THE ROAD TO ROCK

PINK FLOYD
FAMILY
PETE TOWNSHEND
JIMMY PAGE
ROD STEWART
JEFF BECK
ELTON JOHN

A zigzag BOOK OF INTERVIEWS

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A ZigZag Book of Interviews
Edited by Pete Frame

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PREFACE

This is the first in a projected series of rock anthologies comprising selections from *ZigZag* magazine.

In this volume, we have chosen to concentrate on some of the more important figures in British rock. To those of you who know and love *ZigZag*, this may not seem a particularly representative selection of the mish-mash of articles presented for your edification over the years. However, we have our reasons! For once, we decided to order our rambling minds and assemble the best of the many tons of printed *ZigZag* matter available into some sort of coherent, thematic form. And where better to start than here at home.

Hope you like it.

Pete Frame

INTRODUCTION

If any one thing has characterised *ZigZag*'s history—besides the improbability of its survival—it has been the magazine's identification with bands that were either American or whose lives are untroubled by contemplation of the wealth tax, that is struggling. The subjects of this book are all British and, with the exception of Family, have achieved the kind of success that was described by one of them as like winning the pools. Apart from the not completely reprehensible desire to sell lots of copies of the book, these interviews were chosen because they exemplify *ZigZag*'s approach to music journalism.

Throughout its career *ZigZag* has confined itself to documenting, in as straightforward a manner as possible, the circumstances in which the music came to be made. We hope that we've thus avoided the pitfall of acting simply as an adjunct to the selling operation, which usually results in articles of drivelling sycophancy; or the pitfall of collapsing into a boring pseudo-analytical posturing better suited to European social anthropologists. Hence the articles take a roughly historical shape; all the subjects having

been part of the extraordinary flowering of British rock music that took place in the late sixties. And perhaps The Who best illustrate the phenomenon.

Pete Townshend was the perfect interviewee—intelligent, articulate, and equipped with what seemed like an in-built editorial mechanism, which refocused his reflections at just the right moment onto a related subject, never losing interest in our questions, and interspersing his answers with slabs of mischievous humour; we recall his imitation of an Australian policeman with an especially broad grin. The interview was done at his riverside home in London, just after the release of *Who's Next*, and concurrently with their final tour of the UK with the *Tommy* stage act.

Pete Frame's chronicle of the Pink Floyd's days as the underground's favoured sons was a last minute rush job necessitated by the printer's refusal to handle his strictures on a local pie factory. In spite of the rush it is a fascinating account of the period—a superb introduction to the interview with two members of the Pink Floyd that follows. This interview was carried out at Nick Mason's home a week after the band's stunning performance of *Dark Side Of The Moon* at Olympia, but before the album had taken up its residency in the charts.

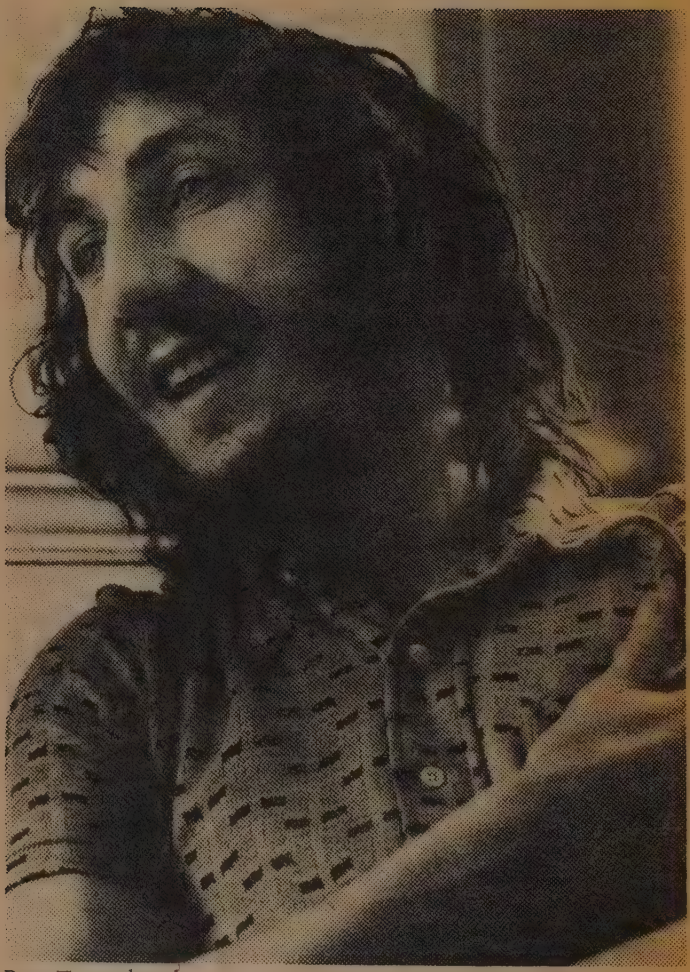
The interviews with Jimmy Page and Rod Stewart were both done in the time honoured fashion. The name of *ZigZag* appeared somewhere on the publicist's schedule for the day, with our man sandwiched between the gossip columnist from the *Daily Gleaner* and the London correspondent of the Hamburg monthly *Die Grosses Beaten*. It seems a little bit of a miracle that anything other than the trite banalities about the new album ever emerges from conversations like that.

Elton John has long been a staunch friend to *ZigZag* and had given freely of his time and effort to help the magazine; for the interview at his home in Virginia Water he furnished John Tobler with sumptuous chalices of champagne, and a peek at his huge record collection, a collection that evidences

his extraordinarily catholic knowledge of music.

The final group to be featured is Family, gone, alas, the way of far too many bands whose musical accomplishment—and theirs was truly exceptional—couldn't, in the end, reinforce their resolution in the face of the public's indifference. The material was culled from several conversations held immediately prior to their farewell tour.

In the process of assembling this introduction the contributors all had recourse to the phrase "really nice bloke" when recalling the principals, and since *ZigZag*'s writers seldom succumb to the temptation to hold forth about individuals' personalities—they're far too interested in what guitars are best for acoustic bottleneck—the description will do good service as our recollection of the musicians featured in this little volume. They've also, we should add, made some fabulous music.



Pete Townshend

CHATTING WITH PETE TOWNSHEND

After almost three years of ZigZag, it was about time that we got round to doing something on The Who. So, at the end of last year, John and a Who-freak friend called Connor McKnight, spent a couple of evenings with Pete Townshend and came away with 7 cassette-fuls of chat. This was duly transcribed and a pile of handwritten foolscap, about two inches thick, arrived for perusal and editing. What to do? Well, in the end, we decided that we would publish selections of the interview. Subjects discussed ranged from Hells Angels, via Thunderclap Newman, to evolving technology in the recording studio, and from Dylan, via Chuck Berry, to all the Who's albums . . . and it's all good stuff. So, for this issue, we chose a random section labelled 'Tape One—second session'.

ZZ: A lot of your earlier songs had a definite Stones feel about them (and you recorded a couple of their numbers) and you said in *The Times* that their resurgence as a live band owed a lot to your example. It's obviously a pretty complex relationship, but can you talk about it a bit?
Pete Townshend (PT): Yeah, sure, but first let me say that

that thing in *The Times* was a bit embarrassing, because re-reading it, it seems to be full of name dropping. To really pin that down . . . I'm writing a piece for a magazine that Meher Baba lovers put out in India, and one of the questions they asked was to give an intimate glimpse of three of your famous contemporaries—and I really couldn't . . . . I can't give an intimate glimpse of anybody really. I could give several intimate glimpses of Ronnie Lane, but there isn't anybody else. We don't really know the Stones; we've never spent any time with them socially, and we've never really spent time with the Beatles—we were around them a lot when Epstein was their manager because we were hoping to get in that stable. Kit Lambert and Brian Epstein really respected each other very highly—quite rightly I think. We were hoping for some sort of leakage into the Beatles thing, but it fell through when Epstein died, and I don't think I ever saw any of the Beatles again socially.

Hendrix I always admired tremendously but never got to know, and same with Eric Clapton, who I spent a bit of time with. I met Dylan once, but that's all. But Mick [Jagger] is one of those guys who seems to ring up occasionally and say "hello", but every time he rings up he asks about a gig or a particular venue or working on the road or some particular problem which has to do with touring. I think that the reason he came to us was that we were the only group that lasted; a contemporary of the Stones right from the ground up, and we were working the kind of gigs that they needed to work when they went back on the road last year. It was at a point where the status was similar, the kind of performance was similar, and the dynamics that we were involved in would be similar.

Quite simply, I personally feel that the Stones are the world's best rock'n'roll band—I think that unqualifiedly. Not that I think their records are always great . . . it's like Glyn Johns says about a Stones session: you can sit and wait for weeks and they'll just churn out a lot of rubbish—and Glyn's very

tough like this—but when they do get together, they're the best in the world. This is why they are often weak live—because you can't wait for three weeks to get it on, but if they did a live tour that came up to the pitch that they get onto some of their albums . . . the presence, the physical excitement, the mental exhilaration, the electricity of the whole occasion, they would be, really, the best in the world. They suffer, I feel, because Jagger's the only one who wants to play.

ZZ: Mick Taylor wants to play . . . . Have you seen Altamont?

PT: No. I was too nervous . . . we've had a few experiences with bad vibe audiences and evil audiences here and there.

ZZ: Not in England presumably.

PT: One was in England . . . we had a few in England actually. I had an argument with a Hell's Angel on the stage at Leicester once, and got bottled. It made the press in a small way, but they treated it like "Christ, don't let this sort of thing happen again"—that sort of way. A road manager and I had to have eight stitches apiece, but even so, I think that if I had not been quite so pissed and quite so bloody, I would have got stuck in a lot further and probably got a lot more badly hurt. Because I got hit on the head, and it bled a lot, I thought I'd better get to a hospital, but I was really wild; I broke my guitar across some geezer's collarbone, but it didn't seem to do much to him—he had a ring in his nose, I remember.

ZZ: It's a nasty thing to say, but I wasn't sad when they got theirs over Weeley.

PT: I know; I must say that I felt the same. I know a lot of Hell's Angels and they always seem, on the surface, to be incredibly innocent, fun-loving people, but there isn't any doubt that when they get involved in a fight, they're willing to go a lot further than other people. This too, I suppose, is the feeling I've always had about skinheads, and it's because they're not interested in anyone as a human being, they're much more interested in themselves as a showpiece. When they're clubbing you with a billiard cue, they must look grace-

ful when they're doing it—and they're not going to hold back, because their chick is there watching. You find that by themselves, they are very ordinary people, and that's what scares me the most in a situation like that—this mindless thing where they're out to get you though they haven't really got any grievance at all . . . . It's like facing an army of robots, and the obvious thing is to run.

ZZ: To get back to the Stones/Who thing, I feel that The Stones have come adrift from their audience. I mean, 'Brown Sugar' is a long way from 'Goin' Home', don't you agree?

PT: [pauses] I dunno . . . it's hard to say.

ZZ: I think they're about dope, basically.

PT: Maybe . . . I suppose they could be . . . it's really hard to say. I know that Mick is an incredibly sharp guy, and if he thought that The Stones would remain a vehicle for him if he wrote songs about dope, then he would . . . because he wants The Stones to exist and he wants to work within The Stones—he wants the whole thing to keep going, and he might even do it subconsciously, if you like. 'Brown Sugar' might be about a black chick's cunt or about raw cocaine—I mean, I don't really know, but I do know that coke is a huge thing in the rock world at the moment. In the last two years, it's overtaken pot in popularity among musicians, and I feel it's very much something to remark on, because coke is an addictive thing. Whether you snort it or mainline it or take it in your mouth . . . it's addictive, and much more than just psychologically addictive. It's slower to get to you, but it gets you in the end. I've had people here, and they've really amazed me—I won't mention any names, obviously, but I've had people here that I'd never ever thought of as being drug-hungry people, and I've seen them just break down right in front of me and say, "I've just got to get some coke . . . get me some coke, I've just got to have some—where am I going to get it from . . . who do you know?"

