spent some time in between concerts checking out the local scene. There they found the guitar-weilding Gene, liked him, and signed him to play 12-string and sing for them. Clark stayed with The Minstrels through their most successful year, recording their big hit, 'Green Green', and two albums, before leaving the group in Los Angeles.

Three months later, one hot night at West Hollywood's Troubadour, he met Jim McGuinn, and their association gave birth to the legendary Byrds.

McGuinn remembers: "When I ran

into Gene Clark I was doing Beatles' songs with a 12-string acoustic guitar, and of course nobody was going for it. But Gene heard it and dug it and he came over to me and said 'do you want to start a duet, like Peter & Gordon or something?' We did that and the very same night Dave Crosby came in....."

Thanks to record producer Jim Dickson, The Byrds used the World Pacific studios to practise and work up their repertoire, which consisted largely of stuff written by Gene alone, or with McGuinn. That was during the summer of 1964. An archive album of these historic sessions was released a few years later on Together Records, and in 1973 Columbia Records bought the tapes to re-release them on an LP called 'Preflyte'. Gene wrote or co-wrote nine of the eleven songs, and 'She Has A Way' and 'Reason Why' really were promises of good things to come. When The Byrds got their very first contract, with Elektra Records, they recorded a single as The Beefeaters, and the top-side, 'Please Let Me Love You' was yet another Clark composition, co-authored with McGuinn. The Byrds recorded two other albums featuring Gene Clark during that heroic year of 1965 - 'Mr. Tambourine Man' which included three Clark originals, 'I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better' (a song later covered by people like Johnny Winter and Johnny Rivers), 'Here Without You', and 'I Knew I'd Want You', along with two Clark/McGuinn collaborations, 'You Won't Have To Cry' and 'It's No Use'. (Note that these two songs are credited to one H. Clark, that is Harold Clark). 'Turn Turn Turn', the third Byrds album, had 'Set You Free This Time', one of the most touching songs Clark has ever written, 'If You're Gone', another beautiful piece, and the more common 'The World Turns All Around Her'. It is worth noting also that the b-side of the Byrds' 'Turn Turn Turn' hit single was Clark's 'She Don't Care About Time', a song very difficult to obtain until CBS issued it last year on the 'History Of The Byrds' double LP. At the beginning of 1966 everything seemed to be going fine for the Byrds, and they released a beautiful anthem, 'Eight

FLIES ON FOREVER

Miles High' as their next 'hit-to-be'; this song is, to my knowledge, the only one to emanate from the songwriting partnership of Clark, McGuinn and Crosby. Unfortunately, just a few weeks later, Gene Clark left the Byrds because, according to a CBS International Memo, 'for his own personal reasons he felt he no longer wanted to perform with the group'.

What were these personal reasons? "Gene had this fantastic fear of air-planes. He just freaked out on that plane before it took off to New York", explains Roger McGuinn, "he panicked and refused to stay on. We told him if he was going to be a Byrd, he'd have to fly..." Gene himself later said: "I don't like to fly in airplanes. To be a Byrd you had to be able to fly all the time, and the pressure got to me. It had nothing to do with musical hassles".

Gene tried to form a new band, failed to get that together, and began writing some more songs.

"It was time to make an album of my own. I wanted to write all the material and do more with my own musical ideas. With the Byrds, most of the ideas had been developed more or less co-operatively. My inspirations, as I remember, were 'Rubber Soul' and early Mamas And Papas".

So the first step in Gene's new career was a fine, but under-promoted album for Columbia, 'Gene Clark With The Gosdin Brothers'.

"The Byrds and The Gossins had the same management, so we had been doing a lot of concerts together, especially in California. Clarence White was playing guitar for them, and their act was kind of country, just country enough for what I wanted to do. We worked out the basic arrangements for most of the songs, along with guitarist Bill Rhinehart, and Chris Hillman and Michael Clarke from the Byrds. The Gossins and I did the vocals".

Leon Russell was brought in on the sessions by Jim Dickson, and he lent his abilities to every cut in one way or another. His orchestrations on several tracks stand, to this day, as exceedingly imaginative, unusual pieces of music. In 1972, thinking back to these sessions, Clark said: "Leon had helped the Byrds on 'Mr. Tambourine Man'. I knew him from then, and when Jim Dickson suggested him as piano player and arranger, it sounded like a good idea. Leon was noted in the business as a good person in the studio and we got on well. If I'd had my way Russell would have produced the whole album. But we had to have a Columbia staff producer, so we started with Larry Marks and later used Gary Usher before Jim Dickson finished it up. Leon is one of the few producers I've worked with who has an excellent empathy with my material. The musical ideas he came up with were always appropriate to what I felt about my songs. After we finished the album, he and I did a few more things which have never come out. I reckon Leon's got the tapes somewhere. Maybe I'll do some more work with him some day".

But back to the album... it's full of country rock (the word had yet to be invented) and sad songs, the characteristics of which are lyrical awkwardness, words that don't fit because of too many or too few syllables, and conspicuously trite rhymes which smack you in the face. (Actually, Gene does this so consistently that it's

become more of a trademark than a drawback). 'Echoes', the opening song, was, and still is, a pure masterpiece. Of this album Gene later said: "It didn't fare too well when it first came out for a couple of reasons. Firstly, albums weren't getting much air-play unless they were by The Beatles, Stones, or Monkees, and then there was no 'Rolling Stone' to review it. Also there were misunderstandings between me and the Byrds... confusion really as to what exactly was going on. 'Younger Than Yesterday' came out the same week as my album, and the Byrds were on top, so they got the attention".

After the release of the album in January 1967, Gene played a few clubs with a back-up band including Bill Rhinehart (lead guitar), Joe Larson (drums), and Chip Douglas (bass), and later he also had a band with two future Byrds, Clarence White (lead guitar) and John York (bass). Clark's work as a soloist, though steady and fairly progressive, did not however, give him the fulfilment he had sought. So when early in 1967, Dave Crosby was sacked from the Byrds, Gene came back into the nest, this time carrying not a tambourine but a rhythm guitar. He lasted three weeks, because again he could not bear to fly to gigs.

McGuinn: "He said he'd fly, but at the last moment he decided he wouldn't. He would always take trains everywhere... so he took a train back to Los Angeles".

Towards the end of that year, Gene went through several months of not doing much at all; the only time he was mentioned in a rock paper was in March 1968 when he joined the Byrds onstage at Derek Taylor's farewell party in Hollywood, for a couple of old songs. Anyway Gene was busy during the first half of 1968, recording an album which, unfortunately never saw the light of day.

"I was in a really frustrating place at the time, and everything I did seemed to both reflect and contribute to it".

By this time Clark, now no longer under contract to Columbia, signed with A&M Records. During the summer of 1968 he ran into a friend, Doug Dillard (they had been picking together in sessions and in friends' smoke-filled living rooms since they had first met a few years back in LA... Doug had even contributed a fine electric banjo break on Clark's first album), and he had the idea of roping Doug into forming a group... Dillard & Clark.

"Of course we had things in common; we both came from the same sort of background where our families had harmonicas, mandolins and guitars around the house for the kids to play with instead of toys. We really never got into any heavy, formal music scenes it was always informal, for fun, and never intentional or premeditated. At the beginning of our friendship I was just interested in the Beatlemania thing, and country & western was not an up front scene with me, although it had always been the strongest element in my musical background".

So Gene and Doug went into a small lonely LA studio and recorded an album together "amidst the ruins of crushed cigarettes and communal smoking things pushed deep inside beer can sentinels... smoke-mixing, feet-tapping, roots-growing, back to the timelessness of the hills music". The result of these sessions, called 'The Fantastic Expedition Of Dillard & Clark', is an

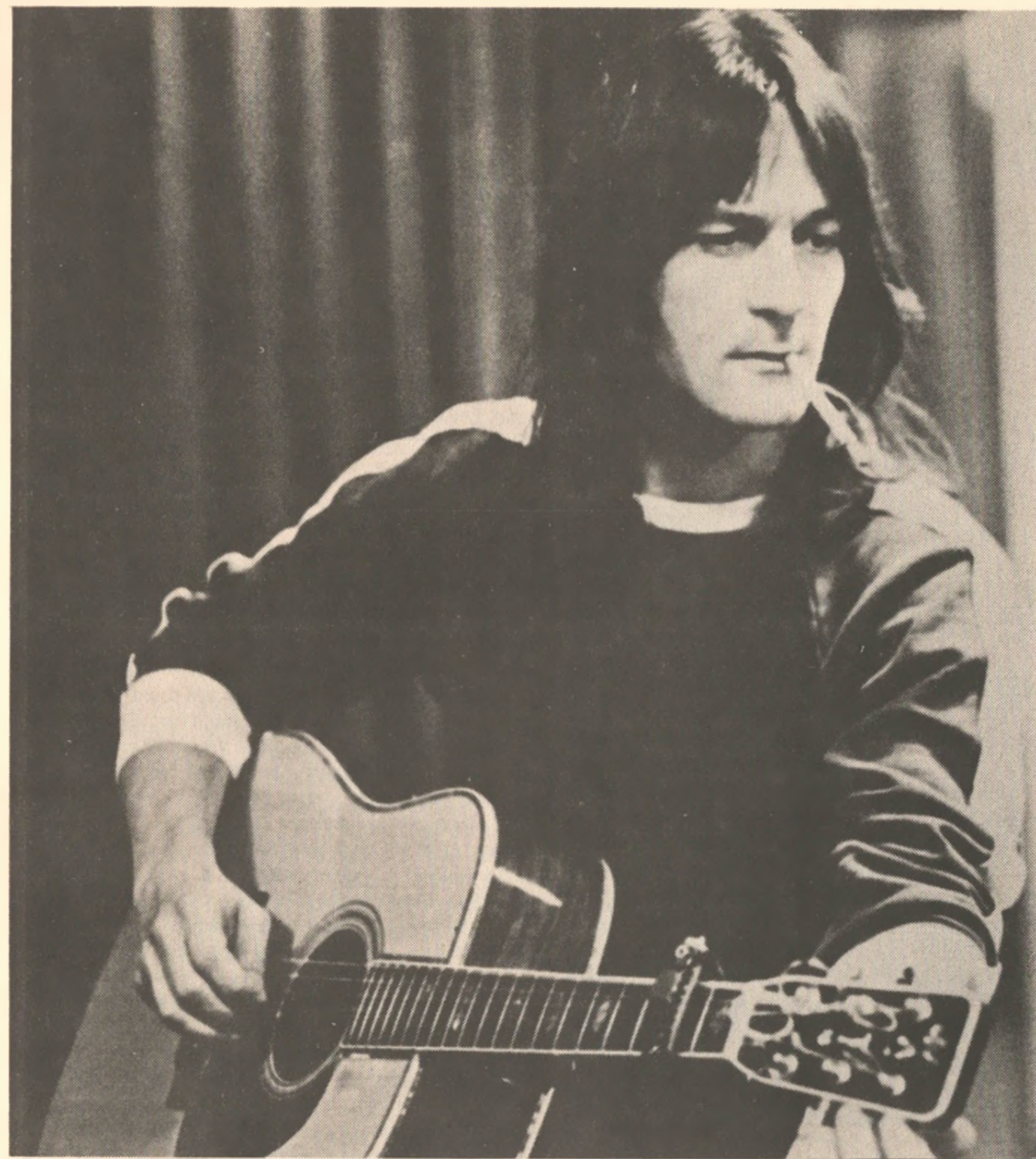
excellent album which got favourable reviews everywhere. It was definitely a group effort with Clark on lead vocal, acoustic guitar and harmonica, Dillard on banjo, violin and back-up vocal, and brilliant contributions from two then relatively unknown musicians, Bernie Leadon (acoustic guitar, dobro, banjo and back-up vocal), and David Jackson (string bass and back-up vocal). Don Beck (mandolin and dobro) with Andy Belling (electric harpsichord) completed the line-up. The songs are mostly by Clark & Leadon - 'Out On The Side' is the best tradition of 'Echoes', and 'The Radio Song' and 'Something's Wrong' are the two other highlights of the record. Clark & Dillard themselves were obviously proud of their work. Dillard claimed:

"We are doing mixtures of all the things we have picked up through our travels over the years. Much of the music we have written for the album sounds like bluegrass, but it also has elements of jazz mixed with it. It's really not traditional, yet it has the traditional sound and the traditional-type harmonies".

Clark states: "Bluegrass actually goes back all the way to the Elizabethian period in England. It's really more European than anything else. You must remember that the early settlers that hit the hills of America were of foreign extraction and were quite far removed from Nashville and other such city country music. So their music stayed the same way up in the country, being handed down from generation to generation by mouth and instrument, not on sheets of music paper like city country music".

In order to promote their album, Gene and Doug decided to play concerts in California, and the group, now called The Dillard & Clark Expedition, opened at The Troubador (where else!) Ex-Byrd Michael Clarke, recalled from Hawaii, was sitting at the drums, while Bernie Leadon was in front singing harmony with Gene and Doug, and playing an electric Gibson. David Jackson was playing a Fender bass, and Doug Dillard himself played a custom-made Rickenbacker electric banjo. They made such a good impression on that night of December 1968 that one rock critic wrote: "They play country music with a rock beat - I hope it isn't immediately classified as country rock because it's something new - their vocals are tight, they look good, and they have that something that's a joy to watch and hear". Gene Clark, explaining the change from acoustic to electric said: "Country & Western will go on because it is definitely an established heritage of this land. Doug and I are just an extension of that heritage and we are trying to keep it pure. We can still play electric and keep it that way".

Early in 1969 the group recorded a single, (not included on their next album), an up-tempo Gene Clark country ballad called 'Lyin' Down The Middle'. The b-side was quite a surprise - Gene singing Presley's 'Don't Be Cruel' with a definite rock backing in totally non-Expedition style. Soon after this single Michael Clarke left to join up with The Flying Burrito Brothers, and The Dillard & Clark Expedition reverted to acoustic bluegrass, adding two new members, Don Beck (who had helped on the first album) and Donna Washburn (described as a power-house singer and also the daughter of the president of the 7-Up soft drink company!!) They played the small clubs in California, but never



outside of LA, presumably because of Gene Clark's aversion to flying. Another single came out, also a Gene Clark song, - the beautifully arranged 'Why Not Your Baby' (incorporating strings in addition to banjos and guitars), and there were more personnel changes. Bernie Leadon and Don Beck left, their places being taken by Byron Berline (fiddle), and John Corneal (drums). Electricity came back into the group during the summer of 1969, and a second album was cut with special help from Burritos! Sneaky Pete Kleinow (pedal-steel) and Chris Hillman (mandolin). But what a disappointment after the delight of the first album. Gone were the songwriting partnership of Clark and Leadon, and the strong playing of the Clark/Dillard/Leadon/Jackson quartet. The album, entitled 'Through The Morning Through The Night' sounds tired, rambling, and very loose. Some of the songs are re-makes of traditionals, like the uninspired 'No Longer A Sweetheart Of Mine' and 'Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms', and a few others are cover versions of other artists' hits, like The Everly's 'So Sad' and The Beatles' 'Don't Let Me Down' (featuring an extraordinary pedal-steel solo). Two songs are, in my opinion, the worst Clark compositions to date, 'Corner Street Bar' and 'Kansas City Southern'. The whole record is only saved by two other Gene Clark songs, the very sad 'Polly' and the title track. This album was obviously not going to establish The Dillard & Clark Expedition all over the world. The consequent soul-searching about directions, the money troubles (the band had to support themselves entirely on gigs, which weren't too wonderful), and the failure to achieve any kind of national reputation, left

everyone drained of energy and ready to settle for playing simple bluegrass music. But there was little room for the moody Gene Clark in pure bluegrass; it was time for him to move on. So in December 1969 he left the band to go solo for the second time. All that was left from his c&w excursion was a short haircut and a moustache!

1970 was not particularly promising for Gene. During long, tumultuous, and frustrating months, nothing happened, except a short contribution to the original soundtrack of 'The American Dreamer', an 'Easy Rider'-type movie starring Dennis Hopper. Gene had been asked to write two songs for the film, 'American Dreamer' and 'Outlaw Song' and he recorded them alone playing acoustic guitar and harmonica. I wish someday he's record a whole album that way! In May of the same year he recorded two songs for a single with a very special back-up crew of Roger McGuinn, David Crosby, Chris Hillman, and Michael Clarke - the original Byrds. But it wasn't exactly a reunion. They all came along separately and did their parts under the guidance of producer Jim Dickson, the Byrds' old manager. Additional features on the songs were piano by Terry Melcher and flute by Bud Shank. 'She's The Kind Of Girl' was the a-side and 'One In A Hundred' the b-side of this A&M single, which regrettably was never released because of the contractual problems to be expected with the respective labels of McGuinn, Crosby, etc.

Following that, Gene played a few gigs with The Flying Burrito Brothers who had just lost Gram Parsons during the summer, and at one point it was

believed that Gene was going to become a permanent member of the group. But of course he didn't; the only result of this short-lived alliance was The Burritos' recording of Clark's 'Tried So Hard' as their next single, with Gene singing the bass part of the back-up vocals. (Note to collectors: when The Burritos recorded their third LP they decided to cut that song again, so the one you're listening to on their LP is not the same as the single version - it's without Gene).

By 1971 everyone was eagerly awaiting a new album on A&M. In January Gene walked into the studio where the Burritos were recording, and he offered them a brand new song, 'Here Tonight!'. They cut it with Gene on lead vocals... a marvellous song, classic Clark and coincidentally classic Burritos. But once again the song didn't find an immediate release.

"I'm getting used to this backlog of material. It must mean something; maybe it's all going to happen next year, and you'll hear it all". (It happened in fact when A&M put this song on the Burritos anthology double LP released last year).

Meanwhile Gene had been preparing himself for a new chapter in his career. He had moved to the woods north of San Francisco to assess his situation, he had been writing more of those poetically complex, subtly introverted songs which had been his trademark since the early Byrds, and in March Clark was ready to cut an album. He booked some session time at the Village Recorder Studios, with Jesse Davis as producer, and everything he laid down was released in August of that year on an A&M LP called 'White Light' (the first title chosen, 'Harold Eugene Clark' having been rejected). The record was well received among 'rock critics', and 'Rolling Stone's' Serge Denisoff wrote: 'Gene Clark's album, one he should have done long ago, is a form of redemption. It is a return to the roots and to those qualities that made 'Younger Than Yesterday' one of the most influential American rock albums of the sixties. This album evokes considerable nostalgia... It is the best of all that was good with the Byrds and the Springfield in a present day context. That's a lot when you think about it'. Backing musicians on the album are Jesse Davis, Ben Sidran, Mike Utley, Gary Mallaber, and even former Burrito bass player Chris Ethridge was present at the sessions. But A&M didn't exactly promote the album too convincingly, and Gene himself didn't do too many concerts, so it soon sunk without a trace. Nevertheless, the few people who, like me, possess 'White Light' gave themselves hours of pleasure listening to 'Spanish Guitar', 'With Tomorrow', 'Where My Love Lies Asleep', or any of the six other tunes.

Gene Clark went back to Mendocino living in pastoral splendour, got married and wrote more songs.

Only one month after the release of his album, Gene was back at work. It seemed the Byrds - the original five, were going to record together. Someone in Hollywood, at the end of September 1971, wrote: 'Seems that David Crosby is the only ex-Byrd not popping up for Byrd recording sessions. Gene Clark and Chris Hillman have been seen, and Michael Clarke is still on speaking terms with McGuinn'. In fact we learned later that these sessions were for a Terry Melcher solo album. Crosby hadn't been invited because he and

Melcher don't get along. Gene Clark wrote two new songs for Terry, but they weren't featured on the final version of the album which was only released two years later!

In January 1972 Gene was reportedly back in Los Angeles from his Mendocino retreat with his wife and newborn boy. Around the same time, rumours of a reunion of the original Byrds became stronger with talk of a 'one-album-only' deal arranged by David Geffen of Asylum Records. Still, Roger McGuinn was touring with the current version of the Byrds, and Clark was on the eve of starting sessions for another album. As usual, he was very careful in selecting his back-up musicians. When he entered the studio in April, he was accompanied by Sneaky Pete Kleinow (pedal-steel), Chris Ethridge (bass), Michael Clarke (drums), plus Clarence White (lead guitar), Country Gazette leader Byron Berline (fiddle), and famed session-man Spooner Oldham (keyboards). Producer Chris Hinshaw was Terry Melcher's former assistant... he had worked on two Byrds albums, and was preparing to help Roger McGuinn record his first solo album the same year. Gene recorded a newly-arranged version of 'She Don't Care About Time', an expanded, slower interpretation of the 1965 Byrds' song, and many originals, 'the best being 'In A Misty Morning', 'I Remember The Railroad' and 'Shooting Star'. But again, this was a period of frustration

"For a long time I'd been in a situation where I'd get halfway into a project and then someone would throw a wet blanket on it. They may or may not have understood what I was trying to do artistically, but for whatever reasons, the problem wouldn't be allowed to work itself out".

It was a stifling period and Gene left A&M Records before completing his album, which never saw the light of day as the regular follow-up to 'White Light'. It is worth noting, however, that A&M Records in Holland released last year an album by Gene Clark called 'Roadmaster', including eight songs from these 1972 sessions, plus the two tracks that Gene had recorded in 1970 with the original Byrds backing him, and the song that Gene had donated to the Burritos in 1971. This special Dutch release is not surprising if you consider that Gene Clark has a cult following in that country, and that his 'White Light' LP was voted album of the year in 1971 by Holland's most influential rock critics. In 1972, Gene nearly took part in the Amsterdam Rock Circus, held on May 22nd at the Olympic Stadium, but he was not allowed to leave the States, having not paid his taxes.

Meanwhile, over at Columbia, someone had the idea of re-releasing Gene's first album in 1972, feeling perhaps that now its time had come. When Gene found out, he suggested that all of the original eight-track recordings should be remixed and at least some vocals re-recorded. After a week in Columbia's LA studios, Gene and Jim Dickson emerged with an enormously improved, almost totally different album.

"There's no doubt that some of this material has a 1966 feel to it, and remixing was pretty necessary. We brought out things you couldn't even hear on the original tapes. All in all, considering who was playing and when it was recorded, it serves as an



interesting picture of growth as it was taking place. It's a chance to hear all these people in a different context, and my own work sure has changed a bit. We were all just a little bit ahead of our time I think. No country-rock sold well until after 1969. And in the sense that the young record buyers can best relate to it, my first album is early LA music, even though it wasn't the first thing we'd ever done. To those people, anything before Crosby, Stills, & Nash is early LA".

So the album, aptly titled 'Early LA Sessions', came out in July 1972, with a re-sequencing in the order of the tracks, and one of them, 'Elevator Operator' was even removed because with six years perspective, Gene felt strongly that it did not measure up to the others. Again I'll refer to 'Rolling Stone' for a review of that album, and to the words of Stephen Davis: 'This record is nothing less than a re-issue of the great and unsung 'Gene Clark With The Gosdin Brothers'. It's half a decade later, but this music still sounds thoroughly fresh and solid. My only conceivable gripe is that Gene, in remixing his old album for reissue, went and left out one of the best tunes on the original, the simian but rocking 'Elevator Operator'. It should have been one of the hottest albums of a monumental year (1967): a couple of million Byrds fans knew that Gene had left the roost and were doubtless waiting to see what would happen... The total sound is a synthesis of the essential style and attitude that was to switch Los Angeles-based musicians away from the metallic sound to 'Sweetheart Of The Rodeo' and on to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Gene Clark did it first and did it beautifully'.

