

ZIGZAG

The Rock Magazine

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LITTLE FEAT

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Sneaky Pete
Kleinow
Lindisfarne
Nico



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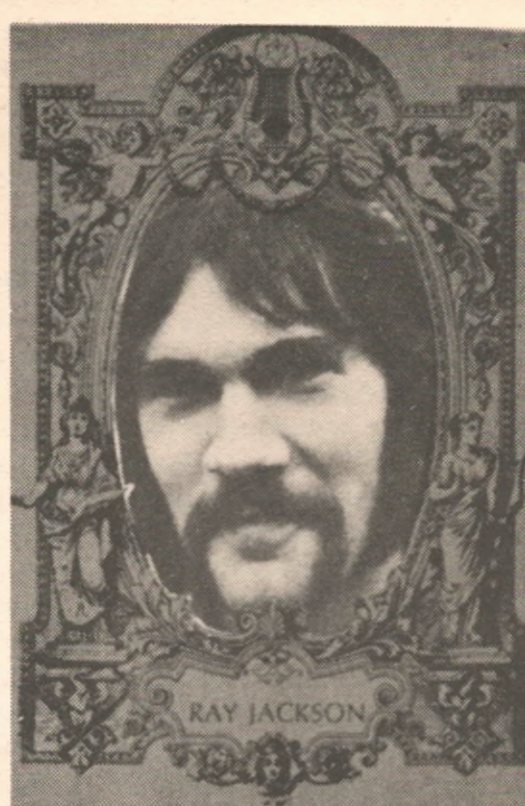
SIMON COWE



ALAN HULL



RAY LAIDLAW



RAY JACKSON

THE LINDISFARNE SAGA

THREE YEARS AGO it seemed like the end of an era.

Alan Hull was to be found in his once favourite haunt, the Nellie Dean, soon after opening time, and was well on the path to honouring that self-created tradition of drinking into oblivion. A battered old suitcase stood alongside, that would sometime in the evening be accompanying its owner back to Newcastle.

It was a meeting of some coincidence. For only hours earlier I had been commissioned to write The Lindisfarne Story, and whilst always aware of, and frequently involved in all the stations on the way as Lindisfarne progressed from support band at the Marquee to national headliners, it must have been two years now since I sat down and talked to Alan Hull in any set of circumstances.

But now he was calmly accepting the fissure that had finally terminated the name of Lindisfarne with a sort of dogged inevitability and I swear he had the words "Geordies are a crazy bunch of bastards" etched on his lips, where "crazy" would once have read "canny". Back on his own again, Alan Hull's future suddenly looks far more decisive. There is a

new solo album, *Squire*—a sequel to that fine Tom Pickard TV play in which Alan fully justified his acting debut.

"They call me the squire," bawled out Hully, in earshot of all the Nellie regulars; using the conjunctive first line of the song which linked each dream sequence of the film in true Lennonesque fashion. Then, in answer

to an imaginary encore, he sang a new song called 'One More Bottle Of Wine', a familiar 20th century music hall theme written by the drunk for the drunk and designed to be sung slightly off key. As far as I know he sang the entire song.

In April Alan Hull will take the stage aftront a twenty-piece orchestra and there will be a further perm of Geordies—the names of Pete Kirtley and Colin Gibson were mentioned, and of course there will be a couple of Lindisfellow.

Alan Hull is pinning high hopes on his new solo album and in all truth his credibility as a songwriter will surely be judged on his next performance. Thankfully he is no longer pulling old items out of the vaults but has 100 per cent new songs for sale.

By eight o'clock on that evening James Alan Hull was sufficiently rummed and pepped to undertake his 300-mile journey into the future. ZigZag, meantime, turns back the pages.

I STILL derive a certain amount of pride from being the first writer to predict Lindisfarne's success. It was September 1970 and Tony Stratton-Smith will doubtless remember better than I the band who Lindisfarne had been brought in to support. But the two of us took our place in the painfully sparse arena, and perhaps because my ears had always supported the tenet that song construction, melodically and rhythmically, was all important, I became sold on the band instantly. They had a nice fat acoustic sound which was so erratic and carefree that it immediately took me back to my old worn Sonny Terry/Woody Guthrie/Cisco Houston combination records. Why, they even played an old Guthrie song, 'Jackhammer Blues'.

A few weeks later, still struggling to make an impact, Lindisfarne were back at the Marquee and I recall unhesitatingly singing along with half the songs as though I'd heard them twenty times.

It was at the Marquee some months earlier that Alan Hull, soloist, had played the Wednesday folk nights (organised, I recall, by Judith Piepe, who has systematically pinpointed the best talents to emerge on the London folk scene over ten years).

It was at the Marquee that Tony Stratton-Smith decided to sign the band to Charisma, at a pub called the George in WC2 that I first interviewed the band and at the old Charisma offices in Brewer Street that I was played the acetate of an album called *Nicely Out Of Tune*

which mushroomed eleven potential hit singles.

By November 1970 I was absolutely convinced of Lindisfarne's pedigree. They were still coming down from Newcastle, roadies sleeping in the truck, the band begging drinks in La Chasse Club . . . but they secretly knew that they were going to be the catalyst in goading public taste back to good songs, delivered in the same raw patois that had distinguished the early Beatles' Liverpool success.

"We're a songwriters' band and we've got to wait for the audiences to catch up with us now," exclaimed a confident Alan Hull. "We're nicely out of tune with what other people are doing—that's why we chose it for the album title."

The story goes that Charisma decided the single on the flip of a coin . . . and went for 'Clear White Light' although it could easily have been 'Turn A Deaf Ear', 'Lady Eleanor' which was later to become a huge hit, or 'We Can Swing Together' which ironically Alan had already put out as a single whilst a folk singer with Transatlantic.

It was in May 1970 that Alan had joined forces with the Newcastle blues/folk band

Brethren, and in so doing ended any chances he might have had of forming a band with fellow Geordies Jon Turnbull and Graham Bell. Brethren had turned up to play an acoustic guest spot at Alan's Whitley Bay club, The Rex, and he was knocked out with what he heard—particularly Ray Jackson's harmonica work. "They wanted to back me on some tapes I was doing and this led to us all doing a gig together, which was terrible. But we gave it another try and it was fantastic, so I joined—and as it turned out we had exactly the same ideas in mind anyway," said Alan soon afterwards.

By June of 1971 Lindisfarne were headlining a concert at the Royal Festival Hall promoted by Jo Lustig, who had also long been singing the group's praises. Unicorn and Gillian McPherson were also on the bill. This was the first milestone.

Word of the band's success had spread like wildfire and that summer Bob Johnston, producer of albums by Dylan, Cohen, and Cash, flew to London to produce *Fog On The Tyne*. It was a decision which I'd always felt a little doubtful for although John Anthony's name

didn't quite carry the same prestige as Johnston's he did a great job on that first album and even little producers' tricks like the scratched effect on 'Down' somehow seemed to enhance the overall chaos.

If there was one thing Lindisfarne didn't need at this point, it was sophistication, and when at the end of the *Fog On The Tyne* sessions a press hearing was called, the worst fears were confirmed. Johnston sat back behind the console like a modern day Henry VIII rolling joints. The summer had given birth to another crop of fine songs and Alan was quite happy to plunder the vaults at Newcastle's Impulse Studios whilst Rod Clements plagiarised Dylan and came up with 'Train In G Major', a knock-off from 'It Takes A Lot To Laugh', which was to become a great stage number.

But Rod also came up with the hugely successful 'Meet Me On The Corner' and on a first side top heavy with good songs there was also 'Alright On The Night' (another hit), 'Together Forever' (like 'Turn A Deaf Ear' by Kirkcaldy folk singer Rab Noakes who was later to tour with the band) and also 'January Song'.

One of the problems Lindisfarne encountered in the second half of 1971 was living up to their reputation of being carefree rough diamonds who came onstage drunk and were running a promo campaign for the Magpies and Newcastle Brown Ale. The image had been promoted largely by jovial Ray Jackson, his penchant for playing old Geordie music hall medleys on harmonica and the fact that he had a far thicker patois than any of the other band members. This is not aimed as a criticism for it gave the group a solid identity so that even the cursory listener could link the band inextricably with Newcastle. Paradoxically this later imposed restrictions which were to bring about their downfall.

On a Saturday in December 1971, Lindisfarne went home for a concert at Newcastle's City Hall, and if the scenes were heartwarming for the band then they were stunning for us outsiders who were there to report on the bond that linked several thousand hysterical Geordies with the five prodigals who had come home for Christmas. All the tell-tale trimmings—music hall decor, genuine Newcastle Brown ale promotion, hippies with sleeping bags who had trekked miles.

Stealers Wheel, Rab Noakes and Roger Ruskin Spear, I recall, created a terrific build-up for the band and I swear there was a prevailing hysteria. All Lindisfarne could have



LINDISFARNE L-R: Charlie Harcourt, Alan Hull, Ray Jackson, Paul Nichols, Tommy Duffy, Ken Craddock.

seen gazing out into the vast auditorium was the occasional body teetering dangerously over the edge of the balcony. It's a wonder no one was killed that night. Jacka played on oblivious—into the medleys, even 'Pretty Thing' and 'Not Fade Away' with a fond hark back to Brethren. Before the end of the night Lindisfarne had been augmented by Charlie Harcourt and Kenny Craddock who were later to team up with Alan and Jacka in Lindisfarne Mark II.

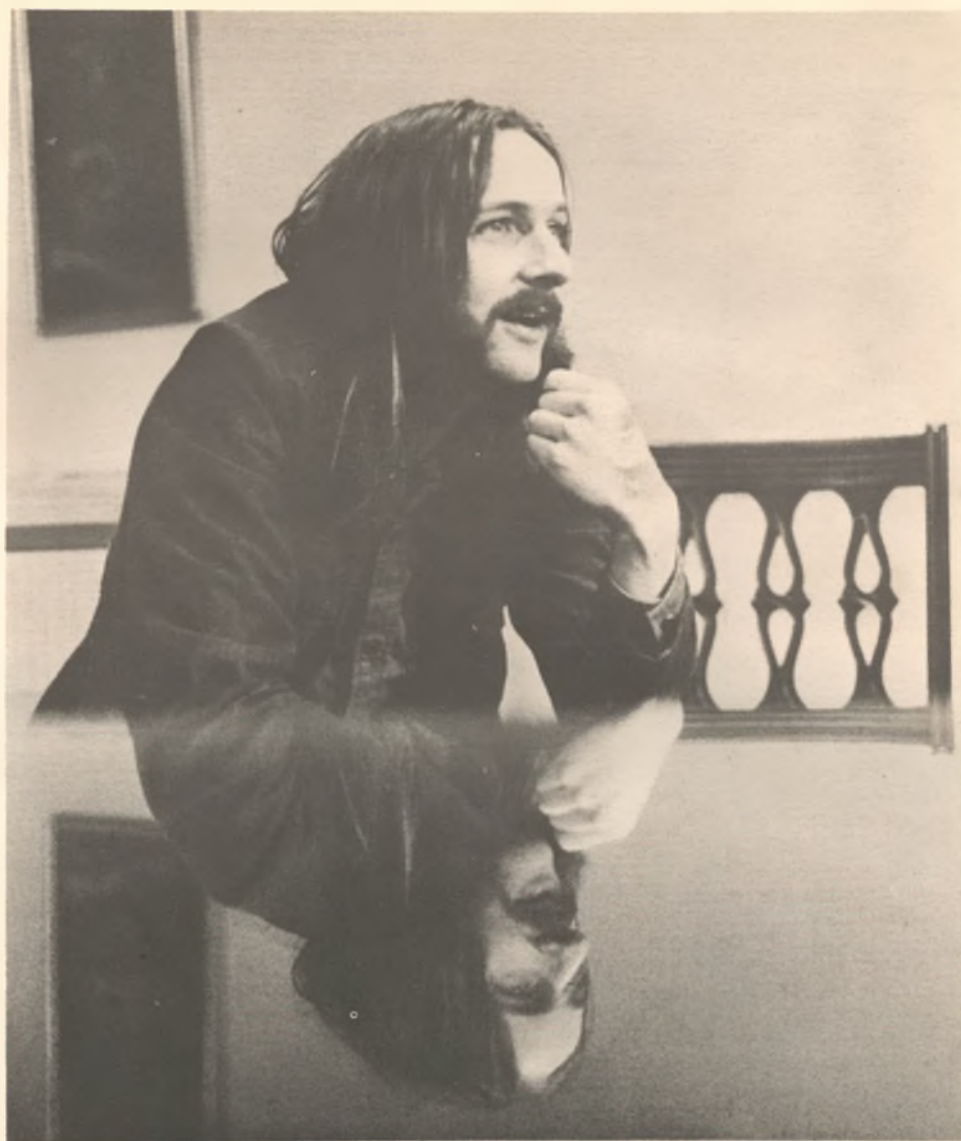
In March 1972 Lindisfarne took off for the States having firmly consolidated their position in Britain and confident of similar success in the US.

They had signed a record deal with Elektra which, on the face of things, looked to be a good label for the band because whilst the glorious days of Elektra definitely belonged to the middle and late sixties, they were showing signs of a resurgence. But it seems to me that they never quite got to grips with how they should promote this ragged beast called Lindisfarne.

Only the legendary Billy James seemed to realise that harmony could best be created by sharing a few ales at a rare Los Angeles pub called the Mucky Duck, but it often seemed as though he was fighting a lone battle; while Elektra execs scratched their heads, American punters who had been weaned on professionalism and perfection, two tiresome ingredients that Lindisfarne were seldom known to inject into their act, were wondering what all the fuss was about.

I'd always enjoyed interviewing Alan Hull and was aware of a fascinating past that had never been probed. The visible iceberg had been sapped dry but the murky past had not and in May 1972 he gave me a fascinating interview (*Sounds* Talk In 27/5/72) which remains one of my favourites to this day. Somehow he managed to put his songs in perspective in the light of his philosophy, the books he had read, his days as a mental hospital nurse, his changing ideology, his preoccupation with madness and the resultant songs that he never dared sing in public. So many of his best songs had sprung from this rather intense period and there was so much hidden depth that in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and seventy-two, he must have been rather bemused at the accolades that were suddenly being heaped upon him. For the truth of the matter was that as a songwriter, Alan Hull was running dry.

He explained: "The only thing that's troubling me now is the songs—you know, the material that's coming out now because it's



only reflecting something that isn't really real. Rod's just written a song that's the best thing I've ever heard, it's the song that I've been trying to write this past two years since the whole thing with Lindisfarne happened. I think it's going to be the best song that Lindisfarne will ever do." ['Don't Ask Me' on *Dingily Dell*.]

Alan confessed that all his worries were centred on his own writing. "I'm still getting the tunes together and the chord changes but

the only things I want to say are what Rod's just said, and the only thing apart from that is very religious and I don't think people wanna hear that. The only thing I wanna write about is getting drunk."

Alan had always walked a tightrope with his lyric writing because, like Lennon's lyrics, they were couched ridiculously simply. Simplistic and blunt—Randy Newman is another genius at that style of writing but

when it's not happening . . . not really flowing, then it's all too easy to allow a trite lyric to slip in vicariously. This is what I believe happened on *Dingily Dell*.

"My main worry is that I've changed so much physically and environmentally in the past two years that I haven't had a settled place to sit down and write. When I lived in Gateshead I was on the dole for a year and I wrote fifty songs including 'Lady Eleanor' and 'Winter Song' and 'Fog On The Tyne'—they were all written during that period and it seemed to be a very atmospheric house. I want to recapture that thing where I can sit down and relax and write."

But he continued to live in a stone conflict. He and his family lived in Barnet for several years—a lot longer than they would have liked—and only recently returned to Newcastle. There was this period of change but it represented a sequence of negatives and was totally unstimulating.

The Summer of '72 was a worrying one for Hull. 'Fog On The Tyne' had gone top of the charts, and *Nicely Out Of Tune*, anachronistically, was just beginning to break. Hull knew that the latter had been far stronger poetically and the follow-up hadn't matched up—but he gave a vote of confidence in Bob Johnston. "He offers us a great atmosphere to work in and ideas on the selection of material," he said at the time.

Alan concluded that interview in May '72 by stating that the band wouldn't outlive its purpose. "I think Lindisfarne's relationship will grow—never out, it'll just sprout," he quipped enigmatically. When the band did sprout it seemed to be purely from convenience and with very little design.

By July *Dingily Dell* was complete although at the time Hull, carried away by the heady excitement of a new release claimed that the album would remain untitled "because the music says it all". He was enthusing about the "dirty, raunchy American sound" that Bob Johnston had manufactured and I could never quite reconcile this with the original concept of the band. I felt that if the songs were good enough then this would be a bad thing, but if the songs were below par then it could be the saviour of the album.

"It's the music that counts," exclaimed Alan and seemed delighted that the standard of playing and arrangement had reached a new level of sophistication. When the album came out in September, sure enough it was packaged in a plain brown sleeve although by this time *Dingily Dell*, the seven-minute closing track had

been picked out for the title.

With this song, clearly the highlight of the album, Ray Laidlaw's brother Paul set a new precedent by orchestrating it whilst Alan and Rod are the only two band members featured. My reaction on hearing it was the same as when I first heard Poco orchestrated on the equally memorable 'Crazy Eyes'. Yet oddly, 'Dingly Dell' had almost found its way onto *Fog On The Tyne* and had been written years before at a time when Alan was writing all his best songs, inspired by the philosophical writer he happened to be immersed in at that particular time. So Cowe's 'Go Back' was another old song that had resurfaced—this time inspired by reading R D Laing. The much advertised Rod Clements' song wasn't so special after all, and apart from a few instrumental fillers the best song was Alan's beautiful 'Wake Up Little Sister'—a piece of pure whimsical tenderness that was rightly to become a stage favourite. But the air of mild rebellion on 'Bring Down The Government' and the lament 'Poor Old Ireland', although atmospheric from the concert platform, were sentimentally weak from the twelve inches of plastic on which they were cut. Alan Hull really was beginning to sound like a man who had nothing to say.

I don't think anyone seriously thought that Lindisfarne would challenge the Stones despite their newly contrived musical virtuosity. It wasn't that the band improved musically to any great degree, simply that they had never really needed to think too heavily about arrangements and sound quality before—not as long as Hully had acoustic, electric guitars and keyboard instrument on stage, Jacka his harp and mandolin, Si on banjo, mandolin and guitar, Rod on fiddle and bass. Rod used to scrape out some dire fiddle parts but in the general melee Lindisfarne always cranked out a fulsome happy backing on which the voices were overlaid.

The anachronism persisted. Lindisfarne toured in the Autumn of 1972 with Genesis and Rab Noakes/Robin McKidd, still winning hordes of new followers and therefore drawing attention to *Nicely Out Of Tune* which still harboured some of the more requested numbers. It was a success based on the brilliant writing of a musician who happened to be undergoing a long period of mental conflict back in the mid-sixties. A man who variously lived on the breadline, worked with mental patients, read some of the heaviest literature around, and fell in love and got married at the same time. If that isn't the kind of conflicting environment that breeds good songs... small



wonder that the ensuing routine of a touring rock band on the road proved to be anti-climactic.

"The folk-fee wore a bit thin because we couldn't get through to the audience," Ray Jackson had said. And as the band played larger venues it was obvious that the sound would have to swell by some degree—particularly if Lindisfarne were to enjoy any success in the States. For they clearly felt that this had counted against them first time around.

In the August Lindisfarne laid all their new songs on the unsuspecting thousands at the Crystal Palace Garden Party, previewing them for the first time. It seemed to pay off and thus the band went off on tour the next month highly confident, winding up at Newcastle City Hall at the end of September—just nine months after their Christmas show.

I recall fondly that particular visit to Newcastle for it provided the basis of an entire background piece to the formation of Lindisfarne, so that the concert became of secondary importance. The presence of Dave Wood and Joe Robertson, who had managed the band prior to Tony Stratton Smith, Barbara Hayes,

who had formed Hazy Music publishing with Alan Hull, and people like Jeff Sadler who had worked with the band until they came to London to hit the big time, coupled with the willingness of these people to talk about the past, provided a weekend of pleasant nostalgia and some fine copy which covered the centre page spread of *Sounds* (7/10/72).

There seems little point in hauling any of that back to the surface since most of it pre-dates Lindisfarne and this story is specifically about the rise and decline of that band after they came to London. But one quote from Dave Wood, who recorded and stored Alan's songs at Impulse Studios, is particularly significant. "I have tapes of about 280 Alan Hull songs, all of which you could get the group to do now. I find it hard to come across a song I don't like. Alan was always a little ahead of his time and he changed my way of thinking completely—some of his songs, like 'Schizoid Revolution' were frightening."

I have a lot of memories of that particular visit to Newcastle not least of them being Alan Hull's mum, oblivious to the occasion, storming into the Haymarket, protesting that Alan

hadn't been home for his tea.

Late that Autumn the band returned to the States and clearly a lot was going wrong. They had become stale and they weren't taking off at all in the States.

Rumours started spreading that the band would split... that they had already effectively split, that Hully would go solo. Rumours gathered strength when it was announced that Alan would start recording a solo album in March 1973.