ZZ: Do you think that drugs are self-destructive, or destructive of anything?

PT: I think that's such a difficult question . . . . I don't really know. Some drugs, like hallucinogenic ones, actually alter the mind—they don't just cloud it over like alcohol does . . . they actually alter it.
ZZ: On a permanent basis?
PT: No, not on a permanent basis . . . .
ZZ: What about acid?
PT: Well, I don't know about acid. I mean, chemically, the only thing they've been able to pin down to acid is the chromosome damage, about which there is no doubt, but apparently, by the time you're 80, you've already lost half your chromosomes anyway—through eating too much vinegar on your fish and chips or something. So I don't really know the relevance of that.

What I'm worried about is the psychological thing about it. When I stopped, and I stopped because of Meher Baba, my whole world suddenly caved in. Mind you, it had got to the point where I found it very repetitive; it was humping everybody's music into the same bag and it was always going to the same place in my head. When I first got into pot, I was involved in the environment more; there was a newness about Art College, having beautiful girls around for the first time in my life, having all that music around me for the first time, and it was such a great period—with the Beatles and all that exploding all over the place. So it was very exciting, but although pot was important to me, it wasn't the biggest thing; the biggest thing, rather, was the fact that pot helped to make incredible things even more incredible.

Later on, say 5 years later, I'd gotten into that rut of listening to every record stoned, and it was just turning to sculpture in my head . . . . I was seeing the music rather than hearing it. It's hard to explain but it was like symmetrical towers of sound—that's how I saw it. The last time I ever heard a record stoned on pot was *Music From Big Pink*, the night I first met John Sebastian, at Peter Tork's house—so there!
ZZ: So what happened to you when you stopped smoking?

PT: Well, like I said, my world just sort of caved in, and I suddenly thought "Christ, what have I been up to?" I found that I couldn't listen to a record unless I was stoned! I've got about 250 albums now, and the only ones I like are the ones that I first heard when I was stoned . . . what I call 'the stoned ones'; the ones that had that 'stoned-ness' around them, that aura. I've got to learn to listen to music all over again, and I've got to learn how to write all over again . . . . I've got to learn how to enjoy life all over again, without leaning on dope. This wasn't the betrayal though; the betrayal was that I found I could give it up just like that [snaps fingers]. When I realised that everything I'd been crediting to pot was nothing at all to do with it . . . the fact that I could write a song, or play guitar, or have a good time at a party, or enjoy a satisfying sexual relationship. Alright—a lot of people would say that I learnt through pot, but anyway, it was like a betrayal.

It was a very strange thing; I thought, "Christ almighty, what have I been doing? I've been giving my whole life to a weed". Previously, I'd been saying, "It's only a weed growing out of the ground—what can be harmful about that?" But now I think that pot is possibly the most subtle evil of all, because of its subtlety and because the psychological dependence, which to me is a far more gritty dependence than actual physical dependence, takes over . . . it's more spiritually based, where you can't enjoy the pleasures of the spirit or the soul. I found it very easy to give up pot, and I think that if I decided not to drink any more I'd find that fairly easy—if there wasn't a Keith Moon in the group, that is—but it was the results which were important. I know I'm lucky in that respect, but it was the results which made me take a positive stand on it—and it's not just aping Meher Baba's words and spouting them out in a quasi-religious manner. I really did make that decision for myself, and in some respects I made it before hearing about Baba. I was, as I said, getting bored with these symmetrical visions, though at the same time, I was attached to them. I liked them, yet I was bored

by them, so I suppose that in itself shows that something was in decline.

What shook me about acid was when I took what I thought was acid, but turned out to be STP—something that I would never ever ever take. It was after the Monterey Pop Festival, and I spent more time outside of my body looking inside myself than I've ever spent . . . it was like a hundred years. It was actually a four hour hump, whereas a normal acid hump is about 25-30 minutes . . . you have a hump and then plane off into a nice trip. Well on this STP trip, the hump was about four to five hours—and it was on an aeroplane over the Atlantic.

ZZ: What do you think about legalising dope?

PT: Well, even though I'm against drugs, I say pot should be legalised. You see, I spent so much of my time pissing around with pot purely because it is illegal; and I came very close to being involved with far more serious drugs because policemen in police stations told me, with grave looks on their faces, about the terrible things dope does—"Do you know what this stuff does?" I mean, do they know what it does? No. One day they get a pot smoker in and give him an incredibly hard time just because the day before they had a heroin addict in—and to them, it's just the same . . . if you're not one, you're the other, because you're on your way.

ZZ: They say that if pot were made legal, people would find something else that was not.

PT: That's a possibility. The other argument I've had put to me several times is that alcohol, which is legal, is still very dodgy. But then look at prohibition—that never stopped people drinking . . . they made their own and died because it was such poison. This is the point: if we're going to have dope, let's have decent dope—at least that would do away with the corruption, and it would bring the thing into the open. Then you could separate pot from drugs that really do cause physical and mental problems.

ZZ: Let's get onto a lighter subject, shall we? Can you tell us about Keith Moon's epics in American hotel rooms?

PT: They do happen with alarming regularity. Keith feels that he has to be involved in some form of entertainment all the time—even when the rest of the group is asleep, he feels he has to entertain us and wake us, either by causing explosions or by getting us thrown out of the hotel. The first really big thing he ever did was on our first American tour [with Herman's Hermits]; we happened to go to Georgia, which is the only place in the States that you can buy fireworks. They sell these things called Cherry Bombs. Anyway, a few days later I was in his room and all the paint round the door knocker was black where he'd been putting these things in the keyhole. I happened to ask if I could use his bog and he just smiled like this and said, "Sure". I went in and there was no toilet—just a sort of S-bend coming out of the floor! "Christ, what the fuck's happened?" I asked, and he said, "Well, this Cherry Bomb was about to go off in my hand, so I threw it down the bog to put it out". "Are they that powerful?" I asked, and he nodded. "How many of them have you got?" I said, with fear in my eyes. He said, "500," opening up a case which was full to the top with Cherry Bombs.

Of course, from that moment on, we got thrown out of every hotel we ever stayed in. The Holiday Inns were phoning round saying "Don't let this group in—they'll blow the place up," and it got to the point where they were asking 5,000 dollars deposit to let us stay in even the shoddiest hotel.

My nerves finally broke in the Goreham, which is like the hotel in New York where all the groups stay. My wife was with me at the time and it was hard enough just to try and keep the hangers-on away from the cosy family situation, but we got ensconced in our room and tried to make it feel a bit like home. A couple of hours or so later, we got to sleep, only to be woken up by police cars outside and a lot of police running about. I thought that Tom, our production manager had been busted, because he was really heavily into dope, so I ran out and got the lift to the seventh floor where his room was. Then I heard this huge great explosion which

rocked the lift. Then the lift stopped, the doors opened, and all I could see was thick smoke—so I got back in and pressed the button for the seventh floor again, and just as the doors were closing, I saw Moon walk past. He'd apparently picked the hotel manager's wife's room, and so, of course, we got thrown out of that and every other hotel in New York as a result. We still have difficulty finding a place to stay in New York.

ZZ: Does he still carry on like that?

PT: Well, Moony's got this thing now, where you wake up in the morning and he says, "Greatest hotel room I've ever done—it was a work of art". . . and you look in his room and it's just total chaos. He does this a lot now—he actually arranges it artistically . . . you don't hear any great smashing noises these days—he just arranges it so that you look in and go, "Oh Christ, what've you done?"—but he hasn't actually broken anything, he's just made it appear wrecked. He unscrews cabinets and prises them apart, takes the television cabinet off and sticks black sticky tape over the screen to make it look shattered . . . or if he's drunk enough, he just smashes the place up . . . pours tomato ketchup in the bath and puts those plastic leg things sticking out.

When we play English towns, Keith always finds the joke shop; tear gas pellets and smoke bombs, stink bombs and itching powder in the bed, bugs under the pillow, naughty doggie in the sink . . . .

ZZ: Why do they always nail down that plastic sheet under him on stage?

PT: I don't know. I can't really work that out . . . it can't have anything to do with the sound.

ZZ: Does he still own the pub?

PT: Yeah—he's got a half share in it. . . they got an Egon Ronay star this year for good cooking—it's a very good hotel.

ZZ: Did he have something to do with that shout of "I saw ya" on the end of 'Happy Jack'?

PT: Oh yeah. Keith, you see, is very annoyed at not being allowed to sing; he's got an awful voice . . . really terrible. So when we do all the vocals, he feels left out, and being Keith, he pisses about. On that particular session, we kept trying to get the vocals down, but he kept stopping us by talking and so on. In the end, we stuck him in the engineer's booth so that we could do them—but that didn't work because he kept pulling these funny faces at us through the glass, so that we laughed in the middle of the take. To stop him, we made him crouch down under the panel so that we couldn't see him —and just as we were finishing, he lifted his head up to see what was happening . . . so I yelled out "I saw ya" and we left it on.

ZZ: Is it right that Roger made all your guitars in the beginning?

PT: He made his own. There was a time when we were all using home made guitars—it was a bit of a weird situation; we used to make our own, rather than put up with shoddy gear. John was the first that I know of; he'd make bass guitars out of one piece of half inch ply. He'd mark out the shape with a pencil, cut it out, divide the neck into frets and get someone to fret it, put a pickup on with the wire hanging out, put a few false knobs on and paint it bright red. He used to get a fairly good sound out of it too. I had a guitar that I made myself, but it wasn't really very good, but Roger had one which he made, and that was alright. He was a bit of a handyman, but he only made his own and told us how to make ours—he was always too busy pulling birds I think.

ZZ: You played on Mike Heron's album, and Keith was on 'Beck's Bolero'—what else have you all played on besides The Who?

PT: Sorry to disappoint you, but I think that's it. Keith's played a few.

ZZ: Like that awful Viv Stanshall record, *Suspicion.*

PT: Well, he produced it didn't he? He was on the Scaffold's *Do The Albert* and one or two others. The thing is that when

Keith did Beck's 'Bolero', that wasn't just a session—that was a political move. It was at a point when the group was very close to breaking up—Keith was very paranoid and going through a heavy pills thing. He wanted to make the group plead for him because he'd joined Beck.

ZZ: Was Ronnie Lane on that session?

PT: I don't think so.

ZZ: What's the tie-up between you and Ronnie Lane, because you must've been rivals in the old days.

PT: No, we were never rivals . . . I don't think he's got a rival in the world. The tie-up is the fact, I suppose, that the Small Faces and The Who always got on incredibly well. I don't know how it came about though, because Kit Lambert was murderous to the Faces; he accused them of copying us. I always used to get on really well with Steve Marriott too—it was a pity when he and Ronnie split up, because they were cohorts . . . . I looked that word up today, and it said "Roman legion". They were the two songwriters and producers, but I think it was natural, in a way, that the Small Faces broke up after *Ogdens Nut Gone* . . . there's that *Tommy* thing . . . the 'Tommy Test'; you do your classic album and then you really have to use every ounce of stamina and guts to stick together, because it's so tempting to relax.

ZZ: Can I ask you a question that's intrigued me for years, and that is this: The two best bands in Britain today, in terms of sitting in a seat and watching and listening to them, are the Faces and The Who. How much is this that you share the mod thing?

PT: I don't know. They were a damned sight more real mods than we were . . . at least they were the right size.

ZZ: Shepherds Bush wasn't really a very mod place was it?

