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ZIGZAG

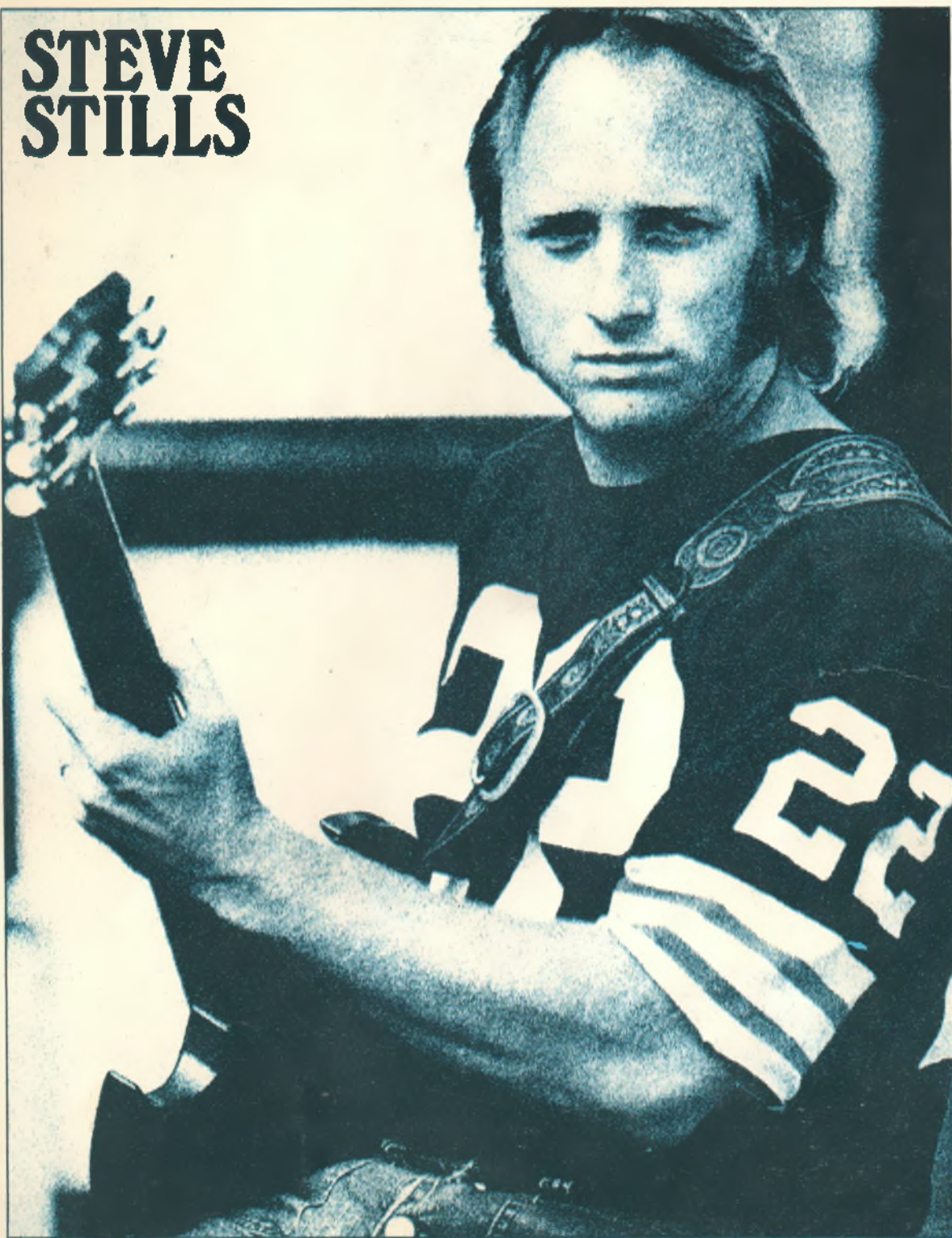
VOLUME 6 No.4

The Rock Magazine

25p

Speedy Keen Billy Joel Andy Fraser

**STEVE
STILLS**



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ZIGZAG

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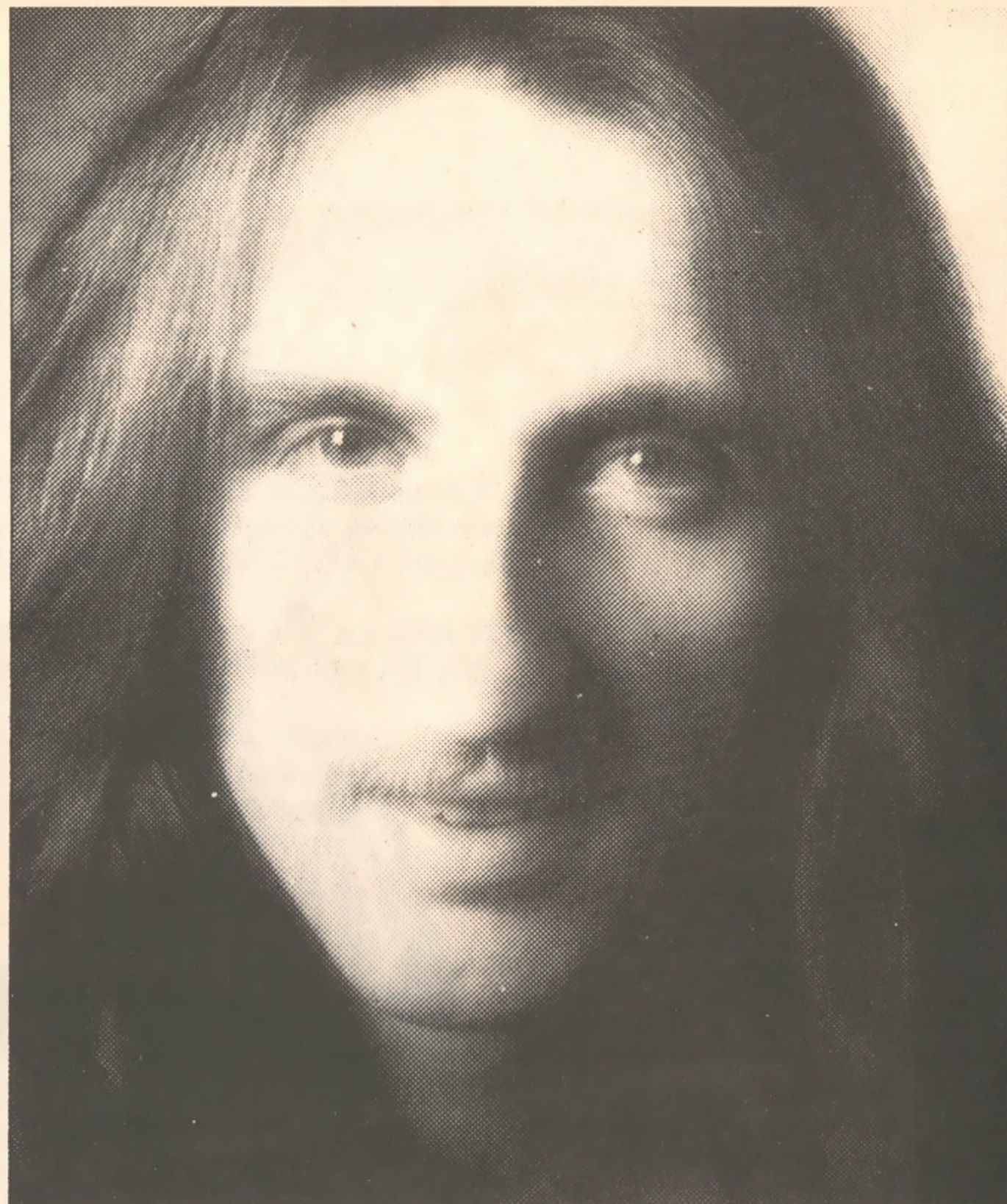
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From Out of the Shadows Comes SPEEDY KEEN

If someone ever asked me to compile a list of my ten favourite singles of all time I'd have five 'definites' straight away and about 200 'maybes'. One of the 'definites' would be 'Something In The Air' by Thunderclap Newman, a spectacular, glorious record produced by none other than Pete Townshend and written by one John 'Speedy' Keen. You've all heard it of course . . . it was released around about the summer of 1969, zoomed straight up the charts to No.1, and stayed in the Top Twenty for eight weeks . . . it's now a classic of its era—a mixture of novelty, surprise, superb production, beautiful melody and evocative lyrics. It was, in retrospect, an obvious hit, but at the time it was viewed as a fluke, and thrust the unsuspecting Thunderclaps into a nightmare world of endless gigging, interminable pressures from unscrupulous hustlers and bread-heads, and generally destroyed any chance they ever had of being taken seriously.

To most people, Thunderclap Newman meant 'Something In The Air' and vice versa, and that was it. What wasn't so well-known, or rather so widely acknowledged, is the fact that they went on to make a brilliant and criminally neglected album called *Hollywood Dream*, and became super-heroes in the States, while over here they couldn't even command a modicum of air-time on our wonderful radio network. As a result of a combination of apathy, frustration, and indecision, they broke up mid-way through 1970 and the three main members of the band, Andy Newman, Jimmy McCulloch, and Speedy Keen went on to pursue solo careers of varying success. (They'd been augmented by two extra members at one point—Jim Pitman-Avery on bass, and Jimmy's brother Jack on drums.) Andy Newman made a curious but enjoyable solo LP called *Rainbow* (Track 2406 103) and has played, and is probably still playing with, a number of trad jazz bands; Jimmy McCulloch of course has made a successful name for himself as a highly proficient rock guitarist playing with Stone The Crows, Blue, and now Wings. But the man whose career we will attempt to unravel here is Speedy Keen, an East-ender by birth and a compulsive talker and joker . . . a man given to wild and exuberant gesticulations, and an extremely friendly bloke to interview. After a see-saw career of seismic



proportions, Speedy is now with Island Records poised to launch into a successful stage of his life—a period of more long-term security than he's experienced before, and it was at Island's St Peter's square headquarters that I tracked him down . . . in the staff canteen, looning about and bubbling over with the sort of enthusiasm you'd expect from a man who's just been released from Death Row.

As an easy point of reference we started talking about his early days and his involvement with Pete Townshend. (N.B. Some of this stuff has been covered previously in *ZigZag* 15, but has been repeated here to provide a fuller, more comprehensive view of things.)

I STARTED out as a professional drummer. I worked on the continent . . . lived in Italy for a year and Spain for nine months. I basically went there on jobs and I either ran out of money or got fired. I worked with a band called The Second Thoughts around about the time the Ealing Club started up and we had a really good following there. Then I met Pete Townshend. I met him on a session . . . I was working for a band called The Cat which doesn't exist now and probably didn't exist nine weeks afterwards. But I used to do a lot of professional drumming for lots of different people, and I was doing these sessions and he was producing the band. We worked on that for about 2 or 3 days and gradually got to know each other. The only thing that came out of those sessions in fact was my friendship with Pete which has been of more value to me than any friendship I've

ever had. I remember going back to Pete's one day and he played me his early demos which for me was like the beginning of what I'm doing now really. I was so impressed by how they'd been put together and multi-recorded . . . it was a whole world that I hadn't looked at before. So he switched on the light for me that day. I thought 'If it takes five years, that's what I want to do, and if I get anywhere near that competence I'll be well pleased'. So that's really what I've been doing—learning how to write as it were.

"Writing has always been one of the most important things to me. I once played in a band called The Rogues in Italy and they were an English band who used to write all this Italian material, and as a drummer I used to become very frustrated. Whenever I played I used to think 'Well I can write better songs than this'. Except R'n'B, I really liked that, and old rock'n'roll—the original stuff, I've always liked that more than anything else. But I always think that it's soul-less if you've got to try and learn how to play it . . . it either comes naturally or it doesn't. And I've always thought that, that's why I've tried to write my own stuff—that's been my mainstay even in my drumming days. I always wanted to play the way I wanted to play—to learn from other people but not copy them."

SPEEDY'S CAREER as a writer started off quite successfully as one of his earliest and most notable credits is on the Who's *Sell Out* for which he wrote 'Armenia, City In The Sky'.

"That was really very early stuff and the first real big thing I ever did. But I was still



very unsure of what I was doing. I was with Pete most of the time—we were very close and it was like an instant friendship. After a few weeks of knowing him I felt like I'd known him all my life. We went to a lot of gigs together and made a lot of demos. It was good for me at that point because although I was happy as a professional drummer I was really missing a whole world—I knew I was missing it but I didn't know how to approach it. I remember hearing songs like 'Run Run Run' a long time ago and things like that really did me in for about three weeks. It was a great surge of energy it brought on. At that point Pete had done an incredible amount of homework—home recording and multi-tracking. So the amount of work he's done since then is enormous. I know that he's still got all my old stuff."

Exit Speedy Keen—writer, drummer, and at one point to make ends meet, lorry driver, and enter—

THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN

"Pete got Thunderclap Newman together. He just said: 'I know these two guys, who, like you, are geniuses [laughs], and I think we ought to do something together . . . do some of your numbers.' Andy and Jimmy were total strangers. Jimmy I could immediately identify with—he was a rock guitarist although he liked my acoustic-type songs, but Andy, well he couldn't relate to us and we couldn't relate to him—he was an engineer in the GPO. But something magical happened from the very first second. The first thing we did was some music for a friend of Pete's at art college—a college film, and it just fell together. We all had to compromise greatly when it came to recording—that shows on our album. In actual fact the majority of the re-

cordings were really difficult . . . we had to really concentrate on what we were doing. We knew it was good, but we couldn't go like, 'Hey man, that was heavy' 'We'd think, 'Well that track was really hard work'. But two years later we'd suddenly realise how good it was. And we realised at the time that it was all very opposite . . . it was hard to relate to each other in terms of what we wanted to do and say. I think *Hollywood Dream*, and I know it's the writer saying this, I think it's really very special, and I've always said that . . . I've always defended it even when I didn't have to. It was a very difficult period with the Thunderclaps when they tried to put us out on the road. Anybody with enough insight would have seen that the best thing to do would be to make another album and then another one, because it was such a unique experience, playing it as well as listening to it. Pete was the guiding force there, he put it together. He's amazing—well he's amazing anyway—but he's amazing because he must have seen it all before it was even brought together, which is incredible. I'm proud of that . . . not only 'Something In The Air' but the whole *Hollywood Dream* album. I know there are millions of brilliant albums out, but there aren't that many with that kind of twist to them."

IF THAT LAST statement sounds a trifle big-headed to you, then let me say that it's completely justified. *Hollywood Dream* (Track 2406 003) is a brilliant album, full of great songs with poignant lyrics and beautiful melodies. Every track's a winner for me but my special favourites are 'Wild Country', 'Accidents', 'The Reason' and 'Something In The Air'—all of which were released as singles. Incidentally,

the b-sides of 'Something In The Air', 'The Reason' and 'Accidents' are *not* on the album and they are 'Wilhelmina', 'Stormy Petrol', and 'I See It All' respectively . . . reason enough to have them in their single form. The album is basically Andy on piano and assorted wind instruments, Jimmy on guitars, and Speedy on drums, vocals, and guitars. There is a bass player of course who is credited as Bijou Drains, but who without much effort, can be deduced to be Pete Townshend. Townshend also produced the whole album and has his trademark of quality oozing out of every groove. Honestly, it really is a fabulous LP although sadly it's never been an outrageously fashionable one to possess in this country. Nevertheless, next time you're passing your local Woolworths have a look through their record department because mine were selling this gem off at the ridiculous price of 72p not so long ago. A sound investment if there ever was one.

Initial reaction to the album was unsensational compared to the overwhelming success that 'Something In The Air' achieved, success in fact that really marked the beginning of the end for the Thunderclaps.

"The pressure caused by a No.1 single really killed the creative side of it because suddenly it was just personalities. When you have to go out on the road and play and they say, 'Well man, you've got to be really good tonight, there are 2,000 people out there', that kills the creative side of it because you're just reacting to your own fear . . . and it was fear at that point, it really was. None of us were ready for it. I mean I was a lorry driver five weeks before . . . I was a musician and all of those things but I'd come to a point where I couldn't live off playing the drums because I hadn't played for two years and I'd been trying to write songs. I'd been living off the small amount that Track Records supplied, and they supplied money for a long time before they knew I was going to get anywhere. And that sort of faith you can't break—I'll always respect them and love them for that because there were some points where I couldn't even put two chords together. I used to take strings off my guitar because I couldn't play with six, so I used to take three or four off. I'm really glad now that I kept at it, but for about two years I thought I was trying to do the impossible."

AFTER 'Something In The Air' peaked, we lasted about eleven months. We did a nine-month tour and played everywhere—you name it and we played there. We were hoping to bang the whole thing into some sort of shape but what it actually did was destroy us. Andy for one wasn't equipped to play in front of big audiences at a big rock venue. I just really wish we could have just recorded because it put me through so many changes I couldn't believe it. I really felt strongly about 'Something In The Air' . . . obviously I didn't foresee it being a huge success, but really and truly it was a reflection of what I was seeing at the time. I wrote it about two months before we recorded it and we put it out as a joke. But it backfired on us really because we weren't in a position to follow up its success . . . it's especially difficult if you're not equipped, and I definitely wasn't. On the first four or

Speedy Keen

five gigs I played a 12-string that wasn't even plugged in, and when you're doing that in front of 2,000 people it takes a lot of nerve... you've got to have a lot of front—more front than Selfridges in fact. After ten or so gigs like that you come off like scrambled eggs because you're lying to yourself and to all those people. I think it was really heavy for all of us. 'Something In The Air' was very hard to live up to because it wasn't done under any pressure and it was very hard to get that same feel when we knew we had to produce another single.

"Going back to the *Hollywood Dream* album for a second, that took quite a while to make because it was in between Who tours. It took about eight months and we did a lot of it on two revoxes. This is where Pete excelled himself—playing bass, mixing it down, and recording it all at the same time."

AS WE'VE SAID before, Thunderclap Newman finally crumbled and everybody went their separate ways, all the richer for the experience they'd gained, but also slightly disillusioned and wary of the music business. They'd all had definite ideas of what they wanted to do as individuals, none more so than Speedy.

"There was a bit of a gap between the break-up of the Thunderclaps and my solo album. Obviously I felt very disappointed with the reaction to *Hollywood Dream*—we didn't get a lot of airplay—we did in America but we didn't actually go there as the Thunderclaps. When I did eventually get over there I found that thousands of people really liked the Thunderclaps and recognised that album for what it was. I wish we'd gone there now because we needed that warmth—we got it in Scandinavian countries and in Scotland too funnily enough.

"When the Thunderclaps broke up I went through change after change after change. I lived in Wardour Street... I had an office... lived there rent free which really did me a favour because I was completely skint. It was above Harry Levine's, and I used to have to pass all these heavies on the stairs every day. But I literally locked myself away for a long time—about 1½ years, and hardly saw anybody, and I thought 'Well either I'm going to leave it all and go back to driving a lorry, or I'm going to get down and do it, and do it on my own'. So I sat down and got to the point where I'd written a load of stuff and went back to Track and asked them to give me some studio time, and I did 'Previous Convictions'. And that was really just stubborn confidence. I just had to do it all myself just to prove to myself that I could. If it wasn't any good it didn't really matter—I just had to do it. It did well in America but in England it hardly got any exposure at all... for some reason Radio One wouldn't play it. I really worked hard on it. The only thing was, I took the finished album to Track and they said it needed strings, so they put strings on it and that did me in. I'd really worked on it and it was sparse and it wasn't multi-recorded, it was very straight so that I could perform it on the road. But Track put a 50-piece orchestra or something on it and so it killed that idea... I no longer had an album I could play 'live'. Actually the strings are really beautifully done by a guy called Ian

Green (he also did the string arrangements on 'Something In The Air'), but if it needed any I only wanted three or four—maybe a viola and three violins."

LIKE *Hollywood Dream*, *Previous Convictions* (Track 2406 105) is an essential album. Speedy Keen's gift for writing truly memorable songs is convincingly confirmed, and it's no better illustrated than in the opening track, 'Old Fashioned Girl', which was also his first solo single I believe. I must admit that I do find the strings a little intrusive at times, but not even Wild Man Fischer conducting the Portsmouth Sinfonia could ruin those beautiful songs. As with *Hollywood Dream* which contained 'Open The Door Homer', there is a Dylan song included and this time it's 'Positively 4th Street'... one of only two non-original tracks, the other being Eddie Cochran's 'Something Else'. As Speedy has said, he did most of the work himself, writing, playing, and producing, but it does seem curious that after their famous friendship, Pete Townshend isn't involved at all.

"That was a very difficult situation. You see Pete is a very productive person and any contact I have with him ends up being productive in some way. But I read all the reports in the papers—*Rolling Stone* said: 'Speedy Keen is Pete Townshend in a blonde wig' and in the States they didn't believe I existed until I went there—a lot of people were really surprised. And although that didn't worry me I felt that musically I had to get my end together. That's why I did *Previous Convictions* on my own, although there were times when I felt like calling Pete and saying 'Help!' But I was determined to prove to him as a friend that I could do it. I wanted to take it to him and have him give me a really honest opinion on it. And it was important to me that it didn't have his influence. I think he felt really bad about it at the time because he thought I didn't want to know him any more, but really and truly I needed it for my confidence which was battered to pieces by then. But it did me good and I got to the stage where I could face Pete again because he was such a heavy dude and I was bashing away getting nowhere. I took him the masters after I'd finished it and he really liked it. Unfortunately nothing happened to it in England and so I went back into obscurity.

"About seven months went by and I went to America, toured the radio stations and met lots of people. I really wanted to meet all the people who had been pushing my stuff for years. At Track I'd got to the stage where I needed a change for my own sake, because stuff was being released and it wasn't getting airplay, etc. I just suddenly thought one day, 'I've got to stop', if for no other reason than for the fact that I was running up a huge debt with Track. So some time later I phoned up a radio station in Detroit, some guys I'd met for just five minutes, and they did a 'live' interview with me on the phone while I was in bed at 4 o'clock in the morning. I just told them that I left Track and was waiting to see what would happen, and within ten minutes of putting the receiver down my phone rang and it was a guy called Pat Pipilo who works for Island in America, and he said, 'Come and see Chris Blackwell', which is what I did. And

I signed with them on October 24th last year.

"You see what happened is that I wrote a double album at Track, and Track being a small company physically, there was only so much they could cope with. And I felt that I needed a real push if people were going to be made aware of what I was doing. But basically I wrote this double album which was a concept thing and I took them all the demos and they said something to the effect that people weren't ready for it... 'Go home and start again'. So I brought them to Island... a double album with 27 tracks, and I was only there ten minutes and they said 'OK, start tomorrow'. So I did, and I've recorded those 27 tracks properly now, one of which is 'Someone To Love' [his current single]. We were planning to release the double album, but considering people's general financial situation, it would be suicide. So it will probably be two single albums now. But I've done a lot of work and I hope to be starting on a new one soon. The position I've always wanted to be in is one or two albums in front of myself. Island have been really fantastic, they look after their artists, not to the extent where they baby them, but they give you a perspective within which to work, and for someone like me that's all I need—give me enough rope and I'll hang myself six times. You see all I really want to do is record. I make a tape at home every day and two months later I listen to what I've made and sort it all out."