In the States, Lindisfarne toured with the Kinks. I was in New York at the time and by sheer coincidence checked into the room adjoining Tony Stratton Smith's in the Gorham Hotel. He suggested a train journey to Washington next day and thus we set off eagerly in the early morning. At the hotel in Georgetown there was nothing to be seen of the group... and we eventually located them in a bar called Mr Smith's, slumped behind four empty bottles of Chateaufort Du Pape.

The gig was an embarrassment—a near disaster saved only by Jacka's cheekiness and final ten-minute harmonica medley (what a way to save a show). That night it all fell into perspective. Kinks headlining, Ray Davies's controlled burlesque, evoking so much laughter with his 'Demon Alcohol' sketch whilst Lindisfarne scarcely won a murmur of sympathy. Both bands are loonies, both have so many good songs and yet on the night Lindisfarne looked Division IV and the Kinks Div I. Lindisfarne, without a shred of concern for the audience, and a total lack of professionalism, were a shambles. And just as a man resorts to his mother tongue with drink, so Jacka had pulled out a Geordie accent which was so thick and rife with idiosyncrasies that they probably wouldn't have known what he was talking about in Middlesbrough!

After America came Australia and Japan and Lindisfarne returned with their tails between their legs. The band decided on a temporary split whilst Hully recorded a solo album, and he sent up to Dave Wood for a whole bunch of his early demos to form the basis of the new album.

He candidly admitted that he hadn't been writing of late and it was as though he'd been saving a bunch of songs pre-dating 'Lady Eleanor' and 'We Can Swing Together' until such time as he was ready to record solo.

The sessions started on March 17 and Alan used an all Geordie line-up including Kenny Craddock, Ray Jackson, Ray Laidlaw, John Turnbull and Colin Gibson, shipping in vast crates of Guinness and tequila daily. In fact

had Glencoe not looked to be on the threshold of something mighty it is highly likely that Jon Turnbull would have joined Lindisfarne when the split finally came. "There'll always be a Lindisfarne. I'll be doing some solo things but they won't be of great importance—it's much better to be playing with a band," proclaimed Alan before the decision was made.

He announced that the band would re-launch with a new vigour in May, but three weeks later Alan confirmed that he would be leaving the band.

It should be emphasised at this point that Alan Hull's *Pipedream* album had been a huge credibility restorer—an album that I played constantly and placed alongside *Nicely Out Of Tune* as containing the best songs he had ever written.

Typically Hully took a surrealistic Magritte painting as an album cover to help illustrate the theme of his music. About fifty percent of the songs were old and the remainder he had written specifically for the album; it's not hard to tell which is which although the album hits an immediate peak and retains it throughout.

The album was still waiting its release when Hully decided to go solo. Now there's a lot of difference in the eyes of the public, between a

man leaving to go solo and a direct split right down the middle of a band. Thus it happened that two-fifths of the band decided to break away when Jacka realised that his sympathies extended more towards Alan Hull than the rest of the band; somehow fitting when you recall that the original nucleus of Brethren was Ray Laidlaw, Rod Clements and Si Cowe—Jacka and Hully had joined later.

Hully badly wanted a new band because the Trident sessions for *Pipedream* had charged him with renewed enthusiasm. He already had some songs left over and was writing prolifically. But it took him a long time to get the new band together and they went on tour in the Summer and played the Reading Festival at the end of it all.

The new band comprised Charlie Harcourt who had returned from a fairly unsuccessful stint on the west coast of America with Cat Mother; Tommy Duffy who'd never been happy since the Arc/Bell & Arc set-up, and had subsequently done some time with Gary Wright's Wonderwheel; then there was Paul Nicholl from a promising band called Sandgate on drums.

Before the end of 1973 the band's first album *Roll On Ruby* was released by Charisma, thus marking the end of Alan Hull's successful

but often stormy relationship with the company.

Alan had specifically wanted a six-piece band and he, Jacka and Kenny Craddock took time to piece the band together. But by the time they went out on the tour they were beating out some tasty licks and had some fine songs. I had always liked Tommy's contributions to the album *Arc*... *At This*, and Charlie had penned a couple of good things for a Jackson Heights album called *King Progress*. Kenny Craddock was an established and prolific writer but would there be room for four writers to get their rocks off in a single band? Ultimately there was not but initially Lindisfarne came out with a well balanced album—four Alan Hull songs, all gems, three from the Kenny Craddock/Colin Gibson partnership in a sort of stompalong goodtime vein more reminiscent of the old Lindisfarne. In point of fact the exception was 'Roll On River' which was more reflective. Tommy Duffy had three songs highlighted by 'North Country Boy' whilst the other two tended to fall in the shadow of Alan Hull's better songs.

The decline set in during 1974. Lindisfarne wound up with a new recording contract (Warner Bros) and management (Tony

Demetriades) but although they continued to knock out some tasty music, their career was obviously going nowhere.

Miraculously that six-piece line-up remained together throughout 1974 and at the end of the year *Happy Daze*, produced by Eddie Offord, was released but largely dismissed by the pop press. Lindisfarne were written off as has-beens but maybe it was fortunate that the whole incident was overshadowed by the much pre-publicised film debut of Alan Hull in *Squire* which, sensibly, was a fairly unambitious debut which deserved its fine reviews. All Hully had to do was act normal for half an hour, as somebody put it, and certainly the profile of a working class reject, on the dole, living out the fantasy life of a country squire and then ultimate suicide, did seem to ring a few old familiar bells.

At the beginning of this year Lindisfarne split. *Happy Daze* was a tepid album to go out under the name of Lindisfarne but it never merited the severe criticism it received. Yet a complete split by this time had become inevitable and I doubt whether press reviews could have affected the eventual outcome in any event.

□ JERRY GILBERT

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And all along the desert shore
she wanders further evermore . . .
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on the icicles of our decay.

—Kevin Ayers ('Decadence')

IT SEEMS to have been characteristic of the role that women have played in rock music that they should be content to have asked why it's too late or why males are so vain, couching their songs in cosy lyric melodies; applying icing to even the most satiric cake, seemingly all too content to leave the exploration and research to the men, relying instead on a coy smile or a sexy come-on approach. This is not to say that males have not in the past (and present) relied on a heavy dose of sex-appeal too; indeed a great number have and still do, but in the main it seems to have been men who have broken fresh ground. There have, however, been a handful of most welcome exceptions to this over-generalisation. Laura Nyro springs to mind with intense performances of her own songs of near-destructive self analysis, as do Dory Previn's chilling studies of paranoia. Annette Peacock has experimented with electronic apparatus and song structure more than most, and Carla Bley has worked at her own unique synthesis of many musical heritages. Although I have not as yet managed to turn my attention wholly to Lady June's album *Linguistic Leprosy* the pieces I have heard suggest she may turn out to be a figure in the Beefheartian mould. It is Nico though, of all the women in rock, who has chosen, I believe, to stretch back the boundaries of contemporary rock music further than most; her music is an anachronism, the feel that it generates of exploring fresh areas is similar to that of *Trout Mask* Beefheart, wildly original and equally compelling but working in bleak landscapes rather than the rich word textures of the Captain. She has not however been mellowed and tamed by the passing years in the same way that he has.

As early as the mid-sixties her remarkable vocal talents were spotted by Andrew Oldham, at that time the Manager of the Rolling Stones, for whose Immediate Records label she recorded a single, 'I'm Not Saying'. At this time she was also often seen in the company of Rolling Stone Brian Jones most notably at the Monterey Pop Festival.

Her work with the Velvet Underground, already well-documented by virtue of new interest in the group since Lou Reed subsequently achieved star status, confirmed Andrew Oldham's impression. Her delivery and colouring, especially of Reed's dark songs, is ominous and foreboding and is, together with John Cale's viola work, the highlight of that early band. The Velvets emerged from New York at the same time as the "sunshine-and-peace" movement spread from San Francisco and in complete contrast with it, portraying not the fey optimism but its negation: the subversive street culture and shadow life. Nico's strange Germanic intonation gives a razor-sharp edge to the lyrics. They did not then need the complement of Reed's latterday banal theatrics; they could bite deep without them.

Nico's first solo album was *Chelsea Girls* (MGM 2353 025, re-issued in 1971). In many ways it is a disappointing album, in the same way that Beefheart's *Strictly Personal* is. Her voice is as distinct and moving as ever, and the songs are beautiful, but where *Strictly Personal* was marred by over-phasing here it is over-orchestration. The arrangements are by Larry Fallon and despite his desperate attempts to the contrary the album still has an inherent beauty that he cannot hide. Nico's choice of

CHANTEUSE ON THE FROZEN BORDER LINE ***** NICO

material for this album is near-perfect . . . a series of songs by Jackson Browne, Lou Reed, John Cale, Tim Hardin and Bob Dylan all suffer the same crassly heavy-handed orchestration. But where Fallon has exercised even minimal self-control the results show just how beautiful the album could have been; for example the final track 'Eulogy To Lenny Bruce' by Tim Hardin, or 'Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams' by John Cale. There is only one track that Nico had any hand in writing and that is 'It Was A Pleasure Then' which she wrote with John Cale and Lou Reed, and it sounds as though it has been arranged not by Fallon but by John Cale (though he is nowhere credited as such) utilising, as it does, hammer-struck stringed instruments, feed-back and bursts of sound in perfect counterpoint to the lyrics which roll with slow urgency across the disturbed, chattering backdrop. It points you towards, but cannot prepare you for *The Marble Index*. As a debut solo album it confirms Nico as a remarkable talent. It also emphasises the need for more artist control over the final product as well as Nico's need to shoot the arranger, or at least find one who is sympathetic.

This she had done by the time she came to

record *The Marble Index* (Elektra EKS 74029), for which she enlisted the help of former Velvet Underground associate John Cale. That combination produced an album that is one of the most disturbing and original ever to emerge within the rock sphere. The compositions are all Nico's and for the first time she plays her harmonium on record, which provides a drone background that fills the whole air making it thick and bare. Nico's vocals, often intoned rather than sung, are both haunted and haunting, and Cale's unorthodox and anarchic arrangements are in complete empathy. Much of the album has this tremendously claustrophobic feel to it (especially 'Evening Of Light' and 'Facing The Wind'), an achievement that any dozen heavy metal bands could not equal. Her vision of bleak landscapes, in 'Frozen Warnings' for example, is far more chilling than Bowie's (e.g. 'Diamond Dogs') and infinitely more believable because of the desperation of the vocals and the restrained urgency of the repetition of many lines. This apocalyptic LP should not be played to those of a nervous disposition; the most frightening album ever.

Another change of record company brought her to Warner-Reprise for her next album



Desertshore (RS 6424) which represents a completely different facet of Nico's talent. This rates alongside *The Marble Index* as the best of her recordings and again consists of all her own compositions. The opening track, 'Janitor Of Lunacy' sets up patterns reminiscent of *The Marble Index*, but as the side progresses the tension is slowly released. The third track, 'My Only Child', has a far more open airy feel; it is sung for the most part unaccompanied against infrequent crystalline horn or trumpet notes which in turn gives way to the innocence of the child singing the beautiful and haunting 'Le Petit Chevalier'. This album is a reassessment, an album of more optimistic feeling than the last (although I can only guess at the meanings of the two German and one French tracks on the album). This should be your first Nico purchase if you don't as yet possess any of her albums and feel that perhaps your heart won't take the strain of *The Marble Index* straight away.

And so to her most recent album, *The End* (Island ILPS 9311). Once again the thumbscrews are being turned, though not as tightly as on *The Marble Index*. John Cale's arrangements incorporate the talents of Eno and Phil

Manzanera, and two of the tracks on this album (The Doors' 'The End' and the 'harmless little song' 'Deutschland Uber Alles') had previously surfaced at the *June 1st 1974* Kevin Ayers' concert at the Rainbow with only Eno as additional instrumentalist, while the Doors' composition found its way onto the *June 1st 1974* album. In this case I feel that the more skeletal feel of the *June 1st* version is infinitely superior to that of Cale's arrangements with its annoying and seemingly misplaced acoustic guitar and other assorted sounds. If this track is a failure though, Cale's typically impressionistic sound structures work perfectly throughout the rest of the album. My only other reservation is that concerning Eno's synthesizer solo on 'Innocent And Vain'. Within the context of the song his work is magnificent, but he seems to add an electronic postscript of considerable prowess which breaks up the flow of the album; maybe it would have been more suitable if 'Innocent And Vain' had been the last track on one of the sides. Despite a general lack of enthusiasm from the press as regards this album, and whilst I feel that as a whole it cannot compare with the inspiration of either *The Marble Index* or

Desertshore, it is still a sensitive and compelling work.

ARMED WITH only a cassette recorder then, it was with some trepidation that I approached her hotel to interview Nico. The music press had undeniably drawn an icy portrait of a woman from whom it was difficult to extract any information whatsoever, thus it was with some relief that I found her, in spite of a heavy cold, to be warm, and if not 'chatty', then at least forthcoming, completely belying the impression her recordings would give . . .

ZZ: You first came to prominence in the mid-sixties as a Paris fashion model, when did you decide you wanted to sing?

NICO: It was always inside, the only decision that had to be made was to not be only an audience, because when I'm on stage I'm as much the audience as I am the performer, the actor.

ZZ: In those days as a fashion model were you already singing?

NICO: Yes, I was taking singing lessons.

ZZ: And your ambition was to sing rather than be a model?

NICO: Oh yes, absolutely; but you have to learn how to sing, it's just required. You can't be a ballet dancer or a trapeze artist without having learnt it, you can't just jump on a trapeze and not fall, or break your neck.

ZZ: How successful were you as a model in Paris?

NICO: Oh very successful in Paris.

ZZ: And you gave all that up to concentrate on your singing?

NICO: Yes. When I felt that it didn't interest me any longer to look at myself in the mirror all the time. If you do it all the time for a living it becomes no longer fun, it becomes absurd.

ZZ: You made a record in the mid-sixties for Immediate Records, didn't you? Was that one of your own songs?

NICO: 'The Last Mile'. Andrew Oldham wrote that, and one song, the first side was a Gordon Lightfoot song, 'I'm Not Saying'.

ZZ: How did the Immediate recording happen?

NICO: Because I was appearing on a 'Ready Steady Go' programme, and that's where I think I met Andrew, maybe I'd met him before, I don't know, I can't tell you. But you see, my memory can't go at that distance, it goes either very far back or more recent. I can't remember very well that distance. To be precise, it was through Brian Jones that I met Andrew, who was running Immediate.

ZZ: The next major step in your career, as far as I've been able to ascertain, was your involvement with the whole Andy Warhol circus in America.

NICO: Absolutely. I would do it all over again. I enjoyed my time with Andy Warhol, it was tremendous, it made me cry a lot. We had conflicts, Lou [Reed] and I, and John [Cale] and I; we had conflicts, and I like conflicts. I mean I like a contradictory situation. Is that good English? I should go to school and learn some more.

ZZ: Judging by your songs you seem to manage very well.

NICO: That is because I read English poetry.

ZZ: I would have thought the influence seemed to be far closer to some of the French surrealists.

NICO: No! Yes? That's what I live with, the French surrealists, all the people I have known in France have been tied in with that.

ZZ: While you were working with Andy Warhol and the Velvets in the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, you were also singing in the clubs as well, weren't you?

NICO: Just in New York, in the East Village.

With Jackson Browne, Rambling Jack Elliot and Tim Hardin.

ZZ: Was this because you felt the framework of the Velvet Underground was too restricting, that you wanted to do other things as well?

NICO: No. I get fascinated by appearances. For instance, Rambling Jack Elliot I really like for his personality, a theatrical need to express himself singing hillbilly . . . no I wouldn't say hillbilly . . . yes, hillbilly songs. The voice of the unconscious which was the voice Tim Hardin was singing with.

ZZ: Were you singing your own songs then?

NICO: No, I was singing other people's. It's very hard to switch from a fashion model to a songwriter, I never started as early as Joni Mitchell did, writing poems, she was very young.

ZZ: You were singing the type of songs that turned up in the *Chelsea Girls* LP—Jackson Browne, Bob Dylan, John Cale songs.

NICO: Yes. They write beautiful songs, they are not easy to memorise though.

ZZ: *Chelsea Girls* was named after the Andy Warhol movie, wasn't it?

NICO: *Chelsea Girls* was about each Chelsea Girl that Lou wrote about in the song 'Chelsea Girls'. I was the one that I don't sing about, I only sing about the others. We were all hanging out at the Chelsea Hotel.

ZZ: And Andy Warhol just filmed his movie there and then?

NICO: Yes, in all the rooms. It showed the way it will never be again, it's almost like a lost battle now. The place has become full of terrible people. I wouldn't set foot in there any more, it's very dangerous, you get carried away and something happens to you before you even know, to you, and to somebody else.

ZZ: Was it about this time that Leonard Cohen found you singing in the Andy Warhol club, the Dom?

NICO: That was the only club I ever sang at, by the way. I would never sing in a club ever again, because of the great memories of that. It wasn't very easy with all the drunks that came in and asked me if I wanted a drink while I was singing. Sometimes I had to be very rude, I was singing, you know, a person would come up to me and say, 'Would you like some champagne? Here baby, have a drink'. It was almost like *The Blue Angel*, the same kind of situation, the movie with Marlene Dietrich.

ZZ: And that was where Leonard Cohen saw you?

NICO: Yes. That's where he came every night. And we both ate the same kind of food, well—he turned me on to that kind of food, at that time, macrobiotic things, you know.

ZZ: How did you become involved in movies?

NICO: When I played in *La Dolce Vita*. I was living in Rome at the time and I was friends with an actress called Silvana Mangano. She is a professional gambler, she plays roulette very well. I liked gambling a lot, although I don't know how to do it. Fellini and her and her husband and her children and all their friends, Fellini kept in a house all the time, and he promised me a part in the movie, I don't know why he promised me a part, he thought that I wanted to be in one. I didn't beg him to be in that, I just asked him to be in it, I asked Philippe Garrel.

ZZ: He was the guy who made the film *La Cicatrice Interieure*.

NICO: Yes.

ZZ: Why did you eventually leave Andy Warhol's circus and the Velvets?

NICO: I didn't leave them, I never left actually.

ZZ: The Velvets just split up at that time?

NICO: Well yes. So did I. I was the first one.

They had some personality problems, they wanted to get rid of me because I got more attention in the press. Well, that's how it went.

ZZ: On the *Chelsea Girls* album do you feel happy with the arrangements with all those strings on it?

NICO: I was never happy with all the arrangements, I thought they were so bad when I heard the album, what they'd done to it, I thought it wasn't right. It was very conventionally arranged, you know?

ZZ: To move on to *The Marble Index* album . . .

NICO: I took that from a William Wordsworth poem:

*The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.*
You see, I do read English poetry!

ZZ: For that album you brought in John Cale to do the arrangements; was that because you were unhappy with those on the *Chelsea Girls* LP?

NICO: No, because I always combined his musical ability with my writing of the songs and the music. Did you like that one?

ZZ: I do. I think that album has so much power, it really presses in on you: it's almost claustrophobic, especially 'Facing The Wind' and 'Evening Of Light'.

NICO: I had a little toy piano on that, a piano for little children and I started playing, we used that. And I like 'Facing The Wind' very much. Do you think the new album has anything to do with *Marble Index*?

ZZ: I think if you take *Marble Index* as being one pole of your work—very tight, overpowering music, you can take *Desertshore* as being another, the album as a whole has a very much more open and fresh, airy feel to it (with the possible exception of the track 'Janitor Of Lunacy', which harks back a bit to *The Marble Index*) . . .

NICO: But all that is my own, because that's the only way I could ever play another instrument besides the organ.

ZZ: You play all the instruments on the track 'Desertshore'?

NICO: Yes. And on 'Le Petit Chevalier', it's the same kind of technique. I can't play any guitar at all, I am always paying more attention to my singing.

On *The End* I like the way 'Deutschland Uber Alles' is arranged, but I disagree with the way 'The End' is arranged. It wasn't my decision, I'm not responsible.

ZZ: John Cale did those arrangements though, didn't he?

NICO: Yes. But without my consent.

ZZ: The feelings that the album [*The End*] generate falls half-way between the openness of *Desertshore* and the tightness of *Marble Index*. Which tracks are you happy with on the new album?

NICO: I'm not that familiar with the album, knowing which tracks come first . . . When I think about it you know, I'm happy with all of it, apart from 'The End', and that's just another point of view but it's a very obvious one.

ZZ: The thing I'm least happy with on that album is Eno's synthesizer solo after 'Innocent And Vain'. The track seems to come to a close on a piece of solo synthesizer work by Eno, but then it suddenly changes channel and seems to stick out like a sore thumb from the flow of the side as a whole.

NICO: I really think his playing is fantastic. But I think that's the way the producer [John Cale] saw it. He thinks my voice sounds very ancient, but I can't hear it, he hears it though. That album was recorded sincerely, but in the worst conditions of mind, worst state of mind.

ZZ: You weren't happy when you were recording it?

ding it?

NICO: No. I could have . . . But it's okay, I'm over it . . . the only thing that justifies it is that it's not pretentious or big-headed! It's very innocent.

ZZ: Between *Marble Index* and *Desertshore* there was a three-year gap (as there was between *Desertshore* and *The End*), do you prefer to work that way?

NICO: Yes, I prefer to work that way.

ZZ: Do you find it easy to write your songs?

NICO: It's not that hard but it's not that easy either.