PT: It was the sort of place where you'd never wear your mod clothes because you would get them dirty in the bundles. But no . . . Shepherds Bush *was* a very mod place as it happens; the Goldhawk Club was amazing—I used to spot all the major fashion changes at the Goldhawk Club . . . nowhere else. Like

you'd see one guy wearing a pair of sneakers with buckles and you'd know that next week they'd all be wearing them . . . and, sure enough, they were. Maybe it was because I got to know all the leaders and could spot the right things.

But to go back to your question, I don't think the mod thing has much to do with it . . . it might be in a line—Stones, Who, Faces—not that Rod Stewart follows in a line from us. I used to go and watch him when I was in short trousers; the night he started—the Cyril Davis benefit night—was the first night I saw him. I remember saying to my mate, "Cor, look at 'im, what a poof, what an 'orrible 'aircut," because he had exactly the same haircut then as he has now, and it was really outrageous.

ZZ: He always used to camp it up on stage.

PT: Yeah. Well, to put it bluntly, I think Rod Stewart was a poove—still is a poove. I've gone from my poovy stage. It's difficult to say whether what you see means anything, or what you hear means anything, because people allow what they want to hear to be heard. In those days it was a really good mystifier if people thought you were queer.

I think the Small Faces were a mod group, and we were a mod group, and in their way, I suppose the Stones were too, although they came from different sources and were quite old. We were a mod group because we picked the situation and went into it; the Stones were picked by the mods and dragged into it, and the Small Faces came out of the mods. We weren't mods but we became mods—we looked at it and said, "That's incredible, let's be involved in it" . . . we didn't grow up as mods, but had to learn all the stuff. I was at Art College, had long hair, was smoking pot and going with girls with long red hair, and all that. Painting farty pictures and carrying my portfolio around . . . and I had to learn how to be a mod.

Like in those days, a scooter was a big status symbol, but I used to have an old American car—that was my symbol. But I used to have to lie to the little mod chicks I pulled, and tell them I had a Vespa GS . . . "Oh yeah, I buzz all over the place".

If I told them I had a '58 Cadillac, which to me was a dream, they would have thought I was a rocker.

ZZ: Do you want people to think really deeply about your music, or just listen to it?

PT: Oh it's so difficult—I don't want to pin people down to any attitude. I know that people get things out of certain people's music that I just can't relate to. For example, when Dylan first came out, I dug his music—his sound and chords and voice, but I'm only just beginning to get the lyrics of his songs. It's not that I'm thick, it's just that I wasn't listening to them. I think, however, that Dylan made people listen to the lyrics but his genius lay in the fact that he didn't consider his lyrics. The way he used to write and record was to write down the rhyming words and fill in with the first words that came into his head . . . or spontaneous titles that came into his head, just sing them off and fill in lines. Let's face it; Dylan is a poet and poets become expert at doing that. Ending up in the same place they started. Allowing their minds to flow freely and yet organising their minds at the same time. I don't suppose for a minute that he was conscious of what he was saying, but when you look at it in retrospect you can really find out an incredible amount about the man—more than you'd ever find out by meeting the fucker. He won't rub two words together for you—and if you mention a song, you've had it.

I suppose he's really got the biggest problem of responsibility of any rock star in the world; his biggest problem of responsibility is that he can't face people—that's why he's so incredible in his music; because everything, everything comes out in his music. But, because of things he said in his early music, now that he's become big and influential his responsibility (if you look at it in the Jean Paul Sartre syndrome) is to get up and do something about the world . . . and of course, he's not capable. He's a very ordinary, shy, weak person. This is really where I hope to be a bit more successful . . . : I dunno, to try and relate the group's work to some role in life. It's

really hard, but it just has to be done—you can't just walk around in a dream all the time.
ZZ: Well Dylan's got his problems—like Weberman for a start.
PT: Well, Weberman I would've killed by now; I've had Weberman equivalents and they've had hammers bashed over their heads before they got in the door. If someone looked through my dustbin . . . Christ, Hoffman got a bat in the neck for less. It's just bull-headedness for bull-headedness's sake. To go back to the lyrics, you've got to look there—that's the problem. Weberman is listening to the lyrics and saying, "There's the man, there's his words, there's his work—but look at him just sitting there with a lot of money, a wife and family and doing nothing. He isn't using the money for the right purposes—he's a hypocrite". But that isn't true; Dylan is a one-way person—from him to you through his music—that's what it's all about, and you can't play the guards-van off against the locomotive. The whole drag is that people really do that. I mean, I can't play the first few years of my musical career off against what I'm doing now. When I started off, the object was to make as much money as possible in the shortest time, don't let any fucker get in the way, be a big star, fuck a load of women, and end up with a mansion in the country. It's taken a lot longer than I thought, and in the meantime I've learnt some sense.

ZZ: Is there a new 'real' album, or are you going to leave that for a bit?
PT: Well at the moment when we made *Who's Next*—one of the things about that—it's a long story—it isn't my idea of a new Who album, and to a staunch Who fan it's not their idea of a new Who album and so I suppose The Who and a lot of other people are waiting for the next Who album which

should really be some event in and around The Who which is a logical next step from *Tommy*, which *Who's Next* wasn't. *Who's Next* wasn't a logical step in anyone's language. *Who's Next* was a stepping stone, if you like, as Roger says it's like The Who treading water. It was a big step for us as it was our first major break away from Kit Lambert as a producer and it was a big step in sound 'cause Glyn Johns has got a characteristic knack of getting really excellent sounds in the studio and so he made The Who sound a little bit more polished and professional but as an album I was really quite disappointed in it. I quite liked bits of it, like 'Everyone Else'. A week after it was out and in the charts I forgot about it and now the public's forgetting about it and I think it's a good thing.

ZZ: A lot of the songs have musical images—'Pick Up My Guitar And Play', 'Getting In Tune'. Was this accidental?

PT: Well that really stemmed from the project that we were involved in at the Lifehouse. The whole thing was based on a combination of fiction—a script that I wrote—called *The Lifehouse*, which was a story—and a projection within that fiction of a possible reality. In other words it was a fiction which was fantasy, parts of which I very much hoped would come true. And the fiction was about a theatre and about a group and about music and about experiments and about concerts and about the day a concert emerges that is so incredible that the whole audience disappears. I started off writing a series of songs about music, about the power of music and the mysticism of music. 'Getting In Tune' is a straight pinch from Imrat Khan's discourse of mysticism of sound where he just says music is one way of individuals getting in tune with one another and I just picked up on that. And there's a couple of others which I don't suppose you've heard. One's called 'Pure And Easy'. You hear the beginning of it at the end of 'Song Is Over'.

'There once was a note pure and easy
Playing so free like a breath rippling by.'

It's about this note that pervades everything.

ZZ: Is this the same song as 'The Note'?
PT: Yeah. It's a song about reflecting creation musically, i.e. there being one infinite consciousness—everything in infinity being the one note and lots of other consciousnesses being us and vaguer consciousnesses being gas and grass and space. I just wrote a lyric about all this—talking about it as music. That is really one of my favourite songs, it really should have been on *Who's Next* because *Who's Next* if nothing else was a culmination of the frustration of The Who trying to get somewhere. We didn't get anywhere near where we were going in the album. 'Baba O'Riley', 'Won't Get Fooled Again', 'Getting In Tune'. There were a few things in there that had nothing to do with it at all—'Behind Blue Eyes', 'Going Mobile', which were really throwaways. There's a few things in there that are really worthwhile. We could have put together a really tight concept album I think. Roger thought so too at the time but Glyn Johns was very adamant that from his point of view as an observer he couldn't see any concept. And I think maybe he could have been wrong. I don't really know. I think that as a producer he perhaps stands a little too much away from the ethereal concepts that a group gets involved in because it's active, it's working and it's exciting and tends to just listen to what comes out of the speakers and take it at its face falue without realising, of course, that a whole lot of people who are interested in The Who are very deeply into everything that we're doing, all of the time.
ZZ: So? He's taking a Steve Miller producer type attitude.
PT: I think he's very much a musical producer. He's very much a musician and he's not creative in the way that, say, I am. The way I create things is that I blind myself and I go behind for a year, come up with something at the end and then I explain it to people in the following year, despite the fact that I didn't know what I was doing or how I came about it. Glyn's much more considered. He would say "What have you got *now*?" I'd say, "Well nothing, but I never do at this time of the day". And he'd say, "Well unless you've got

anything now I think the best thing to do would be to put the album together this way". Of course half way through *Tommy*–if he'd asked me the same question, I'd have had to say nothing, 'cause we had nothing–a lot of disconnected songs about a deaf, dumb and blind boy.
ZZ: Does this lead you to think that perhaps you shouldn't have split from Kit Lambert as producer?
PT: We didn't split with him. Our relationship drifted. It was very much one of those situations where–I think it was *Tommy* that destroyed the relationship. It was so exhausting. It was incredibly long and drawn out. It took about two years of active involvement. Kit's real contribution will never, ever, ever be known because of course it wasn't production at all, it was far deeper. The word producer is, I think, an absurdly misused word anyway. Kit was much more involved in the overall concept of the thing–much more than people imagine. Not all that much in fact with the overall sound. Although he did produce it and mix it and he did make us work at it–still the main thing was that he thought of the idea of rock opera.
ZZ: What, with *A Quick One*?
PT: Yeah and I just did it. He thought of it.
ZZ: Did he suggest *Live At Leeds*?
PT: No, that was pretty much a group idea.
ZZ: You said once that you'd been asked to do a live album.
PT: Slip of the tongue I think–maybe I was talking about fans. I mean a lot of kids have asked us to do a live album. They'd often say: "I can't understand it because your live sound is so far removed from your recorded sound–how about a live album?" And of course we'd been trying from the year dot and none of the stuff was any good.
ZZ: What about *Ready Steady Who*?
PT: That wasn't live.
ZZ: Well what's those whooshing noises when you play 'Disguises'?
PT: That's just a special cymbal effect dreamed up by Kit.

No, that's how we sounded in the studio. We made records to sound tinny—recorded tinny to sound tinny. It's no good recording things to sound hi-fi if they're gonna sound tinny. It was just a real clangy sound. I think Shel Talmy first invented it. But that early clangy Who sound was very much suited to the Dansette record player with the tin speaker and two watt amplifier.

ZZ: You said you went blind for a year and came up with something. Was Thunderclap Newman a product of that?

PT: That was really a chain of events. It wasn't any part of my creative process. Let's just say that I'm very organised when it comes to recording. I mean I've got this studio here that I work in and write in. I built it myself and run it myself and service it myself and I do that because I enjoy it—it's like a hobby but which is an extension of my work—much more fruitful a hobby than playing golf. I get all the exercise I need playing on the stage thanks. Look—it's part of what I'm normally involved in and I think Thunderclap Newman were more a part of that than my own creative processes. In other words they were of their own making. A lot of them would say, if asked now, that we were a figment of Pete Townshend's imagination—but they weren't. It's not true. Independently all three of them came to me, or I got involved with them with a view to helping them and then suddenly I realised—or rather, again, it was Kit Lambert who said to me, "You haven't got time for all of them, why not try them together?" I thought, "Impossible, three more unlikely people you couldn't get," but they got in a room together, they played together on some film music for a friend of mine and they were really great and I played them back the tapes and they said, "Yeah, seems to work," and they liked it and they were all enthusiastic about it, as a concept, as it were. We recorded. We made 'Somethin' In The Air', it worked out great, it got to number 1 and from then on it was a downhill slide.

ZZ: No! No! The album was fantastic.