Three months later, the Byrds reunion took place and Gene found himself together with his former colleagues at Wally Heider's Studios, where the recording of a new album started in November 1972. Everyone brought their own songs, but it is interesting to note that the Byrds decided to give more room to Gene and let him sing four of the eleven tracks selected for the LP. Considering that McGuinn was doing well with the Byrds, that Hillman had all the fame he could wish for with Stephen Stills' Manassas, and that Crosby was still living on the past glory of CSN&Y, it's as if they all wanted to give a chance to Clark, who had never reached any kind of commercial status on his own. Clark sang two Neil Young songs on the LP, 'Cowgirl In The Sand' and 'See The Sky About To Rain', having no small reverence for Neil as a songwriter: "He's a prolific writer and the stuff is significant poetry. He has something to say, more than just 'Hi, 16-year old chick, let's jump in bed and ball all night'. I call that f**k-rock, non-intellect..." But Gene also had two of his own compositions on the album; 'Full Circle' was not really a new song because Gene originally intended to put it on his 'Roadmaster' album, but it was certainly written about, if not for, the reunion. At one point, there was even talk of calling the whole album 'Full Circle'. The second song was 'Changing Heart', a beautiful country ballad. The reactions to the album when it came out in March 1973 were mixed. Here are a few comments concerning Clark's songs: 'He has two of the best things on the album. His songwriting is still excellent and he

transcends the mediocrity of the arrangements with relative ease...' (Rolling Stone). 'His 'Full Circle' should blast the Byrds right back onto AM radio, and his 'Changing Heart' is a fine example of modern country music good enough even to survive his mediocre harp break'. (Crawdaddy). 'Gene Clark has written a few good songs, but his continuing hillbilly folkiness has made him a rather wearisome figure, and he also insists on playing lousy harmonica'. (Creem).

Touring plans for the original Byrds depended upon the success of the album, which they optimistically hoped would earn gold record status. In the States, two singles were culled from the LP, 'Full Circle' and two months later, 'Cowgirl In The Sand', both having Clark as lead singer. Unfortunately the two singles did nothing in the charts. By the summer, the LP had sold 400,000 units, and the possibility of a tour was then said to be depending on David Crosby's musical commitments with CSN&Y. As a matter of fact by now everyone had gone back to what they were into before the reunion.

"Looking back on it, I feel we took the project seriously enough, but we didn't prepare adequately and we definitely lacked perspective on what we were doing. People would be coming and going on the road half the time, and we didn't sit down and tighten up as a band. We may do another one, and I think we've all learned that even a special group like the Byrds can't be expected to do everything perfectly at the snap of a finger. It takes work".

Since the reunion, Gene has worked hard preparing his Asylum debut. (He was signed to the label as a soloist in February 1972). The only distractions were a few gigs on the road as part of The Adventures Of Roger McGuinn, notably in June 1973 for 14 shows at the Troubadour in Los Angeles, nine years after the first meeting of the two men at the very same place. Clark and McGuinn get along well now, and at one point they even shared the same house, high up in the hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Then in 1974, for six months, Gene and his new producer Thomas Jefferson Kaye worked in Los Angeles and San Francisco on a brand new album, 'No Other'. They recruited top session people like Lee Sklar (bass), Russ Kunkel (drums), Joe Lala (percussion), Mike Utley (keyboards), Richard Greene (violin), and Jesse Davis (guitar) to help, gave them carefully considered direction, and came up with a record Gene likes as much as anything he's ever done.

"Coming to a new label, I wanted to bring a fresh attitude, fresh material, and new ideas. I feel I owe that much to everyone involved. On past records the musical style tended to be pretty uniform. Either you related to it or you didn't. This is the first album I've ever made which includes a clear variety of influences... we worked six months on it from conception to mastering... I have to say I'm pretty happy with the whole thing. I'm prepared to get my show on the road. I'm looking forward to doing some more work with the Byrds, and I believe we'll get that together in 1975. But first things first. You could call this an important transition for me. I'm moving into another, bigger arena".

The new album, 'No Other', was released in the States at the end of last September, and to whet your appetite for when it's released over here this month, here are a few of the reviews: 'It's great to have Gene Clark recording again. He has come up with a winning new album. His new material has character and body that are unique. Definitely well-conceived, the LP offers such tasty morsels... A definite positive burst from Mr. Clark'. (Cashbox). 'He's back with his usual superb mix of country and rock tunes, his melodic vocals and his beautiful set of songs... Clark seems in the forefront rather than on the fringes. A magnificent effort'. (Billboard).

So there we are. The future looks brighter now for Gene Clark than at any other time in his career, so keep an eye out for his name, if we're lucky we might hear a lot of him in the coming months. Jean-Pierre Morisset. Special thanks to Bob Garcia, Jim Bickhart, David Swaney, Bud Scoppa, Chuck Casell, and Pete Frame.

DISCOGRAPHY

Ramblin' (with The New Christy Minstrels). Merry Christmas (with The New Christy Minstrels). Preflyte (with the Byrds). Mr. Tambourine Man (with the Byrds). Turn Turn Turn (with the Byrds). Fifth Dimension (with the Byrds). Gene Clark With The Gosdin Brothers. The Fantastic Expedition (with Dillard & Clark). Through The Morning Through Night (with Dillard & Clark). The American Dreamer (original soundtrack). White Light. Roadmaster. Early LA Sessions. Byrds. No Other.

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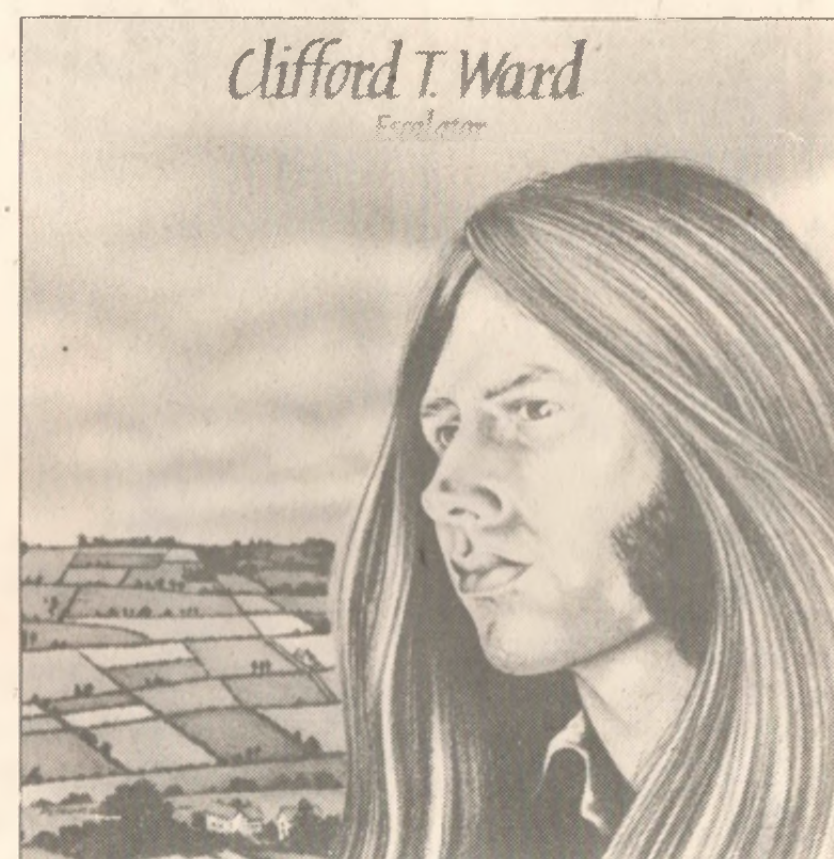
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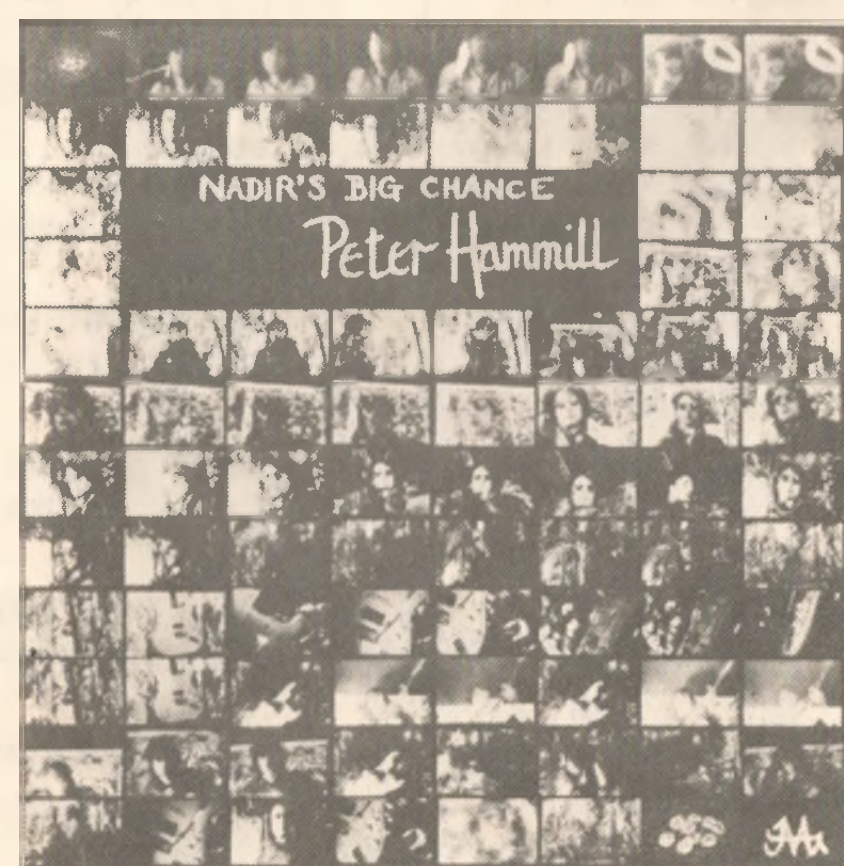
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THE UNDER-RATED ADVENTURES OF LAURIE WISEFIELD AND HOME

Those of you who were able to catch Wishbone Ash on their British tour last October will doubtless have been struck by the excellent guitar playing of Laurie Wisefield, who joined the band last year as a replacement for Ted Turner. Well, you can read more of that in the forthcoming 'History Of Wishbone Ash' which will shortly be appearing in ZigZag, but before then I think a resume of Laurie's career is in order, particularly as it involves the entire history of Home—a band which largely, thanks to the songwriting talents of Mick Stubbs, made three fairly impressive albums before breaking up last year.

Laurie's musical career started at around the age of eight when he began pestering his parents for a guitar.

"They wouldn't buy me one for a long time and my grandfather bought me one in the end. It was a £6 Unicorn guitar, an acoustic. I had that for quite a while and then I got into the Shadows and wanted an electric, so my dad said that when I could play eight songs he'd buy me one. So I was blagging all these songs, making mistakes, but he didn't know and eventually we went out and bought an electric guitar, a Watkins Rapier 33. I took it home and blew up by tape recorder in about the first week because I was using it as

an amplifier. After that my dad bought me a little Watkins Westminster amp."

As Laurie's proficiency increased he got into numerous bands with his friends, most of which were fairly casual affairs with no particular names apart from one called The Inquests. He began playing at the charity shows which his parents put on from time to time and found that he could put his talents to good use at that early age at, of all places, Butlins' holiday camps where he managed to win numerous free holidays in talent contests. Then at the age of twelve or thirteen Laurie got his first semi-pro band, The Four Fables, together.

"That was made up of local guys that

were living in Gants Hill and around that area and we used to do weddings and things like that, playing Beatles and Shadows songs. We did our first semi-pro gig for about eight pounds at the Park Lane Hotel and we went down really well. After that we got on television, on The Stubby Kaye Silver Star show which was a sort of talent contest, but the band split up soon afterwards because we didn't win—we came second! I was still at school at this time and I answered an ad in Melody Maker and went down to this horrible little flat in Tooting Bec where I met Cliff Williams. I had a Marshall 50 watt stack by then which was really amazing at the time, my dad had just bought it and I was really proud of it, but I couldn't take it with me because we didn't have the transport. So I went up there and told them I'd got this 50 watt stack at home and of course they didn't believe me when I brought out my Watkins Rapier, but anyway we played a few things together in the living room, songs like 'Morning Dew'. The drummer who was round there, Dave Wheelock, knew of an organist so we went round to the Marquee one night and met this guy, Malcolm Weiman."

This was the beginning of Sugar, Laurie's second semi-pro band. Sugar did various tours of Scotland, none of which proved profitable, partly due to the expense of keeping their old van on the road which left each member of the band with about five shillings a day to live on. After leaving school Laurie went to art college and then began work designing and making jewellery in Cheapside, by which time Sugar was playing regularly in the early hours of the morning at London's Whiskey A-Go-Go.

"Eventually I gave up my job and went pro but soon afterwards the band split and Cliff came to live at my place for about six months. I think Dave Wheelock's still playing in a cabaret band up North and Malcolm Weiman, he used to play with Pete Woods who joined Quiver, the Sutherlands and Quiver, but I don't know what he's doing now."

THE FORMATION OF HOME

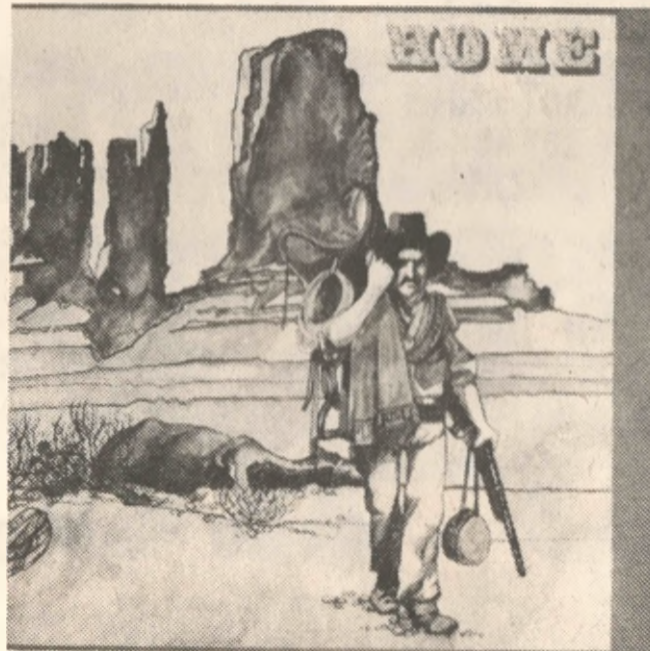
"Now just before Sugar was formed I met Mick Stubbs in a band called Stormy Monday. We didn't do any gigs or anything, it just didn't happen at all, just a couple of rehearsals and that was it. Well when Sugar disbanded I phoned Mick up and he came down to see us."

Mick Stubbs already had a long history of bands behind him and a songwriting career dating back to when, at the age of fourteen, he wrote a song called 'Little Baby' which was subsequently recorded and released as a single on Pye by his band, the Blue Rondos. Written during what Mick describes as his 'Roy Orbison period', 'Little Baby' almost made the charts in 1964, and another of his Roy Orbison-style songs, 'I Don't Want Your Loving No More' was also released, failing however to match the near success of 'Little Baby'. After leaving the Blue Rondos Mick joined a band called The Syndicats, the first incarnation of which had included Steve Howe. The original line-up however had disbanded and it was the reformed band which Mick joined, one which coincidentally also included Pete Banks,

Steve Howe's predecessor in Yes. This was followed by a rather unsuccessful solo stint and he was in the process of looking for a band when Laurie rang him. As a matter of fact only the day before the call from Laurie came he had been for an audition with Christie who, as you'll no doubt remember, produced a pretty inane single, 'Yellow River', a few years ago. Anyway, as I've already said, Mick went down to see Laurie and Cliff and after playing together for a while, decided that he liked the idea of forming a band with them. All that was needed now was a good drummer and having previously played with him, Mick recommended Mick 'Cookie' Cook. Cookie had already gained plenty of experience in bands, having played with the Rocking Crescendoes and Flip & The Dateliners, both of which had played on the Continent, and when Pete Quaipe left The Kinks he had spent a while with him in Maple Oak, once again touring abroad.

Cookie subsequently completed the line-up and Home was born. Months of rehearsing and writing followed, during which time songs like 'Mother' and 'Bad Days', which appeared on Home's first album, were completed. The band found a manager in Bill Sheperd who had known Laurie and Cliff from the final days of Sugar when he had been tour manager for them while they were supporting Fontella Bass.

"Bill got us an advance from Decca for £3,000, so when we got that we thought, wow, that's it, retire! And of course that went nowhere. Then he went to CBS and they really wanted the band, in fact there were a lot of people that wanted the band but he was asking quite a bit of money and we were unknown at the time. So CBS agreed to buy us out of Decca and we signed up with them."



'PAUSE FOR A HOARSE HORSE' (CBS 64356)

"I was about 18 when the first album was recorded and none of us had made an album before so it was a totally new experience. Most of it was recorded at Decca and then we went down to Rockfield and did a couple of extra tracks."

Produced by Mel Baister (who, incidentally, is now tour manager with Wishbone Ash), Home's first album 'Pause For A Hoarse Horse' appeared around August 1971, and on the whole received favourable

reviews. Most of the material was written by Mick Stubbs and the album had a distinct country feel to it, much more so than the two which followed.

"When Mick Stubbs joined the band he turned me on to The Band, I really got into them then, especially their second album, I was very influenced by that. Also Heads Hands and Feet with Albert Lee, I was very much into his playing."

"When we did the album Willie Weider of Family and Clive John from Man came down and played on a few of the tracks. Mel Baister knew them and they both dug the band so they just came down and played. Willie played violin on 'Mother' and 'You're No Good' and Clive played piano on 'You're No Good' and mellotron on 'Bad Days'. I heard that Willie was getting a band together with Keith West, but I don't know whether that's happening or not." [It has in fact, they're called Moonrider and are signed to Anchor Records for those who are interested.]

"One of the tracks on the album, 'Red E. Lewis And The Red Caps' created a lot of interest at the time. You see Mick Stubbs' brother, Red, used to play in a band called Red E. Lewis and the Red Caps and Jimmy Page used to be in it too. This was like when he was really young, and they used to rehearse in Mick's front room, and the words on the record, "I hope Jim Page remembers when he was a younger age... etc." are about that. That track, which was done at Rockfield, was one of the last ones we recorded and it was sort of a stepping stone between the first and second albums."

If you've heard 'Red E. Lewis' you'll know that there's a guitar solo at the end which suddenly fades out just as it's reaching the climax. There's a good reason for this as Laurie explained.

"Well, we were rocking away and we got into this solo and the whole place was shaking because the studio at Rockfield is like a big barn. Anyway we finally got this solo down that everyone was pleased with and we were all dead chuffed. Then we went to play it back and the machine, right at the end of the solo, right when it was just reaching the good part, the machine went wrong and the tape got mangled totally to pieces. Well, the guy came down and opened the back of the machine up and there was a fxxking great big brick in it! No one knows how it got there, but consequently it ruined the tape, so we just had to fade it out before the end, which was a drag. It seems funny now but it was terrible at the time. The best track on the whole album probably."

Besides the solo on 'Red E. Lewis', Laurie's guitar playing on the album is especially good on 'Family', displaying what one reviewer called his "strong full, rolling style". 'Bad Days' is another of the album's better tracks and the blending of acoustic and electric guitars gives the song a nice smooth sound which is enhanced by Clive John's use of mellotron. In lighter vein there's a short song on the album called 'Welwyn Garden City Blues' which is basically one and a half minutes of country guitar pickin', ending with the words of the title being sung in mock hillbilly style. What Laurie describes as "a bit of a send-up really". The more religious side of Mick Stubbs' writing is evident on 'Moses', the

theme of which is developed in more detail in 'Dear Lord' from Home's second album. 'Moses' is also rather interesting in that one of the guitars sounds very much as though it has been recorded backwards and the resulting 'whimpering' sound quite cleverly complements the lead guitar solo which Laurie plays towards the end. As far as the production of the album is concerned, it is fairly good, although the vocals on 'In My Time' and 'You're No Good' do suffer somewhat from a slight excess of echo.

When the album was finished Home took to the road, their first gig being at Westcliff. A number of small gigs followed, with regular appearances at London's Speakeasy, and these in turn led to larger gigs at colleges.

"Our first big gig was at Wembley with Led Zeppelin and Stone The Crows. In fact we had a double that night, we were playing the gig with Led Zeppelin and then we had a gig at Bletchley Youth Centre. Apparently that one had been put in about six months earlier so after playing to all those people at Wembley we had to dash off down to Bletchley and play to a hundred and fifty. But Wembley was a good gig and Robert Plant came in the dressing room afterwards and said he really enjoyed it, which was nice."

'HOME' (CBS 64752)



HOME: L-R Mick Stubbs, Laurie Wisefield, Cliff Williams, Jim Anderson, Mick Cook

songs which Mick Stubbs considered the best he'd ever written, 'Nave' and 'Dear Lord'. 'Nave' was written in a rather unconventional way. Starting with the melody, he played it

into a tape recorder and at the same time recited lines as they came into his head. As a result not all the lines specifically relate to each other, but all convey the same feeling. The title, by the way, is spelt 'Knave' on the cover but 'Nave' on the record label, this being (I think) the correct spelling, meaning the central hub of something. 'Rise Up' is what Mick Stubbs himself calls "a happy song" ("rise up, it's a new day," etc...) and features some very pleasant acoustic guitar backing. The final track on the album, 'Lady Of The Birds' has a really good bow-bass solo from Cliff followed by some superb lead guitar from Laurie, culminating in one of those confusing fade-out endings which suddenly come back at you just as you're about to take the record off. 'Dreamer', with lyrics by Cookie, is a rock song with some nice vocal harmonies, Mick Stubbs' voice sounding a lot better than on their first album. This could be a result of better production—it certainly is very good, and the whole album has a much fuller sound than the first. In a nutshell, 'Home' is better produced, the standard of musicianship is more developed, and the material is much stronger.

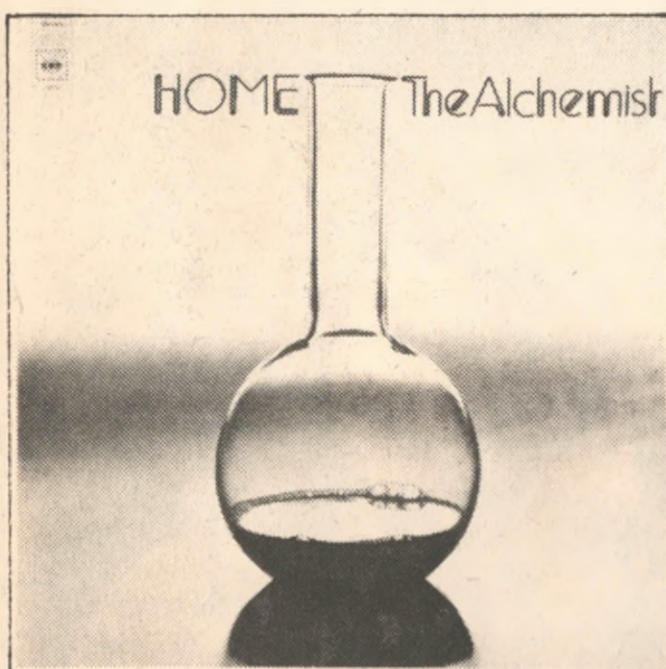


Having been given a great boost by the success of the album, Home went on to prove their worth in October 1972 when they supported Mott The Hoople on their British tour, culminating in a gig at the Rainbow when they stole a large share of the honours. Everyone was by now predicting great things for them and they soon found that they were in great demand, with promoters all over the country wanting to book them.

"We were doing a lot of fairly big gigs by then," Laurie continued. "We'd done a tour with Family and we started going to Germany at that point, where we did quite a few big open air festivals with people like Joe Cocker and Heads Hands And Feet. One gig we did over there had about fifty bands on the bill, like Pink Floyd, Humble Pie, all the big bands. . . . Wishbone Ash!