IF THE SINGLE, 'Someone To Love' (Island WIP 6230) is any sort of indication of what we can expect of a forthcoming album, then we're in for a treat of the most sumptuous delicacy. It's a gorgeous song, Speedy producing and playing everything and it has the most seductively relaxing feel about it. Definitely one of the very best singles to be released this year. The flip-side, 'Fighting In The Streets' is excellent too... a convincingly aggressive rock'n'roll number.

Three points to finish up with:

1. In the very near future Speedy hopes to organise a gig at The Lyceum in London where he and a carefully chosen bunch of rockers will perform a complete set of Eddie Cochran numbers, some old standards, and some previously unheard of songs. Speedy, like his mate Townshend, is a devout Cochran fan, and has apparently come across some of his songs that the man himself never actually recorded. It is to be hoped that this gig (if it happens) will be the forerunner to a Speedy Keen Band taking to the road and performing his material.
2. Lou Reizner is, according to Speedy, currently engaged on his own predictably lavish production of 'Something In The Air' to be released as a single in due course. Just pray that he exhibits a little more taste than he did in his infamous massacre of 'Tommy'.
3. If there is any justice to be found in the squalid, festering circus called the 'rock business' then Speedy Keen will emerge from the shadows this year and take up his position as one of this country's best songwriters. 'Someone To Love' is only the start of something much more rewarding... I'm sure of it. I think I might even bet my copy of *Hollywood Dream* on it.

□ ANDY

One of the greatest recording artists of all time has just made the new Joan Baez album.



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BOB COOPER voc. / guitar	BOB LIGHTNER bass	CARL SHRAGER piano / guitar	JOE McDONALD drums / vocals
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Popovich, who had been in the U.S. since 1964, was in the Army Corps of Engineers when he learned to play guitar. And also worked up to be a writer and writer long and joined the Jeffersons. Popovich says, "The idea just of the soul, must have been

NOV 26 7p A very loose get-together, the Jamboree House Band with a featured performer, which featured a comedy act. **NOV 27 10p** The Jamboree House Band with a featured performer, which featured a comedy act.

WEST Covered to full
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Jock & the Fish - the
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COUNTRY JOE & THE FISH #4

FISH OCT 6/7 Jet-killing reported. Being prepared to
NOV 6/7 take over 5-2 along the Army front.

LAGAN NOV 67 The group's seasonal weather is only not slightly less during the morning

FIGURE 4-9 After the brilliance of their first two albums, 1967

COPIED FOR THE FBI BY THE FBI #2 JUNE 69

DE & THE FISH #6 JUNE 69 72 1st 5
JUNE 70 1st 5
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"Start the song" "Join with a new group" "Join the group"

JOE JULY 1972
IN ARTS 1972

ing his time with the Fox, Muller went to Jackson to do his own thing.

...and I had good luck very often." The department was everywhere noted on January 1, but very little had been - and it is in speculation working on equipment and resources. It is, which was reduced. Considerable with the machine

COUNTRY JOE & THE FLYING SAUCER BAND "L" MAY 7-8 Foxworth Court, Ga. 06

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COUNTRY JOE & THE ALL STAR BAND #3

BARRY MELTON ALBUMS	PERIOD	COUNT
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COUNTRY JOE & THE ALL STAR BAND #4

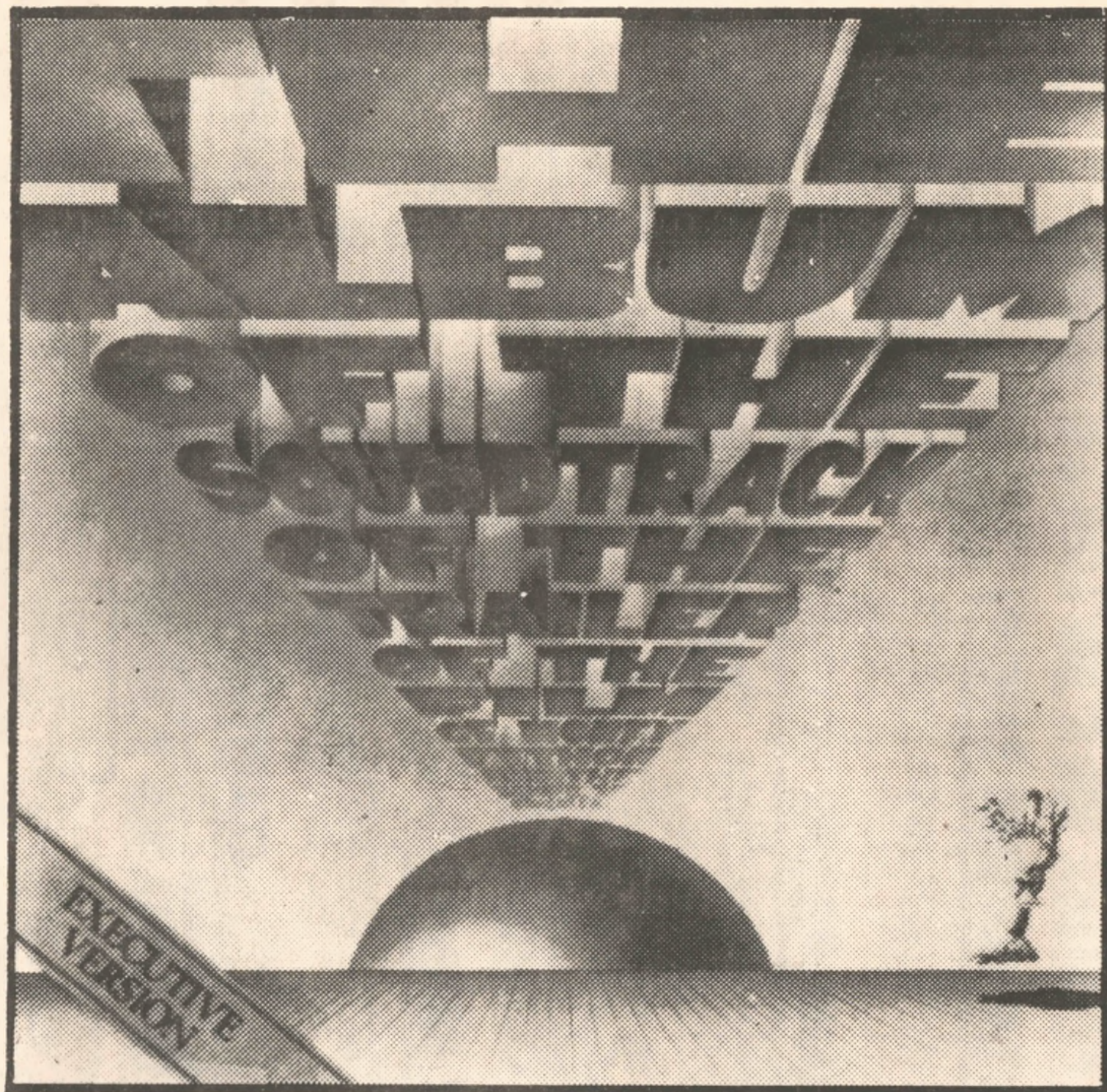
DONALD E. BARRY, MELTON

FEBRUARY 1974 TO MARCH 1975 during the growing season - 1974. They started on a slope of 100% and...

In San Francisco, County and State Fairs were requested at two or three days intervals and publicity increased as came down. The same was done in Los Angeles and elsewhere and established the same in many other towns. We were never out with their guns to get rid of

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL TO HER
MAJESTY

DATE	TIME	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	UNIT	REMARKS
					COUNTRY JOE & THE FISH CHART
					PAGE 9



From the team that saw 'Chinatown', 'The Sound Of Music',
and 'Murder On The Orient Express'.

THE ALBUM OF THE SOUNDTRACK OF THE TRAILER

MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL

CAS 1103



With lots of sex and violence (but not really enough).

Available on Charisma Records

BILLY JOEL



Piano Man

IT'S AN AWFUL confession to make, especially in a normally omniscient rag like this, but up until about nine months ago I was almost completely unaware of Billy Joel, apart from a dim recollection of his first album being released over here, and an old *Rolling Stone* article documenting his peculiar popularity in Philadelphia. The fact that the *Piano Man* album was in the process of going gold across the big water, while the title track made inroads into the Top Ten, successfully eluded me, along with the rest of Britain—so when a friend returned from the States last summer enthusiastically bearing a copy of the aforementioned album, my interest was roused more by the names of people like Michael Stewart and Michael Omartian among the credits than by the prospect of hearing the lugubrious looking gentleman on the cover baring his soul to all and sundry. So much for my preconceptions. Regardless of what the twenty-first century schizoid men from *NME* may feel, *Piano Man* is a great album—so good, in fact, that I felt compelled to stir from my usual lethargy and investigate Mr Joel and his history further.

THE MAN'S recording career in fact began well before his solo career, as he played in a Long Island band called The Hassles, who did an album for UA in 1968, and he then formed a duo with the drummer and released an album on Epic in 1969 under the slightly horrendous name of Attila. Like most curio items, both of these have long since gone to the Great Bargain Bin in the Sky, so I'm afraid I can't pass judgement on their quality, or lack of it. After these ill-fated ventures, Billy apparently decided on a solo career, and in 1971 joined Family Productions, a small L.A. based label. Fear of legal repercussions (or worse) prevents the reproduction of Billy's remarks about his continuing involvement with this organisation, but it seems clear that his experiences should be a lesson to embryonic rock-stars on the folly of hasty signatures. Anyway, Billy's first solo album, *Cold Spring Harbour*, was released on Family Productions in the States and Philips in Europe, but needless to say it's deleted here, although it might still be available in the States, and according to *Musicmaster* it can be obtained here from RPC, 10 Kingsland High Street, Dalston.

The album is produced by the ironically named Artie Ripp, while the other half of Family Productions, one Irwin Mazur, assumes the formidable sounding role of 'Executive Producer and Artist Direction'. Mr Ripp, according to Eamon Frame, used to be with The Kama Sutra gang, and showered himself with glory producing people like The Critters in the mid-sixties, but unfortunately this experience doesn't manifest itself too clearly, as the production is a bit muddy and uneven, and apparently in the process of transferring from tape to acetate a machine fault caused the music to come out a quarter tone higher than it had been recorded, which makes the vocals sound a little chirpy on occasion. Not surprisingly, Billy isn't too happy with the album.

Musically, it's interesting rather than startling; it's got some nice melodies, some very Beatle-ish, especially 'You Can Make Me Free' where his voice sounds just like McCartney, and he proves himself a more than capable pianist, with a range spreading

from raucous honky-tonk to the quasi-classical instrumental 'Nocturne'. On the debit side however, the album is lyrically flat with seven of the songs being basically run-of-the-mill love songs, and only 'Everybody Loves You Now' showing signs of the incisive observation and wry wit that help make *Piano Man* such a joy. The arrangements, too, dominated by piano and voice after the backings had been remixed, get a bit samey by the end of the first side, which is a shame because it means undue emphasis is thrown on the lyrics and vocals, which are still in the 'shows promise' stage.

AND NOW for the good news. Nearly two years later a second album, *Piano Man* was released by Columbia and is compelling evidence of how that promise had developed. Whereas the vocals on *Cold Spring Harbour* suggested an uncertainty before a crossfire of influences, on *Piano Man* they are strong and individual, and while six of the ten songs still deal with

love or relationships, they do it in a way that conveys personal experience rather than bland cliché. From the uncloying tenderness of 'If I Only Had The Words' to the benediction of 'Travelling Prayer', and the wistful farewell of 'Stop in Nevada', the songs are vignettes steeped in authenticity—as are 'Piano Man' itself, 'Captain Jack', and 'Somewhere Along The Line', and if 'Billy The Kid' is spectacularly unrealistic—a tissue of lies, in fact it more than compensates with its spaghetti western melodramatic atmosphere.

And that's not all. The move to Columbia brought with it a new producer, Michael Stewart, brother of John, a new arranger, Michael Omartian, whose work with other people like Albert Hammond is little short of dynamite, and a roster of L.A. super-session-eers that's enough to make a poor boy green with envy. Suffice it to say that these men enhance Joel's maturing talent to the full, whether on low-key stuff like 'You're My Own' or on the epic production jobs 'Captain

Billy Joel

Jack' and 'Billy The Kid'. I can honestly say there's not a single track I don't like, and most of them I love—the whole album is unreservedly recommended to anybody with the least interest in music.

Because of contractual difficulties *Piano Man* didn't see the light of day in Britain until April of this year, nearly two years after its initial release, and by that time another album, *Streetlife Serenade* was already out in the States, and doing almost as well as *Piano Man*. It must be admitted that my initial reaction to *Streetlife Serenade* was the disappointment that goes with a feeling of being cheated of something rightfully yours—in this case aesthetic pleasure. The superb arrangements on the second album are spectacularly absent, and the overall sound is more straightforward and rockier, although the musicians used are fundamentally the same. Lyrically the album veers away from the romantic preoccupations of the first two to such an extent that of the ten tracks only one is an overt love-song, while two more are stylised instruments that do little more than demonstrate the undoubted scope of Joel's piano technique. The remaining seven tracks explore further the vein of suburban consciousness opened up in 'Captain Jack' and the theme of the rock star's dilemma following on from 'Everybody Loves You Now' and 'Somewhere Along The Line'. A score of listenings has mellowed my antipathy towards *Streetlife Serenade*, mainly because, like Elton John with whom he's often unfairly compared, Billy has such a strong sense of melody that he can overcome uninspired lyrics or ordinary arrangements, but I still don't find it as refreshing or affecting as *Piano Man*. Anyway, that's my problem, you can make up your own minds when it's released here around July time, or even earlier if you feel inspired to grab an import copy.

RIGHT, THAT'S his track record dealt with, so join us now as we wend our way down a darkened hotel corridor somewhere in Central London, and enter an unprepossessing room where a waiter is clearing away a late breakfast and our young hero is sleepily donning a sweatshirt that proclaims allegiance to Westport Academy.

ZZ: Let's start at the beginning.

BJ: It all began in a little hospital room in the Bronx.

ZZ: It sounds as if you started off pretty early playing in bars using a forged ID card. Did you start as a solo artist?

BJ: No, I was in local bands before I really did any recording. This was around '65, '66.

ZZ: This was on Long Island. Does that imply that the local bands would be in the Young Rascals mould, because that sort of music was basically what was happening.

BJ: This was just before the Rascals broke. The big thing in America was still the early British groups—the Zombies, the Kinks, Gerry & The Pacemakers, Herman's Hermits. We were the living jukebox type band in Long Island clubs, church dances, high school dances and things like this.

ZZ: And you came to the conclusion that it was an absolute pain in the arse.

BJ: Well, I was asked to join a band called the Hassles, who were kind of the hot band on Long Island, playing the organ. They

were making records, and I figured "Oh, great!"—at that time anybody who had a record contract was big-time. I was with them for a year, almost two years.

ZZ: Were you playing any original material, or was it all cover versions?

BJ: Some of it was original, and it was basically somewhere between the Rascals and the Vanilla Fudge, which was a big production of songs. I got together with one of the other guys and we would come up with some things, but they weren't too good. We weren't the Lennon & McCartney of Long Island. It wasn't a very good band.

ZZ: After the Hassles and the brief venture with the drummer, you did loads of odd jobs for a while. Was that when you started to write the material you eventually did on *Cold Spring Harbour*?

BJ: That was probably about the same time. I picked some strange gigs to get some money, I even worked in an ink factory. I was burned with bands and I wanted to write. I just said, "OK, I'll do this for a while." I only did the inking job for a couple of months. When the guys started telling me "You'll get a raise when you're 40, and a pension when you're 65," I thought "I gotta leave, I gotta go, goodbye." I wasn't really thinking about doing a solo career, I was thinking about being a songwriter, and the advice I got was that if you want to get your songs noticed and published you should make your own album.

ZZ: So how did you get involved with Artie Ripp and Family Productions?

BJ: I signed with a small company in New York called Just Sunshine which was run by Michael Lang, who did the Woodstock Festival, and as part of a deal that he had with Artie Ripp I got transferred to his label. I also signed all my publishing away, and I signed myself into a terrible deal. I was a dumb kid, and I would sign whatever I was told to sign. I was only about 20 and it's so easy to take advantage of a musician. I didn't know what was going on... I didn't know anything about publishing or monies that were owed to me. I found I got ripped off a lot while I was making the album.

ZZ: Was it originally intended as a general release album, or was it done basically as a demo to publicise your songs?

BJ: Oh no, it was supposed to be distributed and everything, but it never was, there was a whole political thing going on between the production company and the distributors. I went on tour for six months, I literally lived on the road for six months, and I had a band together and nobody got paid. Cigarette money, you know, and sometimes we'd get meals taken care of, but mostly we paid for our own food. After six months we were going: "Hey! What's going on? Aren't we going to get any money?" I was told: "Oh, it's all promotion!" And I found out there was a lot of money that went by. But after that album I split, after that six-month tour, I just got fed-up. That's when I took the gig in the piano bar. I wanted to get out of that deal. So that was, like, a year and a half of hiding out.

ZZ: You just cut all your connections...

BJ: Right. I disappeared. I took a different name. Billy Joel is my real name, Martin is my middle name, so... 'Bill Martin at the keyboards'.

ZZ: What is a piano bar? That's a stupid, naive question, but we don't really have things like that over here.

BJ: No, I've been asked that a couple of times. It surprised me that that's the single here, because people don't know what a piano bar is. It's just a cocktail lounge, it's like any other bar, except instead of a jukebox there's a guy playing piano. So instead of putting money in the jukebox you ask the piano player if he can play something. It's a dying thing really, they don't have as many as they used to.

ZZ: So one minute you'd be playing 'Misty', and 'Great Ball Of Fire' the next.

BJ: Right. I know they have pubs where there's a piano and somebody might sit down and play, but this was an actual gig, every night, nine till two.

ZZ: That's a hell of a stint.

BJ: It wasn't bad, it was steady money, Union scale, and I didn't have to work that hard.

ZZ: Where was this club?

BJ: It was in the Westford district of Los Angeles, because my attorney was in Los Angeles, this company was based in L.A. Most of the music business now is in L.A., so you had to go out there really to do battle. It took about a year and a half to get with CBS. Actually I was going to go to Atlantic in February '73, I think, and then Clive Davis jumped in, because he had seen me down in the Village, and at the Mar-Y-Sol Festival, and I guess he didn't know negotiations were going on, but he jumped in.

ZZ: Did you play Mar-Y-Sol solo, or with the band?

BJ: That was during the six-month tour I did in '72, and we did really well. I knew nobody could have heard of me at Mar-Y-Sol, and we went on in the middle of the afternoon, and got three encores or something. My road manager kept running back saying, "They want you again, they want you again". I said, "What? Are they crazy? What's going on? It must be the heat." And that's when Clive saw me, and he got involved, but he... that thing came down with Clive just before I signed, but he was the one who actually initiated my getting on CBS.

ZZ: Was it a case of record companies coming after you, or you coming out of hiding?

BJ: Well what happened in the piano bar was that after a while the music business community in L.A. knew I was there. They knew who I was, 'cos I'd played The Troubadour as Billy Joel, and I'd played in L.A. a couple of times so there was an interest. I didn't want them to know though, but towards the end of the gig, they'd heard I was playing in this piano bar, and they'd come down and say, "Why don't you play your own stuff".

ZZ: Did Columbia say, "Well, we'll try to get you out of your existing contract"? Did they think they'd stand a chance of that?

BJ: Well, they couldn't really go ahead and go into this whole legal battle, because I was unproven as far as they were concerned. They wanted to sign me so there's a kind of co-existing deal. The only way I could sign with CBS was to agree to a certain extent of percentage being given to Family Productions, otherwise it was just back to the salt-mines again.

ZZ: Was it about this time that Joel-mania in Philadelphia started?

BJ: Yeah. We heard a lot of noise coming out



of Philadelphia. On this tour I did in '72 I did a radio concert in Philly that they taped, and people started requesting one of the cuts on the tape, 'Captain Jack', which hadn't been recorded on a record yet, and it ended up being the station's most requested song in their history. They didn't play it every day, just every once in a while, and then we got this great offer from Philadelphia to do this big concert, and that's what kind of started the live performance thing. It started to really take off after that, and the records started selling right away in Philadelphia.

ZZ: How did you get together with Michael Stewart?

BJ: He was suggested as a producer by one of the guys at CBS, who said I might like to use Michael Stewart as a producer, because I'd been going round to this one and that. Producers in Hollywood are really weird, it's like "I'm the captain of this ship, and I'll drive you—just sit in the boat." I wasn't really at the end of any great search for a producer, but Michael happened to fit while I was talking to different people. Mostly it was just his ideas; he's musical, he's not just a producer who wants to make little hit records, he wants to make music. I felt compatible with him.

ZZ: All the songs on the *Piano Man* album, did you write them over a period, or in the studio, or what?

BJ: Those were songs... 'Captain Jack' I wrote about a year before I actually recorded 'Piano Man', 'Travelling Prayer' and 'Billy The

Kid' I think were 1972. Most of the things were written in '73 before recording. I didn't write anything in the studio, I don't write while I'm in the studio, or on the road.

ZZ: 'Billy The Kid' is an unusual track in terms of subject matter. Was it intended to be like 'Desperado', the rock star-as-outlaw analogy?

BJ: Yeah, that's what it was. Basically it was an experiment with an impressionist type of lyric. It was historically totally inaccurate as a story, it wasn't supposed to be listened to as a story. I like writing more soundtrack type things, and I wanted to try something musical.

ZZ: Who did the arrangement on that song, because it really captures the atmosphere.

BJ: I actually did the arrangement—I wanted it to sound like *The Magnificent Seven*. Jimmie Haskell wrote it and conducted the string section, but I told him what I wanted. I worked pretty closely with the arrangements on the *Cold Spring Harbour* album. It was too much on that.

ZZ: It struck me that the arrangements on *Cold Spring Harbour* were much more muted and they came to the fore on *Piano Man*.

BJ: They were muted, but you should have heard them before I muted them. It was like divebombers and *Sergeant Pepper* with an orchestra. It was really bad boogie.

ZZ: Was 'Captain Jack' about anybody specific?

BJ: Well, the character in 'Captain Jack' was

a composite of different kinds of people. I was just sitting around one day looking out of the window wondering what I was going to write about, and kinda wrote about what was going on outside. I mean, Long Island is a suburb and it was about a suburban type of character. There's a lot of frustration living in the suburbs—you don't have an identity as you would if you came from the city or the country, there's city music and there's country music, but there's really no suburban music, you kinda copy the city. You have both influences pulling on you.

ZZ: Do you do that, sit down and say, "OK, I'm going to write a song now"?

BJ: Sometimes I can, sometimes I can't. I don't have a formula for writing a song, sometimes I just wake up in the morning and write a song in five minutes because I've been dreaming about it or thinking about it. But basically I'm pretty slow, I only finish about twenty songs in a year, though I have two thousand bits and pieces. I work off a title, or a piece of melody I have, or a lyric idea. If I run into a dead-end I don't keep kicking it, if I can't get beyond it after a certain amount of time, I just drop it because I think the best songs are the ones that just roll right out. Like 'Billy The Kid'—I wrote that song all in one day—it was kind of a spoof on the rock-star type of thing.