PT: Well I think so.
ZZ: I saw them at a gig, and they were terrible. Surely the ingredient was yourself?
PT: No, no. The ingredient was that I gave them a process to work in, which wasn't the formal process that musicians are usually asked to work in. I mean I'd bloody well like to work in a process that didn't consist in just going on stage and jumping about all over the fuckin' stage and turning full up, but that's the only way to play live these days. If you play any other way it fails. It fails when Neil Young goes on the stage and strums his fuckin' acoustic guitar for 2½ hours. It fails when a group like Floyd try anything fancy. It really fails because what has gone down before prescribes a new limitation which is the limitation within which you have to work. You're defined by it. And it's a bloody good thing—obviously because if you don't have limitations you wouldn't know how to judge one group against another. But at the same time, the recorded medium offers another kind of limitation. It offers a limitation that you start the tape knowing, and although you get several stabs, what you get, what you do, is proven—you know what I mean—it's on the tape. There's no escape from the fact that what you've done is still there. So what I mean is that Thunderclap Newman did the fucking playing. All I did was play engineers. They played, I came up with the arrangements. Jimmy played every solo on that album straight off. Some of them are fantastic, spontaneous chipped solos, considered solos.
ZZ: So was Andy's piano playing and weird clarinets, yet at the live gigs you couldn't hear them and this is where the loss came.
PT: Yeah, I said always, right from the beginning, that they should never play live. But . . . Jimmy desperately wanted to play live. You can imagine, he's a good guitarist and he was brought up in the tradition of loud, young, arm-swinging guitarists and he was into Clapton and Hendrix and The Who—groups of that ilk, guitar groups, and he

wanted to play and so I suggested that he got his own group and that Andy got his own group, but Speedy, for a start, should never, ever, ever have got on the stage because he's not constitutionally built for it, he's incredibly nervous. Well, Speedy and I have like parted company for about [pause] a year. And at the end of that year I hope Speedy's going to have enough songs to do a solo album. Because I think Speedy's a genius, I really do. Andy's finished his album—it was finished today.

ZZ: Did you produce that?

PT: No, a friend of mine called Dick Seaman did it. I wouldn't have had time, it's taken Dick Seaman 18 months. I've edited it and done some mixing and stuff like that . . . sort of 'creative' production.

ZZ: You say you didn't do much to make Thunderclap Newman gell, but Speedy told us that you used to come out yelling "Fuckingetitogether!"

PT: That's not me. Glyn does that to The Who, mate. It's not making a creative contribution. I mean Speedy very much needs me to tell him that he's written a song. He doesn't know until I've told him. That doesn't mean that I've written it. I mean, he will stand in front of me and I'll say, "Well, what have you got?" and he'll say, "Well, nothing". So I say, "We can't record then, can we? You must have something—what's on that bit of paper there?" "Oh, that's just a few lines I wrote down the other day." "Well, has it got a tune?" I ask. . . . "Yeah—a bit of a tune, but it's not very good." "Well, play us that," and it's a great song like 'Something In The Air'. He wouldn't play me 'Something In The Air' because it was originally called 'Revolution' and John Lennon had written a song called 'Revolution' so Speedy wouldn't play me 'Revolution' which was a number 1 hit. We just changed the title to 'Something In The Air' and it was alright. That's the sort of phobia he has. Like, a lot of the songs he won't play me because I don't take drugs any more and he does and he things I'm gonna

get all upset if it's a song about drugs. That's the sort of guy he is. There was an incredible amount of misunderstanding, because I suppose they did look like a manipulated group, or a dreamed up group. But a lot came out of the top of their heads. Stuff like 'Hollywood Dream'.
ZZ: Who picked 'Open The Door Homer'?
PT: I think I chose that. It wasn't one of the more successful songs on the album but . . . . It was a song that Speedy and I have always mutually liked and we had the basement tapes before they were released as an album—came from a publisher or something. No, Arthur Brown had 'em, that's right, so they were at Track. There was a good quality version there and we listened to them and liked them. It was the only unreleased one of the basement tapes, so we figured we'd put it out as a single. So it was recorded as a single. It was recorded at I.B.C. but everything else was recorded in my studio up here. Some of it was actually done on stereo recorders, not on 8-track. We got the 8-track half way through the session. 'Accidents', which is the best track on there, was done on two Revoxes. The other ones—'When I Think' and 'I Don't Know', were done on Revox and 'Old Cornmill' and 'Hollywood I'. The ones that were done on Revoxes have a sound—I don't know what it was—they have a sort of silky sound. I can't explain it. The ones that were done on the 8-track had that typical rock hardness, but 'Accidents', for example, has got an incredible spacious hi-fi stereo feel about it. I dunno what it is, As an album I feel that my biggest mistake was the way I put the tracks together. I don't think I really did it correctly. I was too far into it—the group; like putting two versions of 'Hollywood' on was daft. I should have made a choice. A few other things like that. It could have been shorter. It's about 22 minutes a side and it could have been shorter and tighter.
ZZ: Well, as it turned out it's the only thing to remember Thunderclap Newman by except the singles and it's nice to have as much as you can. They obviously had something

different. They were a novelty band but still musical.
PT: Yeah . . . I'm glad you listen to it. I mean a lot of people haven't. The album's sold very badly. Alright in the States.
ZZ: Andy said he wanted to get something acoustic. He obviously wanted to get something quieter so people could hear him play. What's on the new album?
PT: No, he's done one track with a friend that's acoustic, but Andy's real talent lies with himself, not with organising, not with playing with other musicians. He wants a band, I suppose, because the human being is a social animal and likes to work in that way. But really, again, and it points right back to the fact that Thunderclap Newman had brilliant potential as far as recording—it's that Andy has always done what I have done, since, before I even knew what tape recording was, he was into it. Multi-tracking—bird songs and locomotive recordings, you know, special effects, echoes. I've got a stack of tapes upstairs that he did as early as 1960—which are all done just on piano, or his version of 'Rock Around The Clock' with Andy Newman's saxophone sixteen times. I think the album he's just done is good because he's done it all himself. There's a couple of things that he's done with other musicians.
ZZ: Does Andy resent the 'freak' image at all?
PT: No, he doesn't but I do. I mean on his behalf and so does his producer at the moment, Dick. Dick was at school with Andy and was the first guy to play me the first Thunderclap record which I've actually got here, which is absolutely amazing. If you hang on I'll play it for you.
ZZ: We'll bootleg it.
PT: It's the right quality for bootlegging. He played me this acetate of tapes. Thunderclap Newman with Richard Cardboard on drums. This was when I was at art school.
ZZ: Who is Richard Cardboard?
PT: Co-producer of Stormy Petrel. Well, that's him. Richard Seaman. That record was the beginning of Andy's

image as a freak. We all played the tape and it built up an incredible mystique. Is he a jazz musician? Is he dead? Who is this guy? And then suddenly there he was on the Wall—Thunderclap Newman. The people who hadn't heard of him thought he was, like, a jazz sax player come to play in lunch hours at college.

ZZ: Well, a lot of my friends think he's a freak—but in the best sense of the word, a real individualist.

PT: Yeah. He's certainly eccentric, but above that, the word 'freak' means different and he is different to other people—he's a darn sight more talented than most people and he's a musical genius. That's what I think and I'm right about a lot of other people and I think I'm right about Andy. I think he's a genius. I think he's better than a lot of other minority geniuses, like John Fahey, for example, who I like, people of that ilk. Andy's new record is like a work of art and that's the end of it. It stands up against *The Ring* or anything that Debussy did. I mean it really is incredibly heavy stuff—fantastic stuff. It's the perfect bridge between the rock educated ear, the trad-jazz educated ear, which is really what I am. I mean I was brought up on a mixture of trad-jazz and the Shadows and the classics. He has an incredibly spontaneous way of putting things down and I suppose he is a freak, but I'm worried that if we get a contract for this record, that the record company will decide "It's another R.R.S.*—hey, some of this sounds humorous—let's just dress him up in a top hat and put an ad in the paper." This is why I don't think Andy should go with Track, because Track have got a bit of a reputation for tasteless ads in the paper and they might be tempted to do that—because the album really does what should have been done, *eventually*, by the group, Thunderclap Newman. It brings Andy out as a musician, 'cause we never really got the time to do that on the first album. I suppose the only section where he got full rein was in that little bit in 'Accidents' where I just surprised him by saying, "Why

*Roger Ruskin Spear

don't you do that bit on your own and multitrack it?"
ZZ: You put out a single of *Tommy* and you withdrew it after about a fortnight and put out an E.P. What was that about?
PT: Well that was all company policy. We've always been a group that's said that the singles market and the album market are distinctly separate. I still hold that—in America and England I think it's true. So it's not so much a class thing—lower classes buy singles or that kids buy singles and students buy albums. It's much more that if you're into buying singles and the process of buying singles it's the neatness of the brain. The brain stacks singles on piles and people relate bits of music to bits of their life. You know, they say, "This single here, say—'Surf's Up'—was when I was going out with Tony and it was a lovely sunny day." Not only nostalgia is involved in that. A lot of my albums I can't really listen to now because they are so strongly related to periods of my life, and I can't take the music at face value, even though at the time nothing in particular was happening. Album buyers get into an album buying rut. They collect albums like people collect stamps or coins or banknotes or whatever. They develop into two distinctly different markets for some reason. People who buy the *Tommy* album would never dream of buying a Who single at all. They would sit back and hope that one day—unless they were avid Who fans—they would hope that one day a Who single would come out. In fact until a Who single came out, was played in the charts, on the radio, they may not have heard of The Who, despite the fact that we might have had an album high in an album chart. In the States they might not listen to FM radio and over here they may not buy the trade papers. And if you don't buy the trade papers you don't know what the latest albums are.
ZZ: Well, what about the single that was brought out and pulled back?
PT: What single was that?

ZZ: Well the E.P. had 'Overture', 'See Me, Feel Me', 'Christmas' and something else, but there was a single that was just 'Overture' and 'See Me, Feel Me'.
PT: I'm not quite sure what happened there. I think 'Overture' was put out—I think I'm right here, but 'Overture' was covered in the States by Assembled Multitude, it got to number 2 or something fantastic and so we released our version, right, because naturally we wanted our version—if they were gonna buy someone else's version, they might buy ours as well, 'cause I'd make a fortune out of it as writer, so why shouldn't the rest of the guys have a bash too? So we put out 'Overture' backed with something else in the States and so we thought if it's coming out in the States, English people were gonna sort of say, "What about us?" so we put it out over here. I think the group and Kit and Chris got together and said, "*Tommy*'s been out, done its thing—it was incredibly highly priced in this country—how about releasing everything from *Tommy* on singles—everything." So that if somebody wanted to buy *Tommy* as a serial, as it were, they could do it. So we started off with the 'Overture' and we put out another two E.P.s which contained four tracks—some of which never even reached the shops because there was no record company interested at all and Track is actually marketed through Polydor and we're dependent on their distribution a lot. It was a nice idea but the public didn't really want to buy *Tommy* on singles. I suppose they wanted all the trimmings. As far as I can remember, that's what happened. Also Track pioneered the whole concept of really cheap singles. They took no profit whatsoever. They gave away their whole share and forced the distributor to go without a share. On 'Voodoo Chile', for example, a number 1, nobody made any money at all.
ZZ: What about Backtracks or Track tones? There were six to start with. Then there were gonna be another 25. We've got eight of them. Then there was talk of putting out *Electric Ladyland* at 25/- and presumably *Tommy* as

well. What happened to that idea?
PT: I dunno. Backtrack sells very well. Whenever you go to Track offices there's always a lot lying about, which is a good sign—that there's turnover.
ZZ: Would you like to see *Tommy* out now?
PT: Maybe, but it's important if you're gonna have *Tommy* that you have the artwork. The artwork is intrinsic to it in a lot of ways. And the Backtrack stuff has got cheap covers—that's where it saves a lot of money in fact. On *Electric Ladyland* I could do without the cover quite easily—it's bloody horrible. A lot of Dave King porno rubbish.
ZZ: And what it didn't have was the names of the people playing on it, which would have helped.
PT: Yeah. That's another incredible thing. Dave King is a genius, I think, but he's got a bit of an obsession with pornography. *Who's Next* nearly came out with the most revolting pornographic cover you've ever seen. In the end it turned out to be mildly pornographic but slightly boring at the same time. Dave King was commissioned to do a cover and he came up with one cover with a huge fat lady with her legs apart and where the woman's organ was supposed to be would be a head of The Who, grinning out from underneath the pubics. Anyway I don't really know that much about Track or Track policy or Track history. If you really wanna know that, the guy to talk to is Kit Lambert, but then on the other hand that would be a 50-page article full of history that really nobody is interested in. Track was good not because of the small details but because of the intentions really. It's unfortunate that Kit and Chris weren't able to concentrate only on Track but really had The Who at their most difficult stage which was before *Tommy*, which proved to be just like a huge hump in The Who's career, which was just where we needed management must crucially and it caused everybody to go through incredible traumatic experiences and Track just got lost along the way because of it. Yet maybe I'm talking out of the top of my head—maybe

Pete Townshend in action.

it's other things. Kit would probably scream with laughter and say that it was him getting screwed by Polydor—aw fuck, I dunno. I think that if Track continues they'll probably continue just for The Who, in which case why should we go with anyone else? Track gave us 75% more than we were ever getting on our original deal with Decca.