"I had quite a few offers for doing sessions by then, but I was too busy really. The only one I did was one with Cookie on a Eugene Wallace album. He's a great singer, that guy. I don't know the title of the album, or even what tracks I played on, in fact I don't even know if they're on the album."

It was around the end of that year that Mick Stubbs got hold of a book called 'The Dawn Of Magic' by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier (which was published in England by Mayflower who have re-titled it 'The Morning Of The Magicians', for those who are interested). It was after reading this that he came up with the idea for Home's next album, which was . . .



'THE ALCHEMIST' (CBS 65550)

"For that album we got a guy called Jim Anderson in on keyboards. We'd been thinking about getting a keyboard player in for a long while but we hadn't got round to doing anything about it before, we just thought that if one came along that we fancied taking on we'd put him in the band. Cliff met Jim at a party a couple of days before we went to Rockfield so we invited him up with us. He'd never been in a band before, but he's an amazing guy, he's one of those guys that step straight into something at the deep end and it will always come out right."

The actual book 'The Dawn Of Magic' does not tell the story of 'The Alchemist' itself, but the feelings it conveyed were what motivated Mick Stubbs to write the tale. Together with Dave Skillin he wrote the lyrics for the album, the story of which concerns two Cornish boys who



meet an old man. One of them is given a message by the old man and when he dies, goes to live in his house. Two years later, the man's voice returns to the boy, telling him to warn the townspeople of an impending disaster. This he does and while at first they disbelieve him, when the disaster comes he prevents it in time, at the cost of his youth however, as the next day he ages to become an old man. When he returns to the town the disaster strikes again, the people turn on him and the prematurely aged man is left dying in his friend's arms.

'The Alchemist' was released around the end of July 1973 and at first, as so often happens with 'concept' albums, people either loved or hated it. While some of the music press praised it for its depth of feeling, others, sadly, dismissed it without a second thought. The fact is that it is not an easy album to get into on first or second

listening, and some reviewers, faced with what to them was just one of many albums to be reviewed, obviously did not bother to take the time to get into it.

"'The Alchemist' was one of those albums where everyone had to be totally into what was going on and we were all going through a big sort of spiritual trip at that time. It was a very weird time for the band and we were very close as people. Some of the criticism hurt a bit because at the time I'd thought it was a masterpiece, although there were a couple of guys that believed in the band and wrote really amazing things about it."

Once again produced by John Anthony, 'The Alchemist' was recorded mostly at Rockfield, with a little done at Trident. The country feel which had been a feature of their first album had by now disappeared and this is a true rock album. The music goes through many changes of mood, but throughout the album there is the electrifying playing of Laurie Wisefield which is so much more prominent than on any of their previous material. Jim Anderson's keyboards serve a number of purposes, at times a rippling background to Laurie's guitar passages, at others coming to the fore to

provide a change of texture. Despite the criticism thrown at it from some quarters, I think it is true to say that the album was, in the end, a success.

"After 'The Alchemist' was released we tried to promote it on the road. We wanted to do a big production thing with films and all sorts of stage props and in the middle of all that we lost our manager, well, we split from him. We had other managements interested but they weren't prepared to put in the money that we wanted to put on the stage show, so in the end we had to go and do the gigs with just the bare necessities and it wasn't how we wanted to put it across. We did a tour with Wishbone Ash promoting the album.

"We did start on a fourth album but the band split up during the middle of it. We had this Canadian producer and that didn't work out at all, we couldn't get on with him, and CBS were laying heavies at the time, so there was just too much pressure really. This producer was hustling us to get the album done and Home has never been the sort of band to rush albums. He was saying things like 'We've got a week to get it finished and we have about another dozen tracks to record.' In the end some-one had to split from the band."

And someone did. In April last year Mick Stubbs decided to leave Home to continue a solo career. The remaining members of Home, which for the final few months of its existence had been operating as a six piece with Jim Anderson and Dave Skillin, decided to continue for a while, writing their own material.

"We had a few rehearsals and started writing stuff that was quite good. Then we got this singer down who was amazing, but the wrong guy for the band. His name was Colin and he's written a lot of stuff for The Hollies. One of the guys from Family put me on to him."

The remaining members of Home were then asked to accompany Al Stewart on his American tour as his backing band and it was while they were out there that Laurie was asked to join Wishbone Ash. Consequently, when they returned home, they all went their separate ways.

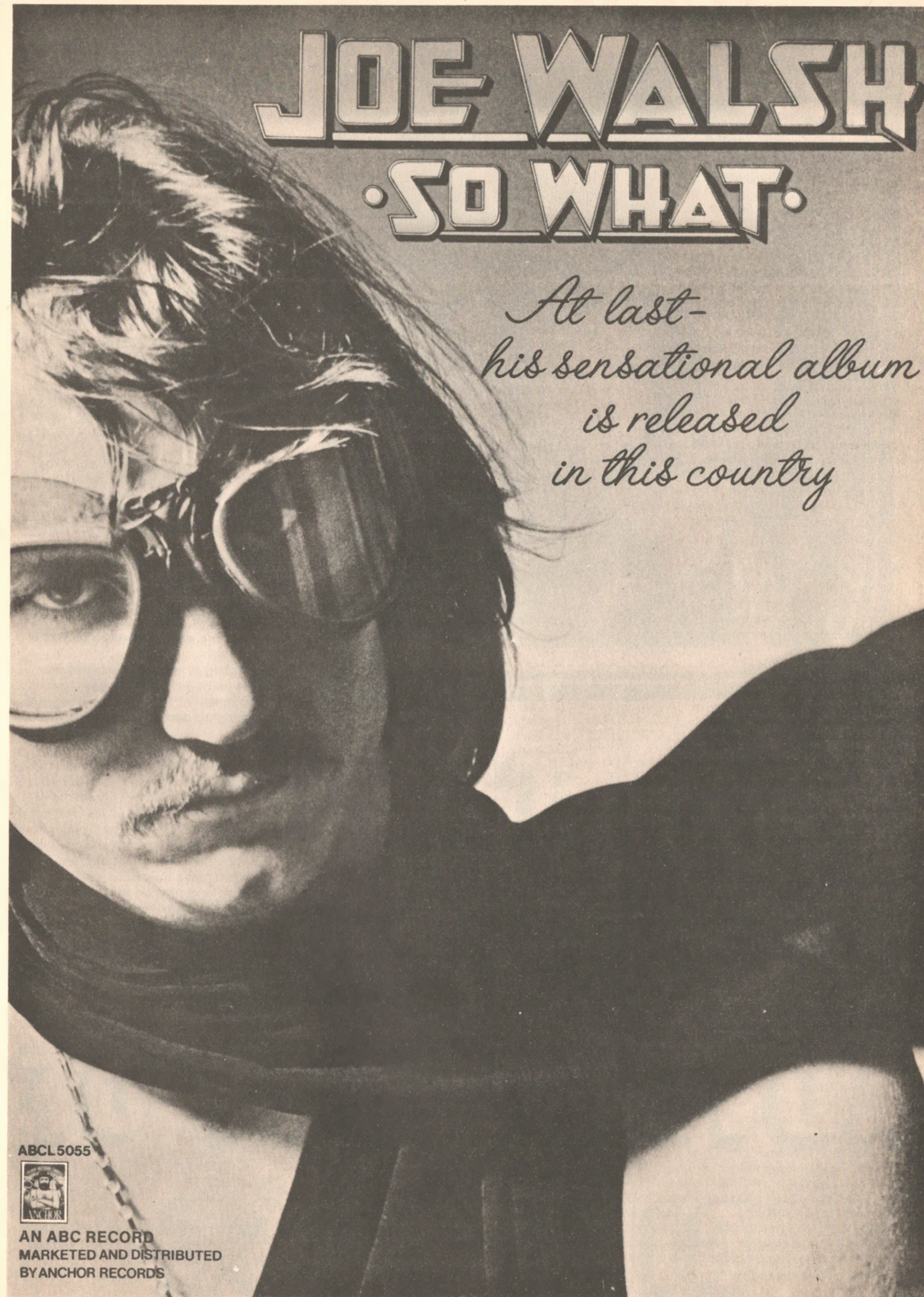
One track from the fourth, uncompleted album was salvaged after Home split and was subsequently released as a single. Called 'Green Eyed Fairy' (CBS 2362) it is a fairly straightforward rock single featuring piano and guitar. The 'B' side, 'Sister Rosalie' is a much softer song with some nice synthesizer from Jim Anderson.

Laurie, as you already know, is now part of Wishbone Ash and his career will be brought up to date in ZigZag in the near future. Cliff Williams and Dave Skillin have formed a new band called Stars, together with guitarists Ray Flacke and Brian Marshall and drummer Patrick McInerney. Of the remaining three members of Home, Mick Stubbs is currently working on his own songs with a view to a future solo career, Jim Anderson has returned to the States where he is writing and producing films, and Mick Cook is trying out various ideas, although he has nothing definite in mind as yet.

□ TREVOR GARDINER

JOE WALSH •SO WHAT•

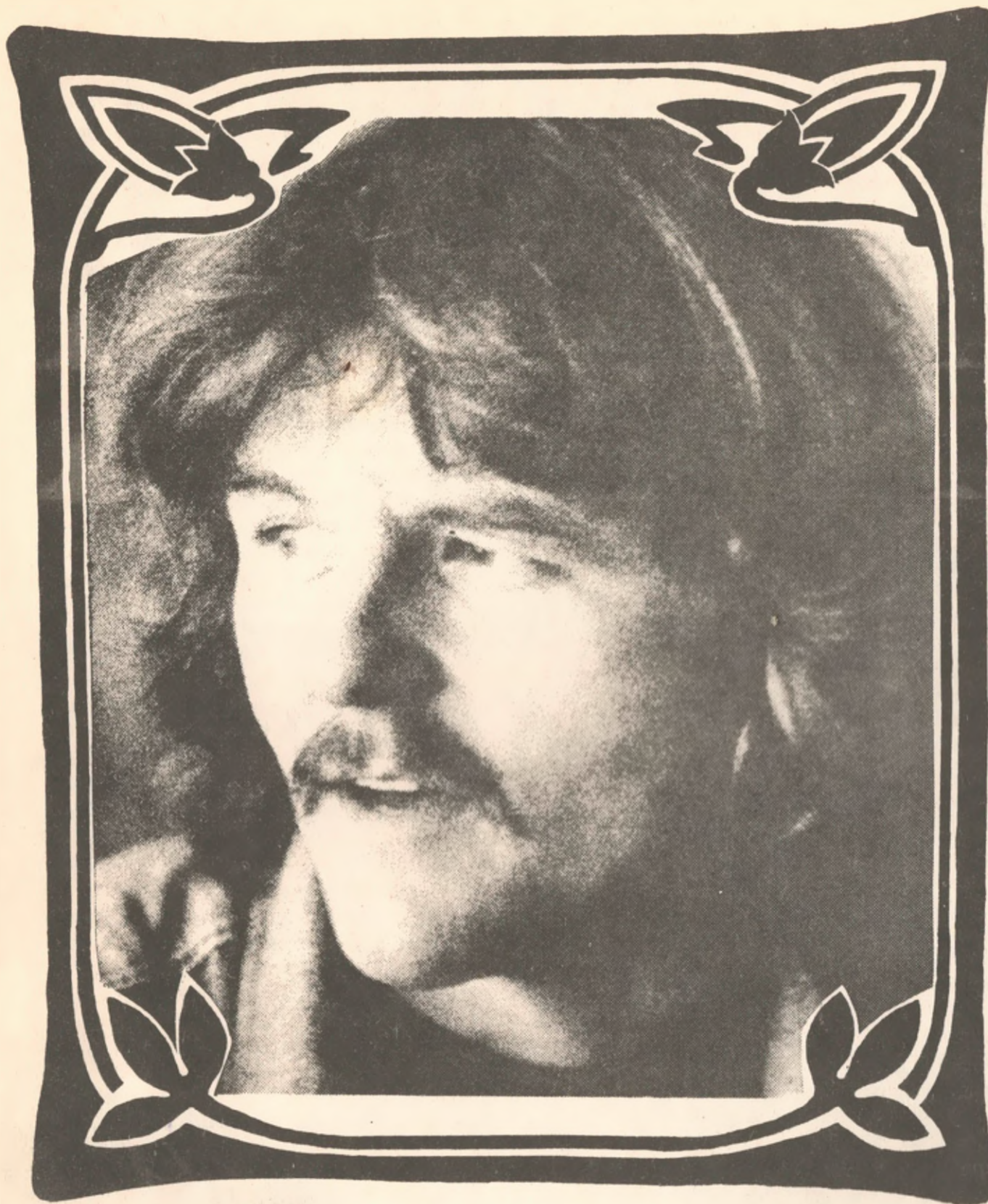
*At last-
his sensational album
is released
in this country*



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BY ANCHOR RECORDS



To be honest this is the second take in my attempts to document fragments of a life story that has thus far eluded journalists far closer to home.

I was well into the first spasm when, seized by the desire to quote humorous anecdotes from the sleeves I wandered downstairs to the ZigZag office where Andy was all set to have them photographed. I tucked all five under my arm and was on my way out of the office when this dude who had been sitting tacitly across the desk suddenly jerked into life, scarcely believing that anyone in Britain had heard the name Biff Rose let alone wanted to write about him.

It transpired that the guy was Larry La Blanc from 'Record World' in Canada and had recently conducted a long radio interview with Biff up in Toronto, and as such joined the handful of people who have ever managed to pin the artiste down to answering questions.

So... you guessed it. After rapping for precisely thirty seconds it became manifestly obvious that my article would have been based on a mighty shallow underlay of facts and that some of the surmises I'd hoped to pad out this feature with were way off the mark.

Biff Rose has devoted most of his life to the perpetration of pre-fabricated myths on the premise that this momentum will build and the Biff Rose mythology will carry the man through for another twenty years or so.

There are a modicum of followers over in the UK who believe that the American culture has benefitted from the quite mad antics of Biff Rose in much the same way that the English culture wouldn't have been quite the same without Vivian Stanshall or Syd Barrett.

In the course of a song Biff Rose provides the thesis and the antithesis... a basic statement of truth utterly wiped out with a line of indisputable gibberish. The

science of disproved logic. "He's just the shell of a man and if you hold him to your ear you can hear the ocean roar. He's been looking back to appreciate forward motion more..." Or: "I'm losing the race against me but I'm racing so I don't lose me Facing a most difficult task I'm losing face but it's just a mask."

My one fleeting introduction to Biff Rose—during the interval of his show at a New York club called Kenny's Castaways in 1973—confirmed all my beliefs. The strangest guy I've ever met in my life, correcting or denying everything I put to him to a point where it was difficult to draw the line between truth and pure send up.

"That's his thing... he doesn't like anyone to know about his past—he likes to build a mystique," said Lablanc.

One of the finest stories I heard about Biff was that his introduction to showbiz came via a stint as a circus clown (and that would certainly add purpose to a beautiful love song called 'Molly' which appears on 'The Thorn in Mrs Rose's Side'). But Biff thought the idea of him having been in the circus a huge joke when I put it to him and apparently this is one of the stories that has been doing the rounds (it also reached Toronto) but remains unsubstantiated.

Five albums after he set out on the path to glory Biff Rose lives in relative obscurity on a commune in California. He has just made his sixth album, and ironically after passing through Tetragrammaton, Buddah and United Artists he is now making private records available through mail order only.

I have not heard Biff's latest album but frequently turn to his first five albums—including the rare and obscure 'Half Live At The Bitter End'. The album is three parts narrative and is as incomprehensible in its way as, say, Billy Connolly, assuming you're not from Glasgow. It's an album of spiritual riddles if you like, culminating in the introduction of Biff's friend, the Rev. Basil McDavid.

At the Bitter End his tactics were, as always, to shock and fluster his audience. This modus operandi seems to be the predominant reason for Biff going onstage at all for the same happened when I saw his set at Kenny's where he held a fixed expression on one chick in the audience, staring her right out, whilst embarrassing others with back chat and never ceasing with that stream of humour over a crazy vaudeville piano backprop. Only seldom did he seek to complete a song, and then he tended to steer clear of early classics (though he did play 'Molly', 'Buzz The Fuzz', 'Ain't No Great Day' and 'Fill Your Heart' which David Bowie recorded on 'Hunky Dory' and featured often onstage). The whole show disintegrated when Biff brought a couple of guys up from the audience to assist with an interminable free form, shapeless jazz.

In the bar afterwards I introduced myself, requested an interview and commented how nice it was to hear some of those old songs, noting his equal abilities as a serious musician. Well, the interview was not granted (presumably for reasons divulged earlier), he denied that he'd been in England last summer, or that he'd been in the circus, and he disregarded the earlier material with a flippant, "What do you think of the new stuff? As you can see I'm getting into jazz..." followed by a little giggle that transmitted the same element of mad-

ness offstage as on. He added that he hoped he'd spelt 'Auntie' the English way on his new album and the only trump card which ultimately found a chink in the Rose defence was when I explained that I'd had this acetate of the first 'take' from 'Auntie Jesus, Uncle Christ' which was never put out.

Although three quarters of the material was ultimately re-recorded, the whole tone and spirit of the album is reversed, the reason being that initially Biff went into the studios (with, I think, Nik Venet), but was on such a downer that the ensuing cuts were all scrapped at the eleventh hour (but not before acetates had been cut). A piano is an amazing vehicle for conveying mood and it underlined the fact that Biff needed an audience to bounce his music off as well as his humour, for second time around he recorded most of it 'live' at the Ice House in Pasadena with Herb Gart taking the production credits. With more discipline and without the same rambling self indulgence that had also made 'Half Live' strictly for devotees only, Biff produced his most commercial album to date, though sadly 'Friend's Song' and the portentous 'Plenty Big House Lotsa Room' were absent. This in itself had probably been a demand from his record company—the first that would probably have exercised some artistic control level. It's unlikely that they would ever have issued 'Half Live' or the first attempt at 'Auntie Jesus'—they just wouldn't have been considered up to scratch, and that would probably have pleased Biff and his low profile determination no end.

Before taking a look at Biff's early career, a word about the growth of his reputation in the UK, those who fostered it and those who stunted it.

Andy Mattiou, the guy who ran Les Cousins folk cellar in Greek Street, was the main supporter of Rose back in '69-'70 (probably because they both hit the madness zone in exactly the same place). Visitors to Cousins in those days would hear Biff's music over the PA system and folkies like Ralph McTell started proclaiming the merits of Biff Rose. It was at Jon Mark's house that I first heard 'The Thorn In Mrs Rose's Side' and the follow up—'Children Of Light'. Mark, too, had appeared on the Tetragrammaton label in 1967 with his acoustic band Sweet Thursday, despite the fact that the label ultimately became a home predominantly for humourists and comedians, largely stemming from the financial involvement of Bill Cosby.

As far back as 1964 Biff was making his name on the Greenwich Village folk scene just about the same time as Stephen Stills was starting to raise eyebrows. "A folk comedian is breaking out of his shell in Greenwich Village," ran a New York Times review in 1964 as Rose began to establish himself as a firm favourite at the Gaslight Cafe. "He is attacking some of the pretentiousness of the folk revival with songs directed at the protest movement," summarised the New York Times.

But it was on the Johnny Carson Show that Biff ultimately gained his biggest following. Mention the name of Biff to the average American and he will recall the long run he did with Carson (and apparently hated) back in the sixties. It was his concession to commercialisation and he was disgusted at the way people heard apparently humorous little ditties like 'Buzz The Fuzz'.

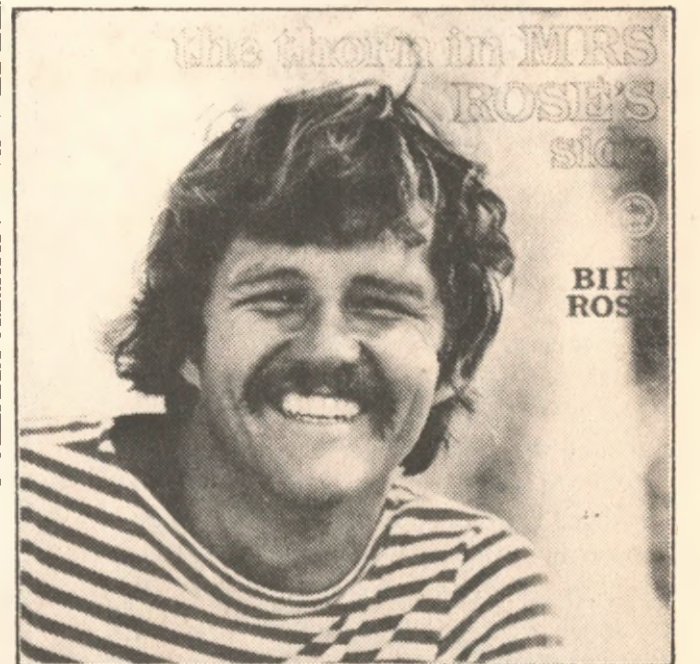
Any stories about Biff pre-1968 have to be taken with a pinch of salt as there is little evidence to support any early accomplishments. A banjo playing circus clown, the winner of an army talent competition in New York, a graduate in French from Loyola University in New Orleans, a graduate from reform school...

What does seem probable is that Biff started out on banjo rather than piano, and he is certainly a native of New Orleans as can be detected from his unmistakable betrayal of Southern dialect.

In any event he made his name sending up just about everything from hippies (Californian hip and New York hip) to just about anything representing the norm, using abstract philosophy and frequently delving into astronomy. By all accounts he is/was a keen astronomer and references to the stars and the significance of star positions on his life is commonplace (eg "The stars shift position and I'm in charge again"... "The Stars" from 'The Thorn in Mrs Rose's Side').

Another preoccupation is religion and here Rose's stance is probably explicated by the fact that he was the son of a southern preacher. 'Uncle Jesus And Auntie Christ' is really a play on anti-Christ and his personification of Christ and the creation is vividly relayed in 'Paradise Almost Lost' and with the introduction of 'the Rev' onstage at the Bitter End—an album which, incidentally, opens with the immortal line, "I wouldn't mind hanging on the cross if I knew what Jesus knew".

"My use of words is just some antics..."
A chronological analysis of Biff Rose's albums



'The Thorn In Mrs Rose's Side' is still the album with which most people choose to identify the art of Biff Rose. Recorded in 1968 it came like a bolt from the sky in the aftermath of flower power and filled the holocaust that had been created by its demise. Rose, already into his thirties, used his knowledge of, say, Zen Buddhism, astrology and his way with words to cut right through all the pretensions of the idiom. For a start the album gave us a sleeveful of puns and fragments of Biff's philosophy... "America, America, God shed his wrath on thee, and frowned upon your ground because you claimed that you were free..." or perhaps the most typical and confusing of all: "... I've heard of transmutation and believe it! It's 'Growing from Within' as I conceive it And if you don't accept the thing transmuting

THE HALF LIVE ADVENTURES OF BIFF ROSE

Then by your 'don't' yourself you are deluding
Until in your imagination rooted—
It comes along and . . . bonk! You are transmuted."
"Reincarnation means you're born again as a flower . . ."
"June got busted . . . it's all over . . . Turn on and you'll soon be stoned, turn off and you'll soon be stunned."
"Nuclear and unclear thinking are the same thing. Depends on how you use the UN."
"Everywhere I look I see God in disguise. Some of the disguises are unbelievable. So I don't believe in disguises I believe in God."

Musically the album is like a breath of fresh air. With arrangements variously by Kirby Johnson, Nick Woods and Arthur Wright, Biff exploits the use of orchestration brilliantly to convey a rich array of sentiment from the philosophical 'Fill Your Heart', ironic 'It's Happening', tragic 'Molly' (still one of his best songs probably a self portrait about the boy who runs away to the circus to make enough money to support his girl). Then there's humour on the Joseph Newman monologue 'Paradise Almost Lost' and satire on 'Gentle People' and 'Buzz The Fuzz'—the story of a rookie who gets turned on by a chick named, of course, Alice Dee.