ZZ: When you use the word 'spoof', do you imply that rock stars take themselves too seriously?

Billy Joel

BJ: Definitely. I think as you sign a record contract, you go through this change, because as soon as you put your name on the paper you're an artist. The record contract says "Billy Joel, herein referred to as the artist", and automatically you become an artist just by signing. I know a lot of people who've had one or two hit records and are really hot now, enormously popular, and they're really... you know... "I'm a star"... and they drive round in their limousines, and they dress up, they do the whole number, flash around, have dinner with Mick Jagger.

ZZ: Did you go through that at all? After *Piano Man* was released, you seemed to shoot from obscurity to prominence.

BJ: Well, I'd been on the verge for a couple of years, of being successful playing, so I had a cynical attitude to it, even before it happened. When it did happen, I just got even more cynical. I don't take it that seriously. I take my music very seriously, and I take performing and recording and writing seriously, but the other things that go with it I don't. I know people who are rock'n'roll stars, and that's all they are—just rock'n'roll stars, that's it. That's why I moved away from Hollywood. I live back in New York now, right on the Hudson River, because I had to get out of Hollywood. I liked California, I liked L.A., but there's a whole... rock'n'roll—it's like a music factory now. Eighty percent of the music business is there.

ZZ: When you did a lot of touring to promote the *Piano Man* album did you use the same band as on the earlier tour in 1972?

BJ: No, it was the same drummer, Rhys Clark, and the guitar was Don Evans from the *Cold Spring Harbour* album. There's Doug Stegmar our bass player, he's not on any of the albums, and Johnny Almond from Mark Almond playing sax and keyboards. We used to have a pedal steel/banjo player, but he split last year and we replaced him with Johnny Almond.

ZZ: Why him, because as far as I can remember there are no wind instruments of any kind on the albums?

BJ: No, there weren't. It was a whole other dimension that we wanted to move in, you know. I'd never really worked with a horn player. We needed another musician to round out the group after the banjo/pedal steel player left, and Johnny can play some keyboards and he also plays saxophones, and we started out with him playing keyboards, but little by little more sax crept in, and now it's one of the featured instruments. It's really interesting, we do 'Travelling Prayer' with the sax... it really works well. As I said, if you'd seen it, I wouldn't have to explain a lot.

ZZ: Why choose people like Ron Tuff and Emory Gordy? Was that purely Michael Stewart's choice?

BJ: Yeah, he was used to working with them, and on that particular album I didn't want to go too far away from what he was used to, because he knows more about the production of records than I do. I'm still a baby as far as production goes, I'm not ready to take over.

ZZ: But you hope to eventually?

BJ: Well, I don't want to knock out the chance that I might some day, it's just that I'm concentrating in another area right now.

ZZ: Did you use Michael Omartian on the new album because you felt you and Michael

Stewart were ready to do the arrangements yourself?

BJ: I wanted to make this album a lot simpler. I wanted to keep it within the framework of a streetlife kind of sound. I didn't want a big orchestral happening. It was kind of a concept album, not so much a concept from beginning to end, it's just the overall production and the feeling of the material—a streetlife concept.

ZZ: Are they going to release that one over here, or wait until *Piano Man* dies down?

BJ: I think it's scheduled for July or something.

ZZ: That must be awkward. Presumably by that time you'll be getting another album ready for the States?

BJ: By the time that's run its course, I'll probably just be coming out with a new one. I'm going to take a while, because I've been on the road for a long time. Since that album came out I've been off for about a month, and then I'm over here, and then I'll do some live recordings, so by the time another album comes out it's going to be next year. If I get this next album finished by the autumn then I'd like to come over here and do a tour.

ZZ: Most American artists, whereas they used to have some respect for England, now they see it as a minute little place you could fit into Texas. It means nothing in terms of income or prestige any more.

BJ: Well, maybe that's where they're at. There's a lot of groups and a lot of people that come from over here that I like and were an influence to me. Yes, and the Beatles, and David Bowie... and these crazy things come out of England, this tiny little island.

ZZ: Is your background largely in pop, because the instrumental tracks on the albums suggest quite wide influences?

BJ: I like to be as eclectic as possible. I don't like to stick in one bag, because then you become "Oh, he's the guy who does, this". I believe in being as eclectic as you can be. I like different kinds of music, whatever's good. I don't want to limit myself to writing in one vein.

ZZ: Could we talk briefly about the economics of life on the road, because in England at the moment if you're relatively unknown and you're trying to get on the road with a band it's just not economically viable.

BJ: Well, it's real hard now if you don't have a hit record to play anywhere. Whereas you could at least be a support act a year or two ago, now the economy is so low that even people who have hit records are having a tough time. People used to go to concerts just because it was something to do, but now people don't have the money to spend, so they're only going to things they know about for sure. I think what they're doing now is what they call packages. They're putting two well-known people together, instead of one well-known guy headlining and an unknown support which I think is good, because people are getting more for their money. It's cut a lot of the junk out—people are only going to go to something they know is good. I've only had one hit record, really top ten record in the States, but I can keep headlining because we do a good show live. It's more of a word of mouth

thing.

ZZ: Presumably you're more adaptable than these big groups?

BJ: Yeah, we're pretty flexible. We're still the light cavalry, we don't go on the road with an entourage of fifty people. I think there's thirteen people that we go out with—five in the band, and then there's the sound company that has three or four people, then there's light trees and two people for that, plus roadies, so it comes out to about thirteen people. It's kinda self-contained.

ZZ: So in fact it's quite a fair organisation really, compared with an English equivalent?

BJ: Compared with most American bands that's really a skeleton crew. An eight-man road crew isn't really all that much. If you're playing concert halls then you've got to have at least a sound system; now either the promoter can provide one, which we've done and we've got a different sound every night, or you can hire all your own, which is what we do now, so you get some consistency when you play. I don't like just going up on stage blind. I won't play if it's a bad piano, and I won't play if the seating arrangement is set up so half the audience can't see.

ZZ: If you could pick a dream band who would you have as sideman out of anybody living or dead?

BJ: I don't know. My favourite musicians probably wouldn't be compatible with the music I play. I think all these people who are that good are normally good when they're featured on their own, more or less. When the great superstars get together it always comes out like a mess. I remember I had a jam once in L.A. with Dave Mason, who I really like, and Joe Cocker, who I've idolised for years, and we got on stage and did 'Feelin' All Right', which was probably one of the low point performances that anybody's ever seen. I mean it was exciting because there were these famous people up on stage, and the audience was going nuts, but after we got off stage we looked at each other and went "That was terrible", and Joe was kinda looking at us as if to say "OK, so what do we do now?" I think the band I have now is a perfect band.

ZZ: Why didn't you use the road band on the earlier recordings?

BJ: Well, that was more or less because Michael felt comfortable in the studio with those musicians, whereas the live band is a lot hotter, and a lot harder to record in the studio. But we've had so many good comments about the live thing that we want to try recording live with the band. I've got about four or five new songs that I want to try out, and for the rest of the year I'm basically just going to be writing, getting a lot of material together, and when I feel like I have enough material... if the live thing works out maybe we'll do a live album, or I may split the difference and just record the basic tracks live, and do the rest of the album in the studio.

□ PAUL KENDALL



ANDY FRASER

The Free story was well covered in ZZ's 41 and 42, but there's been a lot happened since then; Bad Company's meteoric rise to fame, Kossoff's first tentative steps on the comeback trail and lastly, Andy Fraser, who has surely had the most varied career of all the ex-Free men. And it's Andy that we'll look at now.

SHARKS

Andy's first post-Free gig (apart from the ill-fated Toby, which like Paul Rodger's Peace, was only a reaction to the first Free split, and in all fairness, neither were really meant to last any length of time), was Sharks, potentially one of the most exciting line-ups of the seventies. Marty Simon, an American, had been in Mylon Lefevre's Holy Smoke, but quit and came to London looking for work. Someone gave him Andy's number and things began to move. Andy had a lot of songs lying around unused and a band seemed like a good outlet. Andy in turn phoned session guitarist Chris Spedding (late of Battered Ornaments, Jack Bruce and Nucleus) and some heavy jamming convinced them that a band was a good idea. Like all good-luck stories, in the middle of this a tape arrived from a budding young singer (from a Hull band called Nothingeverhappens) called Steve 'Snips' Parsons. Someone at Island's A&R department liked the tape and suggested Snips to the band. And that was it, Sharks was formed.

ISLAND HAD high hopes for Sharks and the band were quickly in the studio and the press were invited to one of those midnight recording sessions. To push the band's image, Island were converting Spedding's Pontiac Le Mans into a 'Sharkmobile', complete with dorsal fin on the roof and sharks' teeth on the radiator grille. Everybody was excited about the project initially, and Snips had this to say at the outset; "It's very simple... There's none of those head trips in it, it's just four people getting together to play songs on a stage." This early euphoria soon wore off as the various songwriting factions began to pull the band in opposite directions. Also, the debut album, *First Water* was too quickly recorded and is an unsatisfactory document and only a shadow of what it could have been. Things finally came to a head after a minor accident, a car crash—the Sharkmobile drove into a tree—injured Andy and he was off the road for a while. It was during the lay-off that he pondered his future, eventually deciding to split.

"Because I couldn't play for a month, it gave me a chance to reflect. We had to cancel gigs. As I wasn't happy, I mean, from that point (the crash) I said, 'Let's forget it as from now'. Whereas before I wouldn't have blown out gigs, not because of that. It was a bit silly on my part, Sharks. After Sharks, I took two years off and travelled around and gained new influences and generally worked out what I wanted to be doing. I started doing that just before Sharks, and Sharks sorta evolved around me. I mean, Marty came in, Chris came in, then we got Snips and it was kinda, 'yeah funky man, nice'. Like there was a band there, we recorded an album. Before I knew it, there was a BAND. And then you realise you've got to be a little



more sure of what you're doing before you do it because you've got people who are investing money in you, writing press, a whole lot of things that you just can't cruise along saying, 'nice, man' to. And I realised at that point that it wasn't working, the band didn't have a particular image together. There were more than two directions... Snips was writing songs, I was writing songs and it just wasn't gelling. And because it wasn't gelling, they were getting more and more uptight vibes and I said, 'I'll leave, I'll continue my direction and you continue yours' and that came after the car crash, it shakes you a bit. I thought I'd broken my finger; I thought at first I'd smashed my head open and I sorta laughed, but when I thought I'd broken my finger I went into shock. And because we had to cancel gigs, it gave me time to think about it. I thought, better to stop it now while it is stopped than to let it get way out of hand. That's what we did, and they got Nick Judd in on keyboards and Busta on bass. I think, for the better, it was a much better idea."

IN A WAY it was, they recorded a second album, *Jab It In Your Eye*, a more even set than *First Water*. A tour of America tightened them up, and they gigged solidly around Britain, looking on the brink of big things, until a series

of splits, abortive recording sessions, and general despair forced them to call it a day. A bit of a shame because Snips is a fine singer in the Rod Stewart/Joe Cocker mould and currently seems wasted in the Baker/Gurvitz Army. Spedding too, drifted back into the session life (David Essex, the Wombles even!), released a weird solo single and is currently involved with Roy Harper's new band.

FRASER/MILLER BAND

Like Andy said, a lot of his time was spent travelling around gaining new influences. One of those adventures provided one of 1974's minor intrigues; Andy's long-standing but eventually fruitless union with Frankie Miller. As you all should know, Frankie Miller is a veteran Scottish rocker who first came to fame via his excellent debut album, *Once In A Blue Moon*, and a series of gigs with the Brinsleys. There are few better vocalists in the now fashionable white soul/funk tradition than Frankie, so their attempt at forming a band was a much-anticipated event. Rehearsals to find a suitable backing band were held at the Hope and Anchor's famous basement and a line-up of Frankie Miller on vocals and guitar, Andy on bass, Mike Kellie (late of Spooky Tooth) on drums,

Henry McCullough (ex-Grease Band and Wings) and Nick Judd who was drafted in from the defunct second version of Sharks. (Nick had previously to Sharks been pianist in Audience and a later version of Jucy Lucy.) Despite all the anticipation and press interest, 1974 drew to a close with no positive developments. During the year, Frankie Miller had put the finishing touches to his second album, *High-life*, recorded in New Orleans and produced by Allen Toussaint. Apart from one solitary try-out gig at Edinburgh University (which I caught the end of and was most impressed with the brief few minutes that I saw), it was never publicised outside the University walls and remains a mysterious event. Was it a rehearsal for the real thing? I think so. Anyway, the year came to an end with the announcement that the Fraser/Miller band was no more, instead an equally promising Frankie Miller/Henry McCullough band had emerged! Obviously there is a lot of intrigue in there somewhere, but here is Andy's version (which sounds like he's playing it down a bit).

"It's quite amazing the amount of people that thought it was a definite band, as though we were gonna be doing this'n'that. The Frankie Miller thing was one of a few things that I've been involved in over the last two or three years that have all been part of me finding my way musically. After working with people like Paul Rodgers and Snips, I've learned a lot from Frankie Miller singing-wise. And we were getting quite serious about getting a band together, to be called the Frankie Miller/Andy Fraser Band, but I think what happened there was, Frankie has very much his own style, and I think I do too, and I think where we failed was making a third style, or just bringing those two things together. That didn't happen at all" Was it because of a clash of singers? "No, I wasn't even gonna sing in that band. I didn't realise it at the time, but it was probably a point of frustration, I mean, it's something that's been building in me for a long time. Lots of people have in fact asked me to play bass in their group (this is a reference to bands like the Faces, who apparently asked Andy to originally replace Ronnie Lane). I think they liked the songs as well and wanted to do them and I really couldn't do that you know, it wouldn't quite satisfy me. For me to be part of any musical thing, I must be very much a part of it, I have to feel my personality is being satisfied, my songs are being done and whatever."

ANDY FRASER BAND

The demise of the Fraser/Miller Band neatly led into the formation, around Christmas '74, of the Andy Fraser Band. "We became a band when Kim joined just before Christmas, I'd been with Nick (Judd) for a few months 'cos we'd both been with Frankie Miller. Nick and I felt a strong sympathy for each other's music and after we'd jammed together for a while, without Frankie and the band, we decided all we needed was a drummer. We started looking for one and found Kim Turner (from a band called Cat Iron) after auditioning, like twenty-seven other guys. This was just before Christmas and we had ten days' rehearsal and went out to a farm and recorded the album (on Ronnie Lane's Mobile Studio—same as Bad Company's



Straight Shooter).

"We're very, very excited about the potential of this band. We didn't think it was a strange line-up (drums, bass guitar as lead instrument and electric piano as rhythm, and bass via the bass pedals), it was just the natural thing to do. The way I've played bass over the last few years had developed naturally and Nick being the sort of player that he is needs to be more than just one of those keyboard players who gets locked away in the back of a seven-piece band, and he's doing things with the bass pedals which are just amazing. So many people have said that the line-up is weird, so maybe that's in our favour." Andy went on to explain his bass-guitar-as-lead technique, "The reason is, I've been playing a four-stringed instrument for about ten years, and it would probably take another ten years to get a six-stringed one together. So I thought, just change the sound, man." Fair enough.

A FAIRLY AMBITIOUS tour was quickly set up for April, and for better or worse, started at the Rainbow. It wasn't the best of debuts and the press were critical of the noise level, and a general feeling that the band had over-stepped themselves in relation to their status. The Rainbow was nowhere near full and of the gigs I saw, at Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow the halls were only about a third full each. But there was no doubting the enthusiasm of the faithful. Tho' small in number, they made a lot of noise and generally had a good time. I know Free had a fabulous reputation, but even trading on his past (it has been almost *four* years since Andy split) a less ambitious build-up might have been preferable.

Onstage however, the band were certainly good—Andy had provided a lot of good songs and they played them with a lot of enthusiasm. Andy proved a revelation as a singer, not unlike Paul Rodgers, and also has this aggressive, powerful bass style, swinging it about like it was a Telecaster. Kim Turner too is a fine drummer, a bit flashy, but he fairly rattles round the kit. Probably Nick Judd's contribution is a bit under-rated. Apart from achieving a nice tone on electric piano, he also

supplies a bass-line on the bass pedals, over which Andy is allowed the freedom to lay his lead part. Back to Andy: "People have been so nice. We're a new band, right? I've found out that millions of people knew who Free was, but only two hundred knew who Andy Fraser was. It's a new band, it's a new name, new songs, the whole concept, and to come out and play big concert halls to people who have no idea what they've paid their money to see. It's fantastic. Every night we've had an encore. It's been great. They've really listened to the music." About his vocals, Andy had this to say: "A few have remarked on that (similarity to Paul Rodgers). Paul's always been a big influence on me, as we have on each other. We wrote songs together for four or five years. I don't think anyone's had a bigger influence on me, and I think I can safely say that no one has had as big an influence on Paul as me. Because we wrote songs together for a long time, we needed each other to finish songs and to find our way. I've learnt a lot from him singing-wise and lyrically, and he learned from me musically. It got to the point where I was writing songs on my own and so was Paul. It goes like that, you know, he was getting pretty good on the guitar and piano, whereas before he wasn't. I can finish songs on my own and love singing them, which I suppose, brings us to now."

THE ALBUM, simply called *The Andy Fraser Band* was released in April on CBS (80731) and was a fine debut set. The first tracks on each side, 'Don't Hide Your Love Away' (also the single) and 'Double Heart Trouble' all really catchy, tight little songs. The emphasis is very much on the funkier side of recent white rock (AWB/Jess Roden/Frankie Miller) and there's more than a suspicion of Stevie Wonder's current style on 'Changed Man'. It's an easy album to get into, all the more so when you consider the mere ten days rehearsal. I'm not a great fan of albums recorded before a band has toured (this applies also to, coincidentally, Sharks and Bad Co.), but obviously the record-tour-plug syndrome necessitates a band having an album out.

Originally this story was meant to end on a high-note for Andy—another short tour of the bigger universities, followed by a debut US

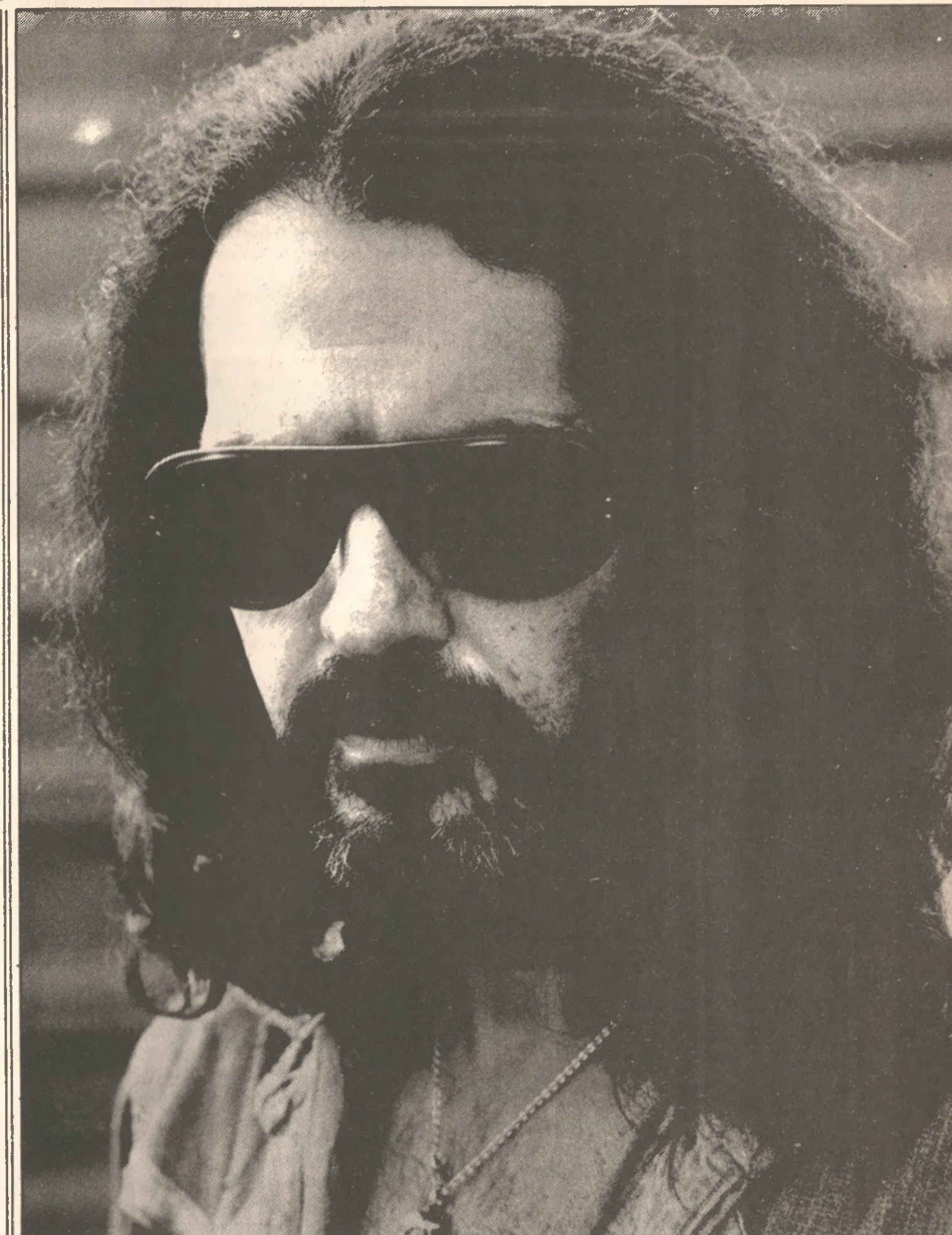
tour in May with Leslie West ["There's all sorts of tie-ups with Leslie. First of all, I think Leslie likes the songs (he does Andy's 'Little Bit Of Love' (Free) and 'Doctor Love' (Sharks) on his *Great Fatsby* album). We also did a tour (Free) with West, Bruce & Laing and when Sharks were formed, as Marty (Simon) was managed by Windfall, the band had Windfall as its American management to sort out any hassles, etc, Sharks toured with Mountain and so on. Leslie's always known what's been going on, and he digs us."] BUT John Tobler just phoned and calmly said, "I think you should know that the Andy Fraser Band has split up." Just like that, what a drag. It's a shame 'cos Andy's getting this reputation now that he doesn't seem to be able to keep a band together. I can only guess at the reasons; Nick Judd and Kim Turner didn't seem to be getting on too well—not outright antagonism, but you could sense it. Maybe Nick felt he was getting a raw deal. He didn't get too many solos, and despite Andy saying that they would just use his songs initially because he had quite a few stockpiled, maybe Nick felt aggrieved there too. Anyway, it's done now—a few weeks after the tour, they did a 'Top Gear' broadcast, which was decidedly rosey. Probably due to a lay-off after the tour, Andy's voice wasn't too hot and the songs were ragged. That too could've demoralised them, allied to less than fantastic album sales.

Andy's really got to get it together soon, I know he's still only twenty-three or so, but it's always hard to make-up on lost time. His contribution to 'Alright Now', 'My Brother Jake', and 'Little Bit Of Love' and all the album tracks, certainly assure him of a place in rock's 'Hall Of Fame', but there's no reason why there can't be much more. It's up to you Andy.