ZZ: What about with Reaction, then?

PT: That was a stepping off point. That was really Robert Stigwood putting his foot on the legal connection between Track and Shel Talmy. Because Shel Talmy had to be got rid of—and the only guy that was really powerful enough that was connected with The Who in any way whatsoever at the time and would wouldn't suffer by it was Robert Stigwood. So we were temporarily on his label.

ZZ: It seemed to be a pretty potent label because it had Hendrix, the Cream, the Beegees. Started off with a bang and then just sort of disappeared.

PT: Well, there again I don't know that much about it. Substitute was a bloody amazing session—Keith can't even remember it. That was the first Who-produced session, Kit didn't slide naturally into the seat of producing The Who—he kind of arrived in the position of producing The Who because we desperately needed a producer. It was obviously logical that I should produce The Who—even then. So it was logical that when it came to 'Substitute' and we got out of Shel Talmy's clutches we should enjoy ourselves and go into the studio and work, so we went in and there was a blonde guy . . . Chris . . . the first Olympic Studios in Baker Street. We went in and we played through the thing and we went up and heard the playbacks and they sounded alright, mixed it, and Robert Stigwood came in and listened to the vocals and said, "Sounds alright," didn't really know much of what was going on at the time. Keith doesn't remember the session, Roger was gonna leave the group. It was just an amazing time in The Who's career. We were more or less about to break up. Nobody

really cared about the group. It was just a political thing. Kit and I used to go for walks in Hyde Park and talk about combining what was gonna be left of The Who with Paddy Klaus and Gibson. Things like this—strange things. Anyway that's as much as I know about Reaction. I know I've borrowed a few quid off Robert Stigwood at various points—tapped him for a few knicker. I also wrote a song for his artist who was called Oscar, who later reappeared in Hair, called 'Join My Gang', which was a fucking good song—[sings]:

'You can join my gang
Even though you're a girl'

which he did. Unfortunately Robert Stigwood owns the publishing, so I haven't even got a demo of it to listen to—but I really like it.

ZZ: That's an interesting topic—the songs of The Who that have been covered. For example, The Untamed's version of 'It's Not True'—another very good song. Any that we mightn't know about?

PT: Yeah, maybe. There's one called 'Lazy Fat People' by that comedy group . . . The Barron Knights [sings]:

'Lazy and fat they are all the same
And because they are all the same
They laugh and complain
The young are so ugly.'

That song was about Allen Klein. Allen Klein tried to get hold of The Who as being the first of his purge on rock. I mean he shat all over The Beatles and The Stones. Fuck knows how we managed to get out of it. But we took along our solicitor who is still our solicitor today . . . an austere conservative, almost Edward Heath character called Edward Oldman, who just took two looks at Allen Klein and said, "We're leaving," so we ate his caviar, had a look at the Statue of Liberty from his yacht, shat in his toilet and went back to England. In fact he paid my first-class fare to the States four ways. I went over there to talk to him, came back to England to do a gig—

which I missed at Sheffield University, which got us a bad reputation for missing gigs, and then flew back again. That was also when Andrew Oldham was trying to take over our management.

ZZ: When was this?

PT: . . . . It was just after 'Substitute'. See, about the time of 'Substitute' we were still having a lot of problems breaking with Shel.

ZZ: Yeah, you had 'A Legal Matter' out on both labels . . . no, 'Circles'.

PT: Yeah, we did two versions of 'Circles', which were both identical because they were both copies of my demo. Shel put in a high court injunction saying there was a copyright in recording, in other words if you're a record producer and you produce a song with a group and you make a creative contribution then you own that sound—there's a copyright in that sound, that arrangement. I suppose it's so that you can't steal the 'John Barry' sound as it were, or copy 'Apache' exactly, while it's in the Top Ten. Well, he took it to the high court judge and he said things like, "And then on bar 36 I suggested to the lead guitarist that he play a diminuendo, forget the adagio, and play 36 bars modulating to the key of E flat," which was all total bullshit—he used to fall asleep at the desk, Glyn Johns used to do everything. Eventually we ended up in court and Quentin Hogg—he was the attorney for Shel—and we dreamed up an even more preposterous thing. "Shel Talmy certainly did *not* tell us at the 36th bar to play a diminuendo. He told us to do this and we suggested blah, blah, blah." All in incredible, grand, grandiose, musical terms and then we produced the demo which was copyrighted with Essex Music a good year before it was recorded. And it was identical to the record. As far as the judge could tell obviously. I mean, he'd listen to 'Help', 'The Last Time' and 'Respect' and think they were all the same song. I mean probably to him they sounded identical. That was a real triumph, and a very funny day too.

ZZ: But you didn't win it, did you?
PT: We won that particular thing, so they weren't able to stop our particular release of 'Circles', but Shel Talmy ended up getting a piece of our recording.
ZZ: Didn't he put out a song called 'Watt's For A Pig' with the Who Orchestra?
PT: We had to, because the single was out by the time we won it. Obviously we had to take it off the back because . . . .
ZZ: It was only a B side after all.
PT: Yeah. Last time I saw Shel he was gloating at our success, 'cause he gets quite a large chunk of our record royalties—even today.
ZZ: Good lord! . . . . He can't see, can he?
PT: I don't really know about him. I've seen veiled hints about The Who in interviews he's done, like "Snotty East End kids would come up to me and ask me to record 'em and I'd make 'em stars and a week later they'd start getting too big for their boots." And it was obviously directed at groups like us because we're the only group ever to have argued with him. The Kinks have never argued with him as far as I know and until quite recently they still used him. I mean, he never said a word to me. On 'I Can't Explain' he brought in the Beverley Sisters to do the backing vocals, and Jimmy Page to play lead guitar. I said to him, "Fuck that, I'm the lead guitarist in this group." It was incredible, it was a typical Love Affair scene—we were the 1965 Love Affair. We were The Who—a few chart successes and then we were gonna be out—we were on, like about half a percent. Because he was The Kinks' record producer we thought he was alright. But he underestimated my intelligence and most of all he underestimated Kit's venomous intelligence.
ZZ: Did you ever use any of these other musicians? 'Daddy Rolling Stone' doesn't sound like your guitar.
PT: It was.
ZZ: That's an old Muddy Waters' song isn't it?
PT: Probably. Derek Martin. We picked it up from where he

was on the Island label. The only song we ever used other musicians on—apart from Nicky Hopkins—was 'Bald-Headed Woman' which was on the same session as 'Can't Explain'. Jimmy Page played lead guitar, 'cause he had a fuzz box which went urgggg . . . and three guys on backing vocals on 'Can't Explain' who turned out to be the Ivy League—I was joking about their being the Beverley Sisters.

ZZ: 'Cause you've started to use backing musicians more now —like Dave Arbry.

PT: Oh yeah, but [mock indignation] he's hardly a backing musician—he's a solo artist—a guest appearance by an esteemed solo artist. That solo we're providing the backing for him.

ZZ: What about these demos? Has it ever occurred to you that you could do one of these, bring it out as The Who and nobody would be any the wiser?

PT: Well, that's never occurred to me. That's something I'd never wanna do. If I put out a record I'd wanna take the credit. It's occurred to me to put out a solo album and it's also occurred to me to put out an album of demos, because I would find it very interesting and I think a lot of people would. Not because the demos are similar to the finished product but really because of a consistency all along. The group's relationship to me and my relationship within the group, as it were, has always been the same—all the way along. I've always been separate as a writer but very much part of the group as a musician and guitarist. And it's been something that I've never been able to fathom and the group's never been able to work out 'cause it's never really gone wrong up to now and it looks like it's gonna continue. So really—there's not any need to proove it because it's painfully obvious. It works and all putting out an album of demos would do would be to say—"Look, this is amazing because this is the songs that I wrote, the group did and this is the way I suggested the group do them and the group did them in the way I suggested, because the way I suggested it was tailor-made for them in the first place." It's not that interesting. Far more interesting to me is

John's solo album, which is interesting because of the fact, I suppose, that there should have been John Entwhistle singles. 'Boris The Spider' should have been a single, and maybe even 'Heaven And Hell'.

ZZ: Why didn't it sell?

PT: Well it's selling incredibly well in the States. It's not a chart album but for a Who offshoot it's going fantastically well.

ZZ: Was that 'Heaven And Hell' done at Leeds?

PT: No. Now that was a real pain in the arse. That was a track that was done here, just to test my 8-track, and someone came here, took the 8-track, took it to I.B.C., did a rough mix of it and shoved it on the B side. That is one case where having your own studio is a drag because they were looking for a B side and The Who were in the States and how could we do it—that was a bit of Dave Ruffel naughtiness, forgiveable perhaps, but a pity to me because 'Heaven And Hell' was lined up as the first John Entwistle Who single, because to me that was gonna be a big day—probably still is. Glyn and I are always plotting to get a John Entwistle Who single. It would be incredible—it'd just be funny. If we can do it—get a hit and still remain The Who. It'd be like the beginning of what we really want to do. We want to be able to totally transcend all the artificiality of bullshit relationships that seem to go down in rock and just keep working, and we do it at lower levels all the time. We tour and work and we enjoy one another's company.

ZZ: When you switched guitars on 'Under My Thumb', was this an attempt to do that at all?

PT: No, John was on holiday somewhere in Wales.

ZZ: Well that's one of The Who's bass lines that you always remember. It comes through really well, like a lead guitar.

PT: Well I'm not a bad old bass player, even though I say so myself. I play a more *recordable* bass than John; less exciting, and it would be dire on the stage but much more recordable because I've always played bass for my tape recorder and not

for a live audience. I damp it right down and play with a pick and it clackety-clacks away, but it's great to record and it comes out well through tiny speakers. That's maybe one of the reasons it came across well—I dunno. We really dug doing those two numbers—well, I did anyway. They were my two favourite Stones' numbers at the time and it was really nice that they got pinched so that we could do them. 'Last Time' was one of my favourite songs that the Stones ever did. I saw them doing it on Top Of The Pops and Jagger was just incredible. He was just wearing a white shirt and his TV presence just taught us more—watching him on the monitors—than we've ever learnt about theatrics. We've learnt a lot from him and he's learning now from us, I reckon.

ZZ: Would you ever consider doing an album of totally unoriginal stuff like 'The Who Play The Stones' or something?