ZZ: Do you have many songs written that you haven't recorded?

NICO: No, I don't. That reminds me too much of when you shoot movies and you throw three-quarters of what you shot away into the dustbin, I would never do that sort of thing anymore. I keep everything that I write, but I don't have any extra things that I wouldn't use, except that I have some things I couldn't record because there were too many unfortunately. My albums have always been very short, I would like them to be a little longer, but it takes away from the high-fidelity.

ZZ: Between *Marble Index* and *Desertshore* you changed from Elektra to Reprise records, why was this? Were you unhappy with the promotion Elektra had given you?

NICO: No, that was my mistake. I had gone to Europe and stayed there ever since. I just got off the road. I should have stayed in America, it was just my running away.

ZZ: Do you think *Marble Index* could ever have sold a large number of copies?

NICO: No. Probably it could now, it makes more sense now.

ZZ: It's the old thing of the audience always taking five years to catch up with the innovative artist.

NICO: It always does, just about that much time.

ZZ: What is the possibility of Nico playing some English concerts in the future?

NICO: I'll be doing one definitely, at the Roundhouse.

ZZ: How did you come to sign up with Island Records?

NICO: I don't know. They approached me because of Richard Williams, he wanted me to be on their label, so I signed up.

ZZ: *The End* was the first time since *Chelsea Girls* that you'd featured somebody else's songs on your album . . .

NICO: It was just for the songs. I shall record more of other people's songs in the future, absolutely.

ZZ: You recorded a track on the *Dr Dream* album with Kevin Ayers, how did that happen?

NICO: At one time we would have liked to sing together, but it never happened. But when I sang on that song, it was a misconception. I didn't like what they did to it. It should have been just the way we sang it. I don't think Kevin's happy with it. It should have been just straightforward, like two children singing together.

ZZ: In an interview with John Cale he said that you were thinking of making an album with a chamber orchestra for Deutsch Grammophon.

NICO: Yes.

ZZ: And did anything ever happen as a result of that?

NICO: Well, I didn't even go there.

ZZ: You just thought it would be a nice idea?

NICO: Yes, and no. But I think I'll skip the next album, I'll jump over it.

ZZ: And just make the one after?

NICO: Yes. . . .

□ KENNETH ANSELL

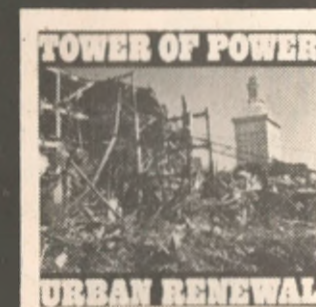
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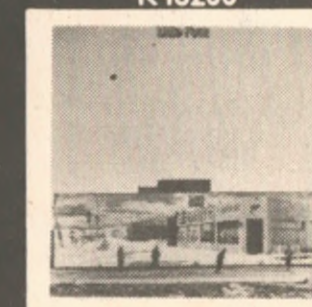
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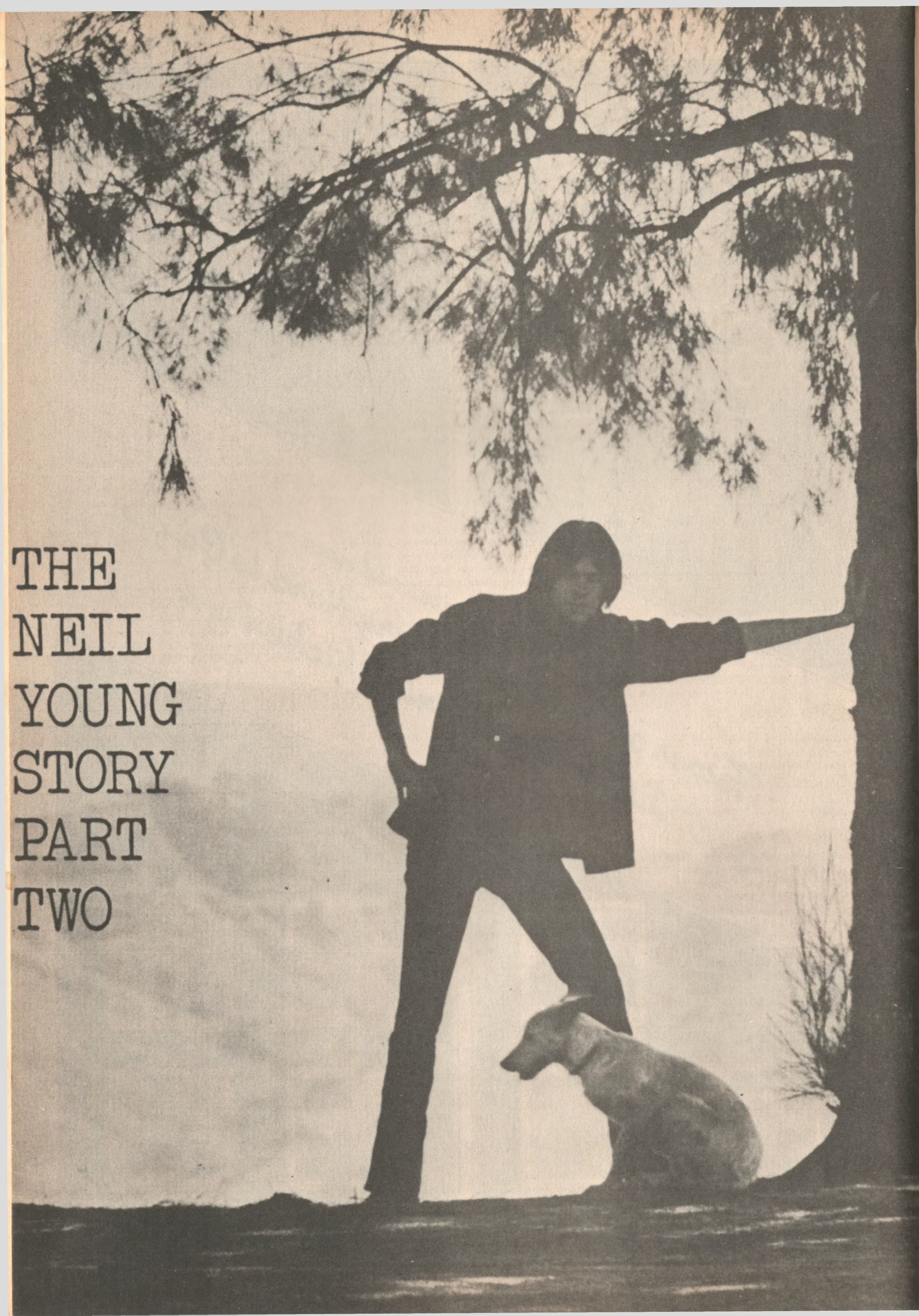
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FROM WARNER BROS

THE NEIL YOUNG STORY PART TWO



Last time we traced the stormy, erratic career of the fabulous Buffalo Springfield up until the time Neil Young left them to be replaced by Doug Hastings from The Daily Flash. You'll remember that this was by no means the first personnel change that took place, and it was this inability to settle on a permanent line-up, caused by endless business hassles and ego problems, that eventually resulted in their break-up.

Reading through the stuff I wrote in the first part, I must honestly admit that I quickly became very disappointed with the way it was put together. For a start it looks pathetically short and was obviously written in a great last-minute rush so that the flow you normally expect in Zigzag articles is missing. However, the relevant details are there, as much as I could find without actually interviewing Young anyway, so we'll start this month at the beginning of the end of the Buffalo Springfield.

The Springfield, with a line-up of Jim Fielder (bass), Doug Hastings (gtr), Steve Stills (gtr/vcls), Dewey Martin (drums/vcls), and Richie Furay (gtr/vcls), played the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 with David Crosby joining in, most probably to add some strength which, without Young, they were bound to need. Happily though, Young's decision to leave the Springfield wasn't irrevocable. He began hanging around their manager Dick Davies' office again, gradually easing his way back into the group, and he even produced some material for their then up-and-coming third album. The inevitable reunion occurred when Doug Hastings was sacked and Young officially re-joined. Another single was released, 'Rock And Roll Woman' (from the second album), and failed to make any immediate impression on the charts, but after a national tour, the band arrived back in LA to find that they had their second album in the local charts along with 'Mr. Soul' - the b-side of 'Bluebird', and 'Rock And Roll Woman'.

But as had been their luck in the past, personnel changes prevented them from stabilizing their position and from seeking further success. Bruce Palmer was busted for the n-millionth time and finally deported (careless lad), and Jim Messina, who worked as engineer on the second and third albums, came in to fill the bass spot. However, internal upheavals raged on. Manager Dick Davis quit, Elliott Roberts took over from him and lasted two weeks, and then the Beach Boys' manager Nick Grillo tried to take them under his wing. But it was plainly and tragically obvious that the Buffalo Springfield were doomed. They'd all virtually made up their minds that there wasn't much point in going on, and the end finally came when Neil Young said he was leaving again. There were several farewell concerts, and they went out with a flourish at their very last gig in Long Beach in May 1968.

As I came to know only too well, Neil Young interviews are very hard to come by. I think I've only ever read about three or four good ones, and nobody has really yet been able to get close enough to the man to persuade him to 'spill the beans' so to speak. But here

THE LIGHTS TURNED ON AND THE CURTAIN FELL DOWN

are a few extracts from an interview conducted by Gary Kenton in an April 1970 edition of 'Fusion' which relate directly to the ground we've already covered.

Young: "When I was in the Springfield for the most part I was really on a whole Hollywood trip and I was living in Hollywood and I was a Hollywood Indian. After that broke up, I moved out to Topanga Canyon - near Hollywood, but in the country, more in the mountains. . . and I moved out there and got married and settled down and everything, and I just started really digging on being at home. I have another life that doesn't have anything to do with rock'n'roll, y'know, that I think is a reason why I think I might be different from most of the people who live rock'n'roll twenty-four hours a day, and although I'm sure a lot of my friends would say I live it twenty-four hours a day, I think I have something else outside of it. I really feel that I like to go home, and when I sing about that I really mean it. That's probably why it comes across.

Kenton: When the Springfield was going through all those traumas, you all kind of kept an overview of what was happening and now that the group has broken up, that's one of the reasons that the whole Springfield myth has come into being.

Young: "Yeah. The thing is a lot of the songs we did were about the group, so now on record, now that the group's broken up, the thing the people can relate to I think might have something to do with the fact that there's some kind of image there, because a story is told. There's three different trips: 'Mr. Soul' and 'Broken Arrow' on the second album were both about the group and groupies and the whole trip, and the first album has 'Out Of My Mind' which was just a premonition.

Kenton: A lot has been said about the break-up of the Springfield. Do you think it broke up at the right time?

Young: "Well, it's like this guy just before was saying how he thought the break-up of the Springfield represented the end of an era or something. It was just the end of the Springfield, that's all. Yeah, I think the Springfield broke up at the right time. I don't think they were improving when they broke up.

Kenton: Like 'Last Time Around'

Young: "The last real album that group made was 'Buffalo Springfield Again'. 'Last Time Around' was pieced together by Jim Messina because neither Steve

nor I gave a shit. . . we just didn't want to do it, y'know. It's weird.

That third Buffalo Springfield album, 'Last Time Around' was released a couple of months after the break-up, and was, as Young has said, put together by Jim Messina (with some help from Richie Furay) at a time when the rest of the group couldn't care less what happened. The lack of unity shows quite clearly in the music and the album contains no more than two Neil Young compositions plus one he co-wrote with Richie Furay called 'It's So Hard To Wait'. Both those songs, 'On The Way Home' and 'I Am A Child' are more direct and simple than his work on the previous album, and both remained a part of his 'live' repertoire for a long while afterwards. The album in general, however, is not quite up to standard and features a variety of session men who were presumably brought in when one or more members of the group refrained from attending recording sessions. As Richie Furay said in ZZ4: 'Buddy Miles played on 'Special Care', Jimmy Carstein played on 'Questions' and 'Merry Go Round', and studio musicians were involved on all the tracks except 'Pretty Girl Why', which was recorded by the original five way back in 1966, and 'On The Way Home' which was also by the original five! Obviously not the sort of set-up conducive to making a successful album.

So those three albums represent all that's officially available from the Springfield, although there have been numerous 'best of' and compilation albums, most notably 'Retrospective', 'Expecting To Fly' and, perhaps the best of all, a double album just titled 'Buffalo Springfield' which features a previously unreleased 9-minute version of 'Bluebird'. But, those who would presumably know, like Stephen Stills and Ahmet Ertegun, claim that there is at least three albums worth of Springfield material, both 'live' and studio recorded, locked away in the vaults of Atlantic Records awaiting some kind soul's permission for its release. This has been known for some time now and still nothing's happened, so I suppose we shouldn't be too optimistic. However, where there's a will there's a way, and there is some Springfield material available on bootleg albums which you'll have to hunt down for yourself. David Procter revealed all the details in ZZ46, and one of the albums he mentions, 'Stampede', I can particularly recommend to all Springfield freaks. 'Stampede' was intended to be the title of the group's second album and this bootleg bears the original cover that was to be used, although that's as far as the similarity goes I presume. This album contains four 'live' cuts recorded early in 1967, plus studio acetates of unreleased material including a great Neil Young song called 'Down To The Wire', and the recording quality is generally very good, save for the 'live' tracks which have been made available more because of their historical interest than anything else. How much more 'unofficial' stuff is in circulation is a matter for speculation, but if anyone has anymore concrete information, I'd be very pleased to hear from them.

Well I think that ties up all the loose ends regarding the Springfield. Doubt-



less more information and stories will come to light in the future, and I'm sure that they'll always be one of the most talked-about groups ever to emerge from America. It's just a shame that their dues are coming to them about seven years too late.

You won't need me to tell you of all the musical aggregations that have sprung up and flourished since the demise of the Springfield, and in that respect their very existence was both incredibly valuable and rather unfortunate. Valuable because it gave us talents like Neil Young and, despite his frequent abandoning of taste, Steve Stills, and unfortunate because groups like Poco, Loggins & Messina, and the Southern, Hillman, Furay Band are producing work which for the most part is mundane and uninspiring. Of the other ex-members not already mentioned, Bruce Palmer and Dewey Martin went on to make very ordinary solo albums, and Martin even had the cheek to rope in three unsuspecting geezers and carry on the name of Buffalo Springfield until someone put a stop to it; Jim Fielder became more well-known for his work with Blood Sweat & Tears than with the Springfield and he was last seen playing bass (and very good bass too) for Tim Buckley, and Doug Hastings joined Rhinoceros, played on that band's first two albums, and then as far as I know, vanished. But to my mind, without any doubt, the most significant and praiseworthy talent to emerge from the Springfield was Neil Young, and as this article is supposed to be about him we'll now concentrate on his post-Springfield career.

Naturally enough, his first project was to record a solo album, and the fact that he came up with it so quickly

indicates that the limitations and frustrations of being in a group were far too restricting for his prolific songwriting talents. Called simply 'Neil Young' (Reprise RSLP 6317), his first solo album was almost universally criticised as being over-orchestrated and messily-arranged, and to a certain extent I agree. Why, even the famous Mac Garry in this very magazine made a very hasty, admittedly ill-considered judgement, calling it one long plodding dirge. But I don't think that the somewhat lop-sided production detracts from the music, and I find it all quite magnificent. The orchestrated songs can be seen as an extension of his work on 'Buffalo Springfield Again' - there are definite similarities to 'Mr. Soul', 'Expecting To Fly' and 'Broken Arrow'. The tracks that I find most appealing in this category are 'The Loner' (which became a single) with its insistent, thumping beat and characteristically desolate lyrics, and 'Here We Are In The Years' which is very complex in structure and an altogether brilliant song. But the whole album is superb, even 'The Last Trip To Tulsa', a crazed, rambling series of apparently unconnected verses which sound as if they were sung completely off the top of his head while heavily under the influence. Anything like that would most probably be a complete disaster if attempted by anyone else, and it's a tribute to Young's ability as a performer that he makes it such compelling listening. As I've said, the slightly muddy production didn't worry me, that is not until I picked up a copy of the re-mixed version and compared it, and found the difference to be astounding. The extent to which there's been an obvious total re-mix varies from track to track, but now Young's impeccable guitar-work

is right up front along with the vocals, and the orchestration takes a back seat. 'The Loner', in particular, is vastly improved and emerges as a very moving, powerful rock song the likes of which I think the Springfield would have found a bit too heavy to handle. Unfortunately, and what a bummer this is, the re-mixed version of 'Neil Young' is only available in the States and is apparently very difficult to get hold of. I consider myself extremely lucky to have just walked into a shop in Atlanta, Georgia, asked to hear it, and found that it was the one I'd been after for years. If there's any justice, which there probably isn't, it'll be released over here, re-reviewed or whatever by all the 'rock critics', and hailed as the masterpiece it most definitely is. A few personnel details... there's no indication on either the British or American sleeves as to who, besides Young, actually plays on the album, (the American sleeve is a fold-out by the way with all the lyrics printed), but Jim Messina is known to have played the bass parts, and presumably the rest is taken care of by session men. The majority of the album is over-dubbed at different times and at different studios, and it was mostly produced by David Briggs and Neil Young, except 'The Old Laughing Lady', 'String Quartet From Whiskey Boot Hill' and 'I've Loved Her So Long' which were produced and arranged by Jack Nitzsche, Ry Cooder, and Young. Even now, after six solo albums, I still come back to this one consistently... for the songs, which are timeless, and the guitar-work, which never fails to amaze me.

Around that time, Young had taken to playing small folk-club venues where people hardly knew who he was. In

mid-1968 he did two weeks at the Bitter End in New York to $\frac{1}{4}$ full audiences - most people had failed to grasp the fact that he was anything except an ex-member of an LA 'pop group'. But his luck changed. He met up with a band that he'd known since the early days of the Springfield, took them from the realms of obscurity, strapped on his electric guitar again, and made an album. Previously known as The Rockets... they'd made a very good album on White Whale Records, he changed their name to Crazy Horse, and with a line-up of Danny Whitten (gtr), Ralph Molina (drums), and Billy Talbot (bass), he adopted them as his back-up band. The album they made together is called 'Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere' (Reprise RSLP 6349), and it's been justifiably hailed as a classic. Believe it or not, they'd been together only eight weeks when that album was recorded, and only six or seven days when one of the best tracks, 'Down By The River' was cut. A subsequent American tour saw the band steadily improve, and if you're familiar with the album, you'll realise just how good that must have been. In that Mac Garry piece in ZZ4 that I've already mentioned, he also reviews 'Everybody Knows...', so as my already dubious critical faculties become totally non-existent when even thinking about this album, I'm going to pinch a few bits from that... 'The second album, 'Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere', is again superb, and much more an extension of the Springfield's sound... here he abandons the strings, his romanticised lust, and his wallowing in the whirling mess of life and love,



for a happier, altogether more zingy attack. It's much heavier (to use an abused description) and almost Quicksilverish in places, with much more dependence on solidity of rhythm - clapping and all. Peculiarly, some songs sound very derivative - structurally, musically, and in style. For instance the title track has rings of Richie Furay's 'Child's Claim To Fame', 'Running Dry' has more than a passing resemblance to a melody which Dylan also borrowed, and some of it sounds similar to the Donovan of the 'Sunshine Superman' era. But that's all nice - I like it when reminiscent melodies jog old songs out of the mothballs of memory. Listen to the first track, 'Cinnamon Girl', for a sample of the quality. A very good

album, full of fine songs (contrary to the opinion of many, I reckon that the best melodies are those which you don't remember immediately), and like the first, this is in that category of rare albums which really glow brighter and brighter, rather than pall, on repetition.

Well said sir, I couldn't agree with you more.

While still with Crazy Horse, the opportunity came along that was to expose Young to huge audiences and elevate him to 'superstar' status - Steve Stills asked him to join Crosby, Stills & Nash. Ironic really when you consider that the ego problems between Young and Stills played a large part in the downfall of the Springfield, but Crosby, Stills & Nash had recorded an album, and to take their music on the road they realised that they needed to augment their rather frail line-up with a musician who could play guitar, keyboards, and sing; hence they asked Neil Young. In fact Young did even more than that... he wrote two very fine songs, 'Helpless' and 'Country Girl' for Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's 'Deja Vu' album. So now he was effectively in two bands, both of which represented different musical styles and which were necessary for him to express the full range of his compositional and musical capabilities.