A S A POSTSCRIPT, let's go back to Andy's first professional band, the pre-'Bare Wires' John Mayall band (Mayall, Andy, Mick Taylor, Keef Hartley, Chris Mercer, Rip Kant and Dick Heckstall-Smith). Depending on how you view the Mayall myth, he's either a brilliant band leader or a tyrant. Andy, I think, favours the latter: "Oh I don't know . . . he's a bit like an old grannie. I'll tell you what happened. One night I heard that John Mayall needed a new bass player. Sunday morning I went for an audition, Sunday afternoon we did a benefit for some blues player at the 51 Club, Sunday evening we did a Guildford club somewhere. Monday morning I went into school and said, 'I've left'. Monday afternoon I bought a new bass and Monday evening I did another gig and carried on gigging seven nights a week (including two in Scotland, which I saw) until I left. Now, I didn't have particularly a lot of chance to express myself musically. It's definitely John Mayall's band, he pays all these guys a wage to do what he wants. Nevertheless, I was fifteen at the time, my first professional group, and I got on particularly well with Mick Taylor, who was only eighteen and had been the baby of the group, till I joined. We had a particular sympathy with each other, smoked joints behind the bog when Big John wasn't looking. But I mean, it was great experience for me . . . would be for anyone at fifteen . . ."

□ BERT MUIRHEAD

SIMON STOKES



T HIS IS ONE of those increasingly frequent occurrences when I'm forced to ask myself what you're going to make of what follows. It's worth taking a substantial bet on the fact that most of the staff of *ZigZag* haven't heard of the artist I intend to witter about, so where does that leave the unfortunate reader? Anyway, let's tell you how it all happened. During one of our visits to the CBS building in Los Angeles, Pete spotted a very strange looking album lying around, and leapt upon it with some gusto. It then transpired that I already had the artist's first album, and on such scanty evidence, we decided there and then to try to talk to this cat. When you see the sleeve of the album Pete saw, you'll maybe understand, but wait a little while, and you should see it reproduced. The man we

are talking about is Simon Stokes, and it is hoped that some of the buzz we felt talking to the man can transmit itself to you.

BEGINNINGS

"I was writing for Elektra as a staff writer, but even before that I had had a lot of songs out, R&B songs, but when R&B was really R&B. Basically, it was limited play and stuff, but then I went with Elektra. I had been there for about two years, and Lonnie Mack was coming up for a session. I had written a song for him called 'Voodoo Woman', which we recorded with him on guitar, but he didn't know whether it was right for him, so Elektra went ahead and released it, but as Simon Stokes and the Nighthawks. I had cut it as a dub for Lonnie, with him playing on it, and I think he was going to listen to it,

Simon Stokes

but I was just lucky, because it came out, and it was a hit."

A LITTLE BACKGROUND here. 'Voodoo Woman' came out in around 1970 on Elektra, both in America and Britain, and it's a fine single, which is well worth looking for. You surely can hear young Mr Mack, because he puts in some very typical and brilliant fills at the end of each verse, and on the B side, 'Can't Stop Now', makes like a saxophone with his guitar. Both very good tracks, written by Simon and his rhythm guitar player, Randall Keith. While the main side certainly seems appropriate to Lonnie Mack's style, 'Can't Stop Now' has more in common with the more acid crazed vocalists who form part of *Nuggets*, which I hope you all possess. It should therefore appeal to the punk rock fans among you, as there are similarities with such singers as those who graced the Shadows Of Knight and the Thirteenth Floor Elevators. That should start some people looking for it . . . While this was the first part of the latest Stokesian outburst, there had been other musical efforts beforehand.

"85 years ago when I was a kid, I had a record in Boston I wrote called 'Breaker Of Dreams'. It was the first song I ever wrote, and I wrote it on the freeway from one exit to the other exit, because I told the guy I'd have it finished. The name of the group was Johnny Mann and the Tornados, and they were all friends of mine, although I wasn't in the group. It was fun days, and they were playing around Boston. I guess about three months after that, I was listening to the radio, and I heard it one day. It went to a number one record up there, and being lazy, I decided to keep on at it rather than talk about work.

"I did cut some other records before 'Voodoo Woman'. I had a record out that was sort of an underground thing called 'Candy Is Dandy, But Love Don't Rot Your Teeth', and the group we called ourselves was Rock Bottom and the Candy Kisses."

The next question just has to be "When did you move to Hollywood, then?"

"I guess about 1965 or 6. I came out, and I just sort of liked it out here—I came out for two weeks, and never went home. I came out to see what it was like—you know, do you ever do that? And I've just never been home since. It's been nearly ten years, and I haven't been back. I just really like it here, it's sort of laid back, and there's a lot less staring and a lot more openness than there is, let's say, in the town depicted in *Straw Dogs*."

Let's quickly revert then to Lonnie Mack. "I don't know which of his albums 'Voodoo Woman' might have been destined for, but I have a song on one of his albums, *Glad I'm In The Band*, called 'Too Much Trouble'. He's really a good act . . . But when my record came out, I was basically off the label. Then my career hit a funny point. I went to MGM, and after I went there, a fellow named Mike Curb took over, and I was throttled, I mean I was literally throttled. It was a whole turnover in the music thing. I mean, he was into the Osmonds and so forth, and so when my record came out, it was like

. . . I'm not sure they wanted to release it, but anyway, that record took care of a year and a half, or two years, and became a collector's item in two weeks! The first band had a guy named Don Senneville on lead guitar. The bass player was named Bob Ledger, who had been with a lot of big groups, but he was heavy into motorcycles, and after the Nighthawks broke up, he got his ultimate job, some sort of a position with Harley Davidson, and he's ultimately happy, you know? Rhythm guitar was a guy named Randy Keith, who wrote 'Voodoo Woman' with me. We wrote a lot of things together, but I don't know where Randy is now, sort of travelling. And the drummer, I don't know. It's funny how you all go your separate ways. After being in a group for two years, and being on the road, and having the company change over to the Osmonds, and I was in an alley . . . we all broke up kind of friends, but there's a lot of bad memories as good as good memories . . ."

AT WHICH POINT, let's look at that excellent first album, titled *Simon Stokes And The Nighthawks*, which escaped briefly on MGM SE4677, but only in the States, although I have seen maybe half a dozen copies lying around in English shops. With regard to the personnel, the only things I should add are that Don Senneville is credited as Butch, and that the drummer was named Joe Yuele Junior. The album was produced by one Michael Lloyd, with the exception of 'Voodoo Woman', which was done by Linda Perry, who I believe was a staff producer for Elektra in those days. I really don't know too much about any of the other musicians, but if you do, I'd like to hear from you. Lonnie Mack, by the way, isn't credited at all, but that's not so surprising in view of the label change.

You get twelve tracks, reasonably enough, with seven of them written by the team of Stokes and Keith, three others just belonging to Simon, and two oldies, which maybe we should deal with first. Both should be familiar to your average r'n'r follower, or even to a novice—'Jambalaya' and 'Down In Mexico'. The former is done in a heavy sort of way, perhaps like Johnny Rivers would have done it in his 'Memphis' and 'Maybellene' days, but rather better. Live I would love to see it. Pretty much the same goes for the Leibert/Stoller song, except that where the Coasters did it as faintly humorous, the Stokes version is dramatic and powerful.

Good those two may be, but the originals are generally better. When 'Voodoo Woman' came out in Britain, it was promoted as being not dissimilar to the fabled 'swamp rock', as distilled by such noble practitioners as Creedence Clearwater Revival and Tony Joe White. This was probably because of the use of the word 'cajun', which you all know means sort of unable to speak very good English, and to do with witch doctors. Voodoo, cajun, swamps—evil, squire. "Yeah, they did try to call me swamp rock, although I'd never been down south in my life when I wrote that. It was just my opinion. See, when I was a kid, in the south, there was all sorts of lynchings and hangings and stuff, but I guess that's basically all changed now. So naturally, when I got down there I was looking for the worst, and I never saw the place because I was

so busy not seeing it. I've seen people coming here to Hollywood from other places, and they don't see it. They take pictures, and they only see what the place is really like when they look at their pictures when they've got home."

How to write a swamp rock song—end of part one. In fact, as well as 'Voodoo Woman', you get two more Stokes/Keith Louisiana lithographs in 'Southern Girl', an Alabama alternative to 'California Girls', and in 'Cajun Lil', by which time the whole concept is beginning to suffer. However, don't doubt that the first two in the trilogy are excellent. The seven other tracks are just well worth your time, going through 'Big City Blues', which is predictably about the strain of living in a city as opposed to a small town or even the country, 'Where Are You Going', a classic blues sounding like perhaps 'Have You Heard' off the Bluesbreakers album with Clapton, but technically far better made, 'Sugar Ann', which has some really fine changes which occur when you least expect them, 'Which Way', sung a la Joe Cocker at his best, with a very good extended guitar solo, 'Rhode Island Red', which doesn't seem to be the similarly titled recent song done by Ike and Tina Turner, but which has another splendid guitar solo, and 'You've Been In', which is another blues with a frantic middle passage. It's a very good song, but a little difficult to describe.

That's six of the seven. The final track, 'Ride On Angel', deserves its own paragraph, so here goes. The basic story is of a biker going into a bar, theoretically minding his own business and merely wanting a drink, until one of the locals in the bar starts to give him a hard time, and subsequently ends up a little bit dead. The biker is arrested, and goes to the electric chair, whereupon Simon enquires "If the bible says 'Thou shalt not kill', what excuse has the law?" Discussion of this song led to a whole lot of interesting topics, a few of which we'll get into at this point.

"I've always felt that a lot of motorcycle gangs, and gangs in general are like Billy the Kid, Jesse James and all those cats who used to ride around. But times have changed, and even then I don't think anybody really liked Billy the Kid shooting down people, although in retrospect you can look back, and it sounds kinda romantic. If Billy the Kid shot my wife, I wouldn't say 'Hi ho, Billy,' you know, I'd be kind of pissed off! But that's how I feel about motorcycle gangs—I always try to write about people that no-one writes about and that people basically don't care about. No-one cares about motorcycle gangs, and we always say it'd be great if everything was straightened out and cleaned up, and we all had money and all that, but there's a certain segment that no-one writes about, I don't think. When I wrote 'Ride On Angel', it encompassed a lot, because it started off as just a straight motorcycle song, and then I got into the killing in the bar, and from that somehow it eventually worked into a protest about the death penalty, the idea being that if people get into those positions, the law should find it difficult . . . Over here, the death penalty has been held in abeyance for a year, but I understand it's going to come back into effect by popular demand. I believe that means that people on Death Row are just waiting to

see what happens, having had a year to dwell on what might happen to them. As I understand it, they're going to bring it back, as they already have in a lot of states. But the thing with 'Ride On Angel' is that they'll kill him, and think nothing of it, but who punishes the law? They don't answer to anybody. I'm sure there's a lot of nice guys in motorcycle gangs, but I'm also sure there are shooting downs in the street. A lot of them here live outside the law. That's it—I mean, they've committed themselves, and there's a James Gang, Dalton Brothers effect. I was reading in the paper the other day about a gang who went into a town, there was some sort of fight at the bar between one of the gangs, and by the end of the night there were fifteen shot and killed in one bar. They weren't fooling or anything, they came back with guns, and the other gang rode off, and the police rode off after them, but forty riders rode off after some sort of carnage. I'm probably the only American act that sings about motorcycle gangs, and sort of pro, I suppose, if I had to specify. Because . . . does this sound similar to you? A guy gets up in the morning, shines his bike down, gets his uniform all shined up, very rigid in his set of rules, right? Now that could be a cop, and that could be a motorcycle gang, they could be Hell's Angels. It's just a matter of which side they happen to be on, because they're very similar. You know, you get in all the regalia, and the bike's the main thing. It could be either one. It's the same thing. I'm fascinated by cops although I'd never start writing cop songs."

CERTAINLY, Simon put over his point of view in an appealing way, and although I'm not about to champion the cause of the Angels, a look at the other side of the coin isn't a bad thing. Reverting to the song, it's really very good indeed, and, need I say it, you should hear it if you can.

THE BLACK WHIP THRILL BAND

A title you might find difficult to ignore, perhaps? But we're going a little bit too fast, because after leaving MGM, the Stokes career took in a rather interesting fellow.

"The Black Whip Thrill Band was the original name of the Nighthawks, except that Elektra wouldn't use it, so that's why I used the Nighthawks. The Black Whip Thrill Band was my original idea, being what I think rock is all about. It still has that great element of . . . I think you're dead the minute the kid's mother says 'OK, you can watch this group'. I think that's the first thing—your downfall, you know? Secondly is that they say 'Can you hear this record, Mr Stokes?' Start calling you Mister, you're in trouble! So when I signed up to do this second album (*The Incredible Simon Stokes and the Black Whip Thrill Band*), I was able to use the name I wanted because the guy that produced this album, David Briggs, is an old friend of mine. He also produced Neil Young, the first Alice Cooper record, and Murray Roman. David was an old friend. We used to produce together, just fooling around, and then we were in a group together with Cass, the drummer from Spirit, called the Heathen Angels. David was on rhythm guitar, and I knew about two bass

lines, and as I was playing bass, we had to stick to those two runs. If it went beyond that, I had to either turn down the bass, and pretend I was playing, or . . . we had some really funny times. That was before I was with Elektra, and before Cass was in Spirit. We had a singer called Big Al, who was like a giant, about six feet eight, and 375 pounds. I was just playing at bass, and screaming some things, and we had Cass on drums, right, and Cass was bald—it was a tragedy at the time.

Black Whips and Thrills the Simon Stokes Legend

Long hair had come in, right, and I had somehow missed it. At the time, it was 'Is my hair ever gonna grow?' You go through those changes back then, and nobody admits it now, but at the time it was a real serious thing. As you can tell, I never did grow up past a certain age, I can happily say! So the major tragedy of my life was that I had hair which was average, but David always had long hair, so he was ahead of everybody, and was quite smug about it, I always felt. It became a big thing. We played some really strange gigs, like singles parties, and nobody would speak to me in the intermissions. But that was just a pickup band. Then David went on, and he did Murray Roman, and I made 'Voodoo Woman', which came out pretty good for me. And then David started doing Neil Young albums, and that's when he really came into his own, and started his own label, Spindizzy.

"David got in touch with me. After MGM, I was defeated—I really didn't know what I wanted to do. Get a motorcycle and just sort of hang out or . . . I had all sorts of things, you know, kind of a detective like James Bond—you go through these weird things inside yourself. Then David called me up and wanted me to do an album, and that's how all this came about."

A QUICK RECAP HERE, David Briggs is not the Nashville cat who appears on records with Kenny Buttrey and Charlie McCoy. The

D.B. we're talking about produced the following albums:

A Blind Man's Movie—Murray Roman (Track)—probably deleted
Easy Action—Alice Cooper (Straight)—released as part of a double called *Schooldays* on Warner Bros.
Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere—Neil Young (Reprise)
After The Goldrush—Neil Young (Reprise)
The Tin Man Was A Dreamer—Nicky Hopkins (CBS)—deleted
Grin (CBS/Spindizzy)—deleted
1 + 1—Grin (CBS/Spindizzy)—deleted
All Out—Grin (CBS/Spindizzy)—deleted
Gone Crazy—Grin (A&M import)
Nils Lofgren (A&M)

plus two tracks from *On The Beach* by Neil Young, which may make you wonder, as well as me, just when they were recorded. Also I would like you to note that Tim Drummond, once a Stray Gator, was part of the Lonnie Mack band that recorded the song written by Simon, and that he may have reached Neil Young via Messrs Stokes and Briggs. I also have another couple of Spindizzy albums which I want to tell you about, but more of them later. You should be able to tell from that list that we are talking about a man with a considerable track record, and he was the man who produced Simon Stokes' second LP.

"After MGM, I just sort of lay back and wrote. We had been on the road a lot when I was on MGM, but I just sort of lay back, and the people on the record were put together for the album. Butch Senneville had been the guitar player for the Nighthawks, and Chris [Christian Penninck] was a guitar player for a blues cat called Shakey Jake. The drummer, Billy Goodnick, was with Checkmates Ltd [although he wasn't on the album they did with Phil Spector, J.T.] and so he formed the group, and Marty [Tryon, bass] had done a lot of work with a lot of groups before. He was with the W.C. Fields Blues Band, and I think he was with Steppenwolf. Harry Garfield did a lot of keyboard work with us, and he's been with a lot of groups, like the Music Machine and Gary Lewis and the Playboys. I've been writing with him now, and he's changed his name to Garth Garfield. Nathan Pino is a great keyboard man, although he doesn't really solo on this album, because he came in late. I had met him with a group called Jekyll up in San Jose. We were headlining at a motorcycle club, and they were the second act. And then John Locke of course was with Spirit—a good friend."

It seemed that the Spirit connection was worth pursuing . . . "No, not really basically. I wasn't really involved with them. I knew Cass briefly before Spirit, and John I more or less met through David after Spirit had demised. I knew Randy and so forth, but not closely—I mean, you know, 'Hi Randy'."

BACK TO THE ALBUM. Seemingly, a lot of the material was ready, at least mentally, when Briggs made the approach, which is interesting if not too relevant. More relevant is to look at the album in a little detail . . . Twelve songs here, split five and seven, ten of which were written by Simon alone. The other two were co-written with Mars Keith ('The Boa Constrictor Ate My Wife Last Night') and with

Simon Stokes

Dale Ward ('Hot Summer's Night In The City'). The personnel is as already stated, with the addition of 'guest lashette' Kathy McDonald on vocals, of whom there will be more later. First track is 'The Black Whip Thrill Band', an unlikely description of the insinuating powers of the band as dreamt of by the young, masochistic and no doubt virginal, Musically, it's a twelvebar with added ferocity. More disturbing by reason of its greater subtlety is 'The Devil Just Called My Name', whose mandolin type intro, reminiscent of a Dr Hook songs is just build-up for an epic about someone on the edge of dying, capturing very well the disturbed thoughts of someone who realises just a little bit late that he hasn't really been a good enough guy to make heaven, and that the other place looks a distinct possibility. "Show you all the pleasure you been searchin' for, won't you hold to my hand as we walk through Hell's door." Which is a bit of a contrast (and was written earlier) to 'Knock, knock, knockin' on Heaven's door', I reckon. A heavy song, decorated in fine style by Kathy McDonald's berserk screams, a sound much to my taste.

Number three on the list is another version of 'Ride On Angel', which you'll recall was on the first album as well. Here the verse formation is slightly different, and the overall context seems more appropriate, because this second album is *heavy*, and not only twelve-bar musically heavy, but also as far as the subject matter goes. Then comes 'The Wolf Pack Rides The Night', which is basically what it sounds—a comparison between your actual wolves and a biker gang. Decorated with some ace guitar playing, the urgent but tuneless vocal begs comparison with the work of another Wolf, Peter, of the J. Geils Band and Faye Dunaway fame. So far, the album comes across as black and serious, but the latter quality should soon disappear when you listen to the cautionary tale titled 'The Boa Constrictor Ate My Wife Last Night'. Just so you know, the b-c's name is Jake, and not only did he get Simon's old lady under his coils, but also her sister and a policeman. Re the latter, Simon wonders whether old Jake got indigestion. The song ends with Jake eyeing Simon a bit strangely, and Simon knows he must be hungry . . . Musically, you get a vague reggae beat, with a ludicrously brilliant male vocal chorus, and a careful avoidance of saying that he loves the boa constrictor (the normal hook line) when he eats the cop. It seems to me that if this were the only Stokesian song you heard, you might put him down as merely a novelty performer, a la "I'm sending you a little gift of Ilford Town Hall" by Marty Feldman. Such thoughts would be incorrect.

Side two begins with 'Good Times They Come', a short accapella introduction to 'Waltz For Jaded Lovers', a bitterly sung song concerning the break-up of an affair, which culminates in suicide. Yes, another Simon Stokes song on a subject rarely if ever covered in song. The words are vicious, the subject distasteful, and the frightening subject requires a strong stomach on the part of the listener. If you want to be transported into the cosmic dream world of rock'n'roll, avoid this one, because it's dangerously close to reality, and is very disturbing. At the end, voices can be heard speaking before

'If I Wanted To', which is Lovin' Spoonful-like in character, and should be gentle and fun, but isn't because it's sung in a 'world domination league' type of voice. In fact, it's a good send-up, portraying, depending on your point of view, either the fantasies of a disturbed person, or the drunken ramblings of someone like you or him over there with the access of alcohol.

A similar type of person is the man who is the subject of 'Should Have Married Peggy Sue', a lament of paranoia from a man who has just been told by a gypsy that he died five years ago, and wants his mum to rescue him. More great guitarring, and it's followed by a return to that swamp business in 'She's Got The Voodoo', which is about an enchantingly nasty lady whose supernatural powers make her dangerously fascinating. The lyrics here, which predate a certain much lauded English group by a couple of years, may look familiar. "Rattlesnake pancakes, swamp rat bouillabaisse" sound about as appealing as a cold lasagne. Penultimately, there's 'Hot Summer's Night In The City', written in 1964 (before Jimmy Osmond was born, I suspect). This demonstrates that Simon's interest in minority groups wasn't just

What Are You Rebelling Against? What Have You Got?

conceived for these two albums, the story being that of a gang fight over a lady, with the lady being the dead result.

The final track deserves its own paragraph, because it's absolutely amazingly BRILLIANT, and affected me very strongly when I listened to it. The song is called 'The Ballad Of Lennie And George', and those of you familiar with the writing of John Steinbeck may guess that it is connected with one of that author's classic stories, *Of Mice And Men*. Many of the lyrics are taken straight from the book—"Tell me how it's gonna be, George", and so on, but to genuinely appreciate what it's all about, you really need to have read the book, which is available in Penguin, and is very well worth your effort. Like the book, the song ends with a gunshot, and that and the repeated choruses sung by Kathy McDonald really got to me. If you haven't read the book, I'm sure you'll think I'm totally out of my mind at last.

Altogether, *The Incredible Simon Stokes And The Black Whip Thrill Band* is a disturbing, but rewarding album, and to be taken very seriously, both in musical and subject matter terms. Don't think that the title bears much relevance to the content—I hope I've made that clear already.

[IT WAS, OF COURSE, inevitable that we should ask some questions

about the stage act employed by the Black Whip Thrill Band. "We have a good show, but we don't use whips. I think whips would be too obvious. With a name like that, you'd figure you'd see a group come out with whips and stuff. The obvious has been so overdone now. We're just a band—we play hard rock and like it."

Hereabouts you should be able to see some American reviews, both of the second album and live performance, so we'll say no more about it, except for a monologue on the album sleeve, and some other things which will become clear as you read on.

"I didn't design it. The idea came from an old *Pope* magazine, which I thought was fine. Sears didn't carry it, and things like that—the stores wouldn't put it in there. The thing is I thought it was humorous, and it was meant to be humorous, but nobody saw the humour except me again . . . I always think of these cats that see it, and they go home and play it, and beat up the whole household and stuff! But it wasn't meant for that . . . There's nothing more fiendish than a fiendish monk . . . Which reminds me about a new song I've written, which is kind of English, called 'Will Shakespeare Is Dying'. A lot of people are

just going to really hate it, but I like it. It goes like, "Lady Macbeth is crying, Will Shakespeare is dying, the whole play is really quite sad. The heroine is shouting, the leading man is pouting, and the director has suddenly gone mad." And it's done very forlorn.