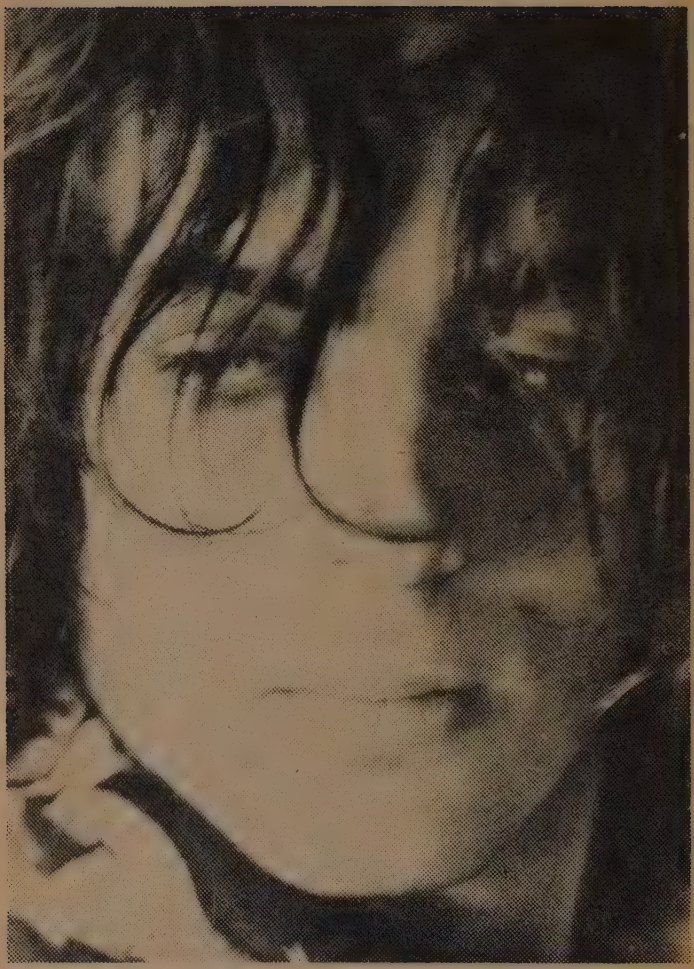
PT: Not necessarily, but there's certainly nothing wrong with The Who playing an album of 'Young Man Blues', 'Summertime Blues', 'Fortune Teller', stuff like that, the kind of numbers that we've picked up—'Shakin' All Over'. It could make a great album. Unfortunately we only seem to fall on these numbers like every now and then. 'Baby Don't You Do It' we're doing on the stage now—incredible.

ZZ: You used to be into a big James Brown thing, didn't you? 'Please Please Please' and 'I Don't Mind', which is an incredible number.

PT: Yeah. I suppose we could do that sort of album, but we've never really thought of it. I mean you don't when you're The Who and you've always written your own material. One of the first things you've got to learn to transcend is the first big album from a group that's always done its own material. Like I laugh now when someone sends me a tape and says, "Please listen to my tape Mr Townshend. We're very good and what's more we wrote all the material ourselves." And I listen to it and it's dreadful. So I write back and say, "Look, you're a great group, you're good musicians—do someone else's material and you're on the

way." A lot of people think it's compulsory to do their own material but really it's not.
ZZ: I agree with you. Too many people think that original material is a kind of moral obligation—but that's bullshit.
PT: True.

Connor McKnight & John Tobler
Issue 24, March 1972



Syd Barrett

THE YEAR OF LOVE
INCLUDING THE BIRTH OF THE PINK FLOYD

INTRODUCTION

We've often featured articles on the San Francisco psychedelic eruption, but we get loads of letters asking us to explain how the 'underground movement' started up in Britain—with particular emphasis on the rock aspects. Obviously, you could fill a book (and indeed many people have) if you wanted to explore every nook and cranny, detailing how the feeling grew out of a wide variety of influences—poets, protest, folk music, the Fugs, playwrights, authors, CND student revolution, Provos, *Peace News*, marijuana, Lysergic Acid, publishers, bookshops, Kesey & Leary, Kerouac & Ginsberg, Quicksilver & The Dead—and for a much more complete history, I would refer you to certain tomes on the subject (see reference list at the end).

As far as rock is concerned, however, I think we can cram it into a concise nutshell, providing we don't try to dig too deeply. It'll be enough to be gettin on with, anyway.

PREFACE (you can skip this bit if you want to . . . you won't miss much)

I lay back in the sumptuous luxury of velvet upholstery and gazed across the panoramic skyline from the penthouse suite of the Blackhill Enterprises' Mayfair offices as a gorgeous nymphet poured coffee into bone china cups and offered After Eight mints. I casually mentioned the Pink Floyd, and the words seemed to cut through the vapid atmosphere like razor blades. Jenner's face, his clean-cut features aglow with interest, paled as he ground his cigar butt into the big diamond studded ashtray resting on the polished mahogany desktop. "The Pink Floyd?" he repeated, as he casually straightened his tie and picked a stray hair off his mohair suit . . . .

That had you all going, didn't it? In actual fact, the way it happened was a little different. I had stumbled up to Blackhill's crumbling Bayswater office to meet Peter Jenner as arranged, but had to wait on the doorstep for almost an hour before Jenner (half of Blackhill Enterprises) and Andrew King (the other half) arrived, as usual, on their tandem. As Andrew began to unload rain-sodden contracts and documents from the panniers, Peter hustled me through the chaotic mountain of strewn papers into "the back room", where he invited me to make myself comfortable on one of the most austerely designed wooden chairs in the history of furniture. He disappeared, leaving me to stare out of the window at the mass of leaking drainpipes clinging to the wall of the tenement block which backed on to the yard, and returned with a cracked Woolworth's mug of tepid radiator flushings; "Here's some coffee," he grunted, plonking it down on the formica kitchen table which served as his desk. He took a worn tobacco tin from his pocket, selected the half-smoked remains of a Park Drive tipped, and peered at me through his cracked national health spectacles. "Now then," he wheezed with considerable hostility, " . . . what is it you want? Make it snappy . . . I'm a busy man."

"It's the Pink Floyd," I stammered. "I want to know how

the Underground started . . . . I was told that no-one knew as much about it as you do; that you're the acknowledged authority on the subject."

His chest swelled with pride below the holey vest which hung on his bony frame, as his disposition changed to one of great charm. "They say that, do they? Well, er, yes, of course I'd be delighted to tell you all about it . . . but it's a long story."

"That's OK," I replied, "just give me all the facts as well as you can remember, and I'll go back home to distort and rehash your words into a vaguely coherent article."

THE LIST OF PLAYERS

Mr Underground . . . . . John Hopkins
An underground journalist. . . . . Miles
A shady LSE drop-out. . . . . Peter Jenner
A pirate disc jockey . . . . . John Peel
A psychedelic music ensemble . . . . . The Pink Floyd
An unemployed person . . . . . Andrew King
A finger in various pies . . . . . Joe Boyd
An East End pixie . . . . . Marc Bolan
All other parts by. . . . . Mick Farren

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PINK FLOYD

If you can cast your mind back to the dying days of 1965 (which most underground stalwarts find impossible because their drug-addled memories, can't remember further back than last week), you'll recall that the chartbound sounds were 'We Can Work It Out', 'Eve Of Destruction', 'Get Off My Cloud' and 'Turn Turn Turn'. Around that time too, Smithy had just declared UDI in Rhodesia, President Johnson was showing his gall bladder operation scar to the waiting world, the Post Office tower had recently been opened, and the Government had just abolished the death penalty.

Right, now that we've established some sort of departure point we can begin our narrative.

Peter Jenner had been set for a very distinguished career

in the field of education; an assistant lecturer in the Dept of Social Administration at the London School of Economics . . . but he was bored with that. He was also a passionate avant garde jazz freak . . . but he was bored with that too: "Most of it was becoming so unpleasant on the ear that I just couldn't get off on it . . . . John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman were the last two to really interest me." His tastes changed towards R&B (of the Bo Diddley type) where they remained for some time . . . approximately until this end-of-65 period.

Apart from music, his head was buzzing with ambitious notions of founding a free school and a record label, on which to record his freaky-jazz musician mates whose virtuosity offended the ears of all civilised record company executives. His partner in crime in cooking up these wild schemes was a bloke called John Hopkins (later to be known as Hoppy), who he had known for years. Now, Elektra Records had just set up an English office under the astute auspices of Joe Boyd, who Hoppy got to know, and a deal was worked out whereby Elektra would assist them in matters of finance, pressing and distribution. Subsequently, an album by AMM was released (on the Elektra label rather than their bizarre DNA label, the logo for which, Mike McInnery, later a well known poster artist, had taken great pains to design), featuring Keith Rowe, Cornelius Cardew and various other musicians in the "avant garde/classical/ weirdo scene . . . and it was a very very good far out record."

It sold about a thousand copies, but nevertheless turned out to be the first and last album they made. However, not only did it re-open the madcap Jenner's head to electronic music, but it also set his economics oriented mind to work on the facts, figures and percentages of the record industry. He did his sums and came to the momentous conclusion that the only way to come out of things with a profit was to get hold of a smash hit—and even a person of his musical

illiteracy (he could hardly differentiate between the Dave Clark Five and the London Symphony Orchestra) knew that freaky sax-blowing weirdies were not about to set the singles chart on fire. The problem caused a great deal of anxiety and he was on the point of consulting a psychiatrist, when it happened.

At 3am one morning, it came to him in a blinding flash. He threw the blankets from the crude framework of his camp-bed and rushed downstairs to make a drink. He could hardly control his excitement as his trembling hands cupped the steaming Bovril . . . "a pop group," he finally ejaculated (not a pretty sight).

The fact had been staring him in the face for several months, but it was not until early 1966 that he recognised it . . . the ideal vehicle to strap his energies to. The previous summer, one of his closest friends had been Eric Clapton, but Jenner at that time was totally disinterested in English pop music; compared with jazz and bona-fide American Blues, it was just a load of trite, ephemeral rubbish—and, to a degree, I suppose his bigotted opinion was just about right . . . there was very little integrity in pop.

Clapton (though this has nothing to do with our story) had suddenly decided to leave John Mayall's Bluesbreakers (in August 66, though he rejoined three months later) and had formed a new band which he was going to take to Europe to get it together in a Greek country cottage, man; there was Jake Milton on drums (now in Quintessence), Ben Palmer on piano (later Cream's roadie), a sax player called Bernie, a bass player who subsequently became leader of the Communist party in Birmingham, and John Bailey (who was in McGuinness Flint for a while). They all went off from Jenner's flat in a big American car.

Anyway, to revert to the main body of the narrative, Jenner began to look for a tasteful pop group. No, that's a lie . . . he wasn't that enthusiastic. He still had his secure

job at LSE and he merely decided to wait until the right group presented itself to him.

His first probings were abortive—and little wonder. Hoppy had got hold of a tape of one of the Velvet Underground's first gigs in New York and it was concluded that if the Velvets played their cards right, they could enjoy the patronage of Messrs Jenner and Hopkins. Such naivety! (This story is true by the way.) They phoned New York and spoke to John Cale, who tactfully pointed out that a Mr Warhol was already handling their affairs.

Now inevitably the sequence of events is going to get a bit blurred and jumbled if we don't stick to the music, but let me just mention a few other things. In these early months of 1966, the thoughts of various poets, painters, writers, musicians, etc, were all funnelling in the same direction . . . the seeds of the Underground were sown and everybody was waiting for the harvest, so to speak. The Free School idea had taken root and was being set up in Notting Hill, and the All Saints Hall was becoming the central meeting place during this fermentation period. To finance the school, which was run on donations, it was decided to put on a few concerts, and these developed into the odd gig at the Marquee in Wardour Street.