The second Tetragrammaton album 'Children Of Light', without earning the same acclaim as the first, is nevertheless a good album spasmodically, conceived in much the same vein as 'The Thorn', even down to the sleeve anecdotes although they have neither the same sting, wit or puns to the same horrendously successful extreme. The music's freakier too, programmed rather than genuinely orchestrated. Van Dyke Parks, Beaver and Krause, plenty of synthesizers. Need I say more?

Benny Barth plays drums on the album and Nick Woods and Kirby Johnson again take production/arrangement credits. Biff's at his best when he keeps it straight—'Son In Moon', 'Children Of Light', 'Spaced Out/I've Got You Covered' and the tear jerker 'To Baby', a beautiful and utterly desolate love song. In many ways the album intends to portray America looking in the mirror at itself . . . "We all love to dance our America: waltz, it's our dream come false . . ." Maybe it was OK then but this album has dated a lot quicker than its predecessor, possibly because it was recorded too soon afterwards.

Nothing then for three years, whereupon Andrew Lauder's secretary Liz, a confirmed Biff Rose freak though she never convinced

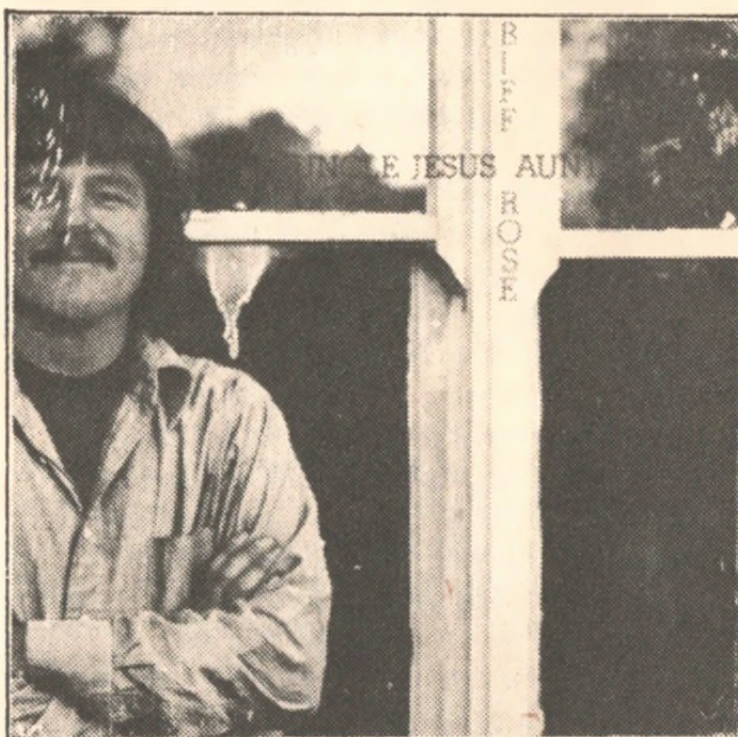


Andrew of Biff's magic even when he joined UA, phoned to say that she'd seen a new Biff album in the import shops. 'Biff Rose' marked the artist's debut for Buddah and became significant for being the one album that ever found an official release in this country, via Polydor's distribution. The album was produced by Lew Merenstein ('Astral Weeks') and from the fleeting introductions I've received to both Biff and Lew I should say that the two would appear highly incompatible in the studios. On the whole the album is again too patchy to be considered as anything but mediocre and yet there are positive jewels that shine out. It's a sad, reflective album of lost love, captured best in the beautifully orchestrated 'All The Fondest Wishes', and also 'Annie', 'Never Mind', 'I'll Walk Away (Paul Williams' lyric), 'Love Song'. The song structures are great but Biff's diversion into self-indulgent themes midway through a song suggest that mentally he was on a huge downer when he cut this album. It seems to be without hope—fatalistic and echoing existentialist philosophy.



'Biff Rose Half Live At The Bitter End' (Buddah 1970) is as elusive to grasp artistically as it is to get hold of. Even in the States no one seems aware that this album was ever made, and maybe it shouldn't have been. I confess that I could never recommend it to a casual listener although anyone having been won over by earlier magical diversions would understand the plane of thought which transmits. Side one is basically rap—apparently ad-libbed throughout, although Biff denies that the whole show is always rehearsed. 'The Shah's Embroidered Psychedelic Pants' is straightforward and hilarious and there's all that zany piano embroidery with which Biffy frequently holds conversations. There's some good throwaway lines too ("I don't know if I'm

together but it's a start if I'm apart" . . . "Watching wanted posters to see if anyone wants me . . .") but no new songs, just a constant attempt to baffle and confound the audience. His California rap is pretty funny and the album definitely has its moments, but it's necessary to have studied Biff's psychology scientifically to grasp some of the messages he puts across. "I tried to do an album completely on my own but I won't make that mistake again," commented Biff on the album's failure.



Exit Biff from Buddah Records. By 1972 he was ready to make his ephemeral stop at United Artists and by June that year 'Auntie Jesus, Uncle Christ' was set for release, and for whatever reason was never issued. (Must tape that acetate before it gets too worn and the grooves disappear forever.)

I would dearly love to know more about the circumstances of that recording and its subsequent abandonment. Ultimately the album appeared towards the end of the year containing four new tracks though, with the exception of Bill Quateman's 'Like A Bird', nothing to match the original stuff that he'd recorded first time around. Of all Biff's albums I think this is the best and probably the most commercial because it is less disturbing in many ways than earlier work. He does a marvellous send up of Carole King's 'You've Got A Friend' and the hypocrisy of it all, finally urging "Come on let's be strangers, who knows then there's a chance we might meet". 'McDonald's Hamburgers' is another terrific send up . . .

"Going downtown going to McDonald's Hamburgers,

Going to stand in line
Order one zillion hamburgers
And watch them change the sign . . ."

Yet for all that, it's almost an album of straight songs and it finally confirms that Biff is an exceptional songwriter; the piano becomes a unique instrument when Biff uses it to embellish his songs. 'Shell Of A Man', 'Food Stamp Casserole', 'Baby Love Song', 'The Strength I Feel', and 'All Man's Got Is His Story To Tell' suggest the usual balance of tenderness, inner peace, satire and wit in turn, but without the same uneasiness.

This, coupled with the live performance I caught at Kenny's round about the same time, suggests that Biff still has a terrific amount to offer whether or not he pushes his 'anti-promotion' policy or not.

At this time the music business badly needs the infectious spirit in which his music and ideology is conveyed.

□ JERRY GILBERT

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Dr. Feelgood
LIVE on the
1975 "Naughty
Rhythms" Tour

Kink Ray Davies is a well respected man when it comes to composing, and dozens of his compositions are justly regarded as classics. There really is no need to list the endless titles here, because ZigZag readers are already well aware of Ray's Kink's work. But Ray has also written and sometimes produced songs for other artists, and we will attempt to cover that less recognised aspect of Ray's musical history here.

From the start, Ray's involvement with Producer Shel Talmy gave him the chance to have his songs recorded and covered by some of Talmy's other artists. Probably the earliest cover is The Orchids' 'I've Got A Feeling' which appeared on The Kinks' first album, followed quickly by the Talmy produced Sneekers doing 'I Just Can't Go To Sleep'. These cover versions are quite interesting, coming as they did at the very start of Davies' career. But as soon as 'You Really Got Me' and 'All Day And All Of The Night' were smashes, dozens of Kinks cover versions were issued, including Steve Marriot's Moments doing 'You Really Got Me'. For the most part this article will not deal with cover versions (which range from Bobby Rydell's 'When I See That Girl Of Mine', to the Pretty Things' 'House In The Country', to Los Cincos' 'Most Exclusive Residence For Sale') but rather the non-Kinks recorded Ray Davies material.

Things started getting hot for Ray early in 1965. Formula One covered 'I Just Can't Go To Sleep' early in the year, and it was released in both the US and England. Then Jimmy Page, who had played on numerous Kinks sessions, re-did a song he co-wrote with Ray a few months earlier, 'Revenge'. 'Revenge', with words added on by Barry Mason, evolved into Page's lone solo single, 'She Just Satisfies'. Interestingly enough, 'Revenge' was chosen as the 'Ready Steady Go TV theme in early 1965 and recorded by the Ray MacVay Sound. It is quite possible that Shel Talmy and/or Ray Davies were involved with the Ray MacVay Sound because the follow-up, issued in April 1965 was 'Kindy Kinky' b/w 'Kinkdom Come'.

Then Ray wrote 'I Go To Sleep' for the Applejacks (the group which included Ray's sister Megan), a moving love song, with a lovely melody and lyric. 'I Go To Sleep' was later recorded by The Truth in England and Peggy Lee (and Cher) in the US. Ray commented at the time: "One thing which knocked me out was when Peggy Lee recorded one of my songs. I didn't know much about it in advance—thought Mary Wells was going to do it. But Peggy Lee heard the demo disc and went for it. Funnily enough I've always liked her voice. I can't help thinking she's very much like Dave Berry . . ." Speaking of Dave Berry, Ray penned 'This Strange Effect' for Dave in early 1965. The song was entered in the German Knokke Song Festival in 1965, and was actually quite commercially successful on the continent. It's a meandering ballad clearly tailored to Ray's wandering vocal style. "You've got this strange effect on me, and I like it . . ."

The English pop group Majority probably deserve a story of their own, but that'll have to wait. Suffice it to say that they produced some wonderful harmony records and had an interesting musical history as well. In 1966, they did a good cover version of Ray's 'Ring The

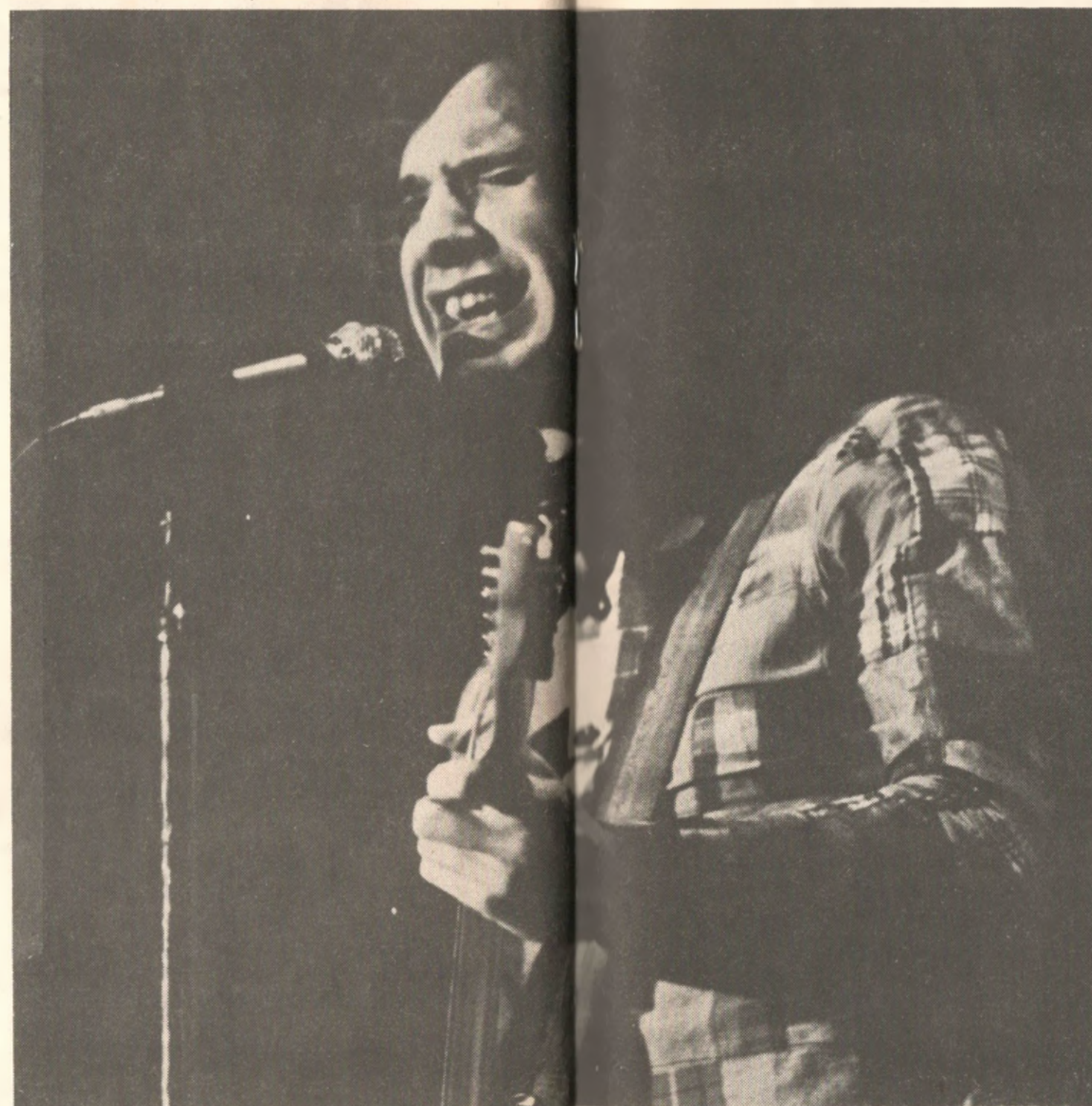
Bells', but over a year earlier they had released one of Ray's songs as a 'b' side! 'A Little Bit Of Sunlight' was the title, and was a nice song, but performed just a bit too poppyish. 'A little bit of sunlight is all I want from you; All that I want; All that I want . . .'. It was a bouncy simple song, which although not one of Ray's better efforts, still could have been handled better.

That seems to be the main problem with Ray Davies' songs recorded by other people. In most cases you can picture the Kinks recording them, and usually judge the non-Kinks version to be inferior to what you imagine the Kinks could have done. For instance the Honeycombs (who covered Ray's 'Something Better Beginning'), a non-Kinks Davies' song, 'Emptiness' on one of their albums, and you just know that the Kinks could have done a better job.

ODDITIES, CLARIFICATIONS & RUMOURS NO.1

(A): Larry Page, who owned a piece of the Kinks during the 1960's, recorded an album by (what else?) the Larry Page Orchestra entitled 'Kinky Music', featuring orchestral versions of Kinks songs. All were well known and had been recorded by the Kinks except one, A Dave Davies song, entitled 'One Fine Day'. (B): During this period Ray got friendly with David Garrick who had some pop hits in England during the mid-sixties. Ray was supposed to write the follow-up to David's hit 'Lady Jane' (as well as penning a few songs for Garrick's album). But whether this seed ever bore fruit is not known, yet there's even more to the story than that. At one point in his career, Garrick used a backing group who were the Iveys. Ray was supposed to write their first single and they did have a 1967 single but only in Sweden (where they were touring at the time), before becoming stars at Apple a few years later. Whether this is a Ray Davies composition is also open to speculation. (C): During this period Ray also wrote two songs for Elvis Presley and recorded demos which were passed onto Elvis' publishing company here in the States. What happened to these songs is also not known.

Getting back to what we do know, Ray in early 1966 immersed himself in his most ambitious project to date. For pop singer Leapy Lee, he wrote, arranged, conducted, and produced 'King Of The Whole Wide World'. He utilised Kinks Dave Davies and Pete Quaife, as well as ex-Goldie & The Gingerbreads Margo and Carole. (Margo was probably Margo from the Marvettes who Talmy recorded for World Artists.) When the song was released it was pretty much ignored, and those who did bother to review it dubbed it as "boring". On the contrary, the record is quite extraordinary, a typically wonderful Davies pop song with lively rhythm guitar and backing vocals. Musically it's a cross between 'The World Keeps Going Round' and Ray's 'Something Else' period:



"When I'm with that girl of mine; I feel like the king of the world; If I could be king of the whole wide world; I'd give her all that I could . . ." If the Kinks had recorded it (with perhaps some needed additional lyrics), it could have been a Top 10 hit. The flip, a non-Davies tune (but produced by Ray), is a quiet ballad with simple harpsichord-led musical backing. (Speaking of the harpsichord part, it was probably played by session-man Nicky Hopkins, who guested on most of the Kinks' records up to 'Village Green'. Nicky also recorded Ray's 'Mr Pleasant', and of course was the central inspiration behind Ray's 'Face To Face' classic, 'Session Man'.

Next came Ray's friendship with Barry Fantoni, the host of a BBC music show 'Whole Scene Going'. Barry came and went in a flash, as did his TV show, but for a while he was the rage of the music world. At first he had planned to start a new label, Pied Piper Records, with his managers Geoff Stephens and Peter Eden, and recorded a whole album of songs with his mate Ray Davies. Unfortunately, the idea was a little unrealistic, so Barry settled for Fontana, and Ray wrote and produced his lone single, 'Little Man In A Little Box'. (Even Barry's original grandiose title for the song 'Little Man In A Little Box or

Norman Service Will Be Resumed As Soon As Possible' had to be scaled down.) This record is quite possibly the closest Ray came to creating a non-Kinks classic. One reviewer described it as having "a lovely insinuating melody line and sound creeping in and around you. It has a weird going-on quality . . ." Unfortunately, Barry's TV show was dropped and the rest of the Davies collaborations never saw the light of day.

With Shel Talmy producing most of the Kinks' records, Ray found time to continue working with other people. His biggest week came in September '66 when three of his compositions were issued simultaneously. First off, the Birmingham Ugly's did 'End Of The Season', which didn't appear on vinyl by the Kinks until well over a year later on 'Something Else'. What's especially interesting is that the Ugly's version is almost identical to the Kinks' release, from the phrasing to backing vocals, as well as the entire musical arrangement and sound. Either the Ugly's copied it from a Ray Davies demo, or Ray just really liked their version so much, he copied it exactly.

Talmy then got Ray to write 'All Night Stand', for one of his Planet releases by the Thoughts. The sound is quite Beatle-esque and the lyrics are typical bitter-

tinged Davies. But probably the most obscure of the trio of releases was Mo & Steve's 'Oh What A Day It's Going To Be'. It is a nice (though rather simply-repetitive lyrically) ballad which would have done much better if recorded by the Kinks or covered by some group like the Walker Brothers. The two young cousins from Manchester show why this debut release was also their last: it's done in a boring, droning style which emits little emotion lyrically or musically.

Two months later another new Pye group, The Gates Of Eden (possibly also produced by Shel Talmy??), recorded quite a distinctive Ray Davies song. 'Too Much On My Mind' was the title and it dealt with a fellow who suffers from a dread disease called thinking—quite a thought!! Ray also topped the world's charts in late '66 with Herman's Hermits' recording of 'Dandy', which appeared by the Kinks later on 'Face To Face': "I wanted it to be a Kinks' single," recalls Ray.

ODDITIES, CLARIFICATIONS & RUMOURS NO.2

(A): It was thought for a while that Ray wrote the two sides of a Mud single, 'Up The Airy Mtn', but although they also sound like the Kinks, both sides were written by Rob Davis of Mud. (B): There was/is a British trumpet player named Ray Davies who has issued singles and albums of his own—these should not be confused with Kink Ray Davies. (B-2): The British singer Karol Keyes had two '66 singles on Columbia arranged by "Ray Davies". By the general sound and other credits (writing, production), this seems to have been trumpeter Ray Davies. (C): Another interesting oddity is that Dave Davies was reported to have written and produced the first single by the Attraction during late 1966, 'She's My Girl'. However when the single was issued the 'a' side was Ray's 'Party Line', and the flip was 'She's A Girl', written by one Dean Maverick. The producer was listed as Vic Keary, so apparently no Ray or Dave involvement seems to have occurred. (The Attraction's 'Party Line' was issued about the same time as the Kinks' version on 'Face To Face', and a week or two before Roger Dennison's 'Face To Face' cover, 'I'm On An Island'.)

During 1967, Ray worked with brother Dave on Dave's solo singles, but with Shel Talmy leaving as Kinks producer, Ray had his hands full just working with the Kinks. So what had seemed to be an expanding writing and producing career for Ray was quickly terminated, and Davies channelled all his energies into the '68-on Kinks. Of course, that was no minimal amount of work. There have been a half-dozen new albums, numerous singles, film ('Percy') soundtracks, TV acting roles, show tune writing, and the month to month affairs of the Kinks (business, tours, etc), not to mention Ray's managing his own personal life. Ray did manage to pen 'Toymaker' for Basil (released in England under the group

name Wild Silk), and 'Nobody's Fool' for Cold Turkey. His sole non-Kinks production product during this period was the Turtles' wonderful LP, 'Turtle Soup'. There are some amazing similarities on 'Turtle Soup' to songs and production techniques utilised on 'Something Else' and 'Village Green'.

Now, in 1974 comes Konk Records, a Davies venture which sees Ray producing the label's debut LP by Claire Hammill. And though most of Davies' RCA/Kinks work has been second-rate, there are significant signs of a return to stellar releases. All of the recent albums and singles have had snatches (sometimes more than that) of brilliance, and with the inception of Konk, Ray may just work all the harder. With the increasing possibility of Shel Talmy returning to Kink-production again, it would seem only natural for Ray to rejuvenate his dormant writing and producing outside activities. With over a decade of genius behind him, 1974/5 will hopefully mark the start of another decade of mastery for Ray Davies. Next year's headline may just read: Konk Kultists Konquer!!!