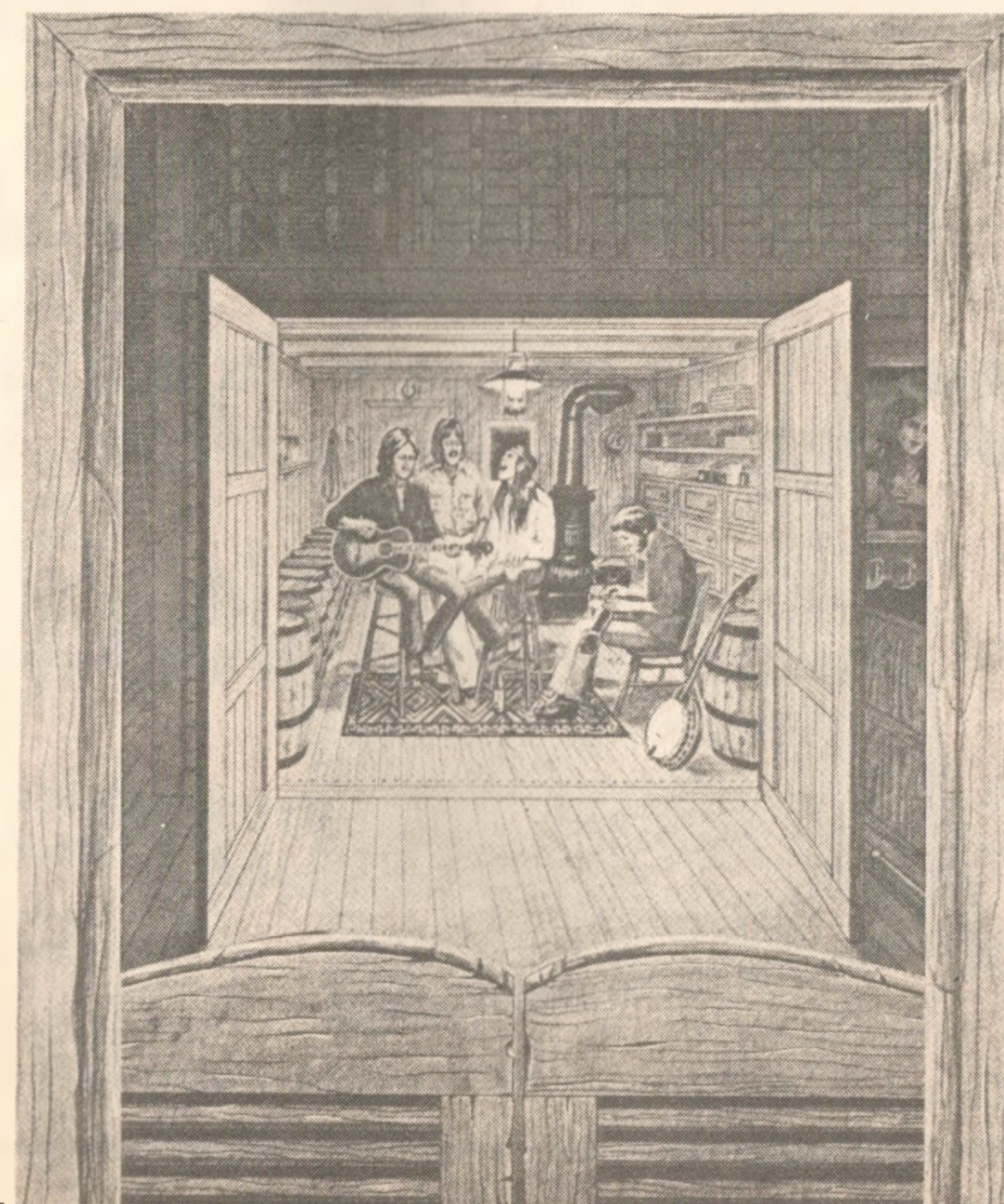
He continued his work with Crazy Horse by using them on his third, and most popular album, 'After The Gold-rush'.

(We'll continue the story next month and bring it right up to date before it gets out of hand).

Andy.

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What the American papers say.

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prowess of Ms. Haslam is complemented by the tight integration of the instruments which accompany her. Renaissance are truly a rebirth of an all too jaded rock scene.'

CASHBOX, May 1974.

¹The band has a unique sound, based around the solid classically-orientated piano of Tout, the flowing melodies composed by Mick Dunford... and Annie Haslam's hauntingly lovely voice... never sounding like any female vocalist you've ever heard before.²

THE PRESS, November 24, 1973.
New York.

'They are, quite simply, a superb band.'
RECORD WORLD, May 1974.
New York.



'Adding classical thunder to rock and roll rhythms, they create a Wagnerian atmosphere with their music that can't be matched... Whether you like them or not, you have to admit they sound different from anyone you've ever heard.'

RAVES, July 1974.
New York.

'The lyric is strong and imagery laden. The glorious vocals of Annie Haslam are complemented by the powerful group instrumentation. Have a rebirth and dig Renaissance.'

CASHBOX, October 19, 1974.

AND FROM THE BRITISH PRESS:

'Mother Russia' is a mind blower.
NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS,
June 8, 1974.

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February 27th	BOLTON—Town Hall
February 28th	SUNDERLAND—Locarno
March 1st	NOTTINGHAM—University
March 4th	SWANSEA—University
March 5th	CARDIFF—University
March 6th	LIVERPOOL—University
March 7th	DURHAM—University
March 8th	LEICESTER—University
March 9th	LONDON—Rainbow
March 10th	BRISTOL—Colston Hall
March 12th	HANLEY—Victoria Hall
March 13th	EDINBURGH—Leaf Hall
March 14th	GLASGOW—Apollo
March 15th	NEWCASTLE—City Hall
March 16th	MANCHESTER—Palace Theatre
March 17th	EGHAM—Royal Holloway College
March 22nd	CAMBRIDGE—Corn Exchange
March 23rd	BIRMINGHAM—Town Hall

Renaissance



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HUGE STARS BIG HEARTS

AND LITTLE FEAT

The Exploits Of

LOWELL GEORGE

After their phenomenally successful visit to this country, the name Little Feat must be on the tip of everyone's tongues and in the heart of every rock loony. After years of wallowing in semi-obscure, and with only a hand-to-mouth existence and the respect of most people in the 'business' to keep them going, they've finally made it. Little Feat maniacs could tell you how good their albums are, but I doubt if even the most enthusiastic and hopeful of their admirers could have foreseen how absolutely brilliant they would be 'live'. They just about blew my head off... twice! An incredible band.

In the wake of the enthusiasm that they generated, there were promises made of a return visit during the summer, not as part of another Warner Bros. package with the likes of the dreaded Doobies, but as headliners in their own right. Which brings up the ever-so sore point of the whole 'Warner Bros. Music Show', its organisation, and lack of adventure. Obviously with such a vast and expensive operation, the risk of losing too much money must be kept to a minimum, but I don't think there's any excuse for limiting a band of Little Feat's calibre to just two performances, one in Manchester and the other as second-billing to The Doobie Brothers on a Sunday afternoon in London. And without wishing to be too vindictive against The Doobies, why oh why were Londoners expected to have to sit through them four times in order to see all the other bands? Such was the stifling over-cautiousness behind the whole scheme, that I think it did the Doobies a lot more harm than good. But let's not dwell too much on inconsequential griping, let's be thankful that Little Feat actually made it over here.

On the Wednesday, January 15th around 1pm, the Zigzag office was suddenly deserted as we made what could loosely be described as a pilgrimage to Manchester for what we expected

to be a treat of epic proportions. But the evening's entertainment started as badly as one could have feared - with Montrose, who sadly came across as a tenth-rate amalgam of every loud, heavy rock band that you could think of. They were far worse than their albums which do in fact contain some degree of musical value. Next were Tower Of Power whose albums I've never really enjoyed, but whose back-up work with people like Mickey Hart is quite excellent. They were rigid, stereotyped, wooden, and boring. Up until the point when they left the stage, the best entertainment had been the cartoons that were shown between acts, but as soon as Little Feat came on, everything that had gone before, good and bad, was forgotten. Electrifying would seem to be the most suitable adjective to describe their performance (does that mean anything to you?) as they played for over an hour a selection of songs from their last three LPs. Kicking off with 'A Apolitical Blues' (humourously dedicated to Howlin' Wolf), they worked their way through 'Two Trains', 'On Your Way Down', 'Wait Till The Shit Hits The Fan', 'Walkin' All Night', 'Skin It Back', 'Fat Man In The Bathtub', 'Sailin' Shoes', 'Rock'n'Roll Doctor', 'Oh Atlanta', 'Cold Cold Cold', 'Dixie Chicken', 'Tripe Face Boogie', and for an encore, 'Willin' and 'Teenage Nervous Breakdown'. If you're not familiar with many of the songs there, believe me the choice is impeccable; it represents most of the best material that Little Feat have recorded. Despite a comparatively dull few minutes early on in the set, they were quite magnificent. Every single member of the band made a significant contribution to the overall sound, and to watch six uniquely talented blokes work out those great songs with fluent ease and obvious enjoyment was quite something. I left wishing they'd played for longer and impatient to see them again at the earliest opportunity... which was four days later on Sunday afternoon at the

Rainbow. Even though they'd been billed second to the Doobie Brothers, it was refreshingly apparent to note that the overwhelming majority of people had primarily come to see Little Feat, and I can't imagine that anyone left the Rainbow that evening without the feeling that they'd seen one of the best bands in the world. I'd have been more than satisfied if they'd played as well as they did in Manchester, but somehow, playing much the same numbers and with an irresistible display of class and sheer ability, they topped it; they were just magic. No way could I even begin to think of watching another band after that performance, and I genuinely felt sorry for the Doobies who clearly found it impossible to follow them, and ended up playing as meekly and politely as they could. I went long before the end, my head still reeling and my estimation of Little Feat higher than ever before. They're probably the best performing band in America today, and there's no-one who knows their rock'n'roll onions who'll tell you otherwise.

But of course such fame and glory represents only a small part of Little Feat's erratic, stumbling career. For years they have suffered the traumas and anxieties of semi-obscure and mediocre record sales, and at one point it seemed that they'd finally been overwhelmed by the chronic apathy around them and decided to chuck it all in. One would therefore not unreasonably expect Lowell George to be a bitter man, hell bent on vengeance and disillusioned by the whole 'business'. But fortunately, that's not the case. George, as you no doubt know, is lead singer, slide guitarist, and spokesman for the group, and when I interviewed him he spoke modestly but with great enthusiasm about Little Feat, and seemed to bear no malice or ill-feeling whatsoever towards those who had conceivably given him a hard time. In fact Lowell George was just about the perfect interview... more than willing



to talk freely about the ups and downs of his own illustrious career, which is basically what this article portends to describe. So we'll start with Lowell's first venture which was...

The Factory

"I was in a group in Los Angeles called The Factory that didn't do anything. We made some demos with Frank Zappa, and one of them is appearing on a bootleg album right now... a tune called 'Lightning Rod Man' that Zappa produced. He did a fantastic job. It's a cross between 'They're Coming To Take Me Away' and Ian & Sylvia - somewhere in the middle there".

As The Factory were a phase in Lowell's career that he'd obviously rather forget, details of its personnel are still a little obscure. But it did serve to introduce him to Richard Hayward, who is of course Little Feat's dynamite drummer.

"In The Factory, we were looking for a drummer and Ritchie came to a gig we played. We had Dallas Taylor playing drums in the band at that time, and he had just come from Texas or somewhere and had had an appendix operation. I didn't know anything about it, but he was ripping his stitches while he was playing the drums. He was dropping the beats and slowing down, and I thought 'wow, this guy's terrible, I've got to get another drummer'. He was actually very good, but he was just ill. And I didn't find out until years later that he was bleeding through his shirt. I mean he needed the money real bad and he was so honorable that he wouldn't cop to the fact that he was sick. And Ritchie came up and said 'that guy's no good, you need a good drummer. I'm your drummer, huh? Let me in the band'. He was with a girl, Animal Huxley was her name - a relative of

Aldous Huxley. Animal brought him to the concert, it was a Mothers concert - a Freak Out. So Ritchie joined that original band with the guys who were in The Fraternity Of Man... Martin Kibbee, who is also the author of 'Rock'n'Roll Doctor', 'Dixie Chicken' and 'Easy To Slip' (all Little Feat classics). I've known Martin since High School... we palled around together for years".

As he said, The Factory didn't really achieve anything of note, and they eventually evolved into The Fraternity Of Man but without Lowell, who next found himself in the dubious role of lead singer with...

The Standells

"I was in The Standells for about two months. I replaced Dicky Dodd, the lead singer, and then I found out that I feared for my life. All these young girls that he had gathered as an audience came looking for me after a gig one night to do me in. They thought that I was responsible for his demise, when in fact he quit because he couldn't stand it. And I finally quit because I couldn't stand it either. It was a very unusual organisation. Actually I'm not very proud of that period, but it kept me out of school y'know. One would say that it kept me off the streets, but I have to say that it kept me out of school.

"In a way it was enlightening because it was a band that was on a real decline, and I was watching all the guys that had made all the money. Ed Cobb, their producer, was more responsible than anybody else for their success, by gathering all the material, putting the band into shape, and creating the sort of circumstances whereby the band could make the sort of money they did. And then as it

began to decline I was watching the other guys in the band bring their hairdryers and their magnifying mirrors along to gigs - they used to fluff up before the gig. I was stunned. I couldn't imagine it and I still can't imagine it to this day. I mean many's the time I've caught a cold stepping out of the shower and walking to the gig or getting in a cab. I mean I know where a hairdryer fits in at this point, but for some reason I still haven't been able to take one with me on the road. I don't know what that's supposed to mean, but it was very interesting to see that band on its last legs, and the things that they went through. They also had a little money disappear from them for unknown reasons. People were wondering why the contract read \$2 500 and the band got paid \$1800. A little shady. I didn't like that, and I think I precipitated the events that got the band to say 'oh forget it'. See I'd known the bass player from Hollywood High School and he knew that I wrote and sang and all, so he called me up and I auditioned and they liked the way I sang so I got the job. And then after I got it I didn't really want it".

Despite Lowell's comments, which I don't for one minute doubt to be perfectly valid, The Standells, in their heyday, were one of the great 'punk-rock' bands. Singles like 'Dirty Water', 'Animal Girl', and 'Riot On Sunset Strip' are classic punk records, and if you wish to learn more of The Standells and other groups musically related, you can do no worse than pick up the summer 1974 edition of Greg Shaw's 'Who Put The Bomp' magazine which is choc-a-bloc full of such fascinating grist. The aforementioned 'Dirty Water' is, you'll be delighted to know, available on the famous 'Nuggets: Original Artyfacts From The First Psychedelic Era 1965-1968' album (Elektra) which is again strongly recommended, firstly because of the music, and secondly because of the intelligent and careful way in which it

has been put together. And if you see any Standell's singles knocking about, grab'em! Unfortunately, or fortunately as the case may be, Lowell George never recorded with The Standells, so we'll never know what we missed.

The Fraternity Of Man

The next stage in Lowell's career concerns a brief spell in the studio with The Fraternity Of Man on whose second album, 'Get It On! (Dot) he played on, along with Bill Payne, now Little Feat's keyboard wizard. Apparently, the Fraternity Of Man, besides being a very funny band, were shall we say, er, a little eccentric... weird even. Especially their guitarist Elliott Ingber (the famous Winged Eel Fingerling).

"The guitar player was trying to play 'Rumble' and on about take 54 they still couldn't get through the first verse and the guitar player started talking to his amplifier. And then his amplifier started answering, it really did answer him. He spoke something to the amp and the amp spoke back, and it's on tape. Yeah, it was very strange. But that band had such poor management, and the story goes that at a convention the lead singer, during his Mick Jagger imitation, threw the maraccas and hit the boss of the record company's wife in the head and knocked her cold. And the president of the record company said, while he flicked his cigar ash onto the floor, 'lose those jerks, they're through!'. And that was the end of the Fraternity Of Man. I worked on their second album, Tom Wilson produced it, and Tom was at the end of his rope because he had like 19 groups to produce in 3 weeks and he couldn't do it all. And he got a telephone call - he has a little briefcase with a phone in it, and he got his first and only telephone call on the thing and he nearly got a seizure, 'cause it never happened before, and he went 'what is it? Oh my phone, oh my God someone's calling me on my phone!'. And it blew the whole session right out of the water. They were interesting days. The group was very funny. Their career was such a Zap comic. I mean it was hard to believe that all those terrible things could happen to a group; they were so accident prone. For instance, Jim Morrison dropped his pants in Tucumcari or somewhere, and a week later the Fraternity Of Man showed up and they were opening the show for Arthur Brown. And one of the tunes they did had a section in it with some four-letter words, those being 'f**k her, forget her, I don't need her any more!', and it was a chorus that repeated. The DA was there with a tape recorder, recorded it, and immediately got the judge out of bed. They issued an indictment and a warrant for the arrest of everyone concerned with the band. And they put up road-blocks. But the band were so 'out to lunch' anyway, they were sort

of not all there, that they took the wrong road out of town by accident and there was no road-block. You know the sheriffs had got together and said, 'well it's either the east road or the west road, nobody takes the north road out of town'. So they immediately drove out on the north road, and drove back into Los Angeles with headlines in all the trade papers - 'FRATERNITY OF MAN INDICTED!'. That's what they came home to. I mean this was typical. They did stuff like this all the way up and down the line. Do you wanna hear another one? They were arrested for smoking a joint in the parking lot of a high school which was next door to the auditorium they were playing in Pasadena, California, and the law says you cannot be in the room or place where marijuana has been smoked, but they weren't caught with anything. However, one of the guys in the group had a chunk of hashish, very hard Nepalese or something - Temple Ball, I think that's what they call them, and it was like a rock, y'know. So they emptied all their pockets out in front of the officer who arrested them and he didn't think anything of this ball and put it in the bag and sealed it up. And they fingerprinted them and threw them in the slammer. They were bailed out a few hours later, came back to get their stuff, and they were really sweating it. So the guy poured their stuff out - it was a new cop this time - he looked at it and said 'what's this?' And one of the guys in the band holds it up and says 'oh that's my lucky pebble!'. So the cop says 'oh, one lucky pebble, check!'. The band got outside and immediately went 'WHAT!!!' and they smoked it up immediately, which was typical. I mean they were on the verge of getting killed... destroyed... here's another one. They were in Chicago. They went to Pepper's Lounge, a blues club, to see Junior Wells. Well they went into the club and some black guy said: 'why don't you come out and we'll go in the car and smoke some pot.' So they went out to the car to smoke a joint and the guy pulled a gun and said: 'I want all your equipment, get out of the car or I'll shoot your arse off!' Well the roadie talked him out of it, he was a really sweet, nice man, and he explained that the band had no money, and that this was the only stuff they had in the whole world, and the guy said: 'shit, OK!'. So he puts his gun away and they go back inside and have a drink. Then the guy comes back the next night, and someone from the band comes back as well, and the guy says: 'hey man let's go out and have a joint, what the f**k!'. So they go out to the car and the guy gets out a gun and says: 'get the f**k out of the car, I'm taking this stuff. I can make a mistake once, but twice, never!'. And he took all their stuff. Terrible. Crazy group. I loved them. I thought they really had potential. They sold like 50,000 records without any promotion at a stage in the game when it was very hard to do that, and they were lost. The group was lost - no management, no direction, no help from the business world whatsoever. They were very hard to deal with but they really had something to offer. I thought 'Last Call For Alcohol' was a classic, and so was 'Don't Bogart That Joint!'

However unlikely it may now seem, those sessions for the second Fraternity Of Man album utilized the

talents of three of the original four members of Little Feat, but as Lowell was never actually a fully-fledged member of that zany outfit we won't dwell on the Fraternity Of Man in any more detail. Instead, we'll move on to

The Mothers

.....which was Lowell's next move. He was brought in to replace singer Ray Collins, and even though he was only with the group for a matter of months, he appeared on both 'Weasels Ripped My Flesh' and 'Hot Rats' (the latter for which he's not credited).

"I got in The Mothers to replace Ray - an impossible job, because no-one can replace Ray. He's a singer par excellence and has a sense of humour that I couldn't hope to get near. He did amazing things, very very funny things. Well I wound up playing more guitar than singing. I was initially hired to be the singer because I guess Frank thought I could sing, but I really ended up playing more guitar than singing. We wound up doing a lot more instrumental stuff. I appeared on a couple of the albums although I didn't get credited for the albums I appeared on, I got credited on other albums, because at that period everything was sort of in a state of flux that those moments were never chronicled. No-one ever scribed who did what and when. I sang on 'WPLJ' (from 'Weasels'), and I played on 'Hot Rats', and I sang on something else. I wasn't on 'Uncle Meat' although my photograph was. Very strange things occurred at that period. I'm also on that 12-album set that Frank planned to release. I think I have half a side. I do a border-guard routine. I'm a German border guard interviewing people as they cross the border. And I think I play one long relatively lame guitar solo, almost half a side. One of these days Frank will put that thing out - the Xmas album - that was what it was supposed to be for awhile. But nobody will take it. Nobody wants a 12-album set. It'll probably cost 30 bucks or something, and not many people will want to spend 30 bucks on a 12-album set of the history of The Mothers Of Invention. What he might do is make it a limited edition!"

While so obviously engrossed in the subject of The Mothers and their peculiar and unique abilities, I asked Lowell if, like many ex-Mothers, he bore a grudge against Frank Zappa.