Jenner: "It was in June, I remember, because I was in the middle of the crucifyingly boring chore of marking examination papers; I always used to leave it until the last minute so that I'd be impelled to rush through them rather than go through the laborious agonies of wondering if a paper merited an A or a B+. Anyway, I decided to pack it in for the evening and go along to this mad gig at the Marquee, which was being run by people like Steve Stollman (whose brother had started the ESP label in New York) and Hoppy. Well, I arrived around 10.30 and there on the stage was this strange band, who were playing a mixture of R&B and electronic noises . . . and I was really intrigued because in between the routine stuff like 'Louie Louie' and

'Roadrunner', they were playing these very weird breaks; so weird that I couldn't even work out which instrument the sound was coming from. It was all very bizarre and just what I was looking for—a far out, electronic, freaky, pop group . . . and there, across the bass amp, was their name: 'The Pink Floyd Sound'."

HOW TO MAKE A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A BLACKHILL

"I didn't know anything about pop music," recalls Jenner. "I just can't tell you how little I knew . . . . I mean, I hardly knew about the Beatles even, and I didn't know anything about the Stones—and it was only at that time that I started trying to become aware of what was happening in pop music. Anyway, after thinking about it, I decided I'd like to record these Floyd geezers, and I finally tracked down Roger and Nicky who were living in an obscure flat in Highgate. It was the typical student scene—they'd bought a £20 J2 van and some gear with their grant money but were on the point of splitting the band because (1) they weren't getting any gigs, (2) they were going off on their summer holidays, and (3) it was interfering with their studies; Roger and Nick were training to become architects, Rick was going to a music school and Syd was at art school and more interested in painting than music."

Peter merely introduced himself, said hello, and said he'd be interested in talking to them when they reconvened after their holidays, and it was only at this stage that he discovered what an amateur set-up the Pink Floyd was: no contracts, no agency or management, no gigs, and very little gear, most of which was either extremely decrepit or else encased in home made cabinets—but still, the seeds were there.

Enter Andrew King, a lifelong friend of Jenner's, who had resigned from his position as an educational cybernetic-cist (I don't know what one of them is either); he too had become bored and found it much more gratifying to hang

out on street corners. He entered into loose partnership with Jenner and jointly, as Blackhill Enterprises, they took on the management of the Floyd, which was more than they'd planned to do because the original idea was merely to find a group for their label idea . . . but now they determined to go the whole hog and make the Pink Floyd into a top band.

Carnival time arrived at the Free School and part of the festivities included a rock concert at the All Saints Hall—and what better choice for the group than . . . the Pink Floyd. As well as that, some American friends of Hoppy's came along and projected coloured slides on the group as they played—not moving whirlpools of colour; just static slides, but it was the beginning of the 'mixed media' idea, and it started Jenner thinking. Snippets of information about the San Francisco scene had been filtering over the ocean; the West Coast psychedelic scene was much more together and advanced than its Notting Hill counterpart, so why not try to find out about the sophistications such as acid, light shows, peace and love, flowers and all the rest of the paraphernalia and implement some of them here?

The light show idea really appealed, but as no-one could tell them about the refinements, they had to improvise. Peter and Andrew, a right pair of mechanical duffers, took instruction on the way to hold a hand saw and constructed a very primitive, Heath Robinson device consisting of domestic spotlights from British Home Stores, operated by domestic light switches, shining through coloured perspex pinned to this crude framework they'd nailed up out of lumps of wood. (This remarkable triumph of carpentry skill is now an exhibit in the sculpture hall of the National Museum of Early Psychedelic Art in Chicago.)

The Floyd needed help. They needed encouragement, equipment, rehearsal, roadies, work, recording contracts, direction and all the rest of it, and their new managers didn't have the

first idea about the roles and attitudes of the established managers, but they waded in at the deep end. Now, there's an old adage which says: "Fools rush in, and get the best seats"—and that, by a strange quirk of good fortune, is exactly what happened . . . over the next few months the Floyd seemed to waltz into the charts, onto the television and into clubs and theatres without any problems at all.

Here's an example of their luck: Peter was still at work, so Andrew did most of the day to day management and also, from the remnants of an inheritance, paid for a thousand quids' worth of gear . . . which was promptly stolen. So they had to get another load of new gear, this time on hire purchase.

By this time, things were happening fast. In October 1966, the *International Times* (later abbreviated to *IT*) was launched and the Roundhouse was taken over for a celebration party, where 2,000 odd people (most of them were odd) were given free sugar cubes and assailed with the raw sounds of the evolving Underground's two top groups. The Pink Floyd and the Soft Machine, both of whose reputations had spread via regular gigs at the All Saints Hall. All the different factions of the Underground were represented and it was as if the net had suddenly tightened round all the loose ends, bringing them together, literally, under one roof.

"At that time, the Roundhouse hadn't ever been used as an entertainment venue and it was just *filthy*. On top of that, there was virtually no electricity other than an ordinary domestic supply and wires dangled here and there . . . so our puny light show looked magnificent in all the darkness."

Celebrities abounded: Antonioni was there, Paul McCartney was there—to name but two, and it was "an incredibly fashionable affair . . . probably the most epochal party you could ever see, and the bands got noticed, particularly the Floyd who blew up the power during their set and consequently ended the evening's entertainment. That in itself,

to be cut off in the middle of 'Interstellar Overdrive' was a bummer, but at the same time it was incredibly dramatic."

The Floyd had, by this time, dropped most of their R&B repertoire in favour of the more electronic/freaky stuff and I, in my blissful ignorance, had assumed that this was a result of acid experimentation and the like, but this was not so. It was done at Jenner's insistence; he directed them off the 'Louie Louie' trip towards the 'Saucerful Of Secrets' style, and it turned out to be the perfect managerial move—although it was done largely out of ignorance . . . . Jenner merely thought the electronic stuff sounded better than the American imitations which he'd never really been keen on. Also, thinking that there was nothing difficult in composing new numbers, he impressed on them that they should write more original material of a "weird" nature but, at the same time, bearing the requirements of the singles market in mind. So, their style evolved to the satisfaction of their managers, who thought it was good but had no idea how radically different it was from anything else that was happening in pop music.

IT rapidly became the official organ of the Underground (supplemented by *Oz* which started up a couple of months later) and then, in December 66, Hoppy and his associates opened UFO, the first regular Underground club (and the best). Here's a brief description of what went on, borrowed from *IT*29 and written by Miles, whose interviews and reviews had become so influential:

"December 23rd saw 'Night Tripper' at Tottenham Court Road, advertised by a poster and a display ad in *IT*5. There was no indication as to who would be there performing, the audience attended because they 'knew' who would be there and 'knew' what was happening. The name-change to UFO occurred the next week and the first UFO advertised the Pink Floyd, Fanta and Ood, the Giant Sun Trolly and Dave Tomlin improvising to

government propaganda. UFO was created by and for the original 'underground', posters from messrs English & Waymouth and an *IT* stall by the cloakrooms. The first UFO also had a Marilyn Monroe movie, Karate and light-shows. It was a club in the sense that most people knew each other, met there to do their business, arrange their week's appointments, dinners and lunches and hatch out issues of *IT*, plans for Arts Lab, SOMA, and various schemes for turning the Thames yellow and removing all the fences in Notting Hill. The activity and energy was thicker than the incense . . . ."

Miles also ran Indica Bookshop in Southampton Row, a veritable goldmine of goodies; a whole new world to be discovered by emerging hippies (like me) . . . full of books, underground papers like the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *East Village Other*, magazines, posters, marvel comics. Phew! And the *International Times* was born out of and published from their basement, which for a while was the nerve centre of the Underground.

By the beginning of 1967, UFO was already bulging to the walls with freaks—and the Pink Floyd, their music becoming increasingly stranger by pop music standards, were the big musical draw. Jenner: "At the first two or three UFOs, the Floyd were on 60% of the gross to provide music and lights, and my first managerial blunder was allowing that to be altered so that we got straight bread instead of a percentage, because the place instantly became very fashionable—I've never seen anything like it, before or since. And the band had become even more fashionable; without any records or any exposure outside of a couple of places in London, we got a centre page spread in *Melody Maker*."

If you know anything about the workings of the pop music industry, you'll know that any manager or publicist would sell his boyfriend to get a centre-spread in *MM*, but Jenner wasn't at all surprised . . . he assumed that this was

the normal routine thing to happen to any band. But the Floyd were becoming red hot; the word was spreading like a forest fire—all the record companies were interested and suited executives were lured into the addict infested filth of UFO to see the band in action. Eventually they signed with EMI who offered them the best deal, including an advance of £5,000, which was just unbelievably astronomical in those days; more like a telephone number than a sum of money—and surprisingly, EMI really got behind them and did an incomparable promotion job.

1967 . . . WHAT A YEAR!

Back to the scene in general. The media was latching on to the more sensational aspects of hippieism/flower-power/beautiful people, and what was going down in San Francisco was now on everybody's lips. There were more gatherings here too; on January 29th, *IT* sponsored an Uncommon Market spontaneous happening thing at the Roundhouse and a little later came THE ULTIMATE in drawing together the Underground . . . the 14-hour Technicolour Dream, held at Alexandra Palace. The Uncommon Market's main attraction was a 56 gallon jelly (if you rolled around naked in jelly, you were considered very far out and groovy and gained great esteem and fame), but the Dream, which took place during the night of April 29th and was originally to be a benefit for *IT* which had been busted for obscenity the previous month, not only attracted 5,000 longhairs, but featured almost every Underground group in England.

I remember it well; the whole thing just burned into my memory for ever . . . it hit you as soon as you walked into the place—lights and films all over the walls and blitzing volume from two stages with bands playing simultaneously! On one stage you had the completely unknown Arthur Brown, this crazy whirling painted lunatic accompanied by a hunched up speeding organist and a thrashing drummer,

and on the other you had the Soft Machine, with Daevid Allen wearing a miner's helmet and staring like a weird zombie and Kevin Ayers wearing rouge on his cheeks and a black cowboy hat surmounted by a giant model glider's wings. I just couldn't believe it; outside, the straights of Wood Green were watching their tellies and sipping their tea, and inside this huge time machine were 5,000 stoned, tripping, mad, friendly, festive hippies . . . talk about two different worlds!

At the time, one of the things that impressed me most was the lack of any sort of physical or mental barrier between performers and audience; when a band finished its set, the members got off the stage and wandered into the crowd to sit on the floor. It was all so very unlike the usual pop gig where a group arrived on stage via a back passage, played and went off by the same route—never mixing with the inferior rabble.

What else did I see? The Purple Gang, with mandolins, washboards and amplification troubles, bashing out their 'Granny Takes A Trip'—one of the early hippie classics, Dick Gregory and Pete Townshend and Yoko Ono were there, Savoy Brown, the Social Deviants with Mick Farren singing Chuck Berry standards against a monstrous cacophony of discordant rock, and Denny Laine was there too—but, though he had his guitar and Viv Prince with him, he didn't play (which was sad, because 1967 was his supreme year of creativity).

Hoppy was there, never without a smile and Suzie Creemcheese, and they were giving out free bananas (because it was around the time of the US Underground great banana hoax; they conned everyone into believing that you could get high by scraping the pith from the inside skin, baking it and smoking it).

As dawn started to shine a shimmering eerie light at the windows, the Pink Floyd came on: "It was a perfect setting," says Jenner. "Everyone had been waiting for them

and everybody was on acid; that event was the peak of acid use in England . . . everybody was on it—the bands, the organisers, the audience—and I certainly was." Of course, the Floyd blew everybody's mind.

But this was a special occasion. The Floyd, though "the psychedelic band", were not really into psychedelics at all —they were much more booze oriented . . . and this was generally they case with the early Underground bands; it was the pop groups of the time, the teenybop raves like The Small Faces, who were doing the drugs.