RAY DAVIES DISCOGRAPHY

- Applejacks—"I Go To Sleep"* (Decca 12216 8/65)
- The Truth—"I Go To Sleep"* (Pye 17095 4/66)
- Peggy Lee—"I Go To Sleep"* (Capitol 5488 & Capitol LP 2388 11/65)
- Dave Berry—"This Strange Effect"* (Decca 12188 7/65)
- The Majority—"A Little Bit Of Sunlight"* (Decca 12271 10/65)
- The Majority—"Ring The Bells"* (Decca 12313 1/66)
- The Honeycombs—"Emptiness"* (on Pye LP)
- Larry Page Orchestra 'Kinky Music'* (Decca LP 4692 6/65)
- Leapy Lee—"***King Of The Whole Wide World"/*"***Shake Hands" (Decca 12369 3/66)
- Barry Fantoni—"***Little Man In A Little Box"/*"***Fat Man" (Fontana 707 5/66)
- Ugly's—"End Of The Season"* (Pye 17178 9/66)
- The Thoughts—"All Night Stand"* (Planet 118 9/66)
- Mo & Steve—"Oh What A Day It's Going To Be"* (Pye 17175 9/66)
- Gates Of Eden—"Too Much On My Mind"* (Pye 17195 11/66)
- The Attraction—"Party Line"*/'She's A Girl' (Col. 8010 11/66)
- Cold Turkey—"Nobody's Fool"* (Pye)
- Wild Silk—"Toymaker"* (Col.8534 1/69)
- Basil—"Toymaker"* (same as above) (US GRT 3 2/69)
- The Turtles—"***Turtle Soup" (US White Whale 7124 1969)
- Formula One—"I Just Can't Go To Sleep"* (US War.Bros.5604 & UK War.Bros.155 2/65)
- Ray MacVay Sound—"Revenge"*/'Raunchy' (Pye 15777 2/65)
- Ray MacVay Sound—"Kindy Kinky"/'Kinkdom Come' (Pye 15816 4/65)
- Claire Hammill—"Stage Door Johnnies" (Konk 101 10/74)

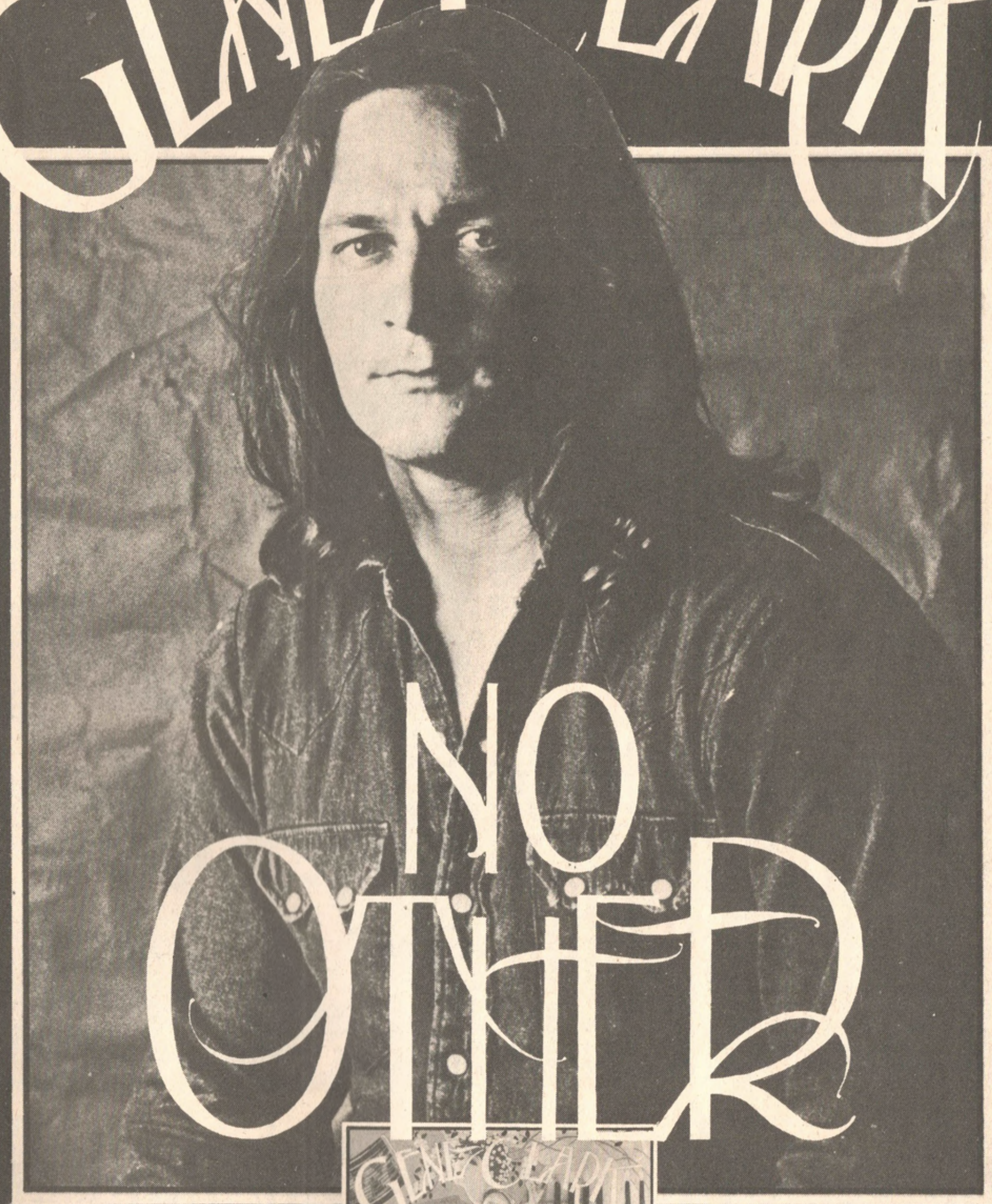
Notes:

- * indicates written by Ray Davies
- ** indicates produced by Ray Davies

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Chances are that if you caught recent tours by Procol Harum, Roxy Music or Herbie Hancock, then you probably saw the warm-up act, who on each occasion were the promising Jess Roden Band. In case you didn't know it, Jess has a long and varied career stretching all the way back to 1965, and as a follow up to John's piece on The Butts Band last month we will now attempt to trace that career.

The Alan Bown Set!

The Alan Bown Set! was Jess' first major band and as such were one of the premier club bands of the pre-progressive mid-sixties. Jess was with them for three years and despite his later disillusionment with the band, on its night (mostly in the early days), it was very good indeed. Like most bands of the day, their repertoire was mostly soul/r&b cover versions and standard club fare. They were signed to Pye who came up with the bright idea of recording an album live at the Marquee with Alan Bown on one side and Jimmy James & The Vagabonds on the other. (Pye also had Geno Washington and the Ram Jam Band at this time and were well represented on the club circuit.) Over to Jess:

"Jimmy James and the Alan Bown were near regulars at the Marquee for a while, playing every other week, and we were both doing really well on the small club circuit, which was really a big thing in those days. So with us both being on Pye, we went ahead and did it one Sunday night—they sort of invited people from clubs all over the country. To tell the truth, there wasn't much detail to it, it was all worked out rather quickly."

By no stretch of the imagination is it a memorable album, but it does recreate the era very well with both groups running through a selection of soul standards and club favourites. The band also recorded two singles for Pye, the first being a cover of Edwin Starr's 'Headline News' (b/w 'Mr Pleasure', Pye 7N-17148) and a few months later a version of Little Anthony & The Imperials' 'Gonna Fix You Good' (b/w 'I Really Care' Pye 7N-17256).

That was late 1966/early 1967 and with the first signs of a musical revolution in America, the Alan Bown Set began to shift from their soul stance to the new 'psychedelic/flower power' era. They had switched labels to MGM and had a moderate hit with 'Toyland', which opens with

acoustic guitar and flute and the classic lines, 'Let's go down to Toyland and blow our minds/ life down there is not so square, in Toyland'. Things improve with cellos, organ and quite a catchy chorus. Jess was less than enthusiastic about this period:

"MGM, yeah. Well I'm credited with co-writing 'Toyland' but I'm rather embarrassed by it all; it was mainly the guitarist, Tony Catchpole, I just added little bits. Actually, that was the thing that made me leave the band, 'cos previously when we were doing cover versions, Sam and Dave, etc, that was exciting. But when we started to write all that stuff, well I couldn't get behind half of it."

The album has all the hallmarks of punk greatness. The band pull in every trick in the book: whimsical lyrics, phasing, backward tapes, flutes, cellos and general psychedelia. Interspersed between their own songs are versions of 'All Along The Watchtower', the Young Rascals' 'Love Is A Beautiful Thing' and Dion's 'My Girl The Month Of May'. Quite a mixed bag then which sounds terribly dated but Jess' singing is of a very high standard throughout. The Alan Bown were still something of a cult band and when I saw them live in 1968, seven of them cramped onto a tiny stage—all hair and fringed suede—they were terrific and did a set comprising mainly Paul Revere, Rascals and Buckingham's numbers. But as he said, Jess was unsettled and the parting of the ways was near. "It took me six months to leave them after I'd taken the decision, and in that time I recorded another album with them which was released on MGM in the States but as I had left when it came

out here, they had Robert Palmer—who had replaced me—dub on his vocals on the British version, which was on Deram." So there, a collectors' album if ever there was: I've got the British one and if anybody knows of the US one then I'd like to hear about it.

After Jess left, the Alan Bown Set! became simply Alan Bown and made two albums for Island, 'Stretching Out' and 'Listen' before splitting up and going their separate ways.

Bronco

"When I left Alan Bown, I was almost of the mind that I hated that style of music and I went back to Kidderminster, my home town, to think about my future. I wanted to get as far away from what I'd done with Alan. It wasn't a conscious thing with Bronco, but I just didn't want to be involved with that side of music any more, and we developed a completely different style. But personally, I didn't get as much enjoyment out of Bronco as I did out of the good (early) years with Alan Bown. With Bronco we had great nights and horrible ones and it was a constant change between enjoying it and hating it. We also had a lot of bad luck with road accidents that really set us back."

Despite Jess' claim that they were pretty uneven 'live', they made two very good albums with Jess as singer. The band comprised Jess on vocals and guitar, Kevyn Gammond and Robbie Blunt (later to be in the first version of Silverhead) both on guitars, John Pasternak on bass and a drum-

mer who also doubled on harmonica in Pete Robinson. Their debut album, 'Country Home' is a fine one. Roughly split into two separate styles, side one features the band in CSN&Y mood on 'Civil Of You Stranger' and 'Love' (speaking of Love, there are traces of Arthur Lee's voice in Jess) and a more good-timey Lovin' Spoonful style on 'Misfit On Your Stair'. The second side features two powerful tracks in a more urgent, Free-style, 'Well Anyhow' and 'Time' which exhibit all the Free trademarks with powerful bass, economic, tough guitar and very Paul Rodgers-like vocals from Jess. A really good album and still in the Island catalogue too.

'Ace Of Sunlight', their second album, builds on the success of 'Country Home' and is in much the same mood, though maybe a bit more powerful overall. The CSN&Y influence is still there, being particularly noticeable in Robbie Blunt's 'Time Slips Away' and Jess's 'New Day Avenue' which has a few direct David Crosby quotes. There are two songs performed by Jess on his own, firstly 'Joys And Fears'... "I just did that myself one night, and it was always Bronco's policy that if anything sounded right, musically or emotionally, then we should use it." Secondly there's 'Amber Moon' which starts out like Tim Buckley and builds to a soulful climax featuring Mick Ralphs (then with Mott The Hoople) on drums and Ian Hunter on piano, and although the sleeve credits the entire band, again it was mainly Jess:

"That was another one I did myself. I did it one night with Mick on drums and Ian on piano. Then I played it to the band who thought it was great and instead of re-recording it, they just dubbed on to it."

Enter Clifford T. Ward again (he had co-written and sang on 'Misfit On Your Stair' on 'Country Home'). There are two more Kevyn Gammond/Clifford T. Ward songs here, 'Some Uncertainty' being in the same Spoonful/good-timey mould as 'Misfit'. 'Woman' is a different thing altogether, it's a pure rocker and powers along like an express train—it was even done 'live' in one take at Island's No.1 studio.

So after two fine albums and a lot of hard work, why didn't Bronco take off in a big way? Jess sees it like this: "We had a road accident, after which we were three months off the road and we decided to go and live on the West Coast of America for three months (now the Flamin' Groovies could have had a hand in this as Bronco played a couple of gigs with them around that time, but that's another story) and do some work out there. Well, we stayed there for about two and a half months and didn't work much and got very depressed. So we all trooped home

THE JESS RODEN STORY

in a very sad state and started in England again. Every time we built up a following with Bronco, something happened—the accident, the mistimed American gig. Well, when we came back to England, it was too hard to start up again a third time. We all lost interest and I decided to do a solo thing."

That sees the end of Jess' stint with Bronco but they did soldier on for a while and recorded a third album, this time for Polydor, called 'Smoking Mixture' which, although pleasant enough really lacks a good vocalist, Jess in fact.

As he said, Jess completed a first solo album, "I did actually record an album, which I was very pleased with, but the songs on it were really down and doomy, and the company didn't feel it was a good move for a first album; they felt something more exciting was needed. Something you could go on stage and have a little excitement with instead of being depressed. I didn't really share their views but I went along with them and said, forget it and I'll get into something else at another stage."

With no band to support him and his solo plans thwarted temporarily, Jess was obliged to do session work to keep himself going. The immediate result being a stint with old war horse, Keef Hartley. "Keef, yeah well, he said he'd done an album and would I listen to it and maybe go along and put some vocals on it. I didn't think it was a great album ('Lancashire Hustler') but it was good, and I needed things to do at that time. Also, the session was of some value in that he introduced me to some fine musicians, Henry Lowther etc, who had worked on it."

When the album came out, Jess was featured on four songs, the rest being done by a spade singer called Robert Jones. Another interesting point here is that the bassist on these sessions was none other than Philip Chen, who apart from being in Jimmy James & The Vagabonds and therefore right at the beginning of the Jess Roden story, would also team up with Jess in their next venture, the ill-fated Butts Band. Last words on Keef Hartley first though:

"I did another album with Keef but it's never been released. It was a good album, but he needed another track to finish it off, then his contract with Decca expired and he's gotten involved in business scenes." In the meanwhile, Deram have issued a 'Best Of Keef Hartley' which features two of the tracks Jess sang on. Also, as Keef has now formed a band called Dog Soldier with Miller Anderson, it looks like Jess's sessions have vanished for good.



The Butts Band

John Tobler dealt at length with the Butts Band in ZZ48 but it's always good to have two sides of a story so here is Jess'. "Robbie [Kreiger] and John [Densmore] asked me and Philip Chen to form a band with them, and I thought 'This can't be bad,' although I'd never been a Doors fan. They weren't my thing at all, ever. The first thing they did was to rehearse for a few weeks and then recorded the album, which seemed like a bad idea to me, not having played live or anything. Elektra were quite interested in the band initially, but it was all business. Jac Holzman said for sure he would sign the band to Elektra, but he copped out and handed it over to David Geffen who didn't like the band and didn't sign them. So that was three months of the band's life wasted and brought the English contingent [Jess, Phil and Roy Davies] down no end. We thought, 'No way is this gonna happen'. Then they finally came up with the idea of us all living in America to try and consolidate something with the Butts Band and I thought, 'Well I'm not too keen on the music we're making and I've got the opportunity to go and cut my own album—which had always been my dream since the first one was cancelled—and I thought,

well I'm not gonna go and live in America, not at all."

The album is divided into four Robbie Krieger songs, three Jess Roden ones and Leiber/Stoller's 'Kansas City'. It's not a fabulous album but does have some nice moments, especially Jess' fine vocal on Robbie's 'Won't Be Alone Anymore', which is as near to a hit record as they would ever get. A few oddities pop up though, 'Pop A Top' is unabashed reggae, courtesy of Jess and Phil. "We recorded that track in Jamaica, along with half the album and it was like Philip saying, 'Hey man, we're in Jamaica and I'm Jamaican and I wanna do one of my home songs.' There's a lot of applause on 'Kansas City', but it's not 'live' tho' [good bottleneck playing from Robbie]." No it wasn't 'live', although it was done in one take at Olympic, I think they took the applause off an old Doors album or something. That didn't please me either."

How successful were the Butts Band? "Well we hardly did anything. We only played clubs in New York, Boston, Dallas and Philadelphia, that was a good little scene, but nothing special. We could've done it here, could've done it anywhere. It wasn't going anywhere but it was nice to do. We were supposed to tour the UK, they came over to do it, then it all fell through."

What about the Howard Werth (of Audience) rumour... that he was to join the Doors? "Jac Holzman knew of him and told Robbie and John to contact him when they came over. He got word of it and spilled it to the papers, which didn't please them and that was that."

What about the shadow of Jim Morrison? "They didn't talk a lot about him, he seemed a sort of tragic figure to them. They didn't have a lot in common, actually. What I found was that he had been such a powerful character and the rest of the band had been in his shadow for so long that they had no strength to pursue a musical concept of their own. They'd obviously been basically controlled by Morrison, even though Robbie wrote a lot of the songs. There was no 'Ex-Doors' hype and they were both lovely people and had this genuine yearning to go back and start all over again without Jim. But for some reason they didn't have the energy and, you know, like a young kid interested in music, they didn't have it to do it again. Not with this particular band anyway."

Session Work

As well as sessions for Keef Hartley as previously discussed, Jess has also done sessions with The Who, Paul Kossof and Jim Capaldi. Of The Who, Jess says, "Well, when I first joined Alan Bown, their roadie and sound man was a guy called Bobby Pridden, who is now The Who's sound man. He's like my best mate. I stayed at his house when I first moved down to London and he's been with The Who for years and years now and I've gotten to know them and we all get on well. Anyway, I ended up doing the backing vocals on the movie version of 'Tommy'. I've not heard the finished tapes yet, but there's some new stuff and new versions of the original songs. I'm really looking forward to seeing it. Oh, and I also sang back-up vocals on the 'Magic Bus' single a few years back."

"I also worked on the last Jim Capaldi album—'Whale Meat Again'—I was Potato Smith (the backing vocals are credited to Potato Smith and Laurence Peabody: Capaldi was Peabody!). We were gonna use the name as a send-up duet. I also played guitar and sang on his single, 'It's All Up To You' [not on the album, rather a shame I always thing], which I think was just Phil Chen on bass, me and Jim Capaldi. He recorded it at his home studio or something, and brought it in and we dubbed on to it."

"The Paul Kossof story is quite involved... it goes back many years now, before 'Alright Now'

in fact. Free were gonna break up and Koss and Andy Fraser approached me when I was in Alan Bown and asked if I would be interested in joining them. I said no at that time 'cos I was in my happy period with the Alan Bown. Well, Koss has always said that he's dug what I've done, so when he left Free and cut his album he wanted me to join his band with him. I didn't because I really don't want to say this... but I found him somewhat unreliable. I didn't wanna get involved with any problems like that because I had enough problems of my own. He did however get me to do things on the 'Back Street Crawler' album with him, so I did just two cuts, 'Molten Gold' and 'I'm Ready' [co-written by Jess and Jean Roussel, and the only two tracks on the album to feature vocals]. 'Molten Gold' was originally recorded for 'Free At Last' but never used. I actually did a harmony vocal for it, but it was in no sense a Free reunion." [As is popularly rumoured, the album being released long after Koss had split from Free.]

Something Jess had said in connection with his own album raised a few interesting thoughts. As mentioned earlier, he had completed a solo album for Island that was shelved. The band on one of the tracks was, Jess, Rabbit Bundrick on piano, Simon Kirke on drums, Mick Weaver on drums and Pat Donaldson on bass. There was talk of forming a band out of that lot but as with the proposed Jess/Kirke/Koss/Fraser version of Free, it too fell through. There was also talk of a Koss/Capaldi band that came to nothing although a band of Capaldi, vocals/Koss, guitar/Mike Kellie on drums and Trevor Burton on bass played on one track on the first Capaldi album, 'Oh How We Danced', so obviously there were lots of interesting possibilities there.

Solo-At Last

"I first met Alain Toussaint when he was over here with Doctor John and the Meters a few years back. I met him a couple of days before he went back to New Orleans and played him some of my stuff and he liked it, so we made plans to work together when he had finished work on his studio in New Orleans, and to cut some tracks with the Meters [this coincided with Jess's last days with the Butts Band and some tracks were done before his return to England].

"I was quite apprehensive at first, but it was remarkably easy to work with him and the Meters. I had admired the Meters for such a long time and Toussaint's got such a big reputation that I thought it might be a little... uh,



strained, but it worked out really well. He was really helpful; we sat for a couple of days or so and worked out the arrangements for the songs. He didn't say a lot, but he would say things like, 'This is how I've done the arrangement but if you don't like it then we can talk it over and work something else out'. Anyway, I liked his ideas."

Entitled simply, 'Jess Roden', it is a fine album, and as Jess has said that a solo album was always his dream, then he should be proud of it. I don't know whose idea it was, but the label is beautiful, with a picture of Jess on it (something previously reserved for Island biggies like Bryan Ferry). Of the eight tracks, four are the Meters/Toussaint collaborations and they all work pretty well with a genuine melodic, funky feel. Excellent guitar from the great Leo Nocentelli and strong horn work from the New Orleans Horns. Two tracks, 'I'm On Your Side' and a good re-make of 'On Broadway' feature Davies (from the Butts Band) on piano and Steve Gregory, Alan Sharp and George Lee on assorted horns. Strangely enough, the two songs I like the best are the older tracks, 'Ferry Cross' with Jess playing all the instruments himself except for engineer Richard Smith on keyboards, and the previously mentioned band of Jess, Si Kirke, Rabbit and Mick Weaver on 'What The Hell'. Both are really fine tunes, well constructed and superbly sung.

Jess Roden Band

With a good album under his belt, all that was needed now was for Jess to go out on the road and promote it. But he didn't have a band. That problem was soon overcome when he teamed up with a group called Iguana—a fairly well known club and college band who had done a fair album for Polydor which you may see knocking around. Previous to their deal with Polydor, they had done some demo tapes for Island and it was through this connection that Jess came to approach them with the idea of a union, "... they had been together a long time but just before I met them they were on the verge of almost total collapse. When we got together things started to happen again for us all. We'd found something in each other that we wanted and it gave us all a new lease of life."

As of now, including Jess on vocals, the Jess Roden Band is a seven piece with Bruce Roberts and Steve Webb on guitars and backing vocals, Pete Hunt on drums, John Cartwright on bass and a two man-horn section in Ron Taylor (alto sax) and Chris Gower (sax and trombone). Onstage, Jess does not dominate the band to an all-powerful extent, and they certainly get their chance to blow. Really, the nearest comparison is with the Average White

Band in that they are both soul influenced bands, although the AWB tend to be less inclined to solo at length as the Jess Roden band do. Most numbers either feature sizeable guitar or sax breaks and their 'live' versions of 'Ferry Cross' and 'What The Hell' are really fabulous and compare very well with the album versions. Certainly they should go a long way. Of their future plans, Jess says, "After the Roxy tour, we're gonna have a few weeks rehearsal and really get a good show together, as opposed to just being a warm-up act for somebody else. We'll do a few gigs and some recording in December. Do a real band album in January and in February, hopefully we'll be off to America."

That's the Jess Roden story then and an object lesson in somebody having an aim and working towards it. Despite numerous offers of more lucrative but maybe less rewarding work, Jess considered them all and rejected most of them, all the while learning his craft that now sees him leading his own, and potentially brilliant band. What more to say? Just that Jess Roden is probably the most underrated singer in Britain today. Why not pick up on him soon?

□ BERT MUIRHEAD

JESS RODEN DISCOGRAPHY

as a session singer on:

'Lancashire Hustler'—Keef Hartley Band
'Magic Bus'—The Who (Track 604024)
'Tommy' (Film version) (as yet unreleased)
'Back Street Crawler'—Paul Kossof (Island ILPS 9264)
'Whale Meat Again'—Jim Capaldi (Island ILPS 9254)
'It's All Up To You'—Jim Capaldi (Island ILPS 6198)

as lead singer:

'Headline News'/'Mr Pleasure'—The Alan Bown Set! (Pye 7N-17148)
'Gonna Fix You Good'/'I Really Care'—The Alan Bown Set! (Pye 7N-17256)
'London Swings Live'—The Alan Bown Set! (LP shared with Jimmy James & The Vagabonds) (Pye NPL 18121)
'Outward Bown'—The Alan Bown (MGM Music Factory CUBLM 1)
'2nd Album'—The Alan Bown (US issue with Jess only—Robert Palmer sings on Deram one)
'Country Home'—Bronco (Island ILPS 9124)
'Ace Of Sunlight'—Bronco (Island ILPS 9161)
Solo album—unreleased by Island
Butts Band—The Butts Band (Blue Thumb ILPS 9260)
Jess Roden (Island ILPS 9286)

PHOEBE SNOW

PHOEBE SNOW AMLIS 66283

Having been raised on Busby Berkeley, Judy Garland, and Shirley Temple, it sure was a strange meld when Phoebe Snow's guitar teacher turned her on to the basic rural blues of John Hurt and Bill Broonzy. By combining torch songs, jazz and basic blues licks, Phoebe has rapidly developed her own unique style, which can be found on her debut album which is already a Top 30 hit in the States.

PHOEBE SNOW—NEW ALBUM
ON A&M RECORDS

NICK DRAKE

The Final Retreat

The amount of coverage Nick Drake's death had in the weekly musical comics just about sums it all up, really. Jerry Gilbert did a beautiful piece for 'Sounds'—and they cut it down to half-a-dozen paragraphs. No-one else mentioned his departure with much more than a cursory nod of acknowledgement.

OK, so the guy did no more than a dozen gigs before more than 150 people, and they raised no ripple you'd notice. He released three albums in four years, and together they probably didn't sell enough to cover the cost of one. What the hell do you want?—front page in 'The Times'?

So you look at the facts and have to agree that when The Bay City Rollers have a new Number One and Gary Glitter's made his comeback after what we've been told is a crucial throat operation, there's precious little space left for the accidental death of some recluse folkie.

But.