"My trouble is that I'm over thirty, although actually I tell my fans, I say 'I'm eighteen, you know, I just look young!' I actually say my next hit'll be when I'm fifty-eight. I think it'll be fun to be in your fifties, and still be an old rocker. But I'm thirty-six, and I have to smile, because I'm just not going to make middle age. [In his way of life, not because he's going to die. J.T.] For some reason, quote unquote, adulthood has escaped me. There are certain things that everybody said I should have accomplished by thirty, like you will have to be settled down, and you will not be rebelling against everything. It's like that line from *The Wild One*, where they say to Brando, 'What are you rebelling against?' and he says, 'What've you got?' That's kind of the way I feel."

I reckon that what we've got through is enough for this issue. If you've got this far, thank you for your perseverance, and with a bit of luck, we'll wind it up next time with some more fab fax and info, and some more of Simon Talking, because that's really the best part.

□ JOHN TOBLER

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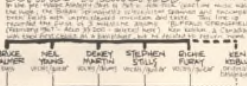




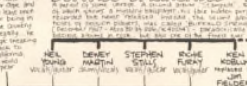
old blue eyes is back

THE HISTORY OF STEPHEN STILLS and Crosby Nash & Young

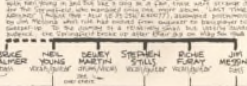
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BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD #2



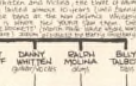
BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD #3



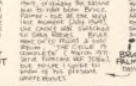
The ROCKETS

Lefted a short time from 1962 to 1963, the Rockets (Stills, Palmer, Young, and Kesey) were a short-lived band. They were formed in 1962 and disbanded in 1963. They were a short-lived band. They were formed in 1962 and disbanded in 1963.

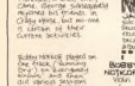
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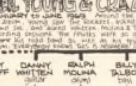
CROSBY STILLS & NASH



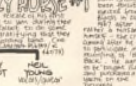
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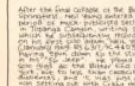
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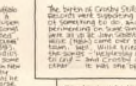
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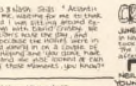
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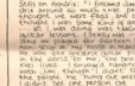
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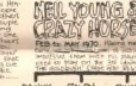
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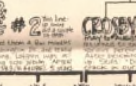
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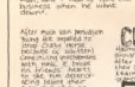
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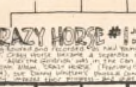
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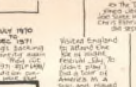
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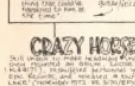
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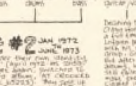
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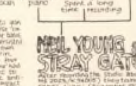
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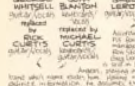
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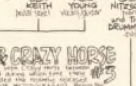
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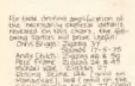
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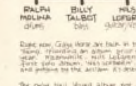
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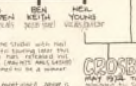
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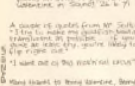
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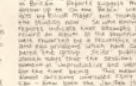
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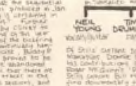
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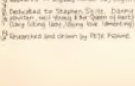
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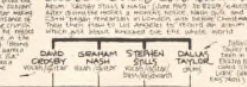
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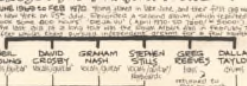
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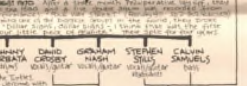
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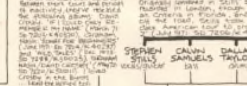
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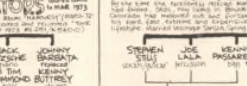
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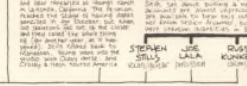
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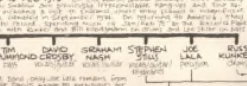
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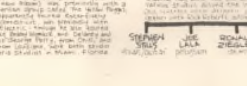
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Stephen Stills and Neil Young were the only two members of the original Buffalo Springfield who remained in the band after the breakup. They were the only two members of the original Buffalo Springfield who remained in the band after the breakup.

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And The Drunken Poet Gave The Universe Hell

I DON'T USUALLY go and brood on people's graves. They're not there, are they? Only what's left of their bodies. Especially not famous people's graves. Yet, here I was, outside the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris and I was there to see Jim Morrison's tomb.

I hadn't planned to. Hell, I hadn't planned to be in Paris at all. I was coming back from America and it had struck me when I got to Kennedy Airport, ready to board my flight home, that it might be a good idea to stay on the plane and drop in on a dear friend of mine who happens to be living in Paris. One thing had led to another. I'd heard that the cemetery authorities weren't at all pleased with the throng of creatures that met with alarming regularity for God knows what unholy gatherings on the famous-American-rock-

star's burial ground. The word was out that they were determined to put an end to it and it looked like Jim's body might not be there much longer.

All of which had contributed to bring me here, outside the main cemetery entrance. Dark bronze gates, 20 ft tall, set in a semi-circle of weathered stone.

It was Easter Sunday, the sky was grey and there was a constant drizzle in the air. I'd woken up to the sound of 'L.A. Woman' and my wind was replaying choice snatches.

This was a pretty big graveyard alright. Actually, it looked like a not very well kept park, with grass growing along the alleys and venerable trees putting up their roots between the old tombstones.

I'd been informed that Jim was in the southeast part and I directed my steps in that direction. Going through my head was a line he wrote: "I'm a changeling . . . see me change".

And it occurred to me how drastically people's ideas about Jim had changed since he died. The world had not been too kind to him in the last few years. People muttered he couldn't cut it any more, that he was always drunk. They even said he was getting fat.

The constant harassment at the hands of the law had obviously taken its toll too. He was falling into the Lenny Bruce syndrome: if they bust you in town A, they gotta bust you in town B, or what kind of a shithouse town are they running?

I remembered being aghast when I learnt that Jim had left America without a word and was rumoured to be hiding in Paris. It looked like he might have left the Doors and that was a blow.

Perhaps not entirely unexpected. Just to watch 'A Feast Of Friends' was to realise that he was growing disenchanted with the conditions in which the Doors' success forced them to perform. The sight of one of the greatest singers/writers/shamans ever to grace us with his visions, reduced to waving to his audience from behind a solid line of cops was a sad, sad thing to witness. He was being trapped in the distorted-mirror image some of us had of him. There even was a time when a sizeable portion of the crowds came to see if he was going to expose himself. After all, he was the Lizard King, wasn't he?

Of course he was aware of it. He knew it was time to move. "Change the weather, change your luck", "I need a brand new friend, someone who doesn't need me," his later lyrics were full of it.

But this later, sadder, wiser Jim Morrison wasn't the one I remembered best. I remembered the Jim Morrison who walked into a pet shop and opened the crickets' cage, shouting "I'll set them all free! FREE!!" I remembered the Jim Morrison who sat without a word watching a Jim Morrison impersonator who sang all his songs, dressed like him, even looked like him. And I wondered what was going through his mind.

Best of all, I remembered the Jim Morrison who sang all those proud, arresting, sometimes tender, always true words to me when I was an introverted teenager who needed to have such things told him. And I remembered how well he told them.

I CAME UPON the grave abruptly. I turned a corner of the small winding path and there

could be no doubt about it. There was no-one about. There was no name, not even a tombstone. Jim Morrison didn't die a rich man. But all the surrounding tombs, all self-important and looking like miniature Greek temples, were covered with graffiti. A ray of sun made its hesitant way through the clouds to shine on the bare patch of flower-littered earth. I stood in front of it and bowed to lay on the ground a red carnation I'd just ripped off from a nearby expensive-looking wreath. Quite a few people, it seems, had had the same idea, because many of the flowers were red carnations just like mine. Between the flowers, you could see a large number of roaches. I knew then what the authorities were going bonkers about.

I remembered the hot day of July 1971 when I heard that Jim was supposed to have died in his bath in a Paris flat. I remembered a tale circulated in French freak circles about Jim being evicted from a Paris disco, one drunken evening not long before, and how French rock writer Herve Muller had found him outside the club and had taken him home. I remembered his wife Pam saying he had a smile on his face when she found him and how, she said, his spirit often left his body and he returned from magic cities with strange tales to tell. "This time," she added, "he didn't come back, that's all."

I walked around and looked at the graffiti. They ranged from the straight quotes ("his only friend the end", "Love St", "we want the world and we want it now") to the hard-assed jokes ("when are you coming back, you bastard? Signed: the Lizard King"). Two linked him to Hendrix: "meet you in the next one and don't be late" and "From Jimi to Jim: Power to Love". The eloquently brief "WHY?" met the mystical "Om mani padme hum", or the one that said "Gong", with the sanskrit character for Om inside the 'O'. Then there was this horned triangle with an eye in it. And, right by that narrow expanse of healthy-looking black earth, my personal favourite, which serves as a title for this piece.

Two others captured my feeling quite accurately. "Jim is not dead", "Morrison isn't here". I wasn't maybe taking it as literally as some people who swear they've seen him in California, although Door John Densmore had said that "if anyone tried to pull something off like this, he'd be the one".

His legacy was still with us. As I walked down the hill, my thoughts turned to the other friend I'd come to Paris to see, and another line from 'L.A. Woman' came to me: "Never seen a woman . . . so alone!"

Who said Jim Morrison was dead?

□ DOMINIC BOONE

Note: If anyone cares about Jim's grave being threatened, the situation is as follows: French cemeteries rent the plots of ground in which bodies are buried. It seems Jim's grave was issued a 5 year lease. This comes up in July '76. If nobody does anything about it, and officially at least, it's a purely financial matter, Jim's remains will be ditched to a collective gravesite where they put the corpses whose relatives don't pay up, or who don't have any. There's nothing wrong about Jim being buried with the tramps and the nameless, but his present grave is a nice place and perhaps should remain so.



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THEIR LATEST , THEIR GREATEST !

ERNIE GRAHAM REMINISCES ABOUT EIRE APPARENT AND HELP YOURSELF AND TALKS ABOUT THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF CLANCY



THE MORE DEDICATED readers among you who scrutinise and memorise every last detail in the magazine will doubtless recall several sly mentions I have made in the past of the Tithe Farm House. Well this particular establishment happens to be my local, a place I visit frequently in order to partake in discussions of earth-shattering importance and vast intellect (i.e. talking about rock'n'roll), and to enjoy the dubious pleasures of a Watneys light and bitter. On one of these visits, months, nay years ago now, we were sitting there half-crippled from the neck upwards and bemoaning the lack of *anything* exciting to do when, on draining the last drops of my nth pint, my bleary eyes happened to fall upon a poster pinned high up on the wall. At first I could hardly believe what I saw; my expression (so they tell me) turned to one of uncontrollable astonishment, as if I'd just seen Jerry Garcia swinging down from the rafters, and focusing with great difficulty I began to read what the poster said out loud... Chilli Willi And The Red Hot Peppers, Ace, Global Village! After something like five years there were going to be rock groups playing at the Tithe Farm again on Sunday nights, and the poster proudly proclaimed future visits from four of the then major 'pub bands'. The first time that live rock music had resounded around those ancient oak beams since Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band had played there to an audience of about 40 bemused freaks way back in the hazy, lazy sixties!! Unbelievable! Owing partly to the complete dearth of cultural activity in this part of the world, rock music at the Tithe Farm was a considerable success. Among the bands that graced that tiny stage on more than one occasion were the Willis (brilliantly), Dr Feelgood, Kokomo, Brinsley Schwarz, Ace, and Clancy.

Clancy in those days were a different kettle of fish to the band that now has its

debut LP out on Warner Bros. They were more of a country-rock sort of band then; they didn't possess the raw excitement of a Dr Feelgood or the infectious good feeling of a Chilli Willi... they were more subtly appealing, their songs required several hearings to be fully appreciated. But nevertheless they were a band of obvious quality, although at that time it was inconceivable to any of them as to how that quality would develop and manifest itself. But back to the Tithe Farm a second. After regularly attending these Sunday night rave-ups for a couple of months I came to know the promoter quite well... the man responsible for providing the more wayward segment of Harrow's community with all this grade A music. His name is Richard Allchin and to him I'm eternally grateful for briefly brightening up this otherwise dreary expanse of suburbia. As things transpired, the Tithe Farm became one of the most popular and adventurous of all the pubs providing live rock music, until fairly recently that is, when an unreasonable new landlord caused Richard to give it up and leave it floundering. But over the last couple of years he'd become increasingly involved with Clancy to the point where now he looks after their agency and handles a lot of the chores that a manager would normally deal with. (Clancy don't have a manager—they rely on Richard and Warner Bros to take care of things for them.)

Well anyway, to cut all this waffle mercifully short, Richard arranged the following interview with Ernie Graham, a founder-member of Clancy, veteran of Eire Apparent and Help Yourself, and the maker of one truly excellent solo album on Liberty, *Ernie Graham* (LBS 83485) in 1971. The second half of the interview deals with the birth and development of Clancy which Ernie naturally preferred to talk most about, and in the first

part he summarises his early career.

BEGINNINGS

EG: The first band I joined was called Tony And The Telstars—they'd been going about three or four months and they needed a rhythm guitarist, so I did an audition—the usual trip. They were semi-pro, some of them were still at school. I was an apprentice motor mechanic, and we were a pop band playing basically what was going down in England in the charts and clubs. Three of us, me, the bass player and the drummer had one thing in common which was that we didn't see Ireland as the be-all and end-all of our musical trip, and at this time we weren't professional or anything; at that time it was totally uneconomical to go professional because the market was mainly for show bands. But one thing led to another in terms that we already wanted to become professional. I allowed myself to become sacked from my job by keeping bad time—and in effect we all became professional musicians. We spent about six or seven months in Belfast trying to make a living but we couldn't do it. We had some friends in Blackpool—a band named Wheels—Rod Demmick from Bees Make Honey and Herbie Armstrong who's now with Fox—all Irish cats, and they were earning a couple of hundred pounds a night on the Mecca circuit in the north of England. So they said "Come over—we'll put you up". We went over there and it was murder—real murder. Their organist left them and they stole our organist and we'd find ourselves with half a band. So we heard that Henry McCullough, who was probably the most respected guitarist in Ireland at the time, was trying to get out of showbands and into a group. We got a friend in Belfast to send us over a date sheet of the band he was in and one night on one of his gigs I phoned him



up from Blackpool and lied through my teeth. Told him things were really good, it's all happening, why don't you come over and join. The cat came over and found there wasn't even a bed for him.

ZZ: Who was in this early band?

EG: Chris Stewart who the last I heard was in the States doing things with people like Steve Miller; Davey Lutton who's now drumming for T. Rex, and then Henry, just the four of us. We spent a couple of months trying to get it together when we actually had a complete band and we still couldn't. Henry's chick was at college in Dublin and the Dublin scene had opened up, about three years after the English club scene, the Dublin scene had just started to go daft. And Sheila got in touch with Henry and said, "Listen I know you don't really want to come back to Ireland but you could earn 50, 60, 100 pounds a week each over here, the way things are at the moment! We were so down at the time we decided to give it a try. We went to Dublin and lived there for a year. Within about three months of living in Dublin—the short time we'd spent in England had made us more professional than the average Irish band, so when we went to Dublin we stood out above all the other Irish bands—within three months we were voted Top Band. But the market again is so small you can only play the same clubs week after week after week. After a year of that it was either pack it in or move on. So we decided to move out and come back to England, to London this time. We set off in a Ford Thames—six of us—two roadies and our equipment. Got to London with something like a fiver between six of us. We spent two months sleeping in that van parked up at Camden Town. We couldn't get any gigs, couldn't get anything together. Then we

met up with Dave Robinson who we knew in Dublin—he used to do things for the band. And Dave said, "I can get you a couple of gigs". So he pulled a couple of tricks and got us the Speakeasy and UFO down at Tottenham Court Road. Procol Harum were No.1 at the time with 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' and they were topping the bill at the UFO and it was an all-nighter. They were so laid-back and it was a very stoned audience so that when we went off everybody was well out of it. Then Joe Boyd came on after Procol Harum and said, "Don't go away everybody because we've got an Irish rock'n'roll band". And you could tell that everybody was giggling, thinking "This'll be a laugh". But coming on after Procol Harum they were wide open just to be moved. And we just played dirty rock'n'roll, and they loved it, the place went daft, I couldn't believe my eyes, it was like a fairy story, months of starving and then all of a sudden there were six of the top managers in Britain knocking on the dressing room door saying, "Don't sign anything until you speak with me". And one of those cats happened to be Mike Jeffries who handled Hendrix and The Animals and he asked Dave Robinson to come in and see him the next morning which was a Saturday, and he signed us up by Saturday afternoon. And by a week later he had us in Spain.

ZZ: So when did you change your name from Tony and The Telstars to The People?

EG: When we actually went to Dublin. We played around with a couple of different names. From Tony and The Telstars the scene had changed dramatically, and we dropped the name and tried two or three different names. From Tony and The Telstars the scene had changed dramatically, and we dropped the name and tried two or three different names

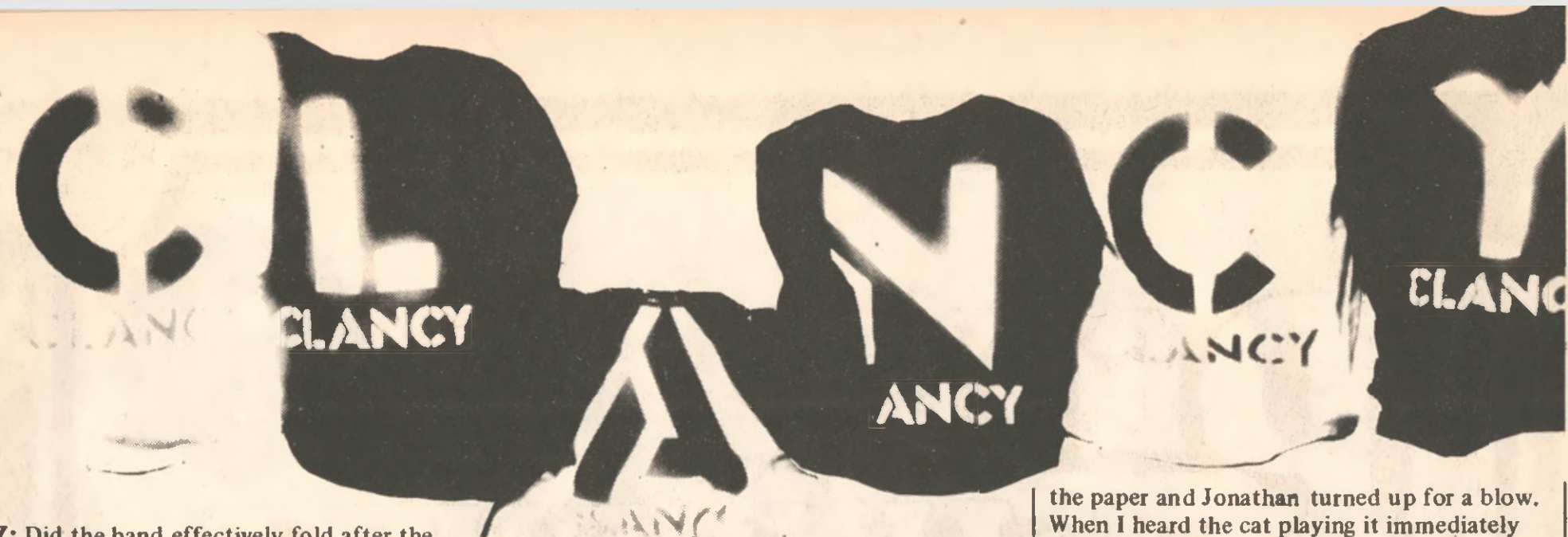
trying to find some identity. But when Henry joined we started calling the band The People, and it was as The People that we went to Dublin. And we came to London and Mike Jeffries signed us up—he wanted to exploit the Irish side of the trip. His wife in fact suggested the name Eire Apparent.

ZZ: What part was Dave Robinson playing at this point?

EG: Dave was actually doing a management job on the band when we were in Dublin, getting us gigs and things. And he split up with us because he wanted to go to England to try and get his own trip together. And we wanted to hang on for a bit before we tried to do anything. Then when he got us those couple of gigs Jeffries suggested we need someone in charge on a personal level, and we thought it might as well be Dave. So Dave was basically brought in as personal manager. For a while it worked really well—he was never tight with money—he would never see a trip suffer because there wasn't bread.

ZZ: Was the line-up always the same?

EG: Yeah, until we got to the States. Then in the States on the first tour with The Animals, Henry got busted in Vancouver and Jeffries didn't want to go back to England—he'd moved all his operations to New York. He wanted to stay there where the action was. And Henry couldn't. They got him out on bail and if he'd gone back he'd have definitely done time. So Henry had to leave the company and the band didn't want to, so basically it was put to Henry: "Listen Henry, here's your ticket home, but we don't want to go with you". So we sent over for another cat from here who was looking for a gig—a guy called Mick Cox. It was only afterwards that we realised we'd been quite rash letting Henry go so quickly.



ZZ: Did the band effectively fold after the famous Soft Machine/Hendrix tour?

EG: It went on for a good bit after that. The tour finished in September of 1968 and the band itself didn't fold up until the beginning of 1970. We stayed on in America after finishing the tour and cut an album with Hendrix. When we came back to England after cutting the album we realised that we had to get things together ourselves. It was no good expecting Jeffries and Hendrix and all those people to make it happen for us. And as long as we stayed in America that's the way things would always be, 'cause we weren't important to Jeffries as money—we could always be used as a tax loss against what Hendrix was earning. We decided to go back to England and spent a year in England trying to prove to ourselves that there was still something in our music which was important. But we'd just been through too much together, and that year just about finally killed it. We'd been together too long, we were becoming too narrow-minded. The cats in the band still thought of me as wee Ernie from Belfast and y'know "We don't play songs by wee Ernie from Belfast," there was still this block of knowing you when you were too young, when you didn't do those sort of things. So I found trouble getting my material together in the band—and the same could be said of everybody.

ZZ: And you only made that one album?

EG: Yeah.

ZZ: So when you finally broke up, you'd obviously kept in touch with Dave Robinson.

EG: It was Dave who got in touch with me in fact, and said, "Listen, how do you feel about doing a solo album?" 'cause he knew from his experience with Eire Apparent that my material wasn't getting exposed and he thought there was a chance of doing it. So he got in touch with me and I went along with him. It was quite a traumatic experience. My music had reached the point where you didn't think it, you'd get on the stage and you felt it. You didn't have to talk about your music anymore. You didn't make up what set you were going to play, you just got out there and started and took it from where the audience was and where you were. It was a very tight trip which has taken me a long time to get over, it was that close. It was very limited but at the same time it was incredibly tight.

ZZ: So you made your 'solo' album. Was that the first time you'd met the Helps and the Brinsleys?