"I did for awhile. I remember there were bits and pieces of information that I created that wound up being used and I never got credit for. I made that known at one point in a book called 'No Commercial Potential' (by David Walley). And basically Frank eradicated my gripe - he did something about it. It was like people involved in long solos, like the 5-minute Ian Underwood horn solo - that's Ian Underwood's music, it's not necessarily Frank's. Ian should have co-authorship at least. Frank changed and did that after the book came out. It really hurt him. He was hurt, and I can understand why... I was hurt for some of the same reasons by my own band, maybe because I was overly

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sensitive. But in Frank's case he was difficult to talk to, difficult man to get close to, because he worked so hard. He worked all the time, every minute. A tireless man. I mean he would wake up and go to work, take a little time for a burnt weeny sandwich, work some more, and drink cup after cup of coffee to the detriment of his health. And it was hard to get close to him; it was hard to get him to loosen up and get down to earth. He never wanted to look bad. I think that's changed. I think he's quite different now. But everybody was under the impression that he was stealing from everybody else, but that's not really true. It's just that the status quo of the music business has been such that y'know he's supposed to be the revolutionary. But he never really copped to being a revolutionary except in his music. The FBI came looking for him because the Watts riots broke out two days after his album ('Freak Out') came out, and they thought he had something to do with it. And he was always very paranoid that the band was always going to get busted for pot possession, so he never got high, and he always made a point of saying: "you guys cannot get high", although something other than that was expressed in the intent of his music. 'Freak Out' was really high music.

"Frank was a very demanding man to work for. He wrote some great charts. There was this big joke. . . all these session players in Los Angeles, who were very accomplished, were going to a Mothers Of Invention session, and they thought it was a big laugh, so they dressed funny. They wore Bermuda shorts, funny socks, and put tennis shoes on the wrong feet and stuff. And they got to the session and the charts were so hard they couldn't play them. They couldn't play the music that was written for them. It scared them to death, and they all came out of there saying: "this guy's no slouch". And it changed everybody's attitude at that point. Shortly thereafter I think Frank received a Grammy for the most unusual, precocious musician of the year".

Little Feat

Before the end of Lowell George's stay with The Mothers, the seeds that were to eventually grow into Little Feat had already been sown. Lowell had been writing songs throughout this period, and he recorded a demo of one of them, 'Willin' which featured Ry Cooder on bottleneck guitar.

"Russ Titelman was starting a publishing company and he asked me if I wanted to co-publish the tune ('Willin') with him and see what he could do with it. So I recorded it and went on the road the same day with The Mothers and was gone for about five weeks I guess. Then I came back and nothing happened, but somehow a demo of the tape got out and it was the rage of the Troubador. People like Linda Ronstadt heard it and The Sunshine Company. All these people heard the tune and cut it. Then we did 'Truck Stop Girl' at some sessions, and Clarence White covered that, and I thought he did a fantastic job. And so from some of those demos we got signed to Warner Brothers and went and did the first album".



The Original LITTLE FEAT. L-R: Ritchie Hayward, Bill Payne, Roy Estrada, and Lowell George.

The story of how the band arrived at its provocative name is, I would think, quite well-known by now, but we'll mention it just the same. According to a press release at the time, "Little Feat was named by Mothers' drummer Jimmy Carl Black, who sidled up to Lowell one day at a Mothers' rehearsal, and pointing to his size eights, sneered 'little feat'. Something about the spelling of the remark caught in Lowell's mind, and when the Mothers disbanded and he formed his own group, he remembered it as being catchy. Hence the derivation of the band's name". Well I suppose it's original if nothing else.

The line-up of the first Little Feat was Lowell George (guitar, harmonica, vocals), Bill Payne (keyboards, vocals), Richard Hayward (drums), and Roy Estrada (bass). We already know of Hayward's background with the Fraternity Of Man, but Bill Payne was born in Waco, Texas, lived in California for most of his life, and played in numerous obscure bands developing a piano style that was nurtured in southern Baptist churches playing gospel/blues.

"Bill came to Los Angeles and I took him up to Zappa's house to audition for The Mothers, but Frank was editing a trailer for '200 Motels' and didn't have enough time to talk to Bill. So we drove back to my house where he was staying, and I said: 'why don't you join a band?' He said: 'OK, what the heck!.' and that was five years ago. And we've been doing it ever since".

Roy Estrada was the last to join after Zappa disbanded the Mothers with a stunningly eloquent flourish in October 1969. Estrada had been with the Mothers right from the beginning and previous to that had spent ten years playing in various Los Angeles r'n'b bands.

Now I'll never forget the first time I heard Little Feat. . . we were driving along on a warm Saturday afternoon listening to 'Top Gear', (I can't

remember who was driving or where we were going), but suddenly John Peel played this brand new American single called 'Hamburger Midnight' by a band called Little Feat. Well it sounded glorious. . . a real moody, sizzling rocker with some fabulous guitar playing. Ed Ward, who has admirably championed the cause of Little Feat from the word go, wrote in 'Rolling Stone' that it's 'a masterpiece. . . perhaps the best record I've heard in several months'. The impression that the record made on me at the time, coupled with the fact that I was unable to get hold of the single, left me in eager anticipation of the day their album was to be released. I naively expected it to be put out in this country (in fact it was shamefully released only in January of this year), but nevertheless I bought an import copy, 'Little Feat' (WS 1890), and played it for months on end. Many of you probably did the same thing and, like me, found it difficult to believe that it was only a debut album; the maturity and variety of styles it displays is impressive to say the least. Lowell George wrote three of the eleven tracks, and co-wrote another five, four with Bill Payne and one with Roy Estrada. 'Willin' is on here, and is in fact the very same demo that George made while still with The Mothers, and so is 'Hamburger Midnight', and its b-side as a single, 'Strawberry Flats' which in retrospect might have made a better a-side. 'Willin' and a song called 'Truck Stop Girl' illustrate George's frequent preoccupation with that modern-day American tradition - truck driving. His handling of such material is romantic, yet down-to-earth, and it's truly evocative of the subject in the same way as The Band successfully conjure up images of the Old West. Besides Ry Cooder who as mentioned before plays bottleneck on 'Willin' and also guitars on 'Forty Four Blues'/'How Many More Years', Sneaky Pete Kleinow (pedal steel on 'I've Been The One'), and producer Russ Titelman (piano on 'I've Been The One' plus background vocals and percussion) are also featured. As I've



Little Feat as they are today. L-R: Bill Payne, Richard Hayward, Sam Clayton, Lowell George, Paul Barrere, and Ken Gradney.

said, the album is now released over here (K 46072), and the only advantage it has over the American copy is that the lyrics are printed on the back of the album sleeve. The beautiful, unmistakable front cover thankfully remains intact.

If that first album alone established Little Feat as one of America's top bands, then their second album, 'Sailin' Shoes' (Warners K 46156), confirmed their status beyond any shadow of a doubt. It remains to this day my own personal favourite Little Feat album. The whole of the first side is just magnificent, opening with 'Easy To Slip', followed by 'Cold Cold Cold' - quite one of the most powerful songs Lowell George has ever written, 'Trouble', 'Tripe Face Boogie' - one of two out-and-out rock'n'roll tracks ('Teenage Nervous Breakdown' being the other one), 'Willin' - a re-recording because Lowell wanted a group rendition, and finally 'A Political Blues'. Perhaps because of the critical success of the first album and a very healthy reputation in the States, 'Sailin' Shoes' was dutifully released over here although it didn't receive anything like the promotion it deserved, and consequently didn't sell too well. To pick a favourite track from the album is a hard task indeed, but I think I might plump for the title track, which to be super-critical, they didn't perform as well as I'd hoped they would on both the occasions I saw them. The lyrics are elusive and imaginative, and the playing is brilliantly tense but subdued. Superb. Sneaky Pete is again featured on a couple of cuts, and other additional personnel include Ron Elliott on electric guitar, Milt Holland (percussion), and Debbie Lindsey (vocals). If you haven't already got 'Sailin' Shoes', don't wait a minute longer; it's definitely one of the best records from any American band ever!

But paradoxically, as critical acclaim spiralled, public reaction in terms of record sales remained unimpressive. Nothing much was heard from the band

until the news came that Roy Estrada had left and that they were now a six-piece.

"Captain Beefheart invited Roy to play with him and he immediately jumped at the chance because it was more in the concept he was accustomed to. We found Ken Gradney and Sam Clayton as a sort of package deal - they'd worked with Delaney & Bonnie. So they joined the band together. Also, Paul Barrere joined the band at this point, and the first gig the new line-up played was in Hawaii - for the Easter Festival. And at that point, that's what everybody imagined it would be like for the rest of our time together. As a first gig, I must say that it was one of the best gigs I've ever played. But a few months later they got wise to the fact that it was a little bit more uphill than that one job".

Around about the same time, rumours started to spread claiming that the band had broken up, and that Lowell George had gone off to form a group with John Sebastian and Phil Everly.

"There were rumours weren't there? It was proposed, but I don't think that Phil Everly and I could share a stage. I mean I'm 20 pounds overweight and he's 20 pounds. . . er. . . over the hill. I don't know. . . he's actually a good singer. He's been doing what he's done for so long that I don't think he'd be prepared for anything I'd want to lay on him. I don't think I'd want to be in a group unless it was possible for me to venture an opinion and/or a musical presentation of one sort or another. This is all conjecture, but Jackson Browne invited me to join a group with him - an LA group - folks from LA that had had a hard time of it. But he's one of my favourites. God, he's a great character. He really is Mr. LA. He really sums it all up. I love the way he sings and the way he plays, and David Lindley is an exceptional lap-steel player. But right now Little Feat is happening and

we're having a lot of fun playing anywhere."

So Little Feat, far from breaking up, emerged with a new expanded line-up, and a third album, 'Dixie Chicken' (K 46200). As stated, the new members were guitarist Paul Barrere who is supposedly the grandson of a famous flautist and veteran of an LA group called Lead Enema "that never made it out of the basement", bassist Ken Gradney who's played with countless people from Delaney & Bonnie to the Shirelles, and Sam Clayton (brother of Merry) on congas. As a result, 'Dixie Chicken' is a much fuller-sounding album, less stark and raunchy than previous ones, and more soulful. It's reminiscent of some of the more successful efforts from Stoneground (remember them?), and other bands of that ilk. A fabulous album, especially the title track, which John Sebastian covered on his last album.

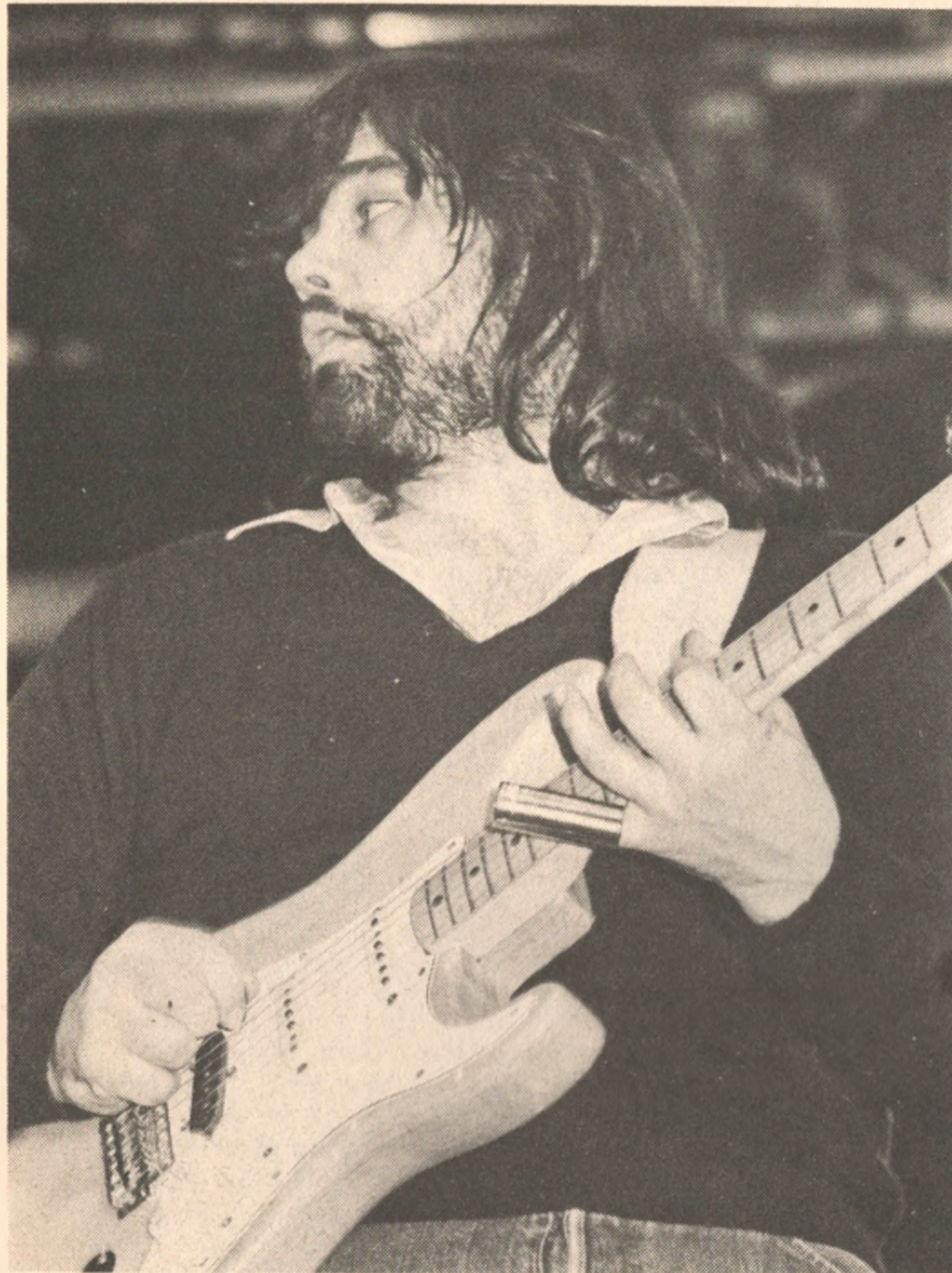
"Both Phil Everly and John Sebastian sang on the original version of the track 'Dixie Chicken'. It was re-cut later on and changed around. We re-did it completely with a new rhythm section about three months later. But they sang well. John played me a cassette of him and Phil, and Phil had this beautiful high voice and John had a contralto, and I had a tenor that fit right in the middle. It was a nice vocal blend. But in fact money was the prime motivation for that little scene and I don't think I could have handled it. Money moves me but it doesn't move me that far. I think of all those pop groups who hate each other making fortunes every night, and I can't imagine doing that. I wouldn't last a week. The only thing that moves me is the ability to further the work I'm doing, and most recently that turned out to be our recording studio. We have our own recording studio in Maryland, and that moved me a great deal. That takes money of course, but in fact the idea of accumulating wealth has never appealed to me."

Around about late-1973 the band acquired a new drummer, Freddie White, who joined from Donny Hathaway's group.

"When I get back to California I'm going to try and get Freddie in the band too, so that we have Freddie and Ritchie. I've always loved listening to two drummers, it's always amazed me. It'll be polyrhythmic. Freddie will play all the down beats and Ritchie will play all the other notes. It's amazing what both those guys are capable of doing, but in totally different areas".

White was with the band for just a few months when the rumours of a break-up once again started flying thick and fast. This time, however, there was an element of truth involved.

"We broke up for about two days. I think I called Bill on the phone and called him a son-of-a-bitch and said 'f**k you' and hung up. And two days later I called him back and said 'hey man, I'm sorry'. It wasn't actually like that, I'm exaggerating the state of affairs. What really did happen was that it was a great hobby, but we weren't making any money. We really



LOWELL GEORGE ONSTAGE IN MANCHESTER

were'n't surviving. So I suggested to everybody that we try and find employment while we either figure out a new hustle or get all the people involved with the management and the record company together under a banner-head, that being Little Feat. I was working with the Meters and Robert Palmer and I got a call from Bob Cavallo saying: 'hey, I've got a studio, would you like it?' And I dropped everything and said 'yikes, that's it!' - that's basically all I wanted from the whole thing anyway.

"The blame for our past lack of success is equal one way or another. We never presented ourselves in front of an audience at the right opportunity. We'd make a record, the thing would come out, and then three months later we'd go on the road. And then the sales of the album would never equate because the initial push would be lost. There was no chart position, so the buyers out in the boondogs wouldn't buy. The record company's a business. It's like if you have a product and it's not doing well, there's not much you can do about it unless you do a million dollar push. And everybody was afraid that we were going to break up!"

Towards the middle of last year however, the band once again rose from beyond the grave with an album that was recorded at their own Blue Seas recording studio in Hunts Valley, Maryland. Aptly titled 'Feats Don't Fail Me Now' (K56030), it maintains the extremely high standard set by its predecessors right from the opening cut, 'Rock And Roll Doctor' to the medley of 'Cold Cold Cold' and 'Tripe Face Boogie' - both tracks on 'Sailin' Shoes' you'll remember, which closes the album out. You'll notice that I've deliberately avoided dwelling too long on the last two albums, not because I think that they are in any way inferior, but because 1) the same qualities and distinctions generally apply to all of them, and 2) the best way to find out what they're like is to hear them for yourself.

A set of their four albums is something that anyone who is moved and excited by great rock music should possess, and if, as promised, they come back over later this year, you must take the opportunity to go and see them. If for some reason you're not totally amazed then my name's notAndy Childs.

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SNEAKY PETE KLEINOW

on the new Burritos and steel guitars

ZZ: How did you come to be part of the whole related family of Los Angeles musicians? You actually come from Michigan?

SP: I'd been in California for about twenty years. My first job was in the late fifties with Smokey Rodgers, who had one of the last western swing bands. It was a typically big line-up with a lot of instruments a country group doesn't normally have. Western swing is a completely different style of music. He had accordion, a couple of fiddles, xylophone, piano, bass, drums, two guitars, horns sometimes and steel guitar—a lot like Bob Wills.

ZZ: How about Spade Cooley? Wasn't he the father figure of western swing?

SP: Smokey Rodgers was actually an offshoot from the Spade Cooley band, along with Tex Williams. Tex Williams and Smokey Rodgers started their own bands when western swing was pretty popular in the forties. Smokey's bands really saw it through to its final phase. When I came out to California I wasn't looking for anything in particular. I took the first thing that was offered me. That was it, I wasn't really into that type of music. I wasn't really that good a player so I was lucky to get anything. As it turned out that was a good one to cut my teeth on.

ZZ: Up to that point presumably you hadn't come into contact with too much country music other than on the radio?

SP: Right. I don't really do that much *true* country music because most of that music is done in Nashville and I don't ever go to Nashville. I've been there twice and that's enough—that's plenty for me. I don't care for it. When you are talking about country music I'd say you would have to be talking about Nashville. There are other spots around the country. In California there's not any true country. Don't get me wrong, there is country music there but it's by no means a centre. I'm producing a country artist at the moment and it's impossible to get a deal of any kind in L.A. All the labels have their country subsidiaries in Nashville so he had to go there to promote himself.

ZZ: The reverse also applies of course, that the Burritos would never have been accepted in Nashville by all the diehards?

SP: It would have been impossible at the time the first group started. Now things have opened up a bit but then we were playing a totally different kind of music. They were playing what I would almost call hillbilly music—they were real southerners—we were playing our version of western country music.

ZZ: That first album the Burritos made was phenomenally important. It defined a future direction of modern country music which I think has yet to be surpassed.

SP: It was very much ahead of its time and was regarded as an underground album in the first place. I don't think enough people realised

what was going on—what we were doing on that album. It certainly wasn't successful. Yet the funny thing is that after the group had split up, and nothing had been going on for three years, now the response is phenomenal. It seems like the charisma has had time to build up. The magic of the name has turned into almost a legend. People now are picking up on the band who never paid any attention before. We've played four gigs so far since we first started a couple of months ago—perfect successes to packed houses—each time there've been lines of people round the block to see us. They were never there in the past.

ZZ: It's just yourself and Chris Ethridge from the original band? There's been no adverse reaction now that there's no Chris Hillman or Bernie Leadon who are associated with earlier versions of the group?

SP: No, they are reacting to the name. It's convenient for us to use that name and we're not cheating anyone. We're giving people a quality product. The music to my way of thinking is better than the original group was. It's not slick by any means, it has the same feeling but has better musicianship.

ZZ: There was no legal problem in any way over the name?

SP: No, because the name is the property of Eddie Tickner, who as you know has been involved with all those separate people who have been in and out of related groups... the Burritos are part of all that family.

ZZ: How about material? What have you retained from the earlier group?

SP: We've kept some of the old songs because we get a lot of requests for them, but we have a lot of new material. We play 'My Uncle', 'Hot Burrito No. 2', 'Devil In Disguise', and 'Wheels' with a few old country songs, like Webb Pierce and Red Sovine's 'Why Baby Why', or 'Sing Me Back Home'. But all the members of the band write and the album we've just recorded is mostly original material.

ZZ: The line-up is fascinating. I wonder what role Gene Parsons is going to play? His solo album, *Kindling*, was tremendous and I'm sure he surprised quite a few people with his versatility which he never fully displayed with the Byrds.

SP: Gene is playing drums and singing—and playing guitar a bit. Actually we're getting that worked out. He plays guitar on the records but so far we haven't done anything like that on stage. We're in the process of working out an acoustic portion of the show. By the time we come to Europe we'll have that properly arranged. Our basic show at the moment is all electric.

ZZ: So the line-up is Gene on drums, Chris Ethridge on bass, Joel Scott Hill on guitar, Gib Gilbeau on fiddle and guitar and yourself. And four singers. There are incredible possi-

bilities there. I'm not sure whether Gene Parsons plays fiddle but one thing I'm very fond of is a dual fiddle sound.