The biggest three-letter word in the dictionary, that. But Nick Drake was a lovely cat. But he wrote songs that'd tear your soul out if you relaxed for a second. But in a world full of bullshit, hype, glittery horrors with the talents of dead oxen and the integrity of starving rats, Nick Drake was a man of sincerity, an artist of tremendous calibre and one of the

few entitled to be called unique. But what the hell do they care?

Connor McKnight cared enough to research a superb piece on Nick Drake in ZZ42. Jerry Gilbert cared enough to pressure 'Sounds' into printing a shortened obituary. A lady who worked with me at Island Records when Nick's second album 'Bryter Layter' was released cared enough to cry when I told her he was dead. Joe Boyd and John Wood, his former producer and recording engineer, care like hell. And I do too.

I have no intention of making this short appreciation much more than that. This history, if you haven't read it and care to, is contained in Connor's story and is as complete as time allows. There is some to add.

Since ZZ42, when Connor's story ended, Joe Boyd, John Wood and Nick Drake did get together in the Sound Techniques Studios and put down some tracks.

Nick and Joe had got together in February 1974, while Joe was on a fleeting visit to London. At the time Nick told Joe that not only didn't he have any words left, he also didn't have any tunes anymore. What Joe didn't tell Connor is that he was shocked enough by this response to give Nick a good talking-to. Joe describes it as

a pep-talk, but what he did was to tell Nick that he was wasting and abusing a real and valuable talent and that he ought to stop pissing about and knuckle down to work.

In July, Boyd was in London again and heard from Nick. He wanted to go into the studio to try out four new songs he'd pretty well got together. Nothing elaborate was done in that session—just guitar and voice tracks.

"Nick couldn't sing and play at the same time," Joe recalls. So they recorded the guitar and then the voice. It was shaky, but the melodies—the factor which elevates Drake's work above any of his rivals—were as beautiful as ever. Apart from a general dissatisfaction with the vocals, Nick, Joe and John were happy.

Boyd had to return to the States for more work and left Nick with every intention of returning in the autumn to continue what they decided was the beginning of a fourth album. Success with a number of projects, not the least being the Maria Muldaur albums, forced Joe to spend all his time in American studios, so the planned grand reunion never came off. By the end of November Nick Drake—described by everyone around him as being more happy than they'd known him for a long time—was dead from an



accidental overdose of sleeping pills.

Joe Boyd is clearly still upset about Nick's death and honest enough to express sorrow that he didn't make it back. His relationship with Nick was pretty special to him. "In a lot of ways it was a frustrating one, because although I felt I was able to get through to him and deal with him as a musician, I was never really able to handle him as a person. I don't think I ever gave him the feedback he needed."

It was a problem most people encountered, mainly because of Nick's own personality which changed discernibly through his last few years. John Martyn was someone originally close to Nick, someone with whom Nick communicated eagerly, both as a musician and as a person. But even John, and his wife Beverley, were eventually unable to handle Nick's moods. He'd turn up at their home in Hastings, unannounced but welcome, sit around for a couple of days without saying more than a few monosyllabic words, and leave as unexpectedly and abruptly as he'd arrived. It upset both of them; they tried to help and draw him out, but they got nowhere fast.

My few dealings with Nick at Island were at the time when he was withdrawing more and more away from all but a few people. He was non-communicative to the point of pain and spent a lot of time in a secret world of his own making. He'd vanish for long periods. Traced to a house full of flats in Hampstead, you'd discover that no-one even knew his name, or that he'd taken the flat in an assumed one.

But to contradict any generalisations made about his mental state, he would keep in touch with Joe Boyd and John Wood, still call Robert Kirby, the old friend from his days at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, who was brought in to arrange 'Bryter Layter'. And he still managed to come up with the songs which made his last album 'Pink Moon'.

The album was stark—just Nick's voice, his guitar and occasional piano. It reflected his mood at the time, and the dissatisfaction he felt about the way 'Five Leaves Left' and 'Bryter Layter' had sounded. At the time of 'Bryter Layter' I got the impression from Nick that he didn't like the strings, or the way the album was presented. Fine, if his studio relationship with Joe Boyd and Robert Kirby had been as bad as Tim Hardin's was with the people at Verve.

In Hardin's case, the rhythm and vocal tracks had been laid down, Hardin had split and strings shoved on when he was far away.

Nick Drake personally supervised every aspect of Kirby's arrangements, working with him and—as Joe Boyd tells it—mainly getting Kirby to chart out what Nick had, in the main, already planned. 'Bryter Layter' took a year to make because Nick Drake spent that long making damn sure it was precisely the way he wanted it.

So if Nick Drake had failed to realise the sounds he heard in his head, 'Pink Moon' trusted to the Drake audience to hear them for themselves. Maybe he did it that way so he could play it at home and hear the different arrangements himself.

But what Joe Boyd calls "the steady progress of retreat" was going on, and Nick spent more and more time at his parents' home in Stratford-upon-Avon, and latterly in Paris. His deal with Island had ended, and with it the regular 15 quid a week salary/pocket money Joe had arranged with Chris Blackwell before handing over the Witchseason stable to Island. Joe isn't sure how Nick made ends meet. There certainly weren't any royalties coming in.

Nick had enough friends to ensure that he had somewhere to stay and to watch out for him. Joe and he had talked about getting a new deal together so that he could get some kind of advance, but a hoped for meeting between Nick, Joe and a still-

interested Chris Blackwell never came off because Nick just didn't want to commit himself to any kind of contract.

And that's pretty well the way it ended. Unfinished, inconclusive and typically up in the air.

If you haven't heard Nick Drake's work, dare I suggest you go out of your way and do so? It won't change the ending of the story, but it could change you. Don't take my word for it—Joe Boyd says it far heavier than I ever could:

"Of all the albums I've ever made, the two albums I produced by Nick are the ones I'm most proud of. I listen to them often because Nick Drake was extraordinarily good. Nothing he ever did was less than striking, and he had the gift of writing melodies of incredible beauty."

Joe Boyd, it may be worth reminding you, has been responsible during his career for some of the definitive British folk and rock albums, including Fairport's 'Unhalfbricking' and 'Leige And Lief', for John and Beverley Martyn's 'Stormbringer' and for the best Incredible String Band albums.

Two pictures of Nick Drake pretty well sum up what I think his relationship with us norms was. The first was on the cover of 'Five Leaves Left'. Nick stands, supporting and being supported by a wall, static and observing while a figure blurs past. Nick tended to let a lot of the world blur past—and was probably smart to do so.

The second was the back view of Nick—shoulders hunched, hand in scruffy jacket pocket, trouser turn-up torn—used to illustrate the ads for 'Pink Moon'.

We spent a day with Nick, taking innumerable excellent arty shots of him with a romping Gus the Labrador, or sat on park benches with a wistful, far-away (and bored?) look in his eyes. But that retreating back said it all.

And it still does.

□ DAVID SANDISON

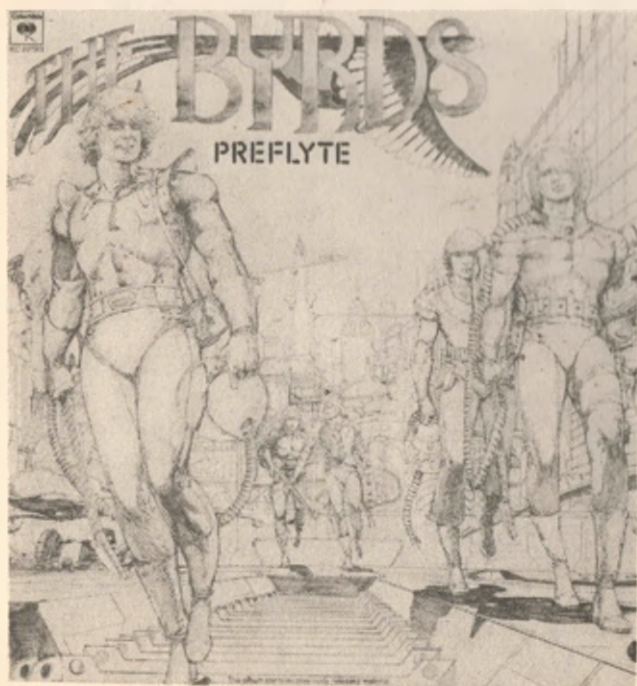


AND THEN ALONG CAME CURT BOETCHER (AGAIN!)

With all the independent producing, it became a logical step to form a label. So in March of 1969 Together Records was formed by Gary Usher, Curt Boetcher, and Keith Olsen under the wings of Transcontinental Entertainment Corporation, which at the time was presided over by the whizz-kid Mike Curb. It was described at the inception as an 'artist orientated label', giving the artists approval of all aspects of a release, from advertising, artwork, promotion, and the material eventually issued.

Gary Usher said when the label was launched: "We don't intend to fall into the pitfalls of many labels whose growth is measured in dollars and cents, to the detriment of artistic freedom. We'll keep a limited roster of artists, maybe no more than six or seven. After all, if you can't hit with a handful of artists, there's no reason to think that you can make a hundred successful."

Fine sentiments, I'm sure you'll agree. Stay tuned and let's hope it works! Unfortunately we can't reproduce the beautiful Together Records logo in these pages, but the labels are worth the price of the records alone.



Curt: "The actual drawing was by a chick named Keita Colten. She did a portrait of myself, Gary Usher and Grace Slick, along with that logo. Her drawings are just unbelievable, there's nobody else like her, and I could see them computer-animated or something. Someday when I'm rich and famous [huge laugh] and a big star, I'll get my hands on some beautiful property and have her animate it."

Dean Torrence and his Kittyhawk artwork company designed most of the sleeves for the company.

Many of the records released were in their 'Archive' series, and the first album from the label was one of these. It was The Byrds' 'Preflyte' (Together 1001) of which fervent readers will need no reminder. It was issued with the group's permission, assisting on the mix, and other etceteras in its eventual compilation. Produced by Jim Dickson and culled from rehearsal sessions and demos, the album was a chart success, prompting The Turtles to cover one of the tracks, the McGuinn/Clark song 'You Showed Me'. It was on the Turtles' 'Battle Of The Bands' album, and was the group's last top ten record.

'Preflyte' was reissued by CBS Stateside in 1973 around the time of The Byrds' Asylum reunion album, and issued in England just before that on Bumble Records (original sleeve). Prompted by this initial success, more releases in the 'Archive' series were planned, including a San Francisco anthology from acts appearing at the Avalon Ballroom (produced by Bobby Cohn) and Matrix nightclub (produced by Pete Abrams) with 'live' studio rehearsals from the period 1964 to 1966. Another planned set was a Lord Buckley anthology, but as with the San Francisco set, they never got past the planning stages.

The second record on Together was the second album from Sagittarius, 'Blue Marble' (Together 1002). Again this was a Gary Usher led (did I hear Gary Ushered...?)

effort only more so than the last, containing mostly Gary Usher songs and vocals. There is little to relate this to the earlier Sagittarius album, songwise and vocally. Harmonies are there for sure, but for the most part being replaced by moog. Not to mention the personnel on the album which is almost a new crew.

One of the best tracks is 'In My Room', the Gary Usher-Brian Wilson song, which is certainly the closest to the feel of the first Sagittarius record. The lead vocal is by Curt, and those of you familiar with the Beach Boys' version will know what a great song it is, if a trifle melancholy. This was the second single on the label, and made a reasonable dent in the stateside charts, but not entirely amazing, otherwise you would have all heard of it. After all, the label would have got a deal in England and the record would have been issued, and the tiny radios would have been singing the words



as a charmer to the balmy summer of '69, and perhaps after stardom, there would be little point in me getting together this article! But things didn't quite work out like that, did they?

Back to the tale. The record was produced by the trio, Boetcher, Usher and Olsen, and the 'b' side 'Navajo Girl' was

nary to be found on the album. This track has a guy called Chuck (Chuck? funny name for a dog) Girard, as the lead vocalist, and written by Gary and Sandy Salisbury, the only one it seems, apart from Keith, to stay with the 'troops'. It opens with steel guitar, then shifts into mex trumpeting, and then the faithful vocals finally come in, but in the main the song belongs to Chuck (Chuck?), although the harmonies exist aplenty in the chorus. The number is Together 102.

Curt's composing credit on the album is 'From You Unto Us'. Lead vocal on this one is Gary, but let's not take it as read, as it was originally a Curt B. demo, and to say that Gary covered the vocal would be more correct. Moog takes up a lot of the speaker in this track, and the album must have been one of the first to use the moog so extensively. Another outstanding track on the album is Michelle O'Malley's 'I Sing My Song', very tuneful and again with some inventive use of moog. Lee Mallory, it seems, is another guy who is still around, and with Gary Usher he wrote the title track 'The Blue Marble'. But the album is one that takes time to grow on you, there are some not-so-hot tracks on the album, and the lead vocals at times leave a lot to be desired, but there is certainly enough to enjoy. Mind, it's not so joyful as some of the work that this team have put together. No credit is given as to the musicians involved in the album, but Curt gets a mention for singing the lead on 'Will You Ever See Me'—perhaps one of the first times that his voice was heard in full, although harmony drifts through occasionally in this Gary Usher song.

Also our Chuck gets mentioned for singing the lead on 'I See In You' and 'Gladys'. Another single, 'I Guess The Lord Must Be In New York City' (Together 122) was issued by the group. It was the original theme song for 'Midnight Cowboy' but turned down in favour of 'Everybody Talkin'', so all seemed well in expectation of the song doing well. It did manage some activity chartwise, but this was thwarted due to the original by Nilsson being issued as the follow-up to 'Talkin''. This was the year of the moon landing, and the packaging of the album romanticised on this theme, with its lunar photos (supplied by NASA).

Curt: "I thought all the little moon pictures and everything, were corny. Everything—cereal box tops and air-sick bags, they all had pictures of the moon on them. It wasn't one of Gary's better albums, he over-extended himself I think."

"On that second Sagittarius album, I've got to tell you something. This was when Gary and I weren't getting along. Gary can get a little out of line sometimes, and he likes to take a little more credit than he has coming—this is the old Gary, the new Gary doesn't do this. Half of the vocals were done by myself, and Gary would lay his voice behind, mask it, you know, and put on his vocal. And a lot of the songs like 'From You Unto Us' and 'Song To The Magic Frog' [from the first Sagittarius album] and all that, he just took demo tracks I had lying around. I just gave him permission to use my demo tracks, and he would just sweeten them up with instruments. And if he used synthesizer, he'd take all my vocal parts that I had on my demos and voice them with synthesizer, and things like that."

"And I think that's where Fennelly got confused over who was stealing who's

voice, as he mentioned in his article [see ZZ41]. He thought that that's what I had done on The Millenium with him, but it wasn't true. I did do it to a certain extent with Lee, because Lee had a hard time staying on key sometime. It was one of those production evil necessity bullshit trips. The way I am now I won't work with anyone who can't cut it, I don't prop them up anymore; I'll just say let's not do it. It has to be for real. Michael Fennelly was wrong, there never was two Sagittarius albums on Columbia. One was on Together and the other one was on Columbia."

Nice to know the other side of the tale given by Michael, and nice to know there is one.

Amongst the other albums in the 'Archive' series were tapes from late '62, early '63, of 'The Hillmen' (Together 1012), again produced by Jim Dickson. The members of The Hillmen included Chris Hillman, The Gosdin Bros (who in '69 were in Buck Owens Buckaroos, and are now the Gosdin Bros on MGM), and Dave Parnley. The album was an amalgamation of group compositions, and songs from the heroes of the day, Pete Seeger, Maybelle Carter, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Bill Monroe. Originally recorded for World Pacific, they had been lying in the vaults all this time, but then, I guess that most of our heroes have things in the vaults, awaiting that very special reason for issuance.

It was pure blue grass at a time when there was more interest in the 'folksy-folk' of Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary. Quite a refreshing and honest sound throughout, especially songs such as 'When My Ship Comes In', and 'Rangers Command'.

Although the San Francisco anthology did not in fact appear, 'Early LA' did (Together 1014), and the first side consisted of Jim Dickson produced tracks. Dino Valenti had his own CBS album out around this time, and part of his ups and downs included 'Get Together', the Youngbloods' classic, and also of course Quicksilver Messenger Service. However, on this album he settles for a Leadbelly song, 'Black Betty', and an original in his blues interpretation, 'Life Is Like That'. Then there's David Crosby, from the folk of the Les Baxter Balladeers—his first rock recording of Hoyt Axton's 'Willie Jean', a song to see a superior version by The Sunshine Company. And a Ray Charles blues track 'Come Back Baby'. It must be remembered that these were never originally meant for release, it is just that notoriety by the people included, has made it inevitable. Of course they never realised that they would find themselves in the position that deemed these recordings to be sought.

The next incarnation of David Crosby was in The Byrds, and we have already mentioned 'Preflyte', but the next couple of tracks did not appear on that album. There was a McGuinn-Clark song, 'The Only Girl', and 'Your Movin'', two tracks that were more Beatle-influenced than Dylan.

Lastly on this side were two Dillards' tracks which seem more complete than some of the others on this side. There's 'Don't You Cry' which later appeared on 'Wheatstraw Suite', but which also exists in an earlier version. The next track is certainly worthy of that particular Dillards' album, namely 'Every Season Changes You' written by one Ruth Talley.

The second side of the album is devoted to the Richard Moore produced tracks of Canned Heat, all two of them, consisting of the bluesy 'You Know I Love You' (6.49) and the inevitable boogie of 'First Time Around' (10.34), both being 'live' recordings. The actual dates of the recordings are not stated on the album, but no doubt they were made while they were between contracts and starvation.

Not available to comment on, but with available information were a couple of other packagings of Doug Dillard—'Banjo Album' (Together ST 1003) and another city anthology called 'Chicago Anthology' (Together ST 1024), which is supposedly the 24th release on the label; I don't really imagine this to be the case, as no doubt there were albums scheduled that never came out. These were about the only ones listed in Schwann, the American catalogue, which is pretty accurate as these things go.

However another original recording was a double album by Danny Cox called 'Birth Announcement' (Together ST 1011). This set is full of elongated interpretations of songs ranging from Lennon and McCartney to Bob Dylan, and traditional songs. Included were 'Hey Jude', 'Little Maggie', 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps', 'Day In The Life', 'Dear Prudence', 'It's All Over Now Baby Blue' and 'Just Like A Woman'. The album has a flowing style, eased along by Cox's voice, and I think it would be accurate to say that the style is close to, say, Richie Havens, although his particular voice is much easier to take. The album features guitar by Danny Cox and Richard Ruskin, Doug Rhodes on bass, Red Rhodes on steel guitar, and Pat Shanahan on drums (the last three had played on the Millenium album, Pat playing vibes, and of course he went on to Rick Nelson's Stone Canyon Band). Additional bass work is provided by Steve Le Fever, and tasteful string arrangements by the producer Gary Usher.

It was released in July of '69, and Danny later resurfaced on MGM's Sunflower label. He now resides at Casablanca, Neil Bogart's label, and has a new album 'Feel So Good' available.

Also scheduled, but never issued, was an album by a group called Moses Lake, to be produced by Curt and Keith, not to mention the Sandy Salisbury album, also to be produced by the duo. Also the very first album by Curt was under way. Again this did not materialise. However, what did result were some singles by this trio. A Sandy Salisbury single, 'Do Unto Others', was in fact the label's first issue (Together 101), written by Curt and one Keith Colley. Quite a rocking little track, and a definite departure from his previous work. The instrumentation is heavier, but still retains that harmony sound with striking falsetto, and a memorable chorus. These ingredients should have made the record a chart stormer, but only regional activity greeted it. Even today the record is strong, and someone should pick it up. The 'B' side of the single, 'Cecily', is much quieter, a Boetcher/Salisbury collaboration, and a country flavoured track that reminds me of the later Curt B. track 'Such A Lady'. But back on the track, there is some nice steel guitar presumably from Red Rhodes, not to mention a stunning guitar break in the middle. And then there's a high harmonic voice coming in on the chorus. It really is a great little single. Which of course hardens the blow of there not being an eventual

'Sandy' album, which was scheduled for release in October of '69. There was however another Sandy Salisbury single of 'Goody Goodbye' which is not in my racks, and a Lee Mallory single of 'The Love Song'. After a couple of years' existence T.E.C. pulled out of the investment made, leaving Gary to go back to independent producing, and Curt and Keith to pursue a similar route. **Curt:** "We did a whole album with Moses Lake that has... a Negro poet... I can't remember his name... a Negro poet who wrote about the creation; we did this whole musical thing based on that poem, which was far out. But the lead singer of the group had a nervous breakdown in the middle of the sessions, and the tracks were never completed."

"I was working on Sandy Salisbury, and working on projects that were extremely experimental, ambitious, hard to cut, things like that. And Gary was repackaging old demos and stuff. He was saying 'Well, gosh, I can't figure out why Curt's budgets are so much higher than mine,' and here was I giving him the means to lower his budget. So pretty soon I was under the gun with Transcontinental, and they were viewing everything I did very dimly. I had started on my own album for Transcontinental and freaked out in the middle of it, because of their insensitivities."



So there you have it—another chapter in the tale, but around the Together days Curt's name appeared on yet another album. This being Michelle and 'Saturn Rings' (ABCS 684), the surname being O'Malley, a name that had appeared on the first Sagittarius album, and also amongst the vocalists that appeared in various projects previously mentioned. The album contained three songs that had appeared on the first Sagittarius LP, 'Present Tense', pre-Melanie versions of 'Musty Dusty' and 'Song To The Magic Frog' and another version of 'Would You Like To Go', which is treated very close to the original. The harmonies and similar instrumentation are there, of course, the main difference being the Michelle vocal lead. Apart from the fragile songs and the vocal group track, she also belts it out on Curt's eight minute track 'Lament To The Astro Cowboy' which is okay but wandering, not really meaning much. Not at all characteristic of previous work, but there, Curt was not involved in the album as far as producing or arranging. He probably worked on 'Would You Like To Go' where he may have assisted on vocals, and incidentally composing credit for the song is given to Bobby Jameson. Jameson's 'Know Yourself' also appears on this, along with a song co-written with Michelle, 'White Linen'. Apart from Curt's 'Lament To The Astro Cowboy' and the Boettcher/Almer 'Musty Dusty',

there also was 'Believe You' and 'Misty Mirage', two songs that again strike one as being unrepresentative of his usual work. 'Spinning Spinning', the Ballroom track, also appears on this record, written by Curt and Lee, and it presents no alternative to the original. 'Musty' also contained some extensive use of flute, supplied by Lowell George, who also contributes some harmonica work through the album. It's pretty certain that the usual crew in part also worked on the album. Mike Deasy produced the set, and the sleeve was designed by Dean Torrence's company.

For the next couple of years Curt's activities remain limited, but for the moment we are now in 1969 towards the end of the Together mess, and back with Keith Olsen.

Curt: "Keith and I knew each other since we were in college. We were at the University of Minnesota together. Keith was playing in the Minneapolis Symphony, he played second chair viola, bass, something like that. Damn good engineer. After eight years, we ran into some kind of falling out that I don't really understand."

And here we are in 1970, and back with The Association, but for only one song though, the track from the second Millenium LP, 'Just About The Same'. The lyric in this instance was very different to the original, 'It's You', the theme being more universal. Part of the lyric goes:

Ask me a question and I'll give you your answer,
Are you part of everybody? Yes you are,
Where do you think all these people have come from?

Are you their brother? Well, I guess you are,
Hey, Everybody is Just About The Same.
(Warner Bros 7372)

Perhaps another pun on the 'Just About The Same' lines. Whatever, it's a great track, which seems to fit in with those quasi-religious things that were around at the time like 'People Got To Be Free', or 'Get Together'. A very spirited (sorry) track with some of those Association harmonies, and what sounds like falling over drums from time to time.