EG: Yeah, pretty much. I brushed into them—when Dave (Robinson) finally split from Eire Apparent one of the first people he teamed up with was Malcolm Morley and he got me to go over a couple of evenings to Malcolm's flat and help work out a couple of Malcolm's ideas. And I'd met the Brinsleys

because Dave had asked us to do them a few favours when he was first trying to get them off the ground, like borrowing our PA, and things. We knew them very vaguely.

ZZ: So was it Dave's idea to get all those guys on the album?

EG: Yeah, I was living down in Kent with Henry McCullough—he was putting me up; I was broke and I was going through a very traumatic trip—just left my chick, the band had folded and it was as if my whole world had caved in on me. And Henry was doing a repair job on me. And I spent a really lovely three months in Kent in the middle of summer, with Henry getting the Grease Band together and me writing my songs and then when they were finished doing their gig during the day and then get together at night round the fire with their acoustic boxes and blow over a few of my things.

ZZ: Is that how those tracks came about? (Four unreleased tracks of Graham with the Grease Band. Dave Robinson's got 'em.)

EG: Yeah. I got word from home that my father was seriously ill and I had to go back because I thought he was going to die. I left everything thinking that Dave already had studio time booked and I left thinking I'll only have to come back and have a few rehearsals with the band and cut the album. When I came back, Dave didn't like the idea of working with Henry and Alan (Spencer) and Neil (Hubbard) etc, because they're very strong people and Dave prefers to move his musicians. Dave was calling the tune at that time so I went along with it when he suggested me having a blow with Help Yourself and see what happened. I suppose it worked out quite nicely. The feeling was nice amongst us but still they didn't have what the Grease Band would have put into that album. The Grease Band would have made that album something special to me. A large part of the album was me trying to encourage those other cats, like Ken—one of the most paranoid musicians I've ever met in my life; fine musicians, but God it took hours of encouragement and pushing to get him to come out and do it. So it was quite a drain on me doing that, especially after being used to musicians who were usually in total command of their trip. Anyway I enjoyed meeting them, and I was quite pleased with the finished result—it's a perfect statement of where I stood at that particular moment in time, which is all you can ask of anything you do.

ZZ: When did you meet Jo Jo Glemser? Because both of you joined the Helps at the same time didn't you? (See chart in ZZ44.)

EG: Yeah. I was looking around for musicians to form a band and Help Yourself were looking for another guitarist. They put an ad in

the paper and Jonathan turned up for a blow. When I heard the cat playing it immediately flashed into my head that he was more suited to the things I was into rather than Help Yourself, so I grabbed him. And him and I were working towards putting a band together. Then Ken left Help Yourself, and they found themselves with just Dave Charles, Malcolm Morley and Richard Treece, and Dave Robinson came up with the idea—Jonathan and myself were looking for a band, and Help Yourself were looking for a couple of extra musicians. Why not put the two trips together?

THE COMPLETE SAGA of Help Yourself and Ernie's involvement with them is too long and complicated to delve into in any great detail here (see a future *Fat Angel*—when it happens). We begin the second half of the story where a somewhat disgruntled and disillusioned Ernie Graham leaves Help Yourself.

"Basically I was approaching 26 or 27 and found myself going over ground that I went over when I was 16 or 17, and I didn't dig it. It freaked me to be quite honest because I knew that if we could overcome our personality differences we could be making some ridiculous music together. So I was torn for about six months—I couldn't make up my mind whether to stay or to go. The final crunch was when I came up to town and I heard a few things that were happening around the band but had nothing to do with the band which were being done in the band's name. And I didn't dig it. I took it back to the band and told them that I didn't dig the way business affairs were being handled. And the rest of the band basically said, 'Well, if you don't dig it, get out'. So I did."

Ernie in fact departed during the making of the Help's second album *Strange Affair* and was soon to be joined by guitarist Jonathan (Jo Jo) Glemser who was enlisted into Help Yourself at the same time as Ernie. The two of them had discovered and developed a musical empathy which was soon to give birth to the very first ill-fated, makeshift version of Clancy.

"There was a period of two or three months where both Jonathan and I tried to think out where we stood and what we were. The Help Yourself trip had really freaked me. My whole lifestyle had changed within eighteen months and I didn't know how to come to terms with it. And then my chick came up with the idea that Jonathan must have quite a lot of bread, and that she could get a loan of a couple of thousand quid. I said to Jonathan, 'Listen, you're always talking about managers screwing you up, everybody screwing you up—the only way to do it is be in charge yourself, why don't you try?' So my chick raised a couple of thousand, Jonathan raised a couple of thousand, we formed a company and started looking around for musicians. The first cat we found was Colin Bass (bass). Colin was coming over to my

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Clancy

flat and we were working out a few ideas—we still didn't have anybody else really in mind. All of us needed somewhere to live when the lease ran out on my flat, so we ended up getting a house and used that as a base to get musicians. We knew what we wanted but actually getting the people who could do it—I knew it would take a long time. It was a point of getting a *band* going and working from there. I knew there was no way I'd get cats who were actually earning money to play for a band that wasn't anything. The way to do it was to get something happening with a band. And that's basically what we did. We spent about a year building on the pub circuit.

"The original line-up was myself, Jonathan, Colin Bass, Martin Belmont (from the Ducks), and Twink. That lasted about a fortnight rehearsing at night in my flat—we never actually did a gig. Twink was a hard cat to work with and we decided that he wasn't really right. And then Jonathan and I had a rap about Martin and we didn't think he fitted—nothing to do with him as a person—but just about some of the things he was trying to get into. That was about April or May of 1972. Jonathan, Colin and myself went into the house together and started looking around for other musicians. At that point all we were looking for was a drummer just to start doing gigs. We advertised but we couldn't find anybody that was compatible. We had this old friend from days back who worked for Apple, and we persuaded him to come into the band—his name was Steve Grendell. And that was the band until about Xmas '72 when Dave Vasco (lead guitar & vocals) came down from Liverpool. He came down on a gig with Jimmy Johnson and we put him up for a couple of weeks. Well, the gig went terribly for Dave and he was going to go back to Liverpool when we said: "Why not sit in on a couple of nights with us and see what happens?" which he did and it worked out really nicely. So that left the line-up of me, Jonathan, Colin, Steve, and Dave Vasco. And that was the line-up that existed right up until Island approached us—when Muff Winwood approached us. He said he didn't dig Steve and Jonathan in the band and thought we could do with a better drummer and another guitarist or keyboard player. And we basically agreed—we basically knew this ourselves. So we used the Island trip to lever both Steve Grendell first, and then Jonathan out. Then George Butler came in next on drums. He came from Uncle Dog and he brought Dave Skinner (keyboards) with him who also used to be in Uncle Dog. Eventually we got rid of George leaving Colin, Dave Vasco, Dave Skinner, and myself looking for a drummer. Again we auditioned loads and Dave Skinner brought along Barry Ford. Well the first rehearsal with Barry was so nice that he joined, and then he bumped into Gaspar Lawal (African drums and percussion) and said, "Hey, why don't you bring your congas down to the Kensington for a blow?" And so Gaspar came down very suspicious and wary, blew a couple of numbers and was knocked out. Shortly afterwards Warner Bros became interested through Barry—Barry had just done some sessions for Warners, and when he went to pick up his bread he mentioned to Martin Jennings about the band and Martin said:

"Have you got any tapes? Can you let me hear them?" Well he came down, saw a couple of gigs, and said: "You've got to get Gaspar in permanently". We thought that would be difficult because he was earning £300 a week on sessions, and it would be difficult to get him to leave that for a £10 a week rock'n'roll band. But the way things worked out, Gaspar liked the music so much that he was eventually prepared to sign the first contract of his life. It was quite amusing—because Gaspar was very anti-business when he first came in contact with us, whereas now he's the first to stand up for the business people who have put a lot into Clancy."

The band's association with Island ended over a clash of personalities and after a fruitless perusal from RCA, they decided to plump for Warner Brothers and to this day have absolutely no regrets about doing so.

"We had our cards on the table with Warner Bros. Quite honestly the band was about to break up unless we got some kind of financial backing, and Warners took over and said: 'Look you don't have to worry about bread, here's two months' rehearsals booked. At the end of six weeks we listen. You've got the material, go in and cut it.'"

Clancy's first release was a single: 'Back On Love'/'Steal Away' (K16491).

"Basically the single was a rush job, in fact the whole trip was a rush job. The way they wanted to do it from the start was after six weeks listen to the material and make up our minds whether we wanted to cut an album. And from that point we started to look for producers and plan the album. What happened was the Argent tour came up and it was a question of 'Could we cut an album or a single in time to have it out for the tour?' Tim Knight, who's in charge of A&R at Warner Bros was just as enthusiastic to go for an album as a single and to pick the strongest song from the tracks that were going down to put out as a single. Steve Smith was available at the time as a producer, and although the Island trip hadn't worked, one recording session that we did with Steve indicated that it could be good. So Steve was free at that point and he was interested in doing it. So we went to Warner Bros to talk about it and Warners said: 'OK, well let's go for an album, go down to Rockfield and cut an album. By the end of the first week you should have an idea of the strongest song, and then finish an A and B side and we'll have a single for the tour.' So we did that and afterwards spend another three or four weeks eventually finishing the album off at Island Studios. The single, in my opinion, was rushed, and the album was rushed. But it was a question of what was available at the time and we really wanted to get something out to keep the momentum going at Warner Bros. We knew that if we lost it we'd never get it back again."

Clancy's debut LP, *Seriously Speaking* (Warners K 56103) was released a month or so ago and has so far received quite favourable reaction. Once you get over the fairly lifeless and inconsistent production, it's a pretty tasty piece of grist with a couple of potential singles besides 'Back On Love' and 'Steal Away'. They're all excellent musicians, and without consciously wishing to categorise

them, they fall loosely into the Average White Band and Ace sort of mould but with enough distinctive flair about them to justify success in their own right. With their record company solidly behind them, it would seem reasonably safe to suggest that this album could sell very well indeed. I hope so.

Incidentally, Ernie Graham has written only two tracks on the album, 'Steal Away' and 'Long Time Comin'', and I ventured that Clancy might not be an adequate outlet for his songwriting. Did he find that frustrating?

"It is at times, but I think all the cats in Clancy recognise one thing—they're not really going to be able to do what they want to do personally until the business, or whatever you want to call it, recognises them. And the best way to be recognised is through a band. It's the easiest way—to pool our resources now, to work together and in the long run we'll end up doing what we really want to do. I think everybody in Clancy realises it's not an easy trip to hold together, because Dave Skinner gets as freaked as I do over his material that just isn't right for Clancy. And Gaspar gets freaked 'cause he's got loads of songs but I can't play African music—well only a limited amount."

So as the buzz and dedication within and around Clancy, due in no small degree to Warner Bros' support, continues to maintain momentum, what are their plans for the future?

"The plans are basically for a single first because this album will go by a lot of people unless we start creating some sort of reaction. And Warners have put in such a lot of bread. Before we get a chance to do another album, Warner Bros in America are going to have to see something coming back. So we're not going to do another album until we justify ourselves to them really. They believe we've got material strong enough for a single and there's no reason why we shouldn't use a single as a means of getting our foot in the door, so to speak. We're doing practically what Ace and a few other bands have done, although we believe that if we do get that foot in the door, we'll be heavier than any of them. We're going to try some recording with the guy who guested on our album, the sax player Jim Cuomo. He used to be an A&R man for a French record company, and the rest of the cats in the band feel they dig a musician to be in charge this time instead of a producer. They feel that Jim probably knows our music better than any producer and at the same time he's outside the band enough to be objective about the material. If it goes well, we'll use that set-up in the future."

□ ANDY

P.S. After typing all this out, I decided to stroll up the road for a pint. It's a Sunday evening you understand, there's nothing I want to watch on the telly, I've been listening to records for most of the day, and I need some fresh air and exercise. Not for one minute intending to go and see whoever's on at the Tithe Farm, I wander in to find, astonishingly enough, that none other than Clancy are playing. What a pleasant surprise! After listening to the album a few dozen times it was great to hear all those songs live... very impressive. Catch 'em when you can.



First off, my profuse apologies for inflicting this handwritten mess on you people who must already have developed severe eyeball complaints as a result of trying to decipher Frame's microscopic scrawl over the months. Truth is, I was so busy relaxing in the sunshine, perusing your letters and catching up on all the jelly I missed, that the typesetter's copy date slipped past like a ship in the night. After placating Childs, who was fuming like a ripshooter at my scandalous negligence and irresponsibility, I managed to coerce Frame into doing a last minute hand job to catch the printers..... So let's get on with it!

The response to the running poll idea was phenomenally encouraging — many thanks to all you ardent scratchers out there. The piano tracks thing got monstrously out of hand and lacked the consistency and cohesion to put into any distinct pattern, but the results of your votes for "favourite British guitarists" (listed over there) were fascinating. As you can see, we are immediately smitten by three undeniable facts: 1. Clapton is still God, for the 10th year on the trot — though young Richie Thompson (the same whippersnapper who is reputed to have turned down an invitation to join the Eagles, no less) is only a short machine head behind. 2. Forgotten heroes, Green and Barrett, currently basking in retirement, are not forgotten at all..... in fact, they're held in the highest esteem. 3. We are slap bang in the middle (to the very day) of the dullest decade in living memory: every guy in the Top 25 started his professional career in the sixties.....except for two: Bill Nelson, who roars into the chart at number 13 with a bullet, making him by far and away the brightest hope — and I've never even heard anything by him (note from Scribe: oh you wretched mariner — if your clapped out short wave radio had been capable of receiving Peel's programmes you'd almost have Cried on the geezer) — and Wilko Johnson, who I was dragged to see no sooner than I set foot on the Auld Sod. I thought his head was going to come off.

O.K. for this month's category, send me a list of your ten favourite albums of all time (from any country of origin, any era), listed in order of preference.. Shoot them off, as quickly as

possible please, to the famous Mac Garry, c/o Yeoman Cottage, North Marston, Buckingham MK18 3PH — and we'll get the results into the next issue..... if there is a next bloody issue.

Caroline, almost ensconced in Vancouver, was deluged in requests for the set of back issues, but some of the bids were so embarrassingly high that she accepted the first offer — such a sporting and lady-like gesture!

Most popular readers' question of the month: Why "Over the Garden Wall"? Well, no reason, other than I found the above heading in a 1902 copy of the *Lady's Realm* Annual which I discovered while snooping in the garage..... I thought that it looked so pretty that I stole it. (Borrowed it).

Record of the month up here is the same as last month.... yawn! Blaring incessantly and piercingly through the cobwebs and grime of this crumbling edifice is *Romance Is On The Rise* by Genevieve Waite — mainly due to Frame's obsessive assertion that John Phillips, who produced and wrote it, "is and always has been approximately 27 light years ahead of the world at large". It's driving me nuts; it's bloody awful! (Another note from scribe: watch it, you poor man's Francis Chichester, or you can get some other twat to scribble out this tripe for you). Inestimably better is "The Shangri Las Greatest Hits", which is worth its weight in gold dust. Laden with classics, tracks which represent the outer limits of human endeavour. Can anyone tell me please, where are the Shangri Las now?

I've decided, in my infinite wisdom and superiority, to institute monthly Journalism awards. Connor McKnight would have won for his *Magic Band* epic in the last issue, but we can't pat our own backs — so this month, the NME sweeps the board. Winner is Max Bell for his excellent and enterprising piece on Southend rock hero Micky Jupp. Runner up is Nick Kent for his *Beach Boys* extravaganza. Both a very welcome change from the usual boring crapperoo the weeklies churn out.

That's it for this month — please send your poll entries and any other comments and observations quick as you can.

his mark — Mac

BRITISH GUITARIST

posn	Zigzag	Poll: June 1975	votes
1	ERIC CLAPTON		314
2	RICHARD THOMPSON		234
3	JIMMY PAGE		205
4	PAUL KOSSOFF		191
5	KEITH RICHARD		162
6	PETER GREEN		156
7	PETE TOWNSHEND		155
8	MICKY JONES		144
9	CHRIS SPEDDING		129
10	ROBIN TROWER		122
11	JOHN MARTYN		117
12	RORY GALLAGHER		112
13	DEKE LEONARD		103
=	BILL NELSON		103
15	JEFF BECK		94
16	MICK TAYLOR		92
17	ROBERT FRIPP		84
18	SYD BARRETT		76
19	WILKO JOHNSON		74
20	STEVE HOWE		71
=	ANDY POWELL		71
22	JOHN McLAUGHLIN		68
=	ROY HARPER		68
24	MICK RALPHS		67
25	MARTIN STONE		62
=	TIM RENWICK		62
27	STEVE HACKETT		60
=	DAVE MASON		60
29	STEVE WINWOOD		59
30	FRED FRITH		56
=	STEVE HILLAGE		56
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36	BERT JANSCH		35
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38	PHIL MANZANERA		34
39	JIMMY McULLOCH		31
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and there were loads more			



ALAN HULL

The Rest of the World

That's how the man of the moment regards his decision to undertake his first solo tour without orchestra, singers or even so much as a rhythm section.

Just the squire and his songs; the old and the new and a fairly disparate collection they are too. For Alan's new album *Squire* re-enters a whole range of colours and moods from a man who has been living for too long on former glories.

Finally, he admits, all the old songs on ice at Impulse Studios in Newcastle have been absorbed and he's happy and relieved to have embarked on a new period of creative writing. *Squire*, he says, contains a wide spectrum of material including a classic rock 'n' roll track in the form of the old Eddie Fontaine hit 'Nuthin' Shakin' But The Leaves On The Trees', which was also an old Billy Fury 'B' side.

With cameo roles from a lot of old friends the album comes with an oddly idiosyncratic endorsement from Geordie playwright Tom Pickard, who wrote the successful BBC-2

play 'Squire' which starred Alan Hull and started all the fuss. "Tom and I have a love-hate relationship because we have very similar personalities," explained Alan, adding that he has no real desire to pursue an acting career. Nevertheless, soon after our interview he was to be seen drinking with Pickard in ZigZag's favourite pub at the commencement of an evening of high revelry.

And next day Alan was at the same bar, this time clad Squire-style in three-piece tweed suit and puffing his Sherlock Holmes pipe; a little piece of mad Geordie eccentricity.

Alan, suffice to say, is delighted with his new album and 'One More Bottle Of Wine' he says is the best song he's ever written. Indeed it is a grand invocation to the demon alcohol and the conviviality of pub life. "One more bottle of wine . . . Someone said the clock is slipping through the time" is a great couplet.

At the extreme points of the album are 'Nuthin' Shakin' and 'Golden Oldies', the latter a tribute to the golden days of pop music and much more concise than 'American Pie'.

"I've always wanted to do 'Nuthin' Shakin'—in fact in 1963 I was in a band called the High Five (because there were only four of us) and we used to do a lot of Chuck Berry and weird r&b songs and we found that that was a great number to do onstage," explained Alan.

"I couldn't write songs like that—the Beatles did once with 'I'm Down'—but when you try it always sounds so phoney. So Snafu came in and we did it straight away, in fact the one we took was just the rehearsal, the warm-up . . . just the way rock 'n' roll should be done.

"I needed that track as a balance because there's a bit of everything, a finger-pointing song, schizophrenic song, a children's song . . . I just wanted to get rid of the idea that solo albums have to be boring.

"And as for 'Golden Oldies' . . . I'd never seen 'Top Of The Pops' before and I saw it this once and just couldn't believe it. As a result I wrote this song in ten minutes flat. Everything on it was just total crap so I sat down at the piano and wrote 'Golden Oldies'. There are a few new bands that I quite like though, Ace for instance, and 10CC.

"One More Bottle Of Wine' was weird because I wrote that when I was in Barnet and I'd forgotten I'd written it. I wrote it one night and discovered it in the morning—I know it's the best thing I've written."

Alan admits that *Squire* contains the last of the throwbacks from his part in the form of 'Mr Inbetween'.

"Now," he says, "I'm writing like I used to again because for a long time I was writing shite. But all this was done six months ago."

Hull has already done a warm-up for the tour with an isolated gig at Aberystwyth. "It went down smashing—I started off with 'Peter Brophy Don't Care' and I'm going to do a lot of old songs that didn't get full exposure with Lindisfarne.

"There's also be stuff from *Pipedream* obviously but I just felt in the end that it was too early to do a big orchestral thing with all the frills.

"I'd like to work with a band again at some point but it's somehow more honest

and requires more self-discipline to go out with just a guitar and piano. It makes more sense to do it on your own these days—just the way the songs were written."

Acting, for the time being, is definitely out of the question. "I think I do feature in Tom's plans somewhere. The trouble is we clash—he's a Geordie hustler but he's a talented bitch; there's always trouble when we get together and acting is a dangerous occupation anyway. I'd rather do something I understand like writing and putting ideas together. I'd rather direct because it seems very similar to producing an album and I love producing—it's like making a soup when you whiz all the things round together and see what comes out."

□ JERRY GILBERT

I Remember BRINSLEY SCHWARZ

I don't have to believe I've been to my last Brinsley Schwarz gig if I don't want to. And I sure don't want to.

The atmosphere in the packed Marquee was boisterous and festive as they kicked off their first set with 'Small Town', a number I've always found stiff and peculiarly banal, moved swiftly into a brilliant version of 'We're Having A Party', then into 'Play That Fast Thing One More Time', featuring two tight, waspish guitar solos from Brinsley. The harmonies on 'It's Been So Long' were earthy, loose and disarming. A bit like those wristwatches with the transparent backs; this is how the song works, you can see it unprotected by veneer or artifice.

Drummer Billy Rankin kicked them through 'Run Run Rudolph' at a wild, scalding tempo with Brinsley singing Chuck Berry's lyrics in fine style. Then down into a silky spade groove with Ian Gomm—smarter than your average rockanroller in his bottlegreen cord suit—playing a perfect Stax guitar intro to 'Private Number'. 'Happy Doing What We're Doing' was relaxed, casual, righteous. 'Surrender' was OK, but I've heard them play it better many times. They closed the set with a storming 'Country Girl'. A classic of truckin' rock: great beat, great chorus, great melody. To use a phrase not now used by anyone except footballers in TV interviews, "It was tremendous".

The second set opened with a reprise of 'Country Girl', then a slick segue into 'Hooked On Love', Ian's best song, then another accelerating segue into 'Trying To Live My Life Without You', fast and fiery, with Billy's ebullient snare cracking like artillery, Nick's warm spongy bass lines whizzing out, Bob's Hammond chord-surges as juicy and slippery as ever.

Their reggae arrangement of 'Save The Last Dance For Me' brought sounds of amused approval from all corners of the club. 'Range War' was a good oldie from their suburban hillbilly days. Then a terrific

new song, not yet released, called 'You Gotta Be Cruel To Be Kind'. It's a rapid dance number, with some killer rhythm guitar from Ian. Then another new ballad which I didn't dig so much, 'You Can't Mess Around With A Thing Called Love'.

They cruised through 'Please Don't Ever Change', into the sultry, smoochy ballad 'Don't Lose Your Grip On Love'. The guitar-waving choreography on 'What's So Funny About Peace Love And Understanding', a witty rocker, was a good-humoured send-up of heavy bubblegum a la Status Quo. They finished with the instrumental from *Silver Pistol*, with that nice fluid guitar melody.