SP: Gene doesn't play fiddle in fact but I have something worked out on the steel. I have a way of playing the steel so it sounds like a violin and we have some unusual arrangements between the fiddle and steel, and Gib and I play the two parts on some songs to get the effect of two fiddles. Then I do the string ensemble parts on the steel and we are able to get some fine sounds between all the combinations. The album is extremely varied covering all kinds of styles—all the way from 1950s juke box, country, right along to the most advanced things we can think up to do.

ZZ: How about Cajun stuff?

SP: Lots of that style. Gib Gilbeau has that covered real well.

ZZ: Like the original Burritos, the new band has only been together a pretty short time before recording. That I thought accounted for a lot of the freshness of the *Gilded Palace Of Sin* album.

SP: That's true; we started making an album before we'd ever played together. This album we've just finished is similar. We had three rehearsals before we started cutting the album and you'll hear it has the same spontaneous feeling. There's no slickness—just music—I think that's what people want to hear. They want the real thing, not just a bunch of studio gimmicks, they get plenty of that elsewhere.

ZZ: Steel guitarists generally seem to disdain gimmicks. It seems as if a lot of other steel guitarists take that even further and even the leading players, like Red Rhodes or Buddy Emmons have a much samier attitude towards what they play. Those two in particular have remarkable taste but they don't strike me as exploring the full range of the instrument in the way that you do. Like on that first Burritos album it's as if you are feeling your way with the songs.

SP: My technique is just to play whatever I think of playing and not to listen too much to what others do. It's not that I don't listen to other players but I don't let them influence me.

ZZ: Does that go back to your early musical background in Michigan where there can't have been too many other steel guitarists for you to emulate? No one to latch on to?

SP: The first thing—when I first learned to play—I was with a trio and there was just bass, drums and steel guitar and I had to pull out every trick I knew just to get some variety into the sounds. I soon got tired of those same old steel guitar sounds. I think there's a real tendency among steel players now to follow along in the same school. Like a steel guitar player is a strange musician. They have a kind of a cult going, a weird kind of a club that they all belong to, without membership. So there is a lot of similarity and a lack of originality and

I think they ought to start striking out in one or two new directions.

ZZ: Do you regard yourself as part of that club—or as a dishonourable member?

SP: No I don't. Like I say I don't pay too much attention to others. I consider Buddy Emmons the ideal technician on the steel guitar. For that technique and his ability to play I don't think that anybody can touch him. At the same time I don't try to emulate Buddy because I can't do what he does. Then on the other hand he doesn't even try to play like I do—he doesn't want to. He plays with rock musicians but in *his* style. He's incredibly good and totally wrapped up in what he plays. I try to adopt a different approach in everything I do. When I play with a person I try to adapt my style to fit what I think they are trying to achieve. I don't let technique interfere. I play what I think sounds right.

ZZ: Is it just technique or are there different tunings?

SP: It's mostly technique. I really don't use any gimmicks or gadgets or special tunings although I do have a tuning that people don't use too much. But that's not what it is. I think it's technique.

ZZ: Can you see other up and coming steel guitarists following your style or do they all go along in the mainstream?

SP: I've never come across anybody that's tried to copy my style yet. I don't think I've influenced anybody. There is this main school which everybody is adhering to.

ZZ: You said earlier that you weren't doing any sessions, in fact you've packed off your steel back to LA [he had been recording in Italy]. Do you always bring your own instrument?

SP: It's a very personal thing, more personal than a guitar. A guitar player can play another guitar but I can't play another steel—no way. The steel is so personal because the tuning and pedal arrangements are set up in a personal way and mine happens to be set up in a unique way. It would take several hours of tinkering, changing strings and so on, for me to change another steel.

ZZ: I don't think many people, myself included, are really able to distinguish steel players as they can guitarists or drummers.

SP: Yeah. That explains why so many people come to me and say "So and so player really knocks me out" whereas to my mind they are a very average player. I think there are only—maybe I shouldn't say this—there are only about twelve steel guitar players that are original and above board, really above the rest. Most of them are some kind of copyists or aspiring amateurs. I could name some of the ones I really like: Buddy Emmons, he's the tops, and Weldon Meyrick, and Lloyd Green, who is very popular, Curly Chalker, gee, I don't know... I could name more, but...

ZZ: How many steel guitarists are there working professionally in the States?

SP: If you are talking about players working in clubs and bars around the country, I'd say three or four thousand, even five. Professional is such a relative term. As far as recording goes, steel players who make their living that way, two hundred; though I'm just guessing. They'd be mostly based in Nashville. There's a few in Texas, and in Los Angeles—not more than half a dozen regular players.

ZZ: Do you get regional stylistic variations like you do with the fiddle, say—Texas, Cajun and so on...?

SP: There is a subtle difference but it's hard to put your finger on what it is. I can recognise a Texas style—it's a little more boisterous and a little bit less reserved. The Nashville style—the accent is much more on precision

and perfection in tonation. The Texas style is more flamboyant.

ZZ: Do you lean more towards the Texas?

SP: Myself, I wouldn't think that I fit into either one of those groups. Like I say I tailor each thing I do to the occasion. I might sound like two different people from one session to another.

[It explains the diversity of session work Sneaky Pete is responsible for: Little Feat, Linda Ronstadt, Shawn Phillips, John Lennon, the Bee Gees, Stevie Wonder, each time moulding his style to their needs. Equally, as on the first Burrito's album he hops from style to style with an ease which belies the complexity of his playing.]

SP: On those sessions (*Gilded Palace Of Sin*) I don't think anyone in the group was trying to emulate anybody else. It was always their own person. In songwriting too that band was quite unique with Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman doing the writing. We've got a very unique writer with Joel Scott Hill right now. He's extremely original and will surprise a lot of people.

ZZ: He doesn't fit so readily in with the rest of the band. On the surface at least. He worked with Chris Ethridge on the *L.A. Getaway* album (along with Clarence White) and wasn't he with Canned Heat for a while? He doesn't seem to have done that much in a country direction. He must add yet another dimension to the group?

SP: When we first started to form the group, in my mind I didn't doubt him; I didn't think of him as a country player, but as a

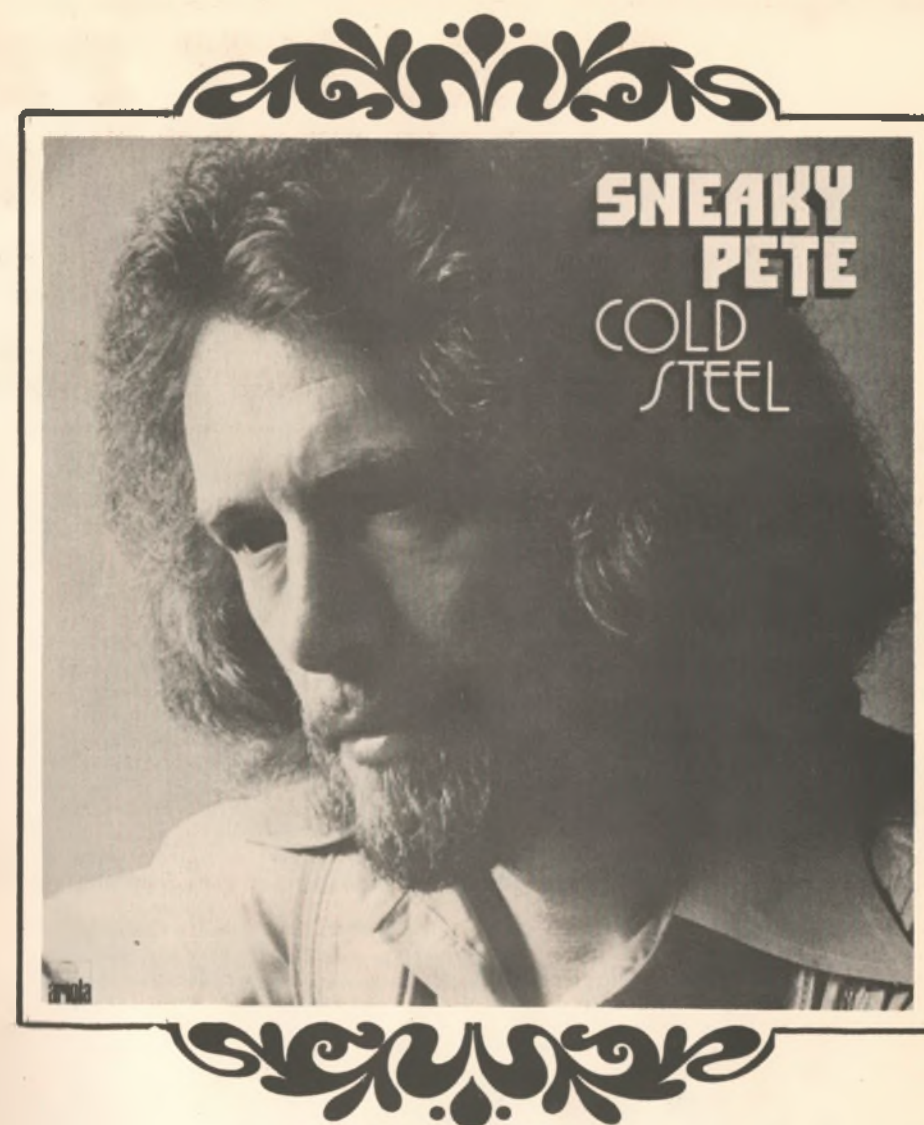
great rock'n'roll star. But when I first heard him sing country he really knocked me out. He's got a feel for country which is breathtaking.

ZZ: You described yourself earlier as 'usually doing your job because it's your job', but you seem really enthusiastic about this band. And also, considering you probably don't have to go out on the road with all the ties of a permanent band, that says something in itself about how you feel.

SP: That kind of surprises me too. I didn't think I'd put myself in that position again but as soon as we started playing I thought, "Well this is it". I have an extremely good feeling about the band, I just know that it's good. I feel more secure about the possibilities this time than I ever felt with the original group. I was always unsure about what was gonna happen, about the musicianship and about how we were gonna perform on any given night. But this group I'm very confident about—it's really cooperative.

WHETHER THE new Burritos will have the same spark that the first band had I still feel is unlikely. The personality and ego clashes of that band (as in Buffalo Springfield) were crucial to its energy. The impact of *The Gilded Palace Of Sin* at that moment of time can never be recreated. Instead we can be assured of great playing at the very least and maybe even that little bit extra. The potential is there, nobody can doubt that, the best may be yet to come.

□ MICK HOUGHTON





At the time of going to press, there weren't any pictures of the new Burritos, so here's a happy shot of the old line-up with Sneaky Pete on the far right.



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"IT'LL SHINE WHEN IT SHINES"
Sparkling new music from The Ozark Mountain Daredevils
ON A&M RECORDS
PRODUCED BY GLYN JOHNS AND DAVID ANDERLE



AMLH 63654

YES FOLKS, YET ANOTHER ARTHUR LEE ARTICLE

Oh God, please, no! I thought old Tobler had just about run out of material on Arthur Lee, but it seems he must have a filing cabinet full of the stuff. In response to my threat that we wouldn't have anything more on Love until Arthur came up with anything of real merit, John duly informed me that he was already half-way through a piece that would tidy up all the bits that I mercilessly cut out of the last opus. So all I can say, pulling my hair out and gnashing my teeth, is here it is, and over to you J.T.

Despite a certain person's harsh words on the subject of Arthur Lee, there is some more to come, if you can believe it. Oh, and while we're talking about that person (not Arthur), did you know that Jackson Browne wrote a song about him? You know, I thought I was A. Childs? Still, back to Arthur (and about time too). The interview, which is the first part of this turgid rubbish, was done during that famous tour which occurred last spring, and it's dedicated to the fellow who wrote a nasty letter in *Melody Maker* saying that Steve Lake and I should not express our opinions on Arthur unless they were favourable. I would like to warn said gent (with a smile) that if a further vinyl crisis ensues, we're going to use him to make albums out of.

ZZ: It's good to see you back in England. What brings you here?

AL: I don't know, man, exactly. Last time I had an interview with you, I told you I was going to start my new thing in England, and

here I am.

ZZ: Did people immediately become interested when you mentioned that you wanted to tour here?

AL: I got booked through the same people that brought me over before, Emperor, Nems, so we put a little tour together, but the whole thing is based around the people knowing I'm alive still, and I'm willing to work and do the whole bit. Like I footed the bill for this whole thing myself—I got four guys plus myself, and I'm paying for everything, so I just want everyone to know that I'm not after the fxxxxing buck, or whatever you call it now, I like to play music, and I've gone out of my way this time to do it, so I hope I get some sort of good response from it.

ZZ: Have the gigs been well received?

AL: Yeah, we've had standing ovations on the last four gigs we've done.

ZZ: Have there been a lot of people calling out for particular songs they wanted to hear?

AL: Yeah. I tried to get that together in the States so that the ones I thought they'd be calling out I'd have together. I don't particularly like to sing 'The Castle', even though everyone calls out for it, so we do 'Alone Again Or', 'Little Red Book' and '7 And 7 Is'. I much prefer doing the things that I'm into now with my new group, and the whole bit, but like I told you earlier when we were talking, I'm getting my old group together as soon as I get back from this tour. I've spoken to each of the members of the old

group, like Snoopy, Bryan, Johnny, Kenny and the whole bunch, and we're going to do an album. I don't know who exactly we'll be signing with, but we'll do an album, and maybe some touring, and see what happens. But I'm not going to disband this group I have now, because I really dig them—I wouldn't have brought them this far if I didn't.

ZZ: Is there any possibility of the old band doing a tour of England?

AL: That's what I mean. When we can get a tour, we're going to do it. Unless you're going to ask the question outright—how can you run two bands? I answer—there's really nothing to it, man, it's just to do it, you know? I read that Johnny Echols has become a really outstanding guitarist over the years, so I'm really looking forward to hearing what these people are laying down, so called. Bryan Maclean was supposed to come over with me this time, but the majority of the music we play is based around jazz and hard rock type of things, and Bryan was more laid back and acoustic, so I decided. it was my decision for him to come, and it was also my decision for him not to come with this band on tour. I think it would be better off with him working with the other band. And we've gotten it all together, so we're gonna do a trip. One way or another, we're going to get over.

ZZ: If the old band did reform, would it be everybody, all eight people? Is Don Conka involved?

AL: Don Conka's involved, yeah, but he was never on a record that I made anyway. He was in the Grassroots, before our name was stolen.

ZZ: With Johnny Fleckenstein?

AL: Yeah. Maybe someone should steal that name too.

ZZ: Maybe we should talk about the record companies that you've been through. The first one was Elektra, of course, and possibly your greatest commercial success was with them. [Note: this is not strictly correct, as Arthur and the L.A.G.s were on Capitol. Must have been a slight brain haemorrhage. Sorry.]

AL: Possibly—we never got anything out of it. [Laughs] The first one was Elektra, and here

we are in Elektra offices talking to ourselves, or recording, or whatever it is, for the people, and I don't think we should have any more talk about record companies.

ZZ: Can you give some idea of where you found the new band, and where the old band had been since the time they were with you?

AL: I guess, wherever they wanted to be, and the new band was wherever I found them. Pretty simple.

ZZ: Were they a band before they met you, the new band, that is?

AL: No, they weren't a band. Robert Rozelle, he's the bassist, he used to work with Little Richard and a group called the Young Hearts, and Melvan Whittington, the guitarist, worked with Little Richard, and Joe Blocker was sort of floating with Harvey Mandel and a few people. John Sterling, the newest addition to the group, has always been a fantastic guitarist, I've heard, so I tried him out and he fitted, and here we all are. I don't think I've forgotten anybody.

ZZ: Are you still writing the majority of the material?

AL: Yes, I'm still writing all the material [laughs] and singing it as well.

ZZ: Some of the material that Love is best known for, like 'Alone Again Or', weren't yours ...

AL: Definitely not mine. I sang it, though, arranged it and got it together. Well, got it together the way it was on record, except for the lack of presence on that particular tune, which

I kept pounding and pounding about to get the right frequencies going across the board, but they didn't listen to me. That's why I got a co-producer's fee on that album, when I actually produced it.

ZZ: You once expressed the opinion that you would like to re-mix 'Forever Changes' ...

AL: Yeah, right. What I'm gonna do with the next company that I'm with is ... I've written a considerable amount of songs during the last year, I've got an album in the can which I did in 1973, so I'm still moving along. From '64 to '74 each year there's been a record out. I've always had at least one LP a year. And last year (1973) I put forth an effort on Buffalo Records, but unfortunately, the company folded, and they had a group called Checkmates Ltd, if you've ever heard of them. They were under a guy, well, not under, Michael Butler his name was. He had the bread for the company, and the whole bit, and all of a sudden he changed his mind. So I had my album in the can there, and I couldn't get out of the contract till November, so that's one of the reasons I've been stagnant for the last couple of years.

ZZ: There's also an album that you made under a previous contract with Jimi Hendrix ...

AL: Right. When I get the time, I'll get over there and do that. All it needs is a few minor touch-ups here and there, and I know who has the material. It belongs to me so I'll get it together. We do a couple of things, like a very long jam, and we do 'The Everlasting First', which came out on the 'False Start' album, also 'Easy Rider' a different way. I admire the interpretation of so-called 'Easy Rider' [laughs].

ZZ: You met Jimi a long, long time before he was famous, or whatever you would like to call it.

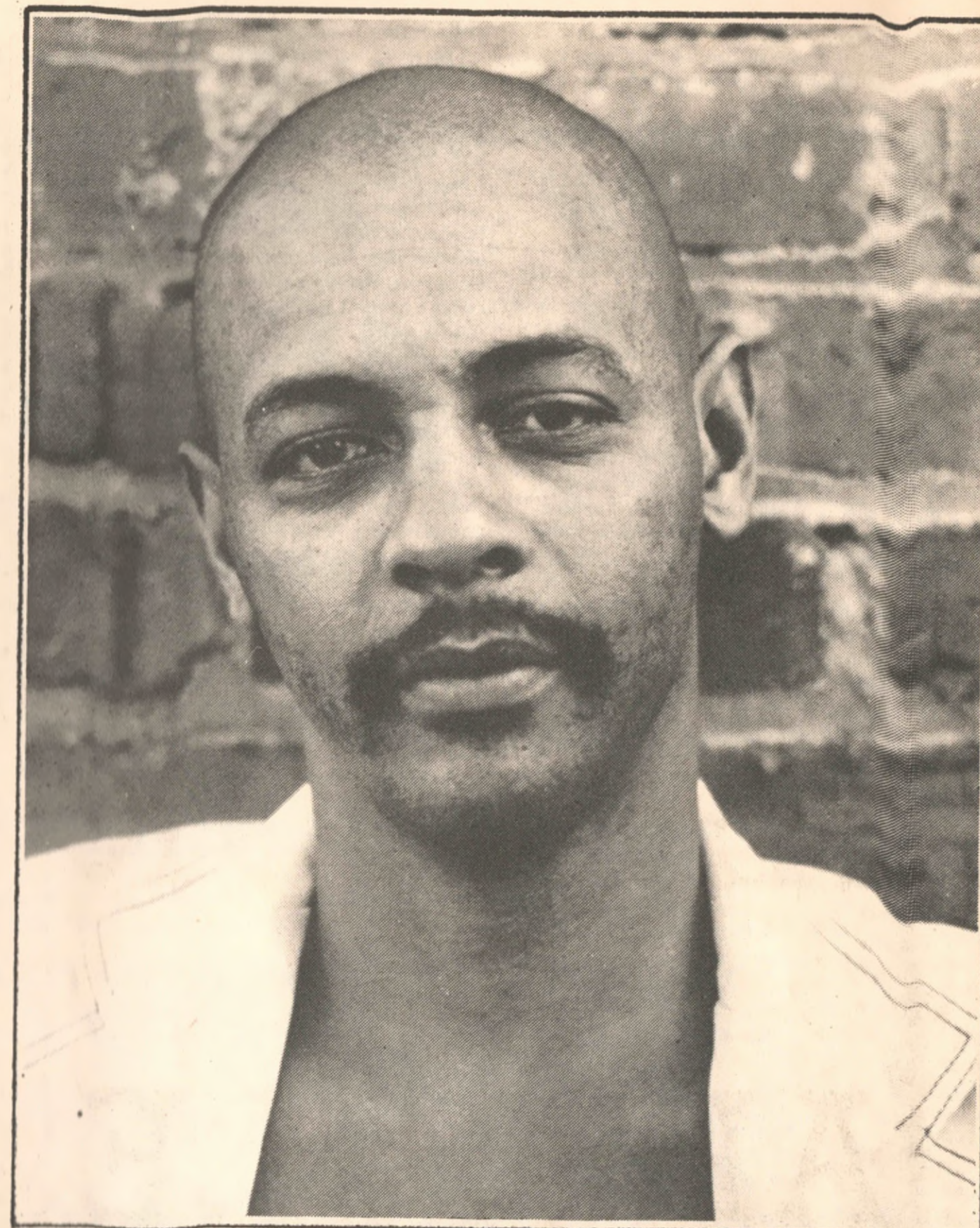
AL: Well, he's dead now, so we can't talk about that anymore [laughs].

ZZ: What is the idea behind going from Love, then to Arthur Lee, and then back to Love? You were called Band-Aid with A&M ...