Curt: "I dubbed The Association's vocal on top of The Millenium track, and they couldn't even cut the vocal. They didn't do the vocal one tenth as good as The Millenium did, but that's showbiz. And they got a chart record, it got in the seventies, fifties, somewhere along there. That's the story of 'Just About The Same'. I just heard about Jules, who's Gary Alexander today, after a long absence. I guess he's got a group together and they're recording for A&M. But I don't really see any of the Association; the last guy I saw in the group was Ted [Bluechel Jr]. They, in my humble opinion, were never able to handle their own success, as far as their head spaces. It really changed them as people—it's part of what happens."

Song came along around this time too, a group and an LP that Curt and Keith produced for MGM (SE4714). It was Mickey Rooney Jr's group, which Curt says made some of the tightest tracks he ever cut, with some amazing Beatle-esque take-offs. As you can guess this is one I cannot comment on, but believe me, if it is as near as good as the previous things, then it certainly is one to look for. The record came out around July of '71.

Curt: "I was introduced to Emmitt Rhodes through Todd Schiffman, manager of Loggins & Messina and former manager of Iron Butterfly, Blues Image, Casey Kelly, who



else, who else?—I can't remember... aah, Poco."

So just before Song, Curt was involved in the one man show, Emmitt Rhodes. You may remember him, his first album 'Emmitt Rhodes' (Dunhill DS 50089/Probe SPBA 6256) had plenty of attention on its release due to the fact of Emmitt doing all the work on it, producing, playing all the instruments, vocals, and writing. It also drew similar parallels to the 'McCartney' album in that way, not to mention the styling and voice. But it is a good album despite all that, scoring pretty heavily in the USA. He too has a history that goes back to 1967 and his group Merry Go Round, scored around that time with 'You're A Very Lovely Woman' on A&M, which was reissued to cash in on the success of the solo album.

There now comes a sitting in limbo period, during which time he did no producing and made no records.

During this time Curt's marriage broke up, and all the sundry hassles involved in that scene. And also there was a slight name change.

You may have noticed without too much effort, that on occasions the name Boettcher has two 't's' and then one, Curt dropped a 't' in '72.

Curt: "Why did I drop the 't' from my name? Ahm... there's this guy out here named Gregg Tiffin, a very famous numerologist, inventor of his own parapsychological science called Cyrcadian Time Analysis, which he does with computers, things like that. He told me that my name was a jinx, so the two 't's' in Boettcher were the kiss of death. Dionne Warwick added an 'e' to her name, and I dropped a 't' from my name, it's supposed to clear my head, and make better, clearer decisions. So that's why I dropped the 't'."

Curt's next step was to go up to Washington State, and get together with one Web Burrel, whence they began laying plans for Curt's own album. Securing a contract with Elektra was the next thing, which was probably due to Jac Holzman who had Michael Fennelly's group Crabby Appleton on the label. A Holzman quote from the English issue of Curt's album (by ZZ's own John Tobler) publicity blurb: "He's done two tracks. It's taken him over a year, but they're absolutely first class." As you can see Jac was quite pleased to be having him on Elektra, even if the results of Curt's affiliation were slow in coming. That's Curt, Capricorn—slow moving, earth sign.

So in December '72 the album 'There's An Innocent Face' (Elektra EKS 75037/K 42124) was finally released. In America that chose to be an inopportune time for release, because it was unfortunately lumped together with a series of new bands the



label was issuing. It received only nominal promotion due perhaps to the fact that the time and money spent on the album had annoyed the label, or because the label was just about to be lumped together with Asylum. Anyway the album was on issue, and it followed suit in England and a couple of months later, where the buzz had already been felt. Strangely enough, Elektra issued 'My World Fell Down' on the 'Nuggets' compilation, at the same time as the Curt album, and it was the original single cut, a coincidence I feel.

Now of course I am really behind this album. To have gotten this far and not be, would be somewhat anti-climatic, but it really is worthy of your attention. The lead track is 'I Love You More Each Day', which was also the single a month before the issue of the LP. A full production with tubas, stirring string arrangements (which reminded me on first hearing of the sort of thing on the Van Dyke Parks 'Song Cycle'), all soaring through the strong lead vocal from time to time. And the vocal, the first time that we have been treated to the voice on its own, apart from the Together single, combining in the chorus with that harmony sound. However, it was, I fear, too complex for the singles market. It would have been great to have it up there, but uncomputable.

Next comes the country track 'Such A Lady', the one I compared to the earlier Curt song, 'Cecily'. The only thing is that this was written by R. Naylor and C. Gusias, the connection being just coincidental. It's a gentle track that boasts the steel guitar of Red Rhodes, and a contingent of background singers coming in on every odd verse. The restful mood created by this track is most agreeable disturbed by the next. Just when you might have thought 'Ah-huh, here we go, a laid back in the chair album,' 'She'll Stay With You' begins with some fast picking and it never lets up. ARP synthesizer is in there too, supported by that strong acoustic guitar, and some powerful vocals from Curt.

Harmonies figure in this track, most obviously at the end, with its collage of doo-wops and a pinch of 50's rock in 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love' and 'Book Of Love' just catching in on the tag. After that you can only recreate the same mood, or slow down. We slow down, but not too slow, with the J. Netkin, Curt Boettcher, Web Burrel tune, 'Love You Yes I Do'. Now this is a favourite of mine, but then so many on here are; plenty of conga sounds are provided by one Tessie, not way in front of everything else, but blended in with the overall sound. In fact, that is a thing that Curt has never done, given any instrument the upfront position in the recordings.

C. Guisas gives us the next track in the host of delights, no relation to the Ham song, only the name gives you that idea, 'Without Her'. This time the song and its instrumentation is much more simple, no complex arrangement here, just a gentle run on the guitar and electric piano. A short piece (1.23) that one could call the interlude before the weight of the next track reaches you. Last track on side one is 'Bobby California', the most rocking track on the whole album. A 'live' atmosphere is created by the audience of tapes, and a lovely mixture of modern and old rock'n'roll, with the girls who provided the background vocals (dubbed in the lyrics—The Heartbeats) providing shoo-be-doo-wahs. Nice electric guitar, fancy drumming and great organ work which is just perfect in the middle. No harmonies folks, just a real strong track, which leaves the tapes crying out for more, right up to your spindle. The song is about a country lad who leaves his Arizona home, and fame reaches him in California via his vocal prowess, so he changes his name to—Bobby California. This would have been the ideal single for England. I feel, although none too close to the usual Curt Boettcher fare, which convinces me even more of its chances—the compromise.

Turn it over, and you have the track that made it onto the Elektra sampler 'New Magic In A Dusty World' some months before the album, namely 'The Choice Is Yours', written by The Rooney Brothers, Mickey Jr & Teddy, departed from Song one would imagine. The song has a lovely lyric, and another guess would be that it was probably one of the first two for the album that Jac enthused over. Harmonies bubble through the song, and you would be forgiven for putting it into a Beach Boy mould. I like the opening lyric: "Keep your peace of mind, you'll find it handy, that's the best advice you'd get from me." Beautiful song, and beautifully sung. A similar feel to that produced on 'She'll Stay With You' is given to the next track, 'Malachi Star', written by Judy Pulver and her ex-lover Bob Wachtel (who played with the Everly Bros for a while). It begins with some plodding drumming behind those vocals, before it takes off with some amazing falsetto, and the ARP running along with the sound.

Then we level out with the voices and come down to the lower registers for 'Lay Down' a D. Gere song (he also wrote 'Bobby California', by the way). A touch of a reggae beat is present throughout this track, and the voice drifts through the low notes and then comes up in a gentle manner that is a joy to hear. Tight harmonies also pervade the track, but not as dense as some contained in the album. After the complexity of most of the songs, we come to 'I've Been Wrong', written again by D. Gere. This song is just Curt and a couple of acoustic guitars, a ballad with a fine lyric, not a lot to say about this one, except it is not as much a favourite as most of the material here.

And finally everyone comes back for the final track 'Wufferton Frog' written by J. Netkin. A lot of high fun on the track which has a full backing, containing tubas, no harmonies, but an enjoyable track—singalong et al. A childlike chorus and croaking frogs end the track and the album, as this too runs into the label.

The album was produced by Curt and Web, for their Land-O-Lake Productions, Gary Usher is listed as executive producer,

and the songs were arranged and adapted by Curt and Web. The album, as it turned out, gained quite a lot of response from radio and press in England. There is an army of people who follow him in the USA, but as far as promotion goes, the album did not reach past this army. And of course in England it was left for people to discover him for themselves.

Curt: "Tandyn Almer was writing with Brian Wilson when I was mixing my last album for Elektra. I got a telephone call from them. They said drop what you're doing right now, and come up and write songs with us. I said, 'I can't! I'm in the middle of my mixdown.' And they said, 'Shit, and that's enough of that!'"

Pity about that; no doubt Tandyn and Almer were writing for The Beach Boys, they did put some things together for 'Holland', but only 'Sail On Sailor' turned up for the album. It'll be good however to see what turns up in the months to come.

Undaunted by the lack of response, Curt and Web began on their second effort for the label, with a tentative title of 'Chicken Little Was Right'. This time the work for the album was somewhat swifter, resulting in five almost complete tracks. But Elektra called a halt to the proceedings, which is a shame, to put it mildly. So the sessions ended, and Curt could not go to any other label at the time, because he was still tied to Elektra.

Meanwhile back in England his old associate Mike Fennelly had completed an album with Argent's rhythm section, called 'Lane Changer'. Mike was not long out of his group Crabby Appleton, formed a while after the Millenium thing, and he had gained a taste for a heavier approach than Millenium had pursued. There is no denying the power of the album and its sundry pyrotechnics, or its influences ranging from Led Zeppelin to Neil Young. But sorry folks, and John, for me, the album does not make it; a mere lad weaned on all those vocal groups, it was too metallic and sparse, although a couple of the tracks, namely 'Over My Dead Body' and 'Shine A Light' are ones that provoke some response in me.

Curt though was somewhat shattered by the Elektra attitude, after their initial enthusiasm, but I suppose that's record company politics for you. He then drifted on up to Seattle... there was not much else to do at the time as you can imagine, and he met up with some guys in a group called Flavour. Not the Flavour that had dented the US charts in '69 with 'Sally Had A Party', but a Canadian bunch. Along with the drummer of the group, Curt decided to head back to LA and reform Millenium, same name, different people. This was in the early part of 1974. Roy Halee had been contacted, and the reaction from him was positive. So a tie-up with CBS would be a not too silly assumption, especially as in England Dan Loggins of CBS had heard the album and reached the same conclusion as Roy, thus solidifying the situation.

Some time has elapsed since this situation came about, during which time the Millenium idea has been shelved, due to the complications involved in putting the group together. And Curt has been taking in other musical inspiration—the Philly sound and other soul configurations. In August, Curt headed back to LA, awaiting news on the contract, and anxious to get back in the studio. Gary too had got

in touch, and the duo are ready to try for a hit single, the aim being to hit at a synthesis of that soul-disco feel.

Curt: "At this point all I can hope is that the contract comes through with Columbia; it's been so many months of waiting that I can't believe it. I just hate it. I wish Dan was the head of A&R here. If it doesn't happen or whatever, maybe I'll make a mad appeal to bring me over to England or something. Maybe I'll have to come over to England to do it yet."

"Although I must admit that the economic chaos, fuel shortages, lack of heat in the winter, and all those weird strikes and everything kind of scare me. And not knowing any of the musicians there, or any of the people, kind of scares me too. Taking your whole scene and transplanting it somewhere else, is kind of scary. But at the same time, maybe the whole change, being in a market that was responsive to your efforts would pull me clear. I've really been turned off by the whole scene that I've been going through here. I don't know, I'd like to be recognised a little bit I guess. I guess everybody would you know. I just feel like it's a waste of time, and I want to have time to enjoy my life, you know—experience things."

"That was provided a lot in Seattle. Seattle was really neat for my head, it turned me on to that whole different direction in music. I just hope that I absorb the discotheque feelings, because I really like it. Who knows what it'll come out like. I think my only concern is whether someone wants to buy it!"

There you have some of Curt's desires and anxieties, but fear not, because now one hears that things are beginning to take

a more encouraging shape across the range. New management and all that sort of thing.

This brings us up to date with the activities of Curt Boettcher. For Curt's next waxings we may expect some tunes from the pen of David Batteaux, writer of El Chicano's big hit last year, 'Tell Her She's Lovely' (and with his brother Robin Batteaux, and former members of some obscure American groups, Apaloosa, and Compton & Batteaux). It looks good, Curt's unique voice in with that black sound, and Gary too back on the scene.

*Curt's last production credit was on the Andy Goldmark album (Warner Bros BS 2703). It bears all the credits one may expect, produced by Gary Usher, plus Dean Torrence as the Art Director. Plus strong session people like Larry Knechtel, Jim Keltner. And that appears to be the contribution Curt makes. The album, despite all this going for it, fails to contain any of the magic usually associated with these people. Nice moments, but something is missing. The record was issued in March of '73.

If you think that there are quite a lot of production credits already listed, well cast an eye on some more that have come to light since the main portion of this epic was completed:

'Pretty Girls And Rolling Stones' (Epic 5-9673)

'June Bride Baby' (Epic 5-9806)

'Jonathan Moore' (Single)

Goldbriars (Single)

'London Bridge'/'I Didn't Ever Know'

(Produced by Boettcher who wrote 'b' side)

'Karen Karsh' (Single)

'Misty Dusty' (Dunhill 4151) (Curt Boettcher song)

'Plastic People' (Single)

'It's Not Right' (Kapp 789) (Produced by Boettcher for Bell & Our)

'New Life' (Single)

'Canterbury Road' (Epic 10538) (Written by L. Mallory/C.Boettcher/M. Fennelly/L. Christie)

'Plastic People' (Single)

'Hide' (Kapp 823) (Produced by Boettcher/co-written M. Fennelly)

Something Young: 'Oh, Don't Come Crying Back To Me'/'The Words I'm Seeking' (Lead vocals—Curt/with Ruthann Friedman—produced by Curt for Our Productions) (Fontana F 1556)

Moses Lake: 'Oobleck' (Together 113)

Sandy Salisbury: 'Come Softly' (Together 125)

Sandy Salisbury: 'On And On She Goes' (Together 139)

(These last three were pretty certain to have been produced by the terrific trio Curt-Keith-Gary.)

It seems the reason behind the gaps between each single on Together is due to the fact that other labels distributed by Transcontinental used the same numbering system.

And, of course, there could be some more things lurking in the man's past . . .

Special thanks to John Tobler (for his support and loan of the Together albums), Pete Frame, Dan Loggins, Daryl Wolf, and, of course, Curt for his assistance.

□ RAY MCCARTHY

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RECORDS



'So What'—Joe Walsh (ABC DSD 50171)

Having just read a review that's described 'So What', as being 'uniformly lifeless', I feel a need to point out that that isn't quite the way I heard it, and in fact 'lifeless' is just about the last thing I had in mind. Maybe it doesn't quite have the strength of 'Barnstorm', Walsh's first album after leaving The James Gang, and even though there aren't any 'Rocky Mountain Way's', I think on the whole the actual songs stand up better than on either of his previous two albums.

There's a new version of 'Turn To Stone' included, which is a good enough example of how Joe's playing has changed (matured?) over the last couple of years. After listening to the way he handled the same song on 'Barnstorm', and comparing the two, the new one doesn't have the same kind of energy as the original, but is substituted by some slightly more inventive guitar work—you'll have to decide which is better.

'Welcome To The Club' opens the album in great style, and along with 'Time Out' they are the two most powerful tracks. It's when he's rocking that Walsh is at his best, and that sharp gritty guitar sound and his shape of phrasing combine to provide a few scintillating passages of vintage rock.

Joe Walsh's singing has never been one of his strong points, but the vocals here are greatly improved by having The Eagles backing him up on some of the songs, and a clearer mix than he's had before has also helped.

Side two ends off with 'County Fair', another great track, followed by an orchestrated 'Song For Emma', which in context with the rest of the album is fine, although if it was to be taken alone, it would probably sound just a bit overdone.

Well, after three solo albums to his name now, it'd be nice if he came over for some concerts this year, with 'So What', although a bit early, seems destined to be one of the albums of the year.

ANTHONY OLIVER



LOGGINS & MESSINA: 'Mother Lode' (CBS 80431); POCO: 'Cantamos' (Epic PE33192)

Initially the main difference between these two progeny of the Buffalo Springfield is one of sophistication. While Poco strive desperately to recapture past glories, Loggins & Messina have moved onto a new plane of sophistication, calling on all their musical resources to attain complete professionalism without matching it with the same excitement of a Steely Dan.

The appearance is that of a band whose front men are fast running out of ideas—if not musically, then lyrically.

In fairness there's not one song that doesn't have structured appeal, and I guarantee that both 'Move On' and 'Be Free' are destined to become stage classics but lyrically Loggins & Messina have nothing to say. I've never been one for lyrics per se—a song either sounds good or it doesn't and if words fit into a metre and somehow enhance melody I'm not worried about their meaning. But when a lyric sheet is provided one expects a little more than the pap that Messina churns out on 'Be Free', 'Changes' and 'Lately My Love'—yet in the final analysis his songs are better because they're more band oriented.

Probably due to the commercial success of 'Danny's Song' and 'Love Song', Kenny Loggins has become entirely unilateral, and now he's got his old lady Dona Lyn George to encourage him in affairs of the heart. By and large they are self sufficient little cameos and I guarantee he'll be opening his solo spot with 'Get A Hold' ere long.

Undoubtedly the new album will go gold immediately but as success becomes routine so, unfortunately, does the song-writing, and I think that fine musicians like Al Garth and Jon Clarke, who produce some wondrous moments on 'Mother Lode' could reasonably expect more from their front men.

Poco's problems are of a different nature entirely. They open 'Cantamos' like a band determined to prove that they've far from outlived their usefulness but the fire is soon extinguished and promises remain unfulfilled.

Considering their life line with the B. Springfield has now been severed the album bears a marked resemblance to all that has gone before: just one classic from

Paul Cotton or Timmy Schmit, to match up to anything they produced on 'A Good Feelin' To Know', would probably have been sufficient but as it is Schmit, Cotton and Rusty Young trade licks and share credits to very little effect in terms of origination. Rusty has taken some of the writing onus off Paul Cotton's shoulders while Timmy chips in with 'Bitter Blue' and 'Whatever Happened To Your Smile' of which the latter alone comes anywhere near approaching his true capabilities.

In fairness this is undoubtedly better than 'Poco 7' but it seems that whatever energy Poco create on stage they shouldn't be fooled by crowd reactions. For albums like this underline that the band lacks a creative vortex and no matter how good the spirit is in the band these days, the departure of Richie Furay has created a sort of terminal void I fear. How long can my one-time fave band continue with albums such as this . . . ?

JERRY GILBERT

GENESIS: 'The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway' (Charisma CBS 101)

Some six years and seven albums into a career which, only within the last year, has shown any signs of international success, Genesis have come up with an album which transcends the current pop malaise by blending the most significant music of the last six years into an interesting and innovative experiment.

Peter Gabriel, lead singer and songwriter, has drawn musical and lyrical elements from most of the major late sixties English groups—The Who, Yes, ELP, Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd, to name the most obvious—into a convincing, surrealistic fairytale about a boy's quest for self-knowledge in the inhospitable environment of New York.

Rael, the central character, is a Puerto Rican ghetto kid whose only claim to fame is an obsessive desire to leave his name aerosolled on every available wall.

Gabriel has been extraordinarily tentative about the record, saying that on the one hand it is the most accessible thing the band have done and then, apparently unaware of the contradiction, suggesting that critics will find it obscure and pretentious.

In fact, neither statement is true. The album is not accessible in the sense that most Top Twenty tunes are, although some tracks, notably 'Counting Out Time', shouldn't present any great problems to anybody. Similarly, the assertion that the work is pretentious is no more valid than suggesting that the paintings of Max Ernst, or fairytales like Cinderella or Jack and the Beanstalk are pretentious.

It is an extraordinary piece of pop surrealism in the classic surrealistic sense of placing incongruous objects next to each other to achieve a new level of meaning. Nowhere is this notion more obvious than in the title. The very fact that lambs don't, can't and shouldn't like down on Broadway says, by the juxtaposition, something about the ethos of the modern city and even more about man's alienation from his natural environment.

RECORDS

The fantasy opens with Rael surfacing from the subways after a night of energetic aerosolling. The world he meets—an awakening New York—is peopled by deadbeats, drifters, and junkies. Hardly the archetypal image of Broadway as America's myth-making dream factory. To heighten the paradox, Gabriel ironically reiterates the chorus lines from the Drifters' Broadway eulogy: 'The say the lights are always bright on Broadway

They say there's always magic in the air.'

As the morning progresses, the whole ethos of Broadway, of American media and myth-making, is presented in 'Broadway Melody of 1974'. As a use of surrealistic devices, it is one of the album's cleverest and most pointed statements.

Evoking contemporary American media myths—Lenny Bruce, Marshall McLuhan, Groucho Marx, the Ku Klux Klan, Caryl Chessman and Howard Hughes—he places each one in a bizarre and surrealistic context, thereby heightening their tragedy or their particular claim to fame.

Lenny Bruce, the most uncompromising of all contemporary humourists "calls a truce"; media guru McLuhan becomes another media-saturated suburbanite "casual viewin', head buried in the sand"; Groucho, master of fast moving comedy "stands alone with his punchline falling"; the anti-negro Ku Klux Klan "serve hot soul food" and millionaire hermit, Howard Hughes dons the most public and outrageous of all clothes, "blue suede shoes".

Implicit in this sense of contrast, this sense of weakness, is one of Gabriel's themes—the inability of the city worker to sustain any sense of his own dignity or integrity. The way the media idols are compromised in this song is, Gabriel argues, the way society forces us all to compromise.

Rael then descends into his first hell. In a complex and ambivalent image which combines elements of the stifling claustrophobic and destructive force of pollution—'There's something solid forming in the air The wall of death is lowered in Times Square

No one seems to care

They carry on as if nothing was there, The Freudian complexities of being locked in the womb, and the sense of despair at being locked in a cave, a prison, a bottle and a cage.

Again the significance of the fantasy is embedded in the claustrophobic pressures—both mental and physical—that a modern city offers. As if to reinforce the dehumanising power of the city, Rael is presented with an horrific image of 'The Grand Parade Of The Lifeless Packaging': 'Got people stocked in every shade Must be doing well with the trade Stamped, addressed, in odd fatality That evens out their personality With profit potential marked by a sign I can recognise some of the production line No bite at all in labour bondage Just wrinkled wrappers or human bandage.'

Rael re-emerges onto Broadway to reminisce about his childhood 'Back In NYC' and his early sexual experiences 'Counting Out Time', before he is hurled back into a fantastic hell which intermin-

gles the epic qualities of Bruegel and Bosch with the mystic fantasies of Ernst and Dali.

In the fantasy he meets 'The Carpet Crawlers'—the failures of the business world who get down on their hands and knees and crawl to the bosses hoping that they will eventually be set free. The chorus line:

'The carpet crawlers heed their callers We've got to get in to get out.' captures the impotence of the business failure, while mild-mannered clerks and brainless typists are marvellously evoked in:

'Mild-mannered supermen are held in kryptonite

And the wise and foolish virgins giggle with their bodies glowing bright'

Rael's descent into hell becomes a nightmare when he joins the masses confronted with thirty-two doors, only one of which leads to freedom. Taking advice from a blind woman, 'Lilywhite Lilith', he escapes down one of the tunnels only to find himself confronted with Death, 'The Supernatural Anaesthetist' and sexuality, 'The Lamia'.

Peter Gabriel's metamorphosis of the lamia, drawn from Philostratus via 'Anatomy Of Melancholy' and Keats, produces a song powerful in its imagery but fairly meaningless in its content. Any fantasy once it loses contact with identifiable iconography immediately subsumes its point. It is only at the end of this totally improbable tale that any worthwhile comment is made.