Then came two encores of 'Walkin' The Dog' and 'Home In My Hand'. Nick, Bill, Bob, Ian and Brinsley exited at 11.25 to tumultuous cheers, applause and wolf-whistles. After five minutes of stomping roaring mayhem they came back and did one more. The ultimate boogie riff: 'Brown Sugar'. Then, appropriately, a classy instrumental reprise of their sig tune, 'Country Girl'.

I saw their manager Dai Davies during the first set and told him I didn't believe for one moment that this was the last time I'd ever see Brinsley Schwarz. "What, you think it's a hype, do you?" he said, laughing. "At £410 a night it's a waste of energy. As soon as you move from having one vehicle and earning £100 a night you start losing money and you carry on losing it until you start making a grand a night. It's nobody's fault, it's just the way things are. I don't think you'll see any more Brinsley gigs unless there's three hit singles and a hit album."

I FIND it hard to offer a balanced and sane appraisal, having known the group for years and enjoyed scores of their gigs. I think Brinsley Schwarz are unique. And we can't afford to lose any group which is unique. They represent an idea, an ambience, a way of doing things. Their music is funky, friendly and generous. It isn't violent, narcissistic or exhibitionistic. They are an island of sanity in an ocean of neurosis.

The Brinsleys have always looked, felt, played and worked more like a group than any other group in this country. They have lived in the same house for five years. The ease and charm with which they can slip out of a country tune into an R&B song, then into a reggae number is remarkable, making it seem like the most natural, comfortable thing in the world. They are the only band who can give you an affectionate illustrated history of rock 'n' roll: Merseybeat, Motown, New Orleans, Memphis, Jamaica, they make sense of it all.

The charm of a guy like Nick Lowe is amazing. Who else would do his last gig at the Marquee in a brown and fawn crewneck sweater, drainpipe jeans and light industrial boots? Who else would make a joke about auctioning their equipment after the show? Well, someone else might make the same joke but they wouldn't be as gay, droll and light-hearted about it.

Now you could be clever and say that the Brinsleys were the best band ever to come out of Tunbridge Wells. You could be corporate and say that they had a self-defeating streak in their attitude to the business and the Big Time. You could be sentimental and say

that they were unlucky in pioneering certain areas for British groups: they were the first into country rock, first to play a popular residency in a pub, first to play, write and record reggae song. You could be cynical and say that they always felt that vital 15% short in everything they did.

Here, as elsewhere in life, the truth is complicated. But it is not as complicated as some post-mortems may make it out to be. If there is one thing that consistently infuriates me, it is talking to people who make a mystery out of the failure of certain fine bands. It's a lament heard in bars and offices throughout the land. I've heard it again and again till I'm sick of hearing it: oh dear, oh dear, why haven't the Brinsleys made it? Why haven't Sutherland Bros & Quiver made it?

They haven't made it because they have been grotesquely mismanaged and mis-produced. Simple as that.

For years they have made amateurish albums full of good ideas. They are too dumb to know the difference between a good song and a good record. They waste their talents. They are marvellous live. They can do it on the planks. Show them an audience and they can show you a standing ovation. Every time. But show them a studio and they are lost.

So they sit back and scratch their heads and watch the Doobie Bros clean up with professional albums full of adequate ideas. Having seen the Doobies on three separate visits I'm entirely safe in stating that they represent a lower form of consciousness than either of the bands just mentioned. The Doobies are one of the most crass, feeble and hollow groups ever to earn four gold albums. But at least they are smart enough to realise that if the albums are above a certain standard they can bluff the rest. Press, radio, TV, gigs, everything.

This formula is so obvious that since 1972 even a few British groups have used it to hoist themselves to international fame. Groups like Roxy Music, 10CC and Queen. The formula has one major drawback. It's a simple problem but there is no way round it. It's this: that whatever else you may be into, when you present yourself on a concert stage with guitars and drums, you have got to be, first and foremost, a rock group. And unfortunately it's impossible for Roxy or 10CC to ever be convincing as a rock group. Because if you can't feel it, you can't play it.

I've lately taken to believing that an American producer, almost by definition, is a clever guy who can make a group sound better than they really are. Lynyrd Skynyrd were just a Southern bar band till they met Al Kooper. And that British producers are mostly idiots who make groups sound worse than they really are. There are exceptions, of course. Glyn Johns is a genius. George Martin is a genius. Jimmy Miller was either a genius, or he just happened to turn up at some of the greatest sessions of all time.

Generally it is fatal for a group to produce themselves. It should only be attempted by those who have been around for a long time and have really good musical instincts. People like Steve Winwood and Paul McCartney and Rod Stewart. And even they don't score a bullseye every time.

For instance, three years ago Vinegar Joe were one of the most musically exciting groups



ever seen in a British club. Loads of talent, but no imagination. They could have had the world but they preferred to be stupid and myopic. They insisted on producing themselves. Albums two and three stiffed and they split. The Average White Band were rescued from this syndrome by Atlantic maestro Arif Mardin.

I suspect that the Brinsleys made a severe strategic blunder by re-signing with UA last year. A change of label is often a tonic, giving fresh momentum to flagging careers. A continuing relationship tends to contain an inevitable and in-built element of self-fulfilling prophecy. So you do the seventh album for the same record company. Even if it is by far your best, the company cannot really get excited because they know the other six didn't sell. So no-one else gets excited. So the album dies. And then they say to each other: what did I tell you, I knew it wasn't going to happen.

Now if Britain had a growth economy instead of a recession economy, the Brinsleys situation would be different. They could buy a ranch in the country, build a good rehearsal studio. Live there, writing and playing and jamming. Emerge twice a year for tours. Hire a decent producer. Make one really fine LP every year. Have a sabbatical in America. Do an album at Bearsville. Establish a legend, like The Band.

In fact this masterplan was not the furthest thing from their minds in the days when the group was a quartet. They planned to add another keyboard player so they would have the same line-up as The Band. But during their second album they found they were doing so many guitar overdubs that it was easier to hire a second guitarist, so in came Ian Gomm to complete the quintet.

Atheist and optimist that I am, I always hoped that their karma was coming to them in this life rather than the next. After five years of being reviewed by adult pimples who always called them "a great little band", it's the least they deserve.

And maybe in some year between this one and 2000 AD the world will realise that Nick Lowe ain't just the Paul McCartney of pub-rock.

□ MYLES PALMER

RECORDS



John Stewart

WINGLESS ANGELS
JOHN STEWART
RCA APL1-0816 (import)

I SHOULD first of all explain to you why I'm doing this review. If we let the enormously biased Omaha Knox do it, poor old J.S. would be praised to the heavens, spoken of in Messianic terms, and the risk would be that those who purchased the album might be hugely distressed if they found it external to their taste. It's enormously difficult to be objective about someone you consider to equal the discovery of electricity in importance. A certain other gentleman, not a million miles from anywhere, if you think about it, is rather too busy on other projects. So here I am, doing my best to be objective . . .

It seems that John Stewart is on the look out for a wider audience, which is reasonable enough. Like anyone in that position, he may be running the risk of alienating the faithful nucleus, and it's my feeling that the alienation process may be starting with this record. The key to it all, I believe, is a one time associate of the lonesome picker, John Denver. Denver is, as we all know, a big deal. I'm not going to knock him for it, because success in this appalling business is a flea on a dog, and they're difficult to find. If you spot it, hold on tight—there may not be a second chance, so Denver's intent on expanding. Stewart has some way to catch up, but my cars seem to tell me he's trying.

While much of the subject matter of *Wingless Angels* is vintage Stewart, much of it seems to me to be little more than repetition. For example, 'Summer Child' is extremely close to 'Mother Country' in its tune, while the tune which immediately follows, 'Josie', is somewhat similar to 'Summer Child' in subject matter. That's followed by 'Ride Stone Blind', which devotees will know is a line pinched from 'Mother Country'. Here Stewart suffers from either bad master cutting, carelessly recorded vocals, or ill-fitting false teeth. Additionally, I don't totally understand the song, which may be my fault, although I have to say that the ending of the track is most impressive, a classical piece of rock indeed, despite the fact that it seems to have little to do with the rest of the song.

The 'Mother Country' motif keeps returning—the last track is 'Let The Big Horse Run', which was one of the very highest points of our greatest (so far) day, 28th April, 1974. It

was the only new song that John played that day, and it was just fabulous. Here, we seem to be treated with E.A. Stuart's false teeth again, and there's so much less urgency and vitality that it seems like some kind of castrated version, a view that is only strengthened by the totally unnecessary backing vocals, which are female-dominated to a fault. It's really a bit of a pain that such a fine song should be ruined thusly.

So what's good about it, I can hear you mutter. Well, two songs at least are definitely examples of the artist at his best. The opening track 'Hung On The Heart (Of A Man Back Home)' took me two plays before I was convinced, but it then measures up very well. Even that was well beaten by 'Survivors', which I really think is very fine. It's a continuation of Stewart's obsessive love of his country which makes him practically beg for patriotism in the face of dishonesty and worse. In this episode, twelve of the states are made part of the contagious chorus, and I should imagine the song will feature strongly in Stewart's stage show in future. Which reminds me—why is the great Arnie Moore only allowed to play on one track? He's a fine bass player, as all who saw him at the Roundhouse will agree, but it doesn't seem a move guaranteed to make friends to leave your best stage player out of the studio. A little like auctioning your granny, I'd say . . .

Maybe that's the key to the whole problem—without Arnie, and even with him on his one track, there's a less than subtle sweetening evident which is out of character, like Wilko Johnson playing in front of Mantovani's band. Maybe not quite that obscure, but still there. A projected solution—don't feel that success is sugar-coated. With a basic trio of yourself, Arnie and Pete Thomas, occasionally bolstered, but not overwhelmed (e.g. seven backing singers) you should tread your own path, which is one where you're projected as the lonesome picker, a man who sets his own very high standards and writes several really ace songs a year. Chuck out all the gravy, and get your teeth back into the meat of your talent. You must know that *Wingless Angels* will result in a certain falling away of some of those who've been your great supporters ever since the Kingston Trio. When a man stops believing in his ability to know what's good and what's bad, as I believe you must have, his self respect is at risk. Don't risk it—just be patient until your talent is properly recognised.

□ A FAN

Elton John

CAPTAIN FANTASTIC AND THE BROWN DIRT COWBOY
DIM DJLPX 1

THIS IS PROBABLY the latest review you've read of the record under scrutiny. Having read several other reviews in various weekly and monthly publications, a concept occurred to me which perhaps could be filed under "Circulation: necessity for exclusive or at least early reviews". There are at least two reviews I've read with which I disagree to a greater or lesser extent. Interestingly enough, they're both by critics who I don't recall reading on the subject of Elton in the past

Ray Coleman in *Melody Maker* is, as you know, the editor of his paper, and it's in some ways a compliment to the artist that he should be writing it. However, a headline like "Elton gets a little wet" is a strange and uncharacteristic artefact, and one which leads me to wonder just why Ray did the review. "The songs and melodies don't stand up," it says, and I don't believe I'm quoting out of context. Apart from disagreeing strongly myself, I wonder where that leaves us when we think about the mighty critical acclaim the same gentleman has positively deluged on Steve Harley. Not to put Harley down, but I don't think he's in the same galaxy as Elton.

"... this collection falls into the conveyor belt category of 'new product'." Again, I cannot concur, even slightly, but the original thought occurs again—if a paper has a record to review, is it in any way charitable to let the reviewer be either (1) less than avid about the artist (provided that there is an avid fan on the paper's staff), (2) too busy to give more than a surface impression—mind you, if any reviewer says he's never done a review on a single listen, he's a liar and a hypocrite. It's just that an artist who has contributed so much important work as Elton deserves a little extra trouble. Often unknowns and semi-knowns aren't so lucky—or, (3) a devil's advocate? Let me emphasise that in no way am I accusing Ray Coleman of (3), and I would be very sorry if (2) were true, but I wonder very much on the subject of (1).

Now on the other review, about which I'm pretty pissed off. It's by Bob Edmonds in *New Musical Express*, and it's little more than snide. I doubt very much whether Edmonds has ever listened very hard to Elton's previous work. To back that up, Edmonds states that "... it constitutes his first major blunder. ('Madman Across The Water' was merely a craftsman finding his way.)" Anyone who has been every remotely interested in Elton's work will be well aware that 17-11-70 was the first and only blunder until comparatively recently, when *Caribou* took away the distinction. Both aberrations are quite explicable, I might add, but I shan't go into them here. Edmonds appears to have the well known beans in his ears, and apart from that, he doesn't seem to be particularly keen on Elton, to know very much about him, or to accord him much respect. I'd wager that if Charles Shaar Murray had done the review, *NME* would have painted a very different picture of the album. Where's the integrity there?

On to the record. I am a fan, I've played it several times, particularly the first side, which I marginally prefer, and no way am I disappointed by what I hear. 'Bitter Fingers' is the best track for me, coming into the same class as 'Tiny Dancer', my absolute fave Elton track, and 'Someone Saved My Life Tonight' isn't far behind. The title track is a typically Eltonian two parter, with a straight bit and a funky bit complementing each other nicely. 'Tower Of Babel' is chiefly interesting to me because of Davey Johnstone's guitar fills. His playing seems to get better by the day, and if the new Elton John Band is going to be an improvement on what's available here, they'll be dynamite behind Davey, Ray and Elton. Johnstone also shines on 'Bitter Fingers', where his



guitar parts are magnificently understated. The only one on the first side which doesn't grab me overmuch is 'Tell Me When The Whistle Blows'. Best on side two is 'Better Off Dead', which has a fascinating riff, interestingly out of phase drumming, which I imagine was very difficult to record, and is altogether a totally intriguing work. The others on this side are not extraordinary to my ears, but four more pleasant excursions into places where I've enjoyed myself before. If I could turn to the conceptual aspect of the album, it would be surprising if the more recent episodes in the story of Elton and Bernie would evoke any particularly violent emotions, and the second half of the record is much less urgent and more relaxed. If you were successful, wouldn't you lose some venom?

There's no doubt that the playing on this album continues the upward curve. I'm not too sure about Gene Page's contribution, or David Hentschel's, if it comes to that, but the impact of Ray Cooper is tremendous, and as previously stated, Davey Johnstone is just blistering. The reason for Dee and Nigel's departure isn't clear to me, but they can certainly be proud of their contributions.

To those who complain that Elton hasn't progressed with this record, I would like to ask "If you were doing something successful, would you change?" Look what happened to Arthur Lee . . . Finally, if you like Elton John, this is well up to standard. If you don't like Elton John, then you bloody well should.

□ JOHN TOBLER

Barry Mann

SURVIVOR
RCA APL1-0860 (import)

SHOULD YOU have *Rock File 3*, which you should have, you can turn to page 213, and see that Barry Mann has written seventeen chart songs, that is top twenty songs, in about as many years. Some have written more, of course, but he ranks interestingly enough as the seventeenth most successful songwriter in the years between 1955 and 1973, a position he shares with Jerry Leiber, Howard and Blaikley and Peter Callander. Among those songs are 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'', which alone should guarantee him immortality, 'On Broadway', 'You're My Soul And Inspiration', 'I'm Gonna Be Strong', 'Looking Through The

Eyes Of Love', 'Bless You', 'Come On Over To My Place', 'Warpaint', 'Walking In The Rain', 'We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place', and, would you believe, 'Who Put The Bomb'. Do not ask further about Barry Mann's qualifications. This is his second solo album to my knowledge. I bought the earlier one on Waterloo Station recently for 69p or something, so you can see how well it must have done, although that's no comment on its quality. That was 1972, and *Survivor* marks the end of a long silence.

The whole business of the singing songwriter is an interesting one in itself. Obviously, Neil Sedaka and Carole King are the two most successful, although both seem to be stiffing at the moment, albeit for different reasons. Carole King made the once in a lifetime *Tapestry*, and has struggled vainly to follow it, and Sedaka made some amazing records, but didn't sell too many until very recently. I don't know whether Gerry Goffin, Howie Greenfield, Jeff Barry or Cynthia Weil made any records, but Ellie Greenwich made two, the latter of which was quite excellent. A measure of the success she found can be seen in the fact that today I received the latest Polydor deletion list, and you guessed it—she's on it.



Survivor should and must not go that way. It is far too good to be condemned to a Smith's sale in eighteen months, and I beg you to listen to it. Enough buried vinyl treasure exists without adding this one. It's the first record I've heard from the Equinox label, which RCA distribute, and which is owned by Terry Melcher and Bruce Johnston. As you can imagine, a lot of familiar names help out, like Spanky McFarlane, Jerry Yester, Hal Blaine, Daryl Dragon, Larry Knechtel and so on.

It would not be right to pick out any songs as the stand outs, because that would mean the dismissal of some others. Certainly, I like some more than others, but there's some of that earlier list that I like more than others, and when dealing with an artist who so clearly surpasses anything I could hope to achieve, I would not be so presumptuous as to point any fingers. I like this record a lot. If you ever hear it, you will too, I reckon. Barry Mann is not to be ignored, and this is a record you should have.

□ JOHN TOBLER

P.S. When you buy the album, get *Rock File 3* as well.

RECORDS



Moonrider

MOONRIDER
Anchor ANCL2010

INTRODUCTIONS FIRST. Moonrider should be well known to you individually, if not collectively. The group is around a year old now, and in fact they played one of their earliest sets at the now rather hazy ZigZag fifth birthday party at Dingwalls. Then they were called, for want of a better name, West and Weider. The constituent parts are Keith West (Tomorrow and Teenage Opera), John Weider (Animals and Family), Bruce Thomas (Quiver) and Chico Greenwood (Nicky James), and those of you fortunate enough to possess ZZ42 can read a little about how they came together, although admittedly not much.

After a year, then, their first record is released, and it's at least pleasant. Now I don't intend that to be damning them with faint praise, but pleasant is a difficult word. In this context, it is designed to mean easy on the ear, fairly conventional, and by no means just another album. The early sound of Moonrider was described by John Weider as "A cross between the Eagles and Manassas", and that description, particularly the first part, still seems quite appropriate, as at least half of the album, probably more, sounds pretty Californian to me. It's quite a shock hearing four lads from these white cliffed shores coming on like they were born within a hundred Mickey Mice of Disneyland, and it occurs to me that Moonrider will make their greatest impression, with this album anyway, if the ears belong to those ignorant of the group's pedigree.

Of interest to trivia freaks will be the fact that two of the songs Keith West recorded as a solo artist about eighteen months ago (on Deram) are re-done here. Of the two, which are very good songs indeed, 'Having Someone' comes over in a greatly improved manner in its more recent incarnation, due to the fact that the earlier orchestral section has disappeared, while 'Ridin' For A Fall' hasn't changed too much.

There are other good songs on the album, like 'Good Things', one of Weider's songs, with its double-tracked lead guitar, and 'Danger In The Night', which recalled a subdued R. Dean Taylor (but maybe because of its subject matter), and has very fine harmonies. Altogether, this is a highly promising

first album.

However, and I don't know just how important this may turn out to be, the Americanisation of this group may make it difficult for them to succeed in a dumb country like ours, where just about every West Coast group we've ever covered in ZigZag fails pretty miserably to get hit albums, let alone singles. I like it, and I reckon lots of you may be buying it, but will that be enough to keep them here? I doubt it, he said despairingly.

□ JOHN TOBLER

Stone Poneys

THE STONE PONEYS
FEATURING LINDA RONSTADT
CAPITOL ST 11383 (import)

IT WAS PREDICTABLE that a glut of Ronstadt reissues would follow her long overdue "making it", and in many ways there's no need to make excuses for this particular one, as it's about the rarest one there is, I believe. As *Silk Purse, Hand Sown*... *Home Grown* and *Linda Ronstadt* can be found relatively easily if you know a sympathetic importer, that means that only two complete albums remain concealed, and no doubt that situation will be remedied ere long. In historical terms, the album is fine. In musical terms, it is less than exciting. A previous Ronstadt reissue, titled *Different Drum*, drew from Linda's five albums made after this one, while excluding even a mention of this, the first. While the intention to re-release may have been a consideration, it seems more likely that nothing was good enough to make the compilation.



Most of the work is done by Kimmel and Edwards, the other two, and dominant, members of the group, who wrote seven of the eleven tracks. Linda performs a kind of Mary role to their Paul and Peter, and thus most of the record is harmony singing. Quickly through the tracks—'Sweet Summer Blue And Gold' is OK, 'If I Were You' is fairly bad, 'Just A Little Bit Of Rain', the Fred Neil song, has Linda coming on like Dame Vera Lynn, 'Bicycle Song (Soon Now)' is prime PP&M, and 'Orion', written by Tom Campbell, seems to be a mixture of classical period Fairport (Sandy Denny) and finger-in-the-ear music.

Side two has 'Wild About My Lovin'', which I thought John Sebastian wrote (be-

cause he claimed it as his own), but which Pete tells me is actually a very old blues type song. Again, the PP&M influence, which I imagine was what the Poneys were trying to copy, is fairly obvious. On with 'Back Home', which is dull, 'Meredith (On My Mind)', which reminds me of We Five, but probably because of the title, and then comes what I think is really rather an ace track, called 'Train And The River'. A possible single for someone, I would think, and some way ahead of the rest of the album. 'All The Beautiful Things' sounds like a less inspired version of 'Train And The River', and it all ends up with '2.10 Train', a Joan Baez rip-off, which limps to a forgettable close.

A little fax and info now, courtesy of the Pros from Dover. The backing musicians are a bunch who played on several of Nik Venet's Capitol productions, notably Fred Neil, and are Billy Mundi, an ex-Mother, where another connection is that Herb Cohen managed both Mothers and Stone Poneys at this time. John Forsha and James Bond on guitar and bass, Cyrus Faryar of the Modern Folk Quartet on bouzouki and guitar, who is the voice on the Cosmic Sounds Zodiac record, a major performer on *A Child's Garden Of Grass*, and has two import-only Elektra albums within the last four years, and finally Pete Childs, who can be found on a bunch of sixties folkie albums, like Jesse Colin Young's *Two Trips*, Fred Neil, etc. Tom Campbell, who wrote 'Orion' and '2.10 Train', the latter of which is his magnum opus, was a hootenanny man of California, along with Steve Gillette, and used to appear on Pepsi Cola hoots at Disneyland. He seems recently to have gone to earth.

Sum up time says that as a record, this doesn't make it, at least at import prices. The total playing time is a meagre 27 minutes, 24 seconds, and only some of that is worthwhile. Capitol may well release it here, and if they do, I hope it won't cost as much as £2. Collectors only will be this one's fate, I suspect.

□ JOHN TOBLER

Dr. Hook

BANKRUPT
CAPITOL ST11397 (import)

ONE OR TWO of you (not enough, anyway) may be aware that I compiled a kind of 'Best Of' album of these loonies recently, and I suppose that the best way to evaluate their new album is to work out how many of the tracks on it would qualify for inclusion on a best of, providing that enough room was available.