AL: That was Jimi's idea. We were going to get a group together. It was going to be Jimi, and he was going to try to get Stevie Winwood and myself and maybe Remi Kabaka. I don't know who the drummer would be, maybe George Suranovich even, my drummer. Anyway, we were gonna put a group together before he croaked, man, and the group was going to be called Band Aid. Jimi and I had gotten it together to get it together and form a group, but I didn't need him to do a group thing, I'm sure. He didn't need me. But he was a great friend of mine and it was a pleasure working with him, he was a great cat. It's a shame. He's free, and I'm still here doing interviews [laughs].

ZZ: Would you like to say anything about the rumours that Love could have been much bigger had they ever played live gigs outside Los Angeles?

AL: Well, the whole thing was really based around my so-called ego during those latter years of the sixties, because I just didn't feel like playing sometimes, you know. With the Grassroots band, we had gigs for playing in clubs and we got a few concert offers and what have you, and it was a pretty loose thing. I liked what I was doing, and I liked to keep it that way and then all of a sudden we became the Love group, and everybody expected to be under the Beatle bed, or whatever. I don't know what they are anyway. I just couldn't dance to their music, man. I mean, I need money just like everyone else, if everyone else ever needed money, but man, I'm not gonna eat shit on the road to become a so-called pop star. I mean, I don't plan on doing a disappearing act for some time now. I'm taking my time, and getting it together, and the longer I have to do my thing, the more I



find out about what I'm doing. So right now, man, I'm really ready to record. That's about where it's at.

ZZ: Did you think about recording in England?

AL: I discussed that with our record company (RSO). I wanted to do a live thing, and I suggested it. Maybe we'll even extend the tour and do an album here as well before I go back to the States. Which would be perfectly fine with me, man. I don't care, I've had my vacation.

ZZ: One of the things that perhaps Love pioneered was the use of a whole side of an album to do one track ...

AL: That's a terrible record on the group's part, I thought. At the time, the band's members really weren't getting along with each other, and the whole recording thing was new to them, and they sorta didn't understand that you need to have your personal life in one hand, and your business in the other. Because if I'm mad at you, man, outside the studio door, and we're going in to record, I shouldn't be mad at you when we're about to record, or it's gonna come out on the record, and that was the loudest effort we ever did as far as the 'Revelation' song went, and no matter whether it was the first or last, whatever they want to call it, eighteen minute side dedicated to one song, it was the worst effort on my part, that we ever did. Because we certainly did better than that on stage.

ZZ: Thinking back over all those albums, which are the ones you regard with most pleasure at

this range?

AL: All of them, man. I put my best foot forward when I step into a recording studio or onto a stage, or I'd like to think I do, so I don't have any favourites, I mean favourite artists, or favourite albums that I've ever done. I just try to do my best as far as I can. **ZZ:** The reason for asking was that you said 'Forever Changes' was flawed in production. Does that apply to any of the others, production-wise or anything else?

AL: It applies to all of them, except maybe 'Vindicator'. On that one, I was pretty pleased with the presence.

ZZ: Were the guys who played with you on that album just a temporary bunch that you happened to be with at that point?

AL: Yeah. It just happened that a guy who was a friend of mine by the name of Herbie Worthington introduced me to Charlie Karp and David Hull, and Don Poncher, Craig Tarwater and Frank Fayad had been in my group with the name Love, and we'd been doing dates, and he turned me on to those two guys. Herbie was running the house next door on the other estate I had, and he turned me on to those two guys, and it turned out pretty good, so I used them partially on the 'Vindicator' album along with Craig and Frank, while Don played drums throughout.

ZZ: What happened to George Suranovich? **AL:** He was going to come over with the band this time, but he couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted to come or go, so I told

him—for a couple of years you can think about it, man, if you're coming or going. I don't know where he's coming from, but I know where he's going.

ZZ: I last heard of Gary Rowles playing with Flo and Eddie. . . .

AL: Yes. I hope that's the last I hear of him. He's a great guy, a nice guy. Too bad there ain't no market for nice guys. . . .

ZZ: Do you still have anything to do with Noony Ricket?

AL: Yeah. He drinks an awful lot [laughs] and I drink as much as I can, so it's fine. I don't see him actually except bye and bye. Along the roadways of L.A.

ZZ: And of course Jay Donnellan [Lewis] is still with Albert Hammond. . . .

AL: I don't know what he's doing, and I couldn't care less, but like I said, he's a real nice guy, and too bad there ain't no market for nice guys [laughs]. As for Michael Stuart, that goes double. It was really a great Love group.

ZZ: Is Michael Stuart going to be with the new reformed Love?

AL: No. Snoopy will do the drumming, I hope. Michael Stuart won't be doing it under any circumstances, unless he becomes ruler of Germany or something. That's the only way he could get it.

ZZ: What was the origin of the name Love, in fact?

AL: The name Love was because someone stole the name from me, or instead of saying stole. . . well, yeah, they did steal it. We were in the Grass Roots of Los Angeles, and a Grass Roots band from San Diego, San Francisco came down when Barry McGuire was opening a club called the Trip, on Sunset Strip, and I don't know, man, they took our name. I didn't have it established and us recorded as being the original Grass Roots, so they took the name, and there's been a band called the Grass Roots since '66. But instead of going to court and fighting it and crying and all that shit, I thought I'd just call the group Love instead of going round projecting all these hate trips, just reverse the whole thing and call it Love. I didn't care. It was just a name anyway. A great name, something we're all part of.

ZZ: Why did you choose to record 'My Little Red Book'?

AL: Well, I saw it in 'What's New Pussycat?' and I liked Paul Jones and the Manfred Mann group at the time, and I showed the song to the group, I don't know whether I showed them the right chord progressions or what, but I wanted to do a more rock type version of that song.

ZZ: How about 'Hoy Jee'? Was that stolen from the Byrds?

AL: It was Bryan's idea, so if anyone stole it, it was him. No, I don't think it was stolen. They did their version, we did our version and Jimi Hendrix did his version, and fortunately enough, we all got it down. I wouldn't mind re-recording that, though.

Now, that's all there is of that particular interview. However, there are a couple of points to be made about what was said which are worth enlarging on.

First of all, I saw Love on last year's tour at a couple of gigs, but really I didn't enjoy it too much, because of excessive volume, and the fact that some of the old tracks were played by the new band with all the sensitivity of a Big Red Rock Eater, as pictured in Bennett Cerf's Book of Riddles, which belongs to my older daughter. In fairness, I have to say that Bert Hot Wacks saw a couple of gigs in his native Transylvania and thought that the band were really good. Let's leave that debate open

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until Arthur returns here.

Next, I, and probably many of you, would be delighted to see the original Love playing in Britain. No one seems to know whether plans are being formulated. I hope they are. As regards the musicians who came over with Arthur, I have been unable to confirm their previous credits from my Harvey Mandel and Little Richard collections, but it's possible that Joe Blocker may have been with Pure Food and Drug Act, Harvey's recent group, whose records I haven't yet acquired. Craig Tarwater, I read in *NME*, was the person who inspired 'Tripe Face Boogie', written by Lowell George, and featured on both 'Sailin' Shoes' and 'Feats Don't Fail Me Now'.

Finally in this particular section, it is my intention to do a sort of round-up of the various members of Arthur's groups, on a "where they came from and went to" basis, and also on a "does Arthur like them" trip. A chart, hopefully, may follow.

And now for something entirely different. The few relevant bits of the piece in *ZZ48* which were not used. Off we go. No we don't. I've just read through the transcript of that interview which Pete and I did when we were in L.A., and slightly less than half of it has been used. Now in deference to Andy, I'm not going to use it unless there's a distinct demand, so if you all want to see it, write to *ZigZag*, and if there are a reasonable number of letters, I'm sure Andy will indulge us.



As you may have noticed, a new album called 'Reel To Real' has just been released by RSO, the first outpourings of the latest Love. You will very likely have noticed that it was received somewhat less than favourably by the lads on the weeklies, particularly my friends Steve Lake and Max Bell. I don't think it's as bad as they apparently do, and I put that down to the fact that I've finally got over my feeling that everything since 'Forever Changes' was insubstantial. Perhaps it was and is, but 'Reel To Real' should be judged now, I think, as an album in its own right rather than making any more comparative decisions. After all, if 'Band On The Run' had been judged specifically in the light of 'Sergeant Pepper', very few people would have bought it. Also, it's nearly eight years since the first Love deflated, and the Summer of Love is almost forgotten, isn't it?

The first thing to say is that I've heard literally hundreds of records which are grossly inferior to 'Reel To Real', while I've also got quite a few that are less flawed. The basic group is two guitarists, bass, drums and congas, plus Arthur on harmonica, rhythm guitar and slide guitar as well as vocals. This line-up is bolstered on certain tracks with guest guitar players, and on most tracks with horns. Eleven tracks, ten of which are Arthur's songs, and three of the ten are re-records of songs from his previous albums.

So, side one. The first track is 'Time Is Like A River' which is good. Arthur told Pete and I about the song when we first met him, and I reckon his enthusiasm is justified, because I find myself singing it gratuitously. The horns and guitar work well. Then comes 'Stop The Music', one of the tracks which probably forms the basis of much of the criticism. The horn intro is a pinch from 'I've Been Loving You Too Long' in the Otis Redding version, and Arthur's vocals are rather more negroid than usual. Is this a return to his roots? Perhaps it was intended as such until they got to the ending where an "Uncle Tom" process almost takes over, before a typical Lee chuckle finishes it. Buzzy Feiten, sometime member of the bands of P. Butterfield and S. Wonder, guests on guitar on 'Who Are You?' and his guitar solo is probably the best thing about the track, which tails off. 'Good Old Fashion Dream' has a 'Mr Pitiful' type intro, and with more Redding-like vocals, one wonders whether Arthur is attempting to don the late great man's crown. The track is OK, no more. More flak was thrown at 'Which Witch Is Which' because of its title, and in fact the whole album's title. I can only say that after spending a few hours with Arthur, I got the impression that puns are his way of keeping a step ahead, and also ensuring that he keeps a somewhat mysterious profile. On the interviewer's side, great attention must be paid, or you lose both your mind and the conversation. On the track in question, Harvey Mandel, presumably introduced by Skip Taylor (Harvey's manager, and maybe still Canned Heat's manager? Don't know) or Joe Blocker, or both, plays guitar as only he can. His style is as unique as McLaughlin's, although in a different way, and his contribution renders the track eerie, spooky and ultimately good. The last track on side one is 'With A Little Energy', and the clavinet/synthesizer noises which spoiled 'Who Are You?' for me make this one a bit routine too. So two good and two or even three OK on the first side.

'Singing Cowboy', originally from 'Four Sail', opens side two, and while it degenerates towards the end, and doesn't seem to be a significant improvement on the earlier version, it's a good song, which just might be some kind of signature tune for Arthur. 'Be Thankful For What You've Got' is the non-Arthur song, and again, there doesn't seem to have been any need to record it, just like the previous track. Perhaps it's a kind of Black Power trip? Pleasant but unnecessary. 'You Said You Would' is one I like. A staccato song with neat stops and starts and good effects. 'Busted Feet' and 'Everybody's Gotta Live' were both on 'Victorator', and the former is the worst track on 'Reel To Real', getting nowhere, but thankfully not taking too long about it. 'Everybody's Gotta Live' is fine, though, the only instrument being Arthur's strummed acoustic guitar, and his vocals, beefed up by other voices as the song goes on, are far away from Otis Redding, bringing to mind maybe Bill Withers or Richie Havens. Arthur is better than either at this kind of thing, and the album ends on an up.

So there we are. Another year, another Love album, and the search isn't yet over for another 'Forever Changes' for 'Reel To Real' sure isn't that. Even so, I don't feel bad about telling you to check it out, for there are some magic moments in there somewhere. Whatever else he may be, Arthur Lee is one of the very great innovators, and even if I've been guilty in the past of over-reacting to what I thought was a disappointment, 'Reel To Real' is quite able to stand on its own edge and ask to be bought.

□ JOHN TOBLER—Captain in the Quest for Arthur Lee.

RECORDS



Dan Fogelberg
Souvenirs
Epic

IF YOU want West Coast soft-rock, you will love Dan Fogelberg. If you hate it, this album will change your mind.

If you are sitting in a room waiting for Spring to arrive, Dan is gonna sound good. And if you're sitting stoned in a room waiting for Spring to arrive, he might sound like the acoustic apocalypse.

Frisky yet mellow, not as sentimental as Jesse Winchester, not as literary as Jackson Browne, Fogelberg has an extremely soothing ballad voice which is cushioned by an exquisite blend of acoustic and electric instruments. It took me a week to suss out the single most distinctive feature of the music. The thing that makes the album is a certain outdoor raunchy flavour, an undercurrent, most of which is coming from the rockin' bass of Kenny Passarelli, who starred on *The Smoker You Drink*.

There is only one straight country track, 'Morning Sky', which features Al Perkins on banjo. Perkins plays pedal steel on two other songs. If the other voices on the album sound familiar it's 'cos they belong to Graham Nash, Glenn Frey and Don Henley.

The introspection which makes good songwriters out of these guitar pickers often paralyses them in the studio. Self-doubt leads to more overdubs. The more overdubs, the longer it takes to mix. And the longer it takes to mix, the more laboured and sterile it sounds. Dave Mason is the worst recent example of this syndrome.

Given a useful bunch of songs and a fine band some producers fxxx up by being too adventurous. Or, more often, too safe. Joe Walsh has shown a lot of skill and taste. Maybe he should produce an English singer. Can you imagine it? The Rod Stewart all-American folk-rock album. Russ Kunkel on drums. Bob Dylan on harmonica. Nils Lofgren on piano and accordion. It would be incredible. And sell 12 million units, easy.

There's not much you need to know about Fogelberg. A man who can call his publishing company Hickory Grove Music is a man who can become a soft-rock superstar. If you listen to this stuff a lot, a strong new talent is always welcome. And if like me you only listen to it occasionally, you might as well listen to the best. *Souvenirs* may just be the best album of its type since the Eagles' first in 1972.

□ MYLES PALMER



The Raspberries
Starting Over
Capitol E-ST 11329

Apparently unknown to most of the British pop press and record buyers alike, the Raspberries have made six highly successful singles (five of them made the American charts), and three consecutive hit albums. This new release is their fourth album and contains possibly their seventh big single. Having not heard their previous work, I can only comment that *Starting Over* contains the stuff of which hits are



made, yet it's stylish, gritty, imaginative, and a million miles removed from the pap which usually infests the British top twenty. The Raspberries' past success in America is of course symptomatic of the generally healthier state of that country's charts. But the irony is that the Raspberries sound so British it's not true. They've been compared favourably with 10cc, and two of America's leading writers on British rock, Alan Betrock and Mike Saunders, have written an extensive and absorbing article on the Raspberries in *The Rock Marketplace* which ZigZaggers will recognise as the source of our 10cc, Blue Oyster Cult, and Ray Davies articles.

Basically, the Raspberries consist of Eric, Carment (rhythm guitar, piano, synthesiser, vocals), Wally Bryson (lead & rhythm guitar, vocals), Scott McCarl (bass, acoustic guitar, vocals), and Michael McBride (drums, vocals),

and they've been around for donkey's years in one form or another, surviving numerous personnel changes until the present line-up was settled upon. Their influences are so obviously British that in some cases it's possible to pinpoint exactly groups and records from which certain bits and pieces have been lifted. If it was all just a cheap rip-off then they'd deserve no more than total neglect, but so much care, enthusiasm, and true ability is at work here that no amount of praise is unworthy of them.

But let's look at them objectively. *Starting Over* is by no means a perfect album. It has its weak spots, most notably on the more romantic, ballad-type numbers which are no more than average both lyrically and musically; but they're more than compensated by the sheer energy and power of tracks like 'Play On', 'Party's Over', 'I Don't Know What I Want', 'All Through The Night', and 'Cruisin' Music'. Lead guitarist Wally Bryson is apparently a Pete Townshend devotee, and the Who can be said to be one of their major influences. Our resident expert on such matters maintains that 'I Don't Know What I Want' comprises extracts from at least four Who numbers from the 'I Can See For Miles' introduction to the 'I'm A Boy' ending, and for me it's the best track on the album. Besides that it's got Keith Moon-type drumming and Alice Cooper/John Lennon-style vocals—a gloriously effective

synthesis. The opening cut, 'Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)' is the single that's been chosen from the album, and like most of side one, it represents a direct front to the music business, all its pretensions and frustrations. The production on this song and throughout the two sides is by Jimmy Ienner, and it's beautiful—a real big, fat gritty sound. Of the other stand-out tracks, 'Cruisin' Music' is possibly the only passing tribute to American rock that the Raspberries make, being a sensitive and original rocker in the Beach Boys mould. 'Party's Over' and 'All Through The Night' are straight-ahead rock'n'roll with glimpses of the Small Faces and Free showing through, and even the Stones get a look in for a few seconds. Another of the Raspberries' major influences are (naturally) the Beatles, by all accounts less so now than before, but 'Play On' and 'Cry' are distinctly Beatle-ish

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in composition and execution, and Scott McCarl sounds so much like John Lennon at times it's uncanny.

It would be great if the Raspberries had a hit single over here. Bands like them and 10cc are few and far between; they may not be great innovators, and in all probability it'll never be 'hip' to like them, but the fact remains that they make excellent rock music and they're a lot of fun, and that's two commodities one very seldom finds in a band these days.

□ ANDY CHILDS



John Martyn
Sunday's Child
Island ILPS 9296

For me, the release of a new John Martyn album is always among the most noteworthy events of the year. The development of his music, its conception and execution, seems to be one of the most important and enjoyable trends in British music to emerge in the last five years, during which time he has eroded the somewhat superficial but steadfast barriers that divide folk and rock music, and produced records that have been brilliantly innovative and easily accessible.

In my article on him in *ZigZag* 41 I recommended four albums among six he had then

made as being totally indispensable, but now, with no reservations whatsoever, I'm glad to be able to say that you can make that five. *Sunday's Child* is a masterful album, a vastly accomplished synthesis of everything that is intelligent, thoughtful and honest in music today.

On the last occasion we met, John Martyn spoke fervently about bands like Weather Report, of their total awareness of the possibilities of electric music, and their ability to utilise textures of sound and variance of rhythm to produce music of considerable 'earthy' substance, but with a lightness of touch and depth of feeling that the overwhelming majority of bands are hardly capable of conceiving yet alone emulating. If Martyn's respect for Weather Report serves as a standard for which to aim, then I would imagine he feels rightly satisfied with the work he's produced.

Elements of folk, rock, and jazz are present throughout this album, but the blend is so subtle and it sounds so natural, that categories become non-existent and meaningless. The opening track, 'One Day Without You', incorporates a lazy, slurred rock'n'roll riff, but has a density and inherent power that is far more potent and a lot 'heavier' than any one of the 'brute force and decibels' brigade. 'Clutches' and 'Root Love' are similarly constructed and represent another direction, endless possibilities, and a lot to look forward to.

There are also songs that are firmly placed in either the traditional or contemporary folk idioms, 'Lay It All Down', 'Spencer The Rover', and 'Satisfied' being the prime examples, and Martyn's style and delivery remain, as always, sensitive and moving. His innovative techniques incorporating guitar, fuzz-box, and echoplex unit, and his unique vocal phrasing and intonation are an integral part of his appeal and importance, and there aren't any solo artists working in the same areas who come remotely near to his level of originality. He is, quite simply, essential listening, and 'Sunday's Child' is already quite definitely one of my albums of the year.

□ ANDY CHILDS



Mu
Mu
United Artists UAG 29709

First off, Mu is the Pacific Ocean equivalent of Atlantis, said to have existed at the same time, and destroyed for much the same reasons. The members of this group, which includes ex-Magic Band member Jeff Cotton and the composer (?) of 'Wipe-Out', Merrell Fankhauser, are so named because they live in the Hawaiian islands, once part of Mu, and diligently study Mu's history.

With all that going for them I was hoping for at least one song about the Lost Continent, but no such luck. It would be great to see them, or anyone for that matter, tackle a conceptual album about Mu or Atlantis or a good science fiction story, not with Yes level sophistication and complexity, but on a good high class pulp adventure level, with the same exhilarating rush as discovering Conan or A.A. Merritt at the age of 15.

What we do have is something that sounds as though it were recorded at the Avalon or old Fillmore. Something indefinable, though the elements are all there; one song even sounds just like '67 Airplane, right down to a great Marty Balin imitation and all the harmonies in exact context. At other points the lyrics preach a Live For The Now, Brother We Are One philosophy, there are titles like 'The Clouds Went That Way' and 'Too Naked For Demetrius' (I like that), and about half way through side two they actually start OM-ing.

It's like the last hippie band, and it's easy to see how some 'groovy' record exec in Hollywood in 1971/72 wouldn't sign them. Eventually they released this record on a small local label, but now United Artists have brought it to these shores. The group has also been signed and all future efforts will be as easily available.

That's nice, because this is a fascinating record. It's fairly primitive in the reproduction, but that adds to the charm. Fankhauser and Cotton get into some interesting picking, and Randy Wimer's percussion (he's since been replaced) is always wandering into unexpected corners. It's not terribly sophisticated but it's quite innovative, and Jeff Cotton's sax work is nice icing.

Peace and love, brothers and sisters.