Rael enters a pool where there are three snakes with female heads, as he enters his body exudes a magic juice which the lamia proceed to suck. The moment the lamia get too close to the flesh and suck blood, they shrivel up and die. Rael, wishing to express his love, eats the remains of the lamia only to be turned into a hideous monster, a slipperman. From his brother, John, he learns that only castration will reverse the process, so duly he undergoes the operation and is given a tube in case of sexual emergencies. Out of the sky swoops a raven which takes the tube, and Rael's hopes of future sexual happiness, and drops it into a fast-flowing river. Wandering along the river's edge, he sees an escape to the outside world—to Broadway—and just as he is deliberating on Broadway or his dick, he sees his brother John drowning in the river.

With a cry of 'Eve! Kneive! you've got nothing in me,' he forsakes the outside world and takes the big dive, grabs John, swims to the bank to find that he hasn't saved John, he's saved himself.

A Freudian could spend hours analysing the elements of necrophilia, vampirism, cannibalism, castration and bestiality that exist in this strange tale. After all, psychiatrists have had a field-day with traditional fairytales.

The final concept—rejection of the material world and selfless love of your fellow man—seems to justify the elaborate and fantastic tale.

Musically, Gabriel has borrowed heavily—echoes of Rick Wakeman's 'Henry VIII', Jethro Tull's 'Thick As A Brick', The

Who's 'Tommy' and some of the early Emerson, Lake and Palmer can be detected throughout the record—but rather than detracting, they seem to enhance the work by creating a familiar background for a very unfamiliar vision.

It is easy to dismiss a complex and inaccessible work like this as public school self-indulgence or crass pop pretension. The fact remains that if Gabriel had used his talent in a different medium, he would now be the subject of lengthy 'Sunday Times' reviews and the academic gurus would be devoting hours to subtle interpretations of his stylistic nuances.

O ye of little faith, recognise a talented writer in your midst.

BRUCE ELDER

OTHER ALBUMS RELEASED DURING THE PAST MONTH

BONAROO—Bonaroo (Warners K56096)

VISIONS OF THE EMERALD BEYOND—Mahavishnu Orchestra (CBS 69108)

7-TEASE—Donovan (Epic EPC 69104)

SKINNY BOY—Robert Lamm (CBS 80359)

JOHN DAWSON WINTER III—Johnny Winter (Blue Sky 80586)

GET UP WITH IT—Miles Davis (CBS 88092)(double)

DAVE MASON (CBS 80360)

WITH EVERYTHING I FEEL IN ME—Aretha Franklin (Atlantic K50093)

NEW & IMPROVED—Detroit Spinners (Atlantic K50102)

A LITTLE BIT OF LOVE—Paul Williams (A&M AMLH 63655)

STAGE DOOR JOHNNIES—Claire Hamill (Konk 101)

I CAN HELP—Billy Swan (Monument MNT 80615)

JOY TO THE WORLD: THEIR GREAT-EST HITS—Three Dog Night (ABC ABCL 5064)

THE LATEST EDITION—John Mayall (Polydor 2391 141)

BLACK BACH—Lamont Dozier (ABC ABCL 5096)

ORDINARY MAN—Sam Leno (Anchor 2002)

A1A—Jimmy Buffett (ABC ABCL 5065)

DREAMS AND ALL THAT STUFF—Leo Kottke (Capitol E-ST 11335)

RUFUSIZED—Rufus, featuring Chaka Khan (ABC ABCD 837)

NIGHTMARES—J. Geils Band (Atlantic K50073)

LITTLE FEAT

DOWN BY THE JETTY—Dr Feelgood (United Artists UAS 29727)

HEART LIKE A WHEEL—Linda Ronstadt (Capitol)

DARK HORSE—George Harrison (Dark Horse)

ORCHESTRAL TUBULAR BELLS—Mike Oldfield with the RPO (Virgin)

WARNER BROS MUSIC SHOW—Various Artists (Warners)

PHOEBE SNOW (A&M AMLS 68283)

MILES OF AISLES—Joni Mitchell (Asylum SYSP 902)

GREETINGS FROM L.A.—Tim Buckley (Straight)(re-release)

ZIGZAG'S 1974 VINYL VOTE

JOHN TOBLER

MIRACLES ANTHOLOGY
DAYDREAM/HUMS—Lovin' Spoonful
LYNYRD SKYNYRD
DISCOVER AMERICA—Van Dyke Parks
LOOSE SALUTE—Michael Nesmith
PRETTY MUCH YOUR AVERAGE
RANCH STASH—Michael Nesmith
AND THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMING—
Michael Nesmith
STARRY EYED AND LAUGHING
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW—Van
Morrison

JAKE (The Willis' Manager)

NEW FAVOURITES OF BRINSLEY
SCHWARZ
GRIEVOUS ANGEL—Gram Parsons
SHEET MUSIC—10 cc
PICKIN' UP THE PIECES—Poco
COURT AND SPARK—Joni Mitchell
WAITRESS IN A DONUT SHOP—Maria
Muldaur
FEATS DON'T FAIL ME NOW—Little Feat
AVERAGE WHITE BAND
EVERYTHING YOU KNOW IS WRONG—
Firesign Theatre
THE JOHN LEROY ALBUM—Jack Treese

CHRIS BRIGGS

FEATS DON'T FAIL ME NOW—Little Feat
ON THE BEACH—Neil Young
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER—Weather
Report
LIGHT OF WORLDS—Kool & The Gang
461 OCEAN BOULEVARD—Eric Clapton
PARADISE & LUNCH—Ry Cooder
PRETZEL LOGIC—Steely Dan
VEEDON FLEECE—Van Morrison
APOSTROPHE(?)—Frank Zappa
DAMN RIGHT I'M SOMEBODY—Fred
Wesley & The J.B.'s

ANTHONY OLIVER

ODDS & SODS—The Who
PARADISE & LUNCH—Ry Cooder
IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL—Rolling Stones
FEATS DON'T FAIL ME NOW—Little Feat
ON THE BORDER—The Eagles
461 OCEAN BOULEVARD—Eric Clapton
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW—Van
Morrison
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER—Weather
Report
BETWEEN NOTHINGNESS AND
ETERNITY LIVE—Mahavishnu Orchestra
SMILER—Rod Stewart

PETE STONE (from Virgin Records)

COURT AND SPARK—Joni Mitchell
FEATS DON'T FAIL ME NOW—Little Feat
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER—Weather
Report
THRUST—Herbie Hancock

LEARN TO LOVE IT—Jesse Winchester
ROCK BOTTOM—Robert Wyatt
SNEAKIN' SALLY THROUGH THE
ALLEY—Robert Palmer
PARADISE & LUNCH—Ry Cooder
VEEDON FLEECE—Van Morrison
GROOVERS PARADISE—Doug Sahm

NICK LUMSDEN

ROCK BOTTOM—Robert Wyatt
SOON OVER BABALUMA—Can
VEEDON FLEECE—Van Morrison
FEAR—John Cale
SECRET TREATIES—Blue Oyster Cult
HAPPY ENDING—Terry Riley
THE END—Nico
CONFESSIONS OF DR DREAM—Kevin
Ayers
ON THE BEACH—Neil Young
RED—King Crimson

FRASER MASSEY

THE PHOENIX CONCERTS LIVE—John
Stewart
ON THE BORDER—The Eagles
PEACE ON YOU—Roger McGuinn
EASY—Ralph McTell
DORY PREVIN—Dory Previn
FEAR—John Cale
CARAVAN WITH THE NEW SYM-
PHONIA—Caravan
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW—
Van Morrison
CHIP TAYLOR'S LAST CHANCE—Chip
Taylor
WALKING MAN—James Taylor

FRASER KENNEDY

SLOW DANCER—Boz Scaggs
GRIEVOUS ANGEL—Gram Parsons
LIGHT SHINE—Jesse Colin Young
VEEDON FLEECE—Van Morrison
MARS HOTEL—Grateful Dead
LA TURNAROUND—Bert Jansch
WHEN THE EAGLE FLIES—Traffic
OKIE—J.J. Cale
MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER—Weather
Report
BEFORE THE FLOOD—Bob Dylan &
The Band

FRED MUNT

APOSTROPHE(?)—Frank Zappa
BAD COMPANY—Bad Company
VEEDON FLEECE—Van Morrison
GOOD OLD BOYS—Randy Newman
ROXY AND ELSEWHERE—Frank Zappa
& The Mothers
461 OCEAN BOULEVARD—Eric Clapton
AVERAGE WHITE BAND—Average White
Band
BEFORE THE FLOOD—Bob Dylan &
The Band
OKIE—J.J. Cale
ON THE BORDER—The Eagles

VIRGIN IMPORTS

ROADMASTER

Gene Clark

CHILD OF THE NOVELTY

Mahogany Rush

MAXOOM

Mahogany Rush

CAJUN COUNTRY

Gib Gilbeau

PREFLYTE

The Byrds

WINTER LIGHT

Oregon

CHICAGO 8

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BLABBER 'N SMOKE

1975! I wonder what hope it brings for the ever-changing world of rock music. If it's as good a year as 1974 then I for one will be well pleased. For me, last year was probably the most eventful year so far in my whole life. I listened to more records, attended more concerts, and met more people than at any other time I can remember, and on one or two occasions the whole thing seemed more like a dream than reality.

My involvement with rock music has always been of paramount importance to me and even when I used to bash out the infamous Fat Angel on a part-time basis while trying to keep a regular day job, rock'n'roll used to infiltrate every part of my life. And the same is true now, perhaps even more so. Due to the people I've met, the gigs I've been to, and the records I've listened to this year, my faith in rock music is as strong as ever. My tastes have broadened, although at the same time they've become more refined, and my total belief in certain artists working in areas as far removed from each other as straight country & western and jazz has been reconfirmed - there's room on my turntable for both the sensitive, imaginative music of Weather Report, and the good-humoured lunacy of Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen. It's through becoming involved full-time that I've met one or two people who have influenced and made me think about my own listening habits. For instance, my concepts of what rock'n'roll should encompass have become more clearly defined, the result of listening avidly to people like Joe Walsh, Dr. Feelgood, the Who, the Flamin' Groovies, and Little Feat.

Elsewhere in this issue you can find lists of favourite albums of the people connected with Zigzag, and apart from one or two exceptions there is a surprising overall similarity between the lists. The ten albums that I enjoyed most last year are quite a mixed bunch, and I had some job trying to pick them. There were a few automatic choices though, like Neil Young's 'On The Beach' - an album that re-affirms his class and ability as a writer and performer. Weather Report's 'Mysterious Traveller' and 'Veedon Fleece' by Van Morrison also spring to mind immediately, Weather Report for their staggering level of musicianship and elegance, and Van Morrison because I think he's the complete songwriter/performer, and he also makes consistently great albums. Ry Cooder is someone I'd love to see in concert, and the standard set on his last album, 'Paradise & Lunch', not to mention his previous three, convinces me that there's no way I'd be disappointed. Same goes for Little Feat who have in fact proved the point quite recently by playing not one but two unbelievable classic gigs over here. I have doubts as to whether they'll ever make another album as good as 'Sailin' Shoes', but even if they only come half-way near that level of quality, they'll still be one of the best bands in the world. 'Feats Don't Fail Me Now' comes more than half-way, so enough said! I suppose I couldn't pick ten favourite albums of the year without including a Grateful Dead

offering, and I pick 'Live From The Mars Hotel' not just because it's the Grateful Dead, and I think the Dead are IT, and Phil Lesh is a genius, etc, etc, but because I really believe that it's a great album save for one or two sticky moments. It highlights facets of the band's musical capabilities that even I barely knew existed, but more importantly it provides tingling, magical moments of uniform intensity that point towards a direction they perhaps should have taken prior to their 'Workingman's Dead' period. When they re-surface sometime next year, as I'm sure they will, I feel confident that a very different, less structured, and more powerful Grateful Dead aura will be unleashed upon the world. Finally, there are four albums that must rank as quite important to me, simply because I've played them a lot. There's Loudon Wainwright III's 'Attempted Moustache' - comical, bitter, moody, and musically very pleasing; the Who's 'Odds & Sods' - a stunningly impressive collection of previously unused material; 'Fear' by John Cale, whose lyrics I can't profess to fully comprehend, but whose musical ideas and arrangements I find compelling; and then the best 'live' album released last year - 'Live From Deep In The Heart Of Texas' by Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen. . . . thirty five minutes of amazing grist. (Look out for a new Cody album very soon, their first for Warner Bros, it contains a version of Lowell George's 'Willin').

If a lot of albums I listened to last year were of a refreshingly high quality, then some of the gigs I attended were too. There were four absolute dynamite concerts in particular that left me almost speechless. Perhaps the best was that sun-baked day at Wembley Stadium when a whole host of Yanks played one beautiful set after another culminating in CSN&Y providing moments that I'll remember for a long long time. Despite the excellence of his company, Neil Young definitely stole the show, and he stole it without any effort at all. The good people of Blackhill provided two beautiful days of music in Hyde Park, and my most vivid memories of those affairs is standing ten feet away from Roger McGuinn as he exploded into 'Eight Miles High', and his 12-string Rickenbacker lit up in a blaze of flashing lights. The celebrated one-day Knebworth Festival could have been an ordeal, but in all events turned out for me to be a most enjoyable occasion, not least because I at last got a chance to see Tim Buckley, and he was fabulous. Then of course there was the Grateful Dead's marathon at Alexandra Palace. Of the three nights they played, Monday left a bit to be desired but a lot to look forward to, Tuesday saw me leave almost completely satisfied, and on Wednesday they spent at least half of the time encroaching musical territories that have yet to be charted. It's impossible to say if it was good, bad or whatever because no valid criteria for judgement exist for experimental music of the nature they perform-

med. Nonetheless, I found it all, at the very least, interesting.

But it wasn't only the big names that provided the best concerts. There aren't many people I'd rather go and see than Chilli Willi or Dr. Feelgood, and there have been gigs at the Marquee, the Torrington, the Hope And Anchor, and god-knows-where-else, where some of the finest music I've ever heard has been laid down before my very eyes. I wouldn't sacrifice moments like those for anything. Both bands at the present time are in the midst of that difficult stage of endeavouring to successfully transfer their unique 'live' personae onto vinyl. It's an old and tortuous problem encountered most notably by virtually every American West Coast band during the late mid-sixties, but I expect, pray, and hope that they'll eventually do it, if only for the sake of posterity. Hell, I know they'll do it.

1974 was also undoubtedly the year when the handful of Britain's rock fanzines came into their own. 'Fat Angel', believe it or not, is still going, and there will be a new issue, crammed full of goodies, within the next three months. The legendary Pippin, and his equally legendary magazine, 'Supersnazz' may also re-emerge sometime this year. . . where are you now old buddy? I haven't seen you in ages. The two strongest fanzines are now undoubtedly 'Omaha Rainbow' and 'Hot Wacks', the fifth and latest issue of which is very very good indeed. It looks like Zigzag of say four years ago, which can't be bad, and it's got splendid articles on the Blue Oyster Cult, the Doors, Free, and Emmylou Harris. 20p from Bert Muirhead, 104 Spring Gardens, Edinburgh, EH8 8EY, and worth every bean. 'Trailing Clouds Of Glory' also made a splendid debut, and future issues, I'm assured, are in the pipeline. Another paper to add to the list is one I picked up very recently in Manchester. It's called 'The Hot Flash', and their first issue includes a Lynyrd Skynyrd interview and a piece on the daunting Alberto Y Los Trios Paranoias (hope I spelt that right). A good mag, it's 15p from Glyn Hazelden, 13 Brookland Lane, Parr, St. Helens, Merseyside.

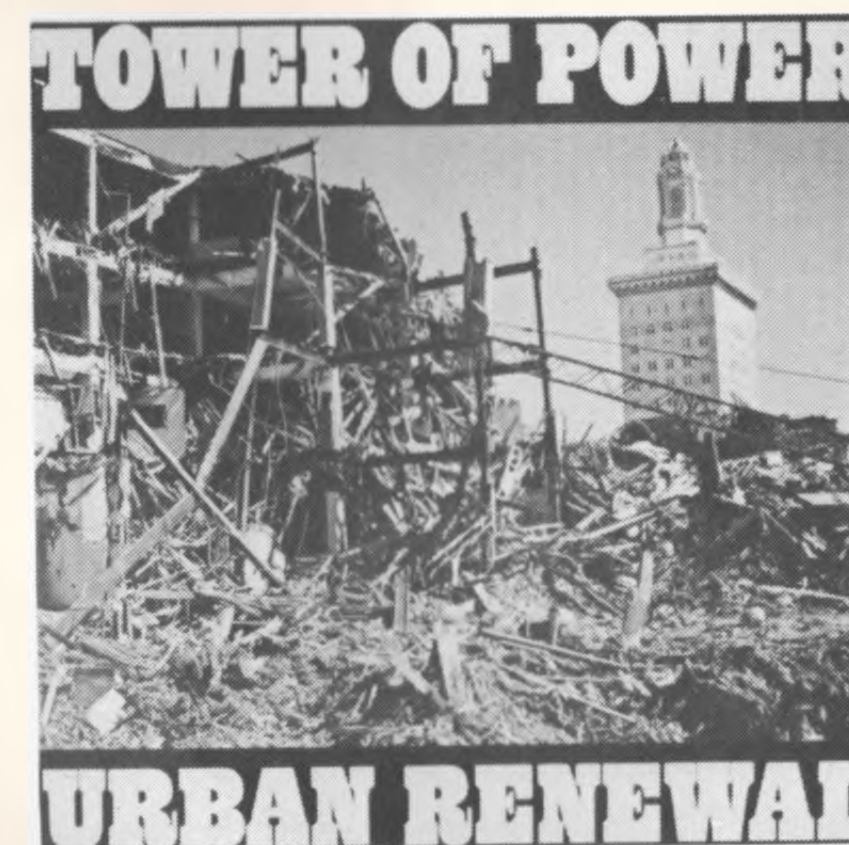
So all in all, a very encouraging year leaving a lot to look forward to. Zigzag will keep trundling on. . . 'the esoteric juggernaut of the rock press' as someone once described it to me. There is a very distinct possibility that a further increase of 5p will have to be made on the cover price in the near future. . . I don't suppose for one minute you want to hear the old bull-shit about printing costs and so forth, so let me just say that it honestly is necessary. Hope you won't mind.

In the next few issues we will be featuring people like Little Feat, Barry Melton, Jesse Colin Young, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Ian Matthews, and a host of other superstars.

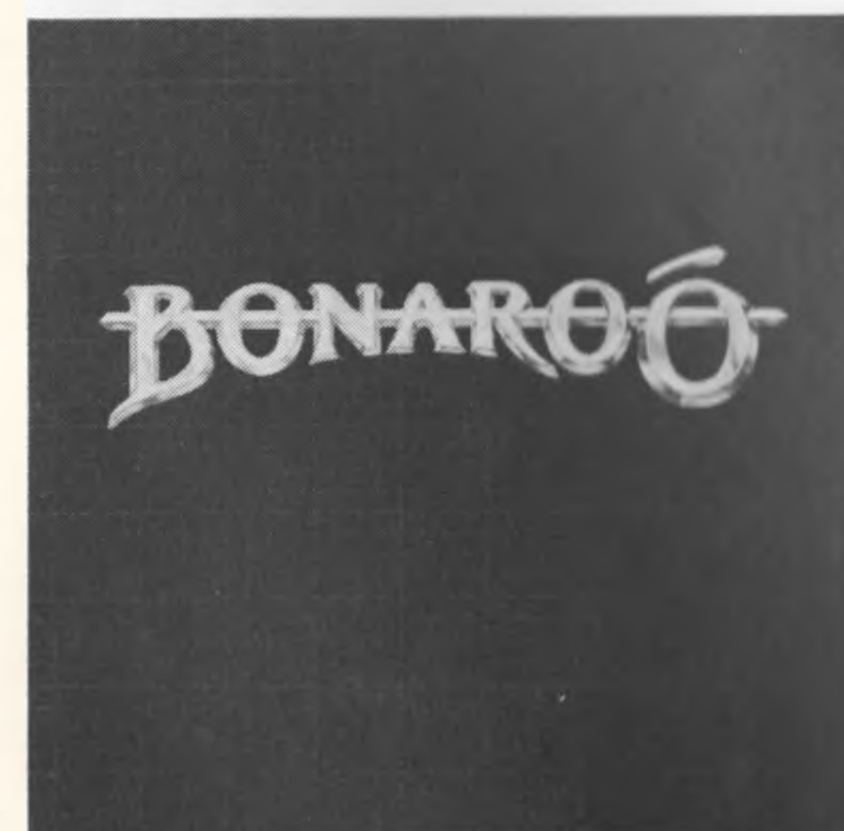
Meanwhile, have a good New Year, and take it easy. See you soon. Andy.

SPIN OFF

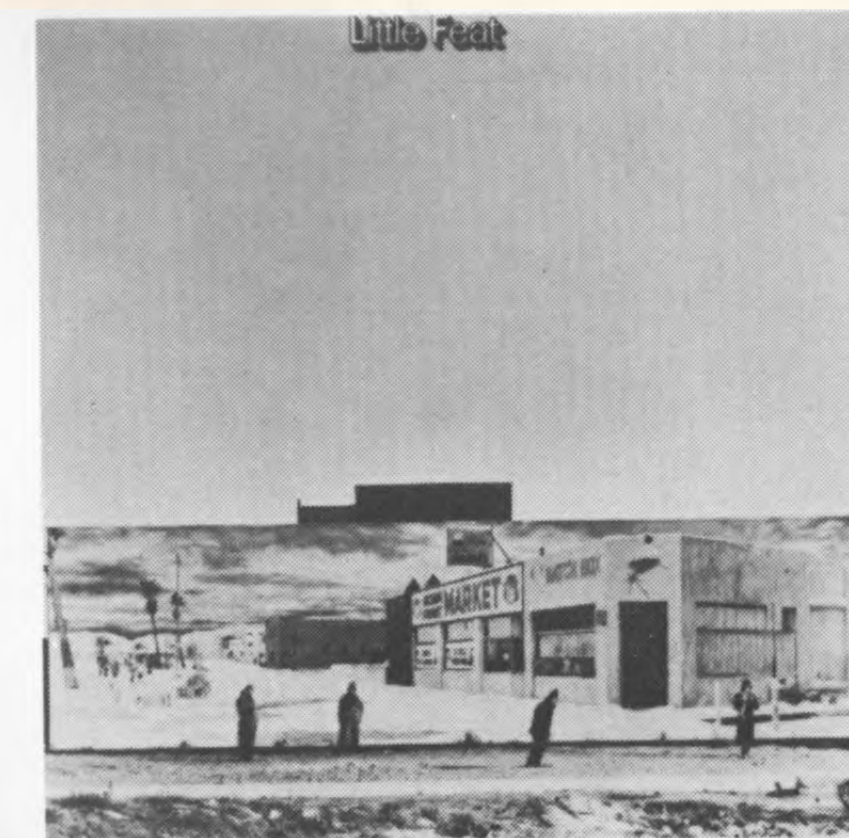
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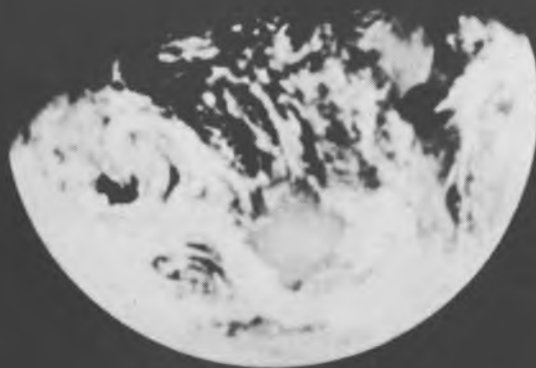


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