Of the twelve tracks, the last ('Do Downs') should be discounted because of its shortness, and because of the fact that it is nothing more or less than a medley of 'Camptown Races' and 'Here Comes The Bride' with somewhat altered words on the subject of downers. As such, it is just a little bit predictable... Of the eleven tracks remaining, five are certainly good enough for the ultimate Hook experience, and these are 'Only Sixteen', which is sung absolutely like a human being, and one with a good voice too, by Dennis Locorriere. Really, no jokes, just

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RECORDS

good. Next come a brace of Shel Silverstein songs, both of which I believe he has recorded himself, 'I Got Stoned And I Missed It' sung by George Cummings and 'Everybody's Making It Big But Me' sung by Rick Elswit. Both of these vocal performances are unexpected, but nevertheless nice. That leaves us with 'The Millionaire', which I hope will have charted by the time you read this. Very good indeed. Finally, there's 'Cooky And Lila', which is a typical and typically fine Hook story of human emotion, a la 'Soup Stone', 'Lucy Jordan' and 'Last Morning', if you like.

Of the other six songs, three are group written, and in all honesty don't seem to be too extraordinary, and two are Silverstein epics with the usual weird subjects. If you think this review is some sort of downer, you're very wrong, because the Hooks always make this sort of album, and I wouldn't change them. If they had to come up with twelve songs as good as the five picked out here, we wouldn't get their albums fast enough. In times of crisis, Dr Hook, with or without the medicine, will bring a smile to the most depressed, even anti-marketeers and those whose feet have just been run over by articulated lorries going to Zanzibar with refrigerators full of Eskimos. And don't you forget that when you're buying the record.

☐ JOHN TOBLER & HIS DOG
(Who wrote what?)



DR. HOOK
BANKRUPT
Capitol ST11397 (import)

IT WAS our man at the layout board, Edward Barker, who recently posed the question to me that he in turn had heard elsewhere. It went something like 'If it's true that marijuana doesn't damage the brain, then how come so many people think that Cheech & Chong are so funny?' A reasonable enquiry I think, and I suppose that if you felt like it you could extend that theory to include the antics of Dr Hook, although you'd be a miserable bugger if you did. I'm pretty confident that my excuse for a brain hasn't been severely impeded by the dreaded weed and I think Dr Hook are hilarious... a near-perfect combination of irreverence, wit, lascivious drunkenness, and first class musical ability.

John Tobler, in yet another of his epic compilation jobs, has managed to illustrate every facet of their collective ability with tracks from their three CBS albums on an invaluable set curiously enough called *The*

Ballad Of Lucy Jordan, and in the light of this, their first album on Capitol, it seems rather a pity that he didn't have some of the songs here at his disposal.

Furthermore, it seems to me highly feasible, although perhaps slightly unreasonable, to compile two *Best Of Dr Hook* albums... one a straight comedy album, and the other based purely on musical content. The 'comedy' album without any doubt would have to be almost entirely composed of Shel Silverstein songs including 'I Got Stoned And I Missed It' and 'Everybody's Making It Big But Me' from *Bankrupt* both of which are really funny not only in content but also in execution. The 'musical' album, on the other hand, would be more difficult to compile, and selections and omissions would be down to completely arbitrary decisions made even more difficult by the fact that Dr Hook are really such a fine rock band. They may loon about like a bunch of wasted drunkards but when it comes down to playing the music they're all there on the ball. Their ability to combine this proficiency with their exuberant sense of humour is what makes all their albums so enjoyable, and although *Bankrupt* has its weaker moments, it's certainly no exception. Their last single, 'The Millionaire', and Sam Cooke's 'Only Sixteen', both included here, are as well performed as anything Dr Hook have ever done, and I hope they'll still be making such records when some of the more 'serious' and pedantic rock 'stars' are so burnt out that all they can do is listen.

☐ ANDY

Various Artists

THE BITTER END YEARS
CHELSEA DeLuxe 2336 108

ANYONE REMEMBER Homer? Apparently, it was a film, because the soundtrack album (on Atlantic), featured the Byrds, the Spoonful, the Springfield, Steve Miller, Cream, Led Zep and Fearts and Flowers. I've never met anyone who saw the film, mind you, and I can't believe they were all in it. The result is somewhat akin to a K-Tel Progressive Anthology. *The Bitter End Years* is somewhat akin to a folk anthology with mistakes. Marks out of ten are as follows:

- 1) 'Younger Generation'—John Sebastian. 8/10 for the wrong credit, because it's by the Spoonful.
- 2) 'Brown Eyed Girl'—Van Morrison. 10/10 because it's perfect.
- 3) 'Sam Stone'—John Prine. 9/10.
- 4) 'Motorcycle Song'—Arlo Guthrie. 7/10.
- 5) 'Riding On A Railroad'—James Taylor. 7/10. This is a live version, and sounds it.
- 6) 'Winken, Blinken And Nod'—Simon Sisters. 7/10. Could be anybody.
- 7) 'Pop That Thang'—Isley Brothers. 4/10. Live version, inappropriate and messy.
- 8) 'Gypsy Woman'—Curtis Mayfield. 2/10. One for the song, one for Curtis, and the drummer, whose brother was obviously the sound engineer, loses the other eight. A live, and most unnecessary version.
- 9) 'Mr Bojangles'—Jerry Jeff Walker. 9/10.
- 10) 'Circus'—John Denver. 6/10. Sounds like an early track.
- 11) 'Dr Rock And Roll'—Dion. 9/10. A good



and rare single only before this.
12) 'Beautiful People'—Melanie. 7/10.
13) 'Daytime Hustler'—Bette Midler. 3/10. Who let her in here? I shall have to relax my "no Bette Midler records" rule, but it hurts.
14) 'Lemon Tree'—Peter, Paul and Mary. 7/10. Very dated.
15) 'Lord Of The Manor'—Everly Brothers. 10/10 for being very rare before this, and also (of course) very good.
That makes 105/150, which is seven out of ten overall. Appears to be a good bet, but deduct the marks for the tracks you already own, and then see what's left. Or else, devise your own marking system. When I deducted marks for what I already have, there were about fifty left. But then I don't have to buy as many records as you.

☐ JOHN TOBLER



Neil Young

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT
Reprise K54040

AS I HOPE I've made clear in previous articles, Neil Young ranks in my estimation as THE singer/songwriter... I play his records extensively and regularly for the pure pleasure of it, I've got unofficial recordings of some of his more obscure songs that just add further weight to my respect for him, and every new album he releases is received by me with the sort of reverence that I can't honestly apply to anyone else. In the face of stiff opposition at the time, I felt that his previous two albums, *Time Fades Away* and

On The Beach were both brilliant in their own way, the former a vibrant full-blooded 'live' album with really beautifully crafted songs like 'L.A.' and 'Last Dance', and the latter a more relaxed set but written and performed in an uncompromising and foreboding style that many people obviously found too oppressive.

On *Tonight's The Night* the music and the structure of the whole album is in fact very similar to *Time Fades Away*. Although all but one track wasn't recorded 'live' in concert, it was made 'live' in the studio at a time when all concerned were on the point of being extremely stoned. And it shows... but not in an adverse way. In fact I'd go as far as to say (although many wouldn't) that most of the material benefits from a rough, shaky interpretation... it's got a human quality to it that music of this kind relies on for its appeal. 'Roll Another Number', which has got to be about nothing else but getting stoned, works perfectly in this context and ends up being one of those irresistible songs that you just have to sing along with. 'Come On Baby Let's Go Downtown', recorded 'live' a couple of years ago on a Neil Young/Crazy Horse tour with the late Danny Whitten singing lead vocals, is roughly in the same mould, but they're the only two songs with lyrics of a lighthearted nature. The rest of the album is, in contrast, heavy listening. The songs are either of a deeply personal kind like 'Albuquerque' which contains a recurring theme in Young's work throughout his career... his desire to escape the pressures and formal trappings that go with being a 'rock star', perfectly summed up in one verse:

So I'll stop when I can
Find some fried eggs and country ham
I'll find somewhere
Where they don't care
Who I am.

And then there are songs like 'Lookout Joe' which deals with the plight of war veterans who arrive home junkies—unable to satisfy their needs—a subject that has admittedly been covered by many people before, but nevertheless Young's own effort is probably as good as any of that genre. Of course perhaps the most direct and arresting song is the title track, which incidentally appears on the album twice, at the beginning and the end. It's about Bruce Berry, a CSN&Y roadie, who died of a drug overdose, and in fact the whole album is dedicated to him and ex-Crazy Horse guitarist Danny Whitten who died in similar circumstances. Both the lyrics and music to the song appear to have been written and performed in a shocked, emotional state of mind and as a result lacks the craft and long-term appeal of most of Young's work.

And now a word or two about the musicians involved. As *Tonight's The Night* was written and recorded before *On The Beach*, it features old Crazy Horse members Ralph Molina (drums) and Billy Talbot (bass), plus appearances from Nils Lofgren (guitar & piano), Ben Keith (pedal steel), Jack Nitzsche (piano), Tim Drummond (bass), and Kenny Buttrey (drums).

Just as a postscript to this review (which is mercifully being cut short before I ramble on indefinitely), I recently met Cameron Crowe, one of America's most influential rock journalists, and he's just done a truly mammoth interview with Neil Young which threatens



to reveal all and will eventually appear in *Rolling Stone*... look out for it. Also there is a fairly interesting interview in *NME* of June 28th which mainly deals with this album. Furthermore, don't take any notice of any of the reviews you may read, including even this one if you like. Just go out and get the album.

☐ ANDY

Robert Hunter

TIGER ROSE
Round Records RX-105

ALTHOUGH IT'S COMMON news by now that the Grateful Dead have ceased their collective activities until the summer of next year, a whole complicated mess of individual

projects have taken place most of which have or will be making an appearance on the Round Records label. Recently there have been four such albums released, none of which, to my knowledge, have yet been reviewed in any other paper. There is a remarkable and original electronic album by Ned Lagan and Phil Lesh called *Seastones*, an album of bluegrass music from Garcia's band, *Old & In The Way*, and a Keith & Donna Godcheaux album, all of which will be discussed in full in the next issue. The fourth album, and by far the easiest to listen to, is Robert Hunter's *Tiger Rose*, his second solo album and one that I find generally accentuates the deficiencies shown on the first while at the same time produces moments of real beauty and musical inventiveness.

RECORDS

The things that let Hunter down are his inability to consistently come up with melodies that are in any way memorable... his mediocre ones sound even worse up against the really good ones, and his voice is still a bit difficult to take. He croaks and strains and tries everything to vary the timbre and pitch, but it still comes out just plain boring. Except, that is, when the arrangements are in any way sympathetic, which brings me on to another criticism... although the standard of musicianship is faultless, as you would expect from Jerry Garcia, Mickey Hart, David Freiberg, Dave Torbert, Pete Sears, etc, the production and arrangements (by Garcia) I find rather strange to say the least. The album, taken as a whole, sounds slightly samey and lifeless, and I would venture to suggest a fuller and more varied production job could have helped matters. The actual songs themselves however, are mostly very good... Hunter's strong-point of course is his lyrics, and when he comes up with a good set of words, a pleasant melody, and a compatible arrangement and production job, the results are quite stunning. Unfortunately, that doesn't happen too often, but the one track on *Tiger Rose* where it does, a track called 'One Thing To Try', is worth, along with the beautiful cover, the price of the album alone.

Although the general impression I've given is one of disappointment, let me qualify it by saying that despite its short-



comings. I enjoy listening to *Tiger Rose* a lot. It's a friendly record, it makes mistakes, and it doesn't always want to make you listen too closely, but its sentiments are admirable and the guys who made it are all OK by me. Oh yeah, and if you're gonna buy this record, order it from Virgin Records 'cause they're selling it for £1.99.

□ ANDY

OTHER RELEASES

AS HE STANDS—Ron Geesin (Ron 2R)
THE HEAT IS ON—The Isley Brothers (Epic EPC 69139)
ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL VOL.1—The Earl

Scruggs Revue (CBS 80821)
STREETLIFE SERENADE—Billy Joel (CBS 80766)
JASMINE NIGHTMARES—Edgar Winter (Blue Sky SKY 80772)
INITIATION—Todd Rundgren (Bearsville K55504)
OVER THE RAINBOW—Various Artists (Chrysalis CHR 1079)
MADE IN THE SHADE—Rolling Stones (Rolling Stones COC 59104)
ONE OF THESE NIGHTS—Eagles (Asylum SYLA 8759)
INSPIRATION—Amazing Blondel (DJM DJLPS 446)
HOME OF THE BRAVE—Christopher Rainbow (Polydor 2383 338)
NATIVE DANCER—Wayne Shorter (CBS 80721)
CUT THE CAKE—Average White Band (Atlantic K50146)
CHOCOLATE CHIP—Isaac Hayes (Hot Buttered Soul Records ABCL 5129)
PRIME CUTS—Various Artists (SINGL 1)
A FRIEND OF MINE—John Dawson Read (Chrysalis CHR 1075)
BANCO—Banco (Manticore K53507)
MOON BATHING—Lesley Duncan (GM GML 1017)
TALL TREE—Peter Sarstedt (Warners K56129)
DIAMONDS & RUST—Joan Baez (A&M AMLH 64527)



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| 28 Led Zeppelin, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Kim Fowley, Stealers Wheel, Kevin Ayers Tree, Byrds Part 2. | 42 Nick Drake, Albert Hammond, Moby Grape, Dr Hook, Free, Lovin' Spoonful, John Weider, John Stewart |
| 29 Genesis, Everly Bros, Eagles/Burritos Family Tree, Silverhead, Johnny Speight, Beefheart, Byrds Part 3. | 43 Tim Hardin, Jackie Lomax, Bees Make Honey, Man Tree, Love, Sopwith Camel, Townshend, Steely Dan |
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| 32 Pink Floyd, Steve Ellis, The Story of Spirit, Clifford T Ward, John Cale, Roy Buchanan, Byrds Part 6. | 46 Phil Lesh, Rick Nelson, Ron Wood, Poco, Kevin Ayers, Leonard Cohen, American Newsletter |
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| 37 Charlie Watts, Mighty Baby, Nils Lofgren, Grateful Dead Part 3, Country Joe McDonald | 51 Dr Feelgood, Wishbone Ash Part 1, Norman Greenbaum, Ian Hunter Family Tree, Gentle Giant, Henry Cow |
| 38 Quicksilver Messenger Service, Richard Greene Tree, Ben Sidran, Loggins & Messina, John Stewart | 52 Lou Reed, Wishbone Ash Part 2, Country Rock, Caravan, Burritos, John Cipollina, The Strawbs Part 1 |
| 39 Michael Nesmith interview, Steve Miller, ZigZag Poll, Ralph McTell, Evan Parker | 53 Genesis, Pure Prairie League, Country Rock, The Magic Band, The Strawbs Part 2, Jesse Colin Young |
| 40 Dave Mason, Michael Nesmith: post-Monkees, Peter Hammill, Macon, Georgia | |



Illustrated above is the cover of Robert Hunter's new album "Tiger Rose" by Kelley Mouse Studios, San Francisco. It is featured on a great new T. shirt and 12" square Patch, one of twenty five exclusive West Coast designs that'll blow your mind!..... Send a big S.A.E. for our B/W poster and add 20p. for a full colour catalogue. Solely from: Alcock & Dicks Trading Company, 93 Charlton Church Lane, London SE7.



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BLABBERIN' SMOKE

Almost everything that happened last month has been totally eclipsed by that fabulous Wembley gig a couple of weeks back. It would be impossible to do justice to such an event in the short amount of space on this page, so we're going to present a full report in the next issue and hopefully illuminate a few points that the other reviews missed or glossed over. I was down on the pitch basking in the glorious sunshine, and John was up in the press box, so between us we should be able to present a fairly balanced account for those of you unlucky enough not to be there. Full marks to Elton John for hand-picking such a formidable line-up of bands and presenting us with a day's music that we'll never forget.

Partly as a result of that gig my listening habits over the last fortnight have altered somewhat, and after the astounding response to my idea last month, I thought I'd let both of you know what my ten fave rave album tracks are this month, in no particular order:

1. Roll Another Number - Neil Young.
2. Borrowed Tune - Neil Young.
3. Wild Country - Thunderclap Newman.
4. One Of These Nights - Eagles.
5. The Death Of Rock And Roll - Todd Rundgren.
6. Won't Get Fooled Again - The Who.
7. Shakin' Street - MC5.
8. Rocky Mountain Way - Joe Walsh.
9. Someone Saved My Life Tonight - Elton John.
10. Sail On Sailor - Beach Boys.

Both Neil Young songs are naturally enough from his new album, the Thunderclap Newman track is from 'Hollywood Dream' which, if you read the Speedy Keen article elsewhere, you'll know I value very highly, and 'The Death Of Rock And Roll' is another one of Todd Rundgren's kaleidoscopic power-house songs - this from his new LP 'Initiation'. I wonder how many of you out there consider, as I do, that Rundgren is one of THE major artists in rock'n'roll today? As you read this, I will already have done an extensive interview with the man which will appear shortly. The Eagles, Joe Walsh, Elton John and Beach Boys' tracks are all current singles, and if you've already got 'Holland' and 'The Smoker You Drink...' (which you should have), and you don't think the new Eagles album is up to scratch, and you can't afford to shell out over three quid for Elton's album, then these singles are essential. It's as much in anticipation of the new Who LP as anything else that I've been consistently playing 'Wont Get Fooled Again' - the penultimate Who track for my money, savage, stylish, and so bloody exciting rock'n'f***in' roll. Much the same can be said of the late, great MC5. If you haven't got 'Back In The USA' from which 'Shakin' Street' is taken, then get it, put your head between the speakers and play it LOUD. Great LP.

Contrary to suspicions held by some Zigzaggers, Marc Benno is alive and well and living back in Hollywood (see ZZ44). An odd communique arrived from the man this month in response to countless efforts by Jerry Gilbert to track the man down (following his progress from Austin, Texas to

Point Reyes, North California but with little success). "I've been writing a lot of tunes on piano lately, playing guitar with Bonnie Bramlett and I hope to put together a small group for her", says Benno. He also sent news on his old band The Nightcrawlers. "...they're like cowshit man, everywhere..." and promised a copy tape of the album he cut with the band, which A&M reportedly wouldn't issue. More news later... if the promised tape arrives.

In the midst of all the summer activity, Van der Graaf Generator's return to major concert work is worth keeping in mind. After a highly successful French tour - their first dates together for three years - Peter Hammill, Guy Evans, Hugh Banton, and Dave Jackson make their British debut at the Victoria Palace on July 27th. I expect we'll all be there, but they're only doing one British concert this summer so get in early.

One of the few drawbacks in getting the magazine together every month is the fact that I don't get as much time to read as I would like, and most of the stuff I do read is about rock music. However, I've managed to work my way through a couple of books lately, one of which is directly concerned with the record business, and the other a really remarkable book about a teenage street gang in the Bronx during the sixties. The first one is 'Clive: Inside The Record Business' by Clive Davis (Morrow). Those of you who only even vaguely follow the comings and goings of the record industry will know that Clive Davis was the President of CBS Records and was unceremoniously fired in 1973 after allegations involving the misuse of money, drugs, etc. Well this book is Davis' autobiography, and as such is a very interesting and absorbing insight into the way the business ticks, although at times I rather felt that Davis, as earnest, hard-working and genuine as he is, often sounded too good to be true, and that many of the problems and incidents he describes have been over-simplified. John Tobler also tells me that there are several factual errors in the book which, if you read it, you might be able to spot, although I must admit that I don't know enough about CBS to be able to correct them. The book is only in hard-back unfortunately, so it's ludicrously expensive, but your local library will no doubt have it, so have a glance through when you've got the time.

The second book is called 'The Wanderers' (Chatto & Windus), and is by Richard Price, a teacher at Long Island university, New York. His book is a really compelling story of the characters in a Bronx street gang called The Wanderers (named after the Dion song), and all of it is written from personal experience, which if you read it, is all the more remarkable. William Burroughs himself has been moved to call it "a deeply moving account of confused and spiritually underprivileged youth" and I guarantee you that the impressions you gain from the characters and the desolate, violent, but strangely at times compassionate atmosphere created will remain in your mind long after you put the book down.

I recently interviewed Price for a more detailed review when I've read the book again.

Just to finish up with, a new issue of Hot Wacks is out... as good as ever with stuff on Eric Clapton, Ry Cooder, Harvey Mandel, and The Turtles. 25p from 16 Almondbank Terrace, Edinburgh EH11 1SS. Also a brand new mag called 'Nostalgia' with a lot of interesting grist - Joni Mitchell, Todd Rundgren, Man, and much more. 25p from 11 Thistleboon Road, Mumbles, Swansea. That's it, see you next month.

Andy.

KURSAAL FLYERS COMPETITION

To celebrate their imminent rise to fame and fortune, the Kursaal Flyers, in conjunction with Zigzag are holding a competition. If you've ever seen the Kursaals (and God help you if you haven't), you'll know that they have among their number a stout, jovial ace banjo-picker named Ritchie Bull. Now all you've got to do to win yourself a handsome prize is guess Ritchie's weight. At a suitable gig to be arranged after the competition closes, Ritchie will be ceremoniously weighed and the winner announced. If he's there on the night he (or she) will be presented with their prize (a copy of the Kursaal's sparkling new album and a nice surprise!!), and if not they'll be notified by post. So what are you waiting for? Have a guess and send your entries along with your name and address to Kursaal Flyers Competition, Zigzag, 37 Soho Square, London W1. Chocs Away!!

THE GREAT LOST MICHAEL WILHELM ALBUM

Through the unflinching goodwill of Andrew Lauder at UA Records and the talent of ex-Charlatan Michael Wilhelm, Zigzag are very proud to announce that they'll be issuing this great album in a couple of months time. Yes folks, our very own record on our very own label! Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? Well we need your help. This album, recorded during 1971-2 and NEVER BEFORE RELEASED, will be available only through Zigzag. The point is we need to have a rough idea of how many to press up. We're going to sell it at a very reasonable price and in all honesty I can't possibly see how any true Zig-zagger could live without it.... it's more than just a valuable collector's item... it's a bloody brilliant album. So if you anticipate buying one or more copies please, without fail, write and let me know. The sooner the letters start coming in the sooner we can get this princely platter ready for you. Don't delay, do it today. More details next month.

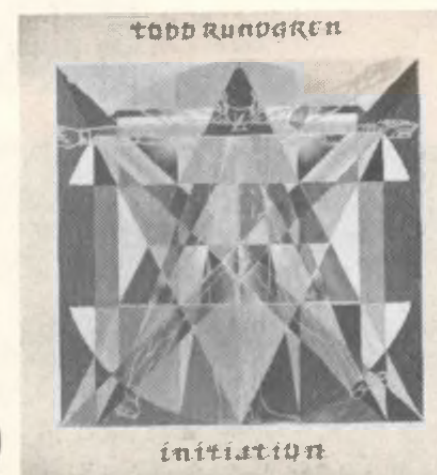
The illustration on pg 3 is courtesy of Personality Posters Ltd, 9, Gorst Rd, London NW10, and was sent to us by Phil of Malvern, Worcs. Many thanks.



Todd Rundgren

'Initiation'

his most intuitive album so far, also the longest musical record ever made 69 minutes 11 seconds



James Dean

'James Dean' a compilation album containing music and dialogue from the cult hero's three films East of Eden, Rebel without a Cause and Giant



Ronnie Wood

'Now Look' his second solo album and follow up to I've got my own album to do' Soul man Bobby Womack plays guitar and sings on most tracks



Neil Young

'Tonight's the Night' marks a reunion between Neil Young and his original backing group Crazy Horse, tracks include 'Roll another Number' and 'Mellow my Mind'



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