□ JONH INGHAM

RECORDS

Dr. Feelgood



Down By The Jetty

Dr. Feelgood
Down By The Jetty
United Artists UAS 29727 Mono

Rock'n'roll. Loud, dirty, mean, raw, vicious rock'n'roll. That's what Dr. Feelgood are all about and they never make any pretensions to the contrary. Onstage they're explosive; they create the sort of violent, anarchic atmosphere that hangs heavy in the air and leaves you utterly drained of every ounce of energy you may have had. Guitarist Wilko Johnson is a natural STAR; he commands the awe and wonder of an increasing number of people in search of a new guitar hero, (the last time I saw them there were three deranged lunatics with

capture the essence of rock'n'roll on vinyl.

But records are to be judged as records and not as substitutes for 'live' gigs, and in this respect *Down By The Jetty* is a particularly fine debut. Curiously enough, it doesn't achieve any amazing level of consistency, but the great moments (e.g. Wilko's slashing guitar-work on 'The More I Give') far outnumber the less memorable ones (e.g. Wilko's vocals on 'That Ain't The Way To Behave'). The pace of the album is exhausting, slowing down only once or twice, and then only for a few seconds before the sharp, jagged chords, and tough, lean vocals whip the next song along. 'She Does It Right', 'The More I Give', 'I Don't Mind', 'Twenty Yards Behind', 'Keep It Out Of Sight', and 'Bonnie Moronie/Tequila' (recorded 'live' at Dingwalls), are delivered with the sort of nervous energy that makes you realise how sloppy and untidy most established bands with similar r'n'b/rock'n'roll roots really are.

Despite that missing ingredient which manifests itself at great gigs but has yet to find its way on any rock'n'roll record, (*Live At Leeds*—The Who, *Live At Max's Kansas City*—the Velvet Underground, and *LIVE! Than You'll Ever Be*—the Stones, come closest), *Down By The Jetty* is tight, disciplined, tense, sometimes inspiring rock'n'roll for which you must all forget any preconceptions of what it should or could sound like, and be thankful that it's available and awaiting your pleasure.

□ ANDY CHILDS



that crazy zomboid glare in their eyes, at the front of the stage impersonating Wilko's every move). Singer Lee Brilleaux sweats, grunts, pounds thin air with his fist, and jerks off with the microphone. Bassist John B Sparks bobs back and forth, and ultra-cool drummer, The Big Figure, wears a white suit, stares at his drum kit, and never misses a beat. But the feeling they generate and the impression they leave amount to more than just the sum of the individual parts. There's some elusive quality there that has to do with the overall visual effect, the programming of the set, and the feed-back from the audience. And that's why their debut album, *Down By The Jetty*, must inevitably remain a second-best alternative to seeing them 'live'. That's not to put the album down, however, it just emphasises how good they are onstage and how difficult it is to

OTHER ALBUMS RELEASED DURING THE PAST MONTH

WALKER'S COLLECTIBLES—Jerry Jeff Walker (MCA MCF 2592)
FOR EARTH BELOW—Robin Trower (Chrysalis CHR 1073)
REEL TO REAL—Love (RSO 2394 145)
COUNTRY GAZETTE LIVE (Transatlantic TRA 291)
SOUL TRAIN—Various Artists (Philips 6612 053)
ST LOUIS TO FRISCO TO MEMPHIS—Chuck Berry (Philips 6619 008)
KISS—Kiss (Casablanca CBC 4003)
BLOOD ON THE TRACKS—Bob Dylan (CBS 69097)
NO OTHER—Gene Clark (Asylum SYL 9020)

IT'LL SHINE WHEN IT SHINES—The Ozark Mountain Daredevils (A&M AMLH 63654)
NATTY DREAD—Bob Marley & The Wailers (Island ILPS 9281)
4—Tim Weisberg (A&M AMLS 63658)
FAR BEYOND THESE CASTLE WALLS—Chris de Burgh (A&M AMLH 68284)
BREAKAWAY—Kris & Rita (Monument MNT 80547)
ALBERT HAMMOND (Mums Mum 80026)
LADIES LOVE OUTLAWS—Tom Rush (CBS 80282)
TEA-BREAK OVER—BACK ON YOUR 'EADS—If (Gull Gulp 1007)
RUSH—Strife (Chrysalis CHR 1063)
RAUNCH'N'ROLL—Black Oak Arkansas (Atlantic K40451)
WHILE YOU'RE DOWN THERE—Stray Dog (Manticore K53504)
GHOSTS—The Strawbs (A&M AMLH 68277)
EXTRAVAGANZA—Stackridge (Rocket PIGL 11)
SAD PIG DANCE—Dave Evans (Kicking Mule SNKF 107)
FAMOUS RAGTIME GUITAR SOLOS—Tom Van Bergeyk (Kicking Mule SNKF 106)
BOTTLENECK GUITAR SOLOS—Peter Finger (Kicking Mule SNKF 105)
GUITAR INSTRUMENTALS—Dettef & Finger (Kicking Mule SNKF 104)
A FOOT IN COLD WATER OR ALL AROUND US—Foot In Cold Water (Eke- tra K52011)
I CAN UNDERSTAND IT—Bobby Womack (United Artists UAS 29715)
NADIR'S BIG CHANCE—Peter Hammill (Charisma CAS 1099)
ESCALATOR—Clifford T Ward (Charisma CAS 1098)
SKINNY BOY—Robert Lamm (CBS 80359)
COMMONERS CROWN—Steeleye Span (Chrysalis CHR 1071)
BRUJO—New Riders of the Purple Sage (CBS 80405)
KOKOMO—Kokomo (CBS 80670)

Apart from the albums we've reviewed, incidentally all of which are strongly recommended, there are several other releases which stand out in one way or another. There is of course the highly acclaimed new Dylan album containing at least five tracks that I find absolutely brilliant, and I'm by no stretch of the imagination the world's number one Dylan fan. This is undeniably Grade A rock music however, and no-one should be without it. Gene Clark's album, which was discussed in last month's issue, is out now, and along with albums from Country Gazette, the New Riders, and the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, there is plenty to satisfy the American country music freak. I would have reviewed the debut album from Kokomo if I'd received it a few days earlier, but it'll have to wait till next month now; nevertheless try and hear it as soon as possible. The Chuck Berry album we've listed is a double, and one LP is the re-release of the 'live' album he made with the Steve Miller Band at the Fillmore West way back in 1967. It's a pretty rosey set, but worth having if you're a collector of such obscurities. As for the rest of the releases, well there aren't many downright bad albums there, just very few that stir the imagination. You pays your money and takes your choice.

□ ANDY CHILDS

PROGRESSIVE SOUL: ALONG KAME KOOL & THE GANG

REAL LANDMARKS in black music are infrequent, and never chart-busters in the UK. There was *What's Goin' On* (71), *Music Of My Mind* (72), *Catch-A-Fire* (73) and *Headhunters* (74). All were innovative, influential albums whose value was most clearly seen in retrospect.

Somewhere in the shuffle, one brilliant group got lost... I remember the night I was turned on to Kool and the Gang by the late 'H', hipster, booker and host at Dingwalls. "These guys are ahead of Sly!" he yelled above the noise of 'Jungle Boogie' one festive night back in the winter of 73-74.

I scored their then-current *Wild And Peaceful* LP from Polydor. It was clever, yet simple. Pure, yet dirty. It was easy to see how their unmistakable dance party sound had made them a cult in New York's disco-theques. They laid down a beat which was so insistent, so rugged, that you couldn't ignore it. Drummer George Brown sounds like the Godzilla of heavy soul, a monster with wrists as thick as your thigh, structural damage a speciality. I was hooked on the distinctive rhythm guitar, the naive spoken peace raps, the supremely dumb catchphrases. Most of all, as a longtime jazzhead, I was hooked on their use of horns. Their horn section is the most electrifying of any of the streetfunk bands in America today.

The trumpet solo on 'Heaven At Once' betrayed their roots, for this seven-piece from Jersey City played together for over five years as a jazz band. They showed exquisite taste on the long ballad tunes, but basically it was body music with a vengeance. Kool and Co were obviously the best thing to happen to the funk business since the Meters. I swiftly installed them as my third favourite American group behind Little Feat and Weather Report.

By the time of their next album *Light Of Worlds*, the production was even more adventurous and sophisticated. They sounded like a group which was urgent, confident and right on top of its style. And style was the key word. It wasn't songs we were hearing so much as style. The songs weren't really songs to the extent that they could be recorded effectively by other people. As Dr John and Poco proved in other idioms, the style is the message.

The album is packed solid with the most vibrant arrangements since those the Motown mafia dreamed up to launch the Jackson Five. They had developed some of War's flair for texture and programming. But they had remained the hard-funk juggernaut, the black music energy-trip. It was potent, vital, disciplined music all the way. The horn arrangement on 'Street Corner Symphony' has been keeping me awake at night for months. They are skilful, but also upfront. Their vocals are ordinaire, but they let it all hang out anyway. Everybody can't be Marvin Gaye. Several sweet segues on side two underline the feeling of group music—music without embroidery, without afterthoughts. There is a mellow 20-second girly-vocal intro to the

title track, then an immaculate gear-change into a rock-solid truckin' groove.

You've only gotta compare the irresistible bass riff of 'Higher Plane' to the cute strings of 'Hang On In There Baby', to find out if you really wanna get down. Whether you really like progressive-funk or whether you think you like it. To us fanatics, Johnny Bristol is always gonna be high-class Schlock. Progressive-phunk, in fact.

For a while I thought I was the only person who had heard the album. Then I met Richard Williams at a Kevin Ayers' reception. We had the usual rap about what we were listening to. I asked him if he had heard *Light Of Worlds*, fully expecting him to say: "What??" "Yes," he said, "it's great, I love that beautiful grainy horn sound." And I thought: Exactly! That's the word I've been trying to think of for six months. Grainy!!!!

In concert the successful black groups vary enormously in approach and personality. War proved to be very tight, very laidback, obviously Californian, a bit like a movie soundtrack. Good ideas spread a bit thin, synco-pated cinemascope.

Graham Central Station are fantastic. At the Rainbow they played like a super-confident support band. Dirty, rock-solid rhythms, electric keyboards sending out wave after wave of squalling, turbulent sound, with the guitarist taking one long fluid and beautifully-constructed solo, a minor masterpiece of taste and tonal control. Above all, they are amazing for their vocals. An ecstatic, thrilling blend of voices. They are the best progressive soul band I've ever seen. Not counting Stevie Wonder's Rainbow band, 'cos nothing has ever—or will ever—equal that.

Kool and the Gang were enjoyable at the Rainbow. Not brain-blasting, but enjoyable. The gig was being recorded on the Island mobile which was an inhibiting factor. Funky George was a dynamo on drums. The dance routines of the four horn men (a trombonist has now been added to the two saxes and trumpet) probably looked fine from the back row, but from the front row were we were sitting such visual embroidery was redundant. When the alto player got off a knockout flute solo I realised that I would much rather have been listening to them stretch out in a club. That might have been the progressive-funk apocalypse. This was just a good gig which got a standing ovation.

In December I read Bob Palmer's album review in *Rolling Stone*, and was delighted to find someone who agreed with my verdict. And someone who shared the same surname. Is this a conspiracy? He wrote: "Kool and Co are at present the most musical and resourceful band in a genre plagued by artifice and lack of subtlety and are to be congratulated on maintaining their exemplary level of musicianship, combining creative arrangement with a supremely heavy bottom and consistently placing their singles in the Top Ten." So there.

□ MYLES PALMER

VIRGIN IMPORTS

COLD STEEL
Sneaky Pete Kleinow

BUSTIN' OUT
Pure Prairie League

PURE PRAIRIE LEAGUE 1st

AND THE HITS KEEP ON
COMING - Mike Nesmith

NEVADA FIGHTER
Mike Nesmith (£1.79)

GRIN 1st

1 & 1 - Grin

ALL OUT - Grin (£1.39)

GONE CRAZY - Grin

— expected soon —

NILS LOFGREN Solo

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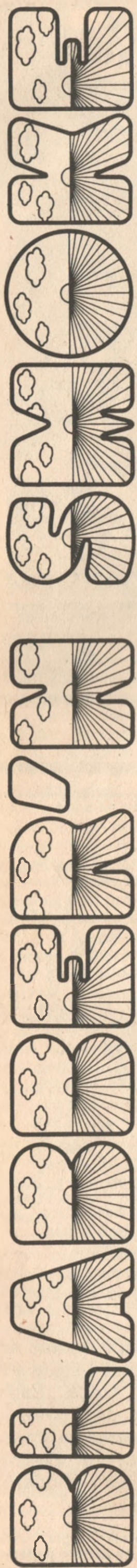
- | | | |
|--|----|--|
| 1-25 Sold out completely. | 37 | Charlie Watts, Mighty Baby, Nils Lofgren, Grateful Dead Part 3, Country Joe McDonald |
| 26 Hawkwind, Joe Cocker, Dave van Ronk, Greenwich Village, Brewer's Droop, Dan Hicks/ S.F. Tree | 38 | Quicksilver Messenger Service, Richard Greene Tree, Ben Sidran, Loggins & Messina, John Stewart |
| 27 Jimmy Page, Bridget St John, Procul/Traffic Tree, Ducks Deluxe, Kinks, Steve Stills, Byrds Part 1. | 39 | Michael Nesmith interview, Steve Miller, ZigZag Poll, Ralph McTell, Evan Parker |
| 28 Led Zeppelin, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Kim Fowley, Stealers Wheel, Kevin Ayers Tree, Byrds Part 2. | 40 | Dave Mason, Michael Nesmith: post-Monkees, Peter Hammill, Macon, Georgia |
| 29 Genesis, Everly Bros, Eagles/Burritos Family Tree, Silverhead, Johnny Speight, Beefheart, Byrds Part 3. | 41 | Quicksilver, John Martyn, David Blue, Free, Moby Grape, Michael Fennelly, Byrds Story Part 7 (!!!) |
| 30 Sold out completely. | 42 | Nick Drake, Albert Hammond, Moby Grape, Dr Hook, Free, Lovin' Spoonful, John Weider, John Stewart |
| 31 Sold out completely. | 43 | Tim Hardin, Jackie Lomax, Bees Make Honey, Man Tree, Love, Sopwith Camel, Townshend, Steely Dan |
| 32 Pink Floyd, Steve Ellis, The Story of Spirit, Clifford T Ward, John Cale, Roy Buchanan, Byrds Part 6. | 44 | Tim Buckley, 10cc, Marc Benno, Townshend, Clapton Tree, Beefheart, Tangerine Dream, Blue Oyster Cult |
| 33 McKendree Spring, Robert Plant, Boz Scaggs, Clarence White, Steve Miller/Sir Douglas Quintet Tree | 45 | Russ Ballard, Bruce Springsteen, New Riders Chart, Dead Sound System, Poco Chart, Bert Jansch |
| 34 Sold out completely. | 46 | Phil Lesh, Rick Nelson, Ron Wood, Poco, Kevin Ayers, Leonard Cohen, American Newsletter |
| 35 Sold out completely. | | |
| 36 Van Morrison, Stan Tracey, Kevin Coyne, Grateful Dead Part 2, Byron Berline | | |



- 47 Grace Slick, Rick Nelson, Redwing, Keith Richard, Chilli Willi, Roy Harper
- 48 Jesse Winchester, Butts Band, John Sebastian, Arthur Lee, Neil Young, Curt Boetcher, Tim Buckley
- 49 Gene Clark, Home, Biff Rose, Ray Davies, Jess Roden, Nick Drake, Curt Boetcher

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Goodness gracious!, it's four-thirty in the morning and I've still got another bloody page of this magazine to write. I'm surrounded by pages of lay-out sheets that have to be at the printers tomorrow or rather this morning, and I'm staring at a list of things I've got to mention in Blabber'n Smoke.

First of all, there's a couple of singles that none of you should be without. They are 'You Tore Me Down'/'Him Or Me' by The Flamin' Groovies (Bomp 101), and 'Breathe A Little'/'Friday Song' by Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers (Mooncrest Moon 40). The Groovies' single is one of the best things I've heard in years. It knocks the spots off everything that's currently in the charts, and if by some freak chance it got played on our wonderful radio network it might be a smasheroo hit and make our heroes the big stars they've always wanted to be. The trouble is, it probably won't even get released over here because Bomp Records the label on which you can find this hot little number, is the brainchild of our mate Greg Shaw of 'Who Put The Bomp' magazine. There seems to be some sort of alliance between Greg and the band whereby he's got access to a load of old tapes including the material that was recorded over here at Rockfield with Dave Edmunds and never used. That's where 'You Tore Me Down' comes from. It's less aggressive than the usual Groovies fare, but it has a captivating melody that is almost a complete take-off of the Beatles' 'She Loves You'. In fact the whole record sounds like what I imagine the Beatles would have sounded like if a very much subdued Phil Spector had got hold of them around 1963. Great stuff. The b-side is a sample of what the Groovies usually and hopefully always will sound like. If you have trouble obtaining this record - there are some shops in London that may stock it - write direct to Bomp Records P.O. Box 7112 Burbank, California 91510, USA, and send loads of bread... it's worth it.

The Willis' single is tragically wallowing

CHILLI WILLI - Long may they boogie.

In a big black cloud of depression, for you must all know by now that this ace band are going to break up very shortly. I must admit that now the very little faith I had in the 'music business' is completely gone... I mean how the bloody hell can we AFFORD to lose a band of the Willis' calibre? Answer - we can't, and the whole scene is going to be an awful lot duller without them around. But regardless they've gone out with a bang, because in my own humble estimation, this single contains the finest work they've ever laid down on vinyl. The a-side is of course taken from the admirable 'Bongos Over Balham' album, which I presume you all have by now, but it's the b-side which is especially good. 'Friday Song' used to be the highlight of their 'live' set up until about a year ago, and I still think it was a mistake to drop it. However, here it is

in all its glory... a very crisp, clear production, and instrumental virtuosity of staggering proportions. I know everybody always picks out Martin Stone, but his guitar playing here really is a treat... practically a different phrase for every line in the song - he never repeats himself; and then when he's double-tracked after all the 'loohing and aahing' near the end... whew! Rush out now and buy it before your local record emporium runs out of stocks.

Pete 'Omaha Rainbow' O'Brien brought me in the new fat, action-packed issue of his mag yesterday, and what a goodie it is. There are really fascinating features on Barry McGuire, Gene Parsons, the Doors, and a rivetting interview with DJ and writer Paul Gambaccini who spills some amazing facts about 'Rolling Stone'



and American radio. Still excellent value for 20p (incl p&p), send off for a copy to 10 Lesley Court, Harcourt Road, Wallington, Surrey.

Still on the subject of publications, I've received a very smart, glossy book called 'Celluloid Rock: Twenty Years Of Movie Rock' (Lorimer), which if you haven't already guessed, attempts to trace the history of rock on the big screen. It was put together by Philip Jenkinson (who I have a lot of respect for) and Alan Warner, and the results of their efforts seem pretty comprehensive. There are a lot of very interesting pictures, and if their lack of knowledge on some of the finer points of rock'n'roll tend to jar on the nerves sometimes, then they're easily forgiven because this is a good, and highly entertaining book.

Remember that excellent rock programme called 'Fresh Garbage' that used to be on Radio London on a Sunday afternoon before the fools insensitively axed it? Well the man responsible for its popularity and good taste was DJ Andy Finney who now works for Radio Stoke-On-Trent and presents a series of shows called 'Fine And Tasty Music' which seemingly caters for a wide variety of tastes. But Andy is nothing if not a busy man, and he always has lots of different projects going at the same time. When he was with Radio London he presented near-complete programmes on subjects like the Elektra story and the history of Spirit, and so on. One of the things he was involved in was the recording of a Country Joe concert at Imperial College... a very fine gig it was too. Well that recording is being transmitted again on February 28th, so tune in and hear one of the great West Coast legends at work.

And talking of Country Joe, we have a fairly lengthy article on him and Barry Melton coming up pretty soon along with a whole host of other amazing jive like Dr. Feelgood, Ian Matthews, Gentle Giant, Pete Dinklage, and Henry Cow.

Right, that's it, I'm going to bed. So until next month.....Andy.

Their last album sold ONE MILLION copies in America. It took them just 40 days to do that, easy. They play r&b like you've never heard it before. They call it Krudde. The critics call it "a funk delight", "sensational" and "explosive". Their lead singer is a high steppin' strutting fireball of 21. Her voice claws your soul out. More than Tina Turner. More than Sly Stone. Much more. With a line in pelvic actions that violates interstate laws.

Stevie Wonder says they're the hottest thing in '75. He's right. Their new album 'RUFUSIZED' is out now.

RUFUS CHAKA KHAN

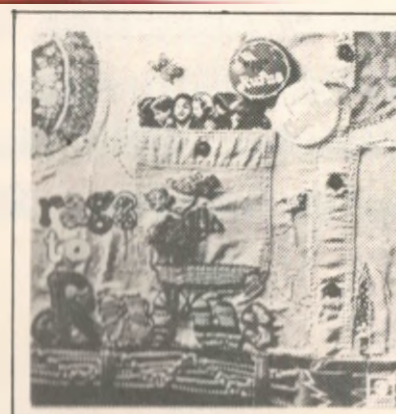


This month they stomp into Britain for their first ever dates here.

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