Around this time, the pirate radio stations, whose lifespan was already being limited to months by the Marine Offences Act which was being rushed through the Commons, were at their most influential in shaping the pop charts: "We start 'em, others chart 'em". Radio London, by far and away the best, refused to play 'Arnold Layne', the Floyd's first single, because it was about a transvestite, but Radio Caroline, once the payola had been handed over, got behind it, and supplemented EMI's big promotional campaign. Before long, it had got to number 23 in the national chart, which, of course, was no surprise to Peter Jenner who thought it was only natural for a single to go into the charts, but due possibly to the 'dirty song' ban, it never quite reached the top twenty and thus the essential Top Of The Pops boost eluded them.

Their second single, they were sure, would be even more successful, but there were doubts. Joe Boyd, who had left his Elektra job to become involved in a variety of enterprises including record production, running UFO and group management, had produced and made an excellent job of 'Arnold Layne', but EMI decided to rub him out in favour of Norman ('Hurricane') Smith, who had just been promoted from engineer to staff producer. It was a very unpopular move; everybody, especially the fuming Joe Boyd, was choked off and Norman knew it, but his experience with the Beatles, his exacting demands, his ideas and ambitions,

turned up trumps and it turned out to be a very productive combination.

The song they selected was 'See Emily Play', which Syd Barrett had written (as 'Games For May') specially for a concert which our intrepid managers mounted at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It was a staggeringly successful event—a solo performance, which was totally unheard of, because the big groups of the time would never do more than a 30-minute set—"and we got this guy from EMI to erect speakers at the back of the hall too, which was like the predecessor of the Azimuth Co-ordinator. We had an incredible light show by then as well, and the concert, which was the first pop show ever held in the hall, was just unbelievable. At one stage, one of the roadies came on dressed in Admiral's gear and tossed armfuls of daffodils up in the air . . . it was just amazing, and everybody went beserk." Everyone except the owners of the hall, who went absolutely bananas because the bubbles which had filled the place, had left marks all over their posh leather chairs, and some of the flowers which had been handed out to the audience had been trodden into the carpets.

Anyway, everybody was knocked out with 'Emily', especially Radio London, who felt that they were missing out on the flower power scene, and they went crazy; the first week out, it was number one in the Big L Top 40, a chart which bore no relation to anything other than the fevered imagination of the programme director.

In actual fact, far from "missing out on the hippie scene", Radio London was a distinct pioneer in that area, with John Peel's 'Perfumed Garden', transmitted two weeks out of every three (as far as I remember), between midnight and 2am. Prior to getting this programme, Peel's 'Climber of the Week' was always worth hearing (among those that stick in my mind are 'Tiny Goddess' by Nirvana and 'Somebody To Love' by the Airplane), but once he got this midnight thing going, it was compulsive listening. It was for me any-

way; I used to lie there listening to the Doors, the Incredibles, Donovan and all the others, and arrive at work the next day with great bags under my eyes—and he used to get hold of imports and play unheard of grist like Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band and Country Joe & The Fish. It was an amazing period—one I wouldn't have missed for the world.

By the time June rolled around, the unity of the Underground was already disintegrating, with the different sections criticising the ethics of each other, and the bread-minded entrepreneurs had begun to step in and promote flower power festivals and happenings on a very obviously commercial basis. There were now so many 'Underground Bands' that you couldn't move for them, but the thing that caused most discomfort to the hard core of the old school was the arrest and sentencing of Hoppy for dope possession; he got nine months.

Though many avant garde musicians (not to mention people in other spheres) had been smoking marijuana for years, the public image of drugs was the wicked black man prosecuted for selling reefers to unsuspecting teenagers. But all of a sudden, all the mods were gulping down handfuls of pills, and the longhairs were either getting stoned or else trying out this incredible new acid stuff which had newly arrived from the laboratories of America, where it was still legal until late 1966. The Sunday papers feared for the future of the nation's youth, the police got pressured into paranoia and they went berserk with their arrests: Jagger, Richard, Lennon, Georgie Fame, Joe Cocker, were all busted for possession, but the first really big purge came in the early hours of March 3rd 1968, when 150 police suddenly plunged into the depths of Middle Earth, which had opened as a rival to UFO in early 67. They took five hours to search 750 people and made only eleven arrests, though one heard grapevine reports of the vast tonnage of hash that was swept up from the floor afterwards.

Back to the Floyd, who were now just about world famous due to a combination of luck, talent and a miraculous series of events. "If we had started out with just any old banger group, we'd have been finished within a year, because we had so little idea of what we were doing, but fortunately, the Floyd had all this talent. Andrew and I just played everything by ear; goodness only knows what the established record-biz people must have thought about us . . . . I suppose that when we left their offices they just looked at each other and collapsed in disbelief at our naivety."

They cut their first album in Studio 3 at EMI whilst the Beatles were constructing *Sgt Pepper* next door in Studio 2, and that sold well too—so everything was going along smoothly—but at the London School of Economics, where Peter still taught, he was one of the junior staff in favour of the student revolution which was beginning to erupt and he eventually got a sharp reprimand; either he curbed the nature of his extra-curricular activities or else he could tender his resignation. So he compromised, and took a year's leave of absence . . . which has so far extended itself to five years.

It was around this time that the pressures of the world started exerting themselves on Syd Barrett, who was really the genius of the group; he was writing, arranging, creating the sounds, singing, but he was, as everybody who ever followed the Floyd knows, cracking up a little. Peter accepts some of the responsibility for what was happening; he was always demanding greater effort, more productivity, more songs for future singles and so forth, but the gig scene was probably more to blame. In the London longhair haunts, everything was fine—perfect vibes between audience and group—but once they got out into the world they found that their music had hardly been accepted; gigs were disastrous. Kids who turned up purely to hear a "top twenty group" could not come to terms with feedback and the like—so they booed and threw pennies . . . . Jenner's face contorts in

agony as he recalls the general miseries of touring in that summer of '67.

Finding a suitable chartbuster to follow 'Emily' proved impossible; loads of material (much of it amazing classics like 'Scream Your Last Scream Old Woman With A Basket' and 'Vegetable Man' which have yet to be released) was recorded, but no obvious single surfaced to keep them buoyant, and a tour interrupted the proceedings. It was an epic theatre package tour of the type we'll never see again—seven groups in one show . . . and they did two shows a night! A roadie's nightmare! Jimi Hendrix had 40 minutes, The Move had 30, the Floyd had 17, Amen Corner 15, The Nice 12, and so on, and it was all bound together by compere Pete Drummond, whose main success lay in alienating the fans.

That tour did wonders in popularising them, but a subsequent tour of America was decidedly very strange; they'd arrive at a gig and someone backstage would invariably induce them to sample the latest line in synthetic drugs and some extraordinary music would ensue. One of the aims of the early Floyd was to achieve the San Fran/psychedelic stance, which they thought they were doing quite well, but it transpired that their music was far removed from anything the Americans had ever seen before. With few examples of the West Coast sound to take their lead from, they had just guessed and assumed what the more progressive groups might be trying, and in doing so had evolved a style entirely their own.

THE END OF AN ERA AND THE START OF ANOTHER

Within a year of the first stirrings of love, peace and brotherhood, the Underground had passed through its period of togetherness.

UFO, under the control of Joe Boyd, had closed down, and Hoppy, just out of prison, was now much quieter and there was no-one to assume his pivotal role as coordinator of

Underground activities. Jenner: "I think it was a tragedy for the hip community when Hoppy was put in jail and I don't think it ever recovered, because it was his energy which fired so many schemes . . . he held everything together and helped to maintain a unity."

Everyone withdrew into his own camp rather than think about the Underground as a whole . . . a very harrowing bandwagon period during which hypocrisy was around on a very big scale.

Meanwhile, the Floyd was falling apart too; the pop press were coming out with rapturous accounts of how Syd would do a whole number strumming just one chord, but the other three weren't so much amused as troubled, and they decided to make a few changes because they could never be sure if Syd was suddenly going to change the rhythm or structure of a piece—and things stretched just a little too far . . . .

Syd stayed with Blackhill, who had plans for a solo career, and the Floyd recruited Dave Gilmour and went off to a new management in March 1968. The end of an amazing, but very weird era.

"We were always convinced that they were going to be as big as The Beatles—we were sure of that—but the way we ran things was so haphazard. For instance, at one time we had the four Floyd, Andrew and me, June Child [who worked in the office and later became Mrs Bolan], two roadies and two lights people—they were all on salary, and we didn't keep any sort of control over expenditure . . . ludicrous amounts were spent on ridiculous things, and the money scene got very unstable as a result of no hit record and no gigs, a situation which had arisen because of the reputation they'd gained for being unreliable.

"Basically, the Floyd left us because they thought we'd have no confidence in them without Syd, which was true, even though it was a mistake for us to think like that. We just couldn't conceive how they would be able to make it

without Syd, who put all the creativity into the group."

So off they went, leaving the financial position approximately as it had been 18 months earlier . . . everybody was broke. Jenner: "If I'd known then, what I know now, things would've been very different . . . the Floyd would have made a lot of money much sooner than they did, and I'd be a very rich man."

By this time, however, Blackhill had just taken on the management of an unrecorded duo who had no gigs and survived mainly because of John Peel's interest and help . . . they were called Tyrannosaurus Rex, but that's another story altogether.

Pete Frame
Issue 25, August 1972

References:
For a fuller picture, read *Play Power* by Richard Neville, and *Bomb Culture* by Jeff Nuttall. Also see Glen Sweeney in *ZigZag* 4 and Mick Farren in *ZigZag* 5. Old copies of *IT* and *Oz* are interesting, and a snoop around Compendium Books in Camden Town is always worthwhile.

PINK FLOYD FIRST XI

1


The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*
Columbia SCX 6157

2

A Saucerful of Secrets
Columbia SCX 6258

3

More*
Columbia SCX 6346

4

Atom Heart Mother*
Harvest SHVL 781

5
6

Ummagumma*
Harvest SHDW 1/2

7

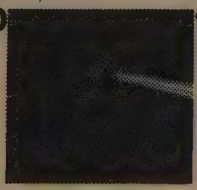
Relics*
Starline SRS 5071

8

Meddle*
Harvest SHVL 795

9

Obscured by Clouds*
(Music from La Vallee)
Harvest SHSP 4020

10

The Dark Side of the Moon*
Harvest SHVL 804

11

A Nice Pair*
Harvest SHDW 403

EMI
HARVEST

* also available on cassette and cartridge

EMI Records Limited,
20, Manchester Square, London W1A 1ES.

Nick Mason (with beard in those days) and Roger Waters.

NOTES TOWARDS THE ILLUMINATION OF THE FLOYD

Three years ago, when Arsenal were an interesting football team, and I had the time, I used to go to see them at Highbury. An old acquaintance from university used to meet me there and he was often accompanied by this big tall geezer who didn't say much but who looked fairly familiar. Probably someone else from university I thought. After about two years of nodding, I eventually asked him what he did for a living. "I'm a musician," he replied. "Oh yeah, what sort exactly," I reposted. "I'm in a group called The Pink Floyd," he said, in much the same way that you might tell someone that you worked for J Walter Thompson. It was Roger Waters. Eventually I managed to screw up sufficient effrontery to ask for a few hours of his time to answer some questions. The only problem was that he had told Michael Wale in his book *Voxpop* that he couldn't stand people who asked where the group got their name from, and that seemed to me to be exactly the sort of question that I would want to ask, plus a few other not altogether trivial matters that hopefully he could clear up. We finally agreed to meet

at his house, but when we arrived we were directed to a Mr Mason's residence about 60p's worth of taxi away. In conversation with Roger Waters (RW) and Nick Mason (NM) the following was gleaned.

OUR HEROES RECALL THE BEGINNING

Pete Frame chronicled the early days of The Pink Floyd in ZZ25. The story was told from the point of view of Peter Jenner, a half of Blackhill Enterprises who discovered The Floyd and managed them for a few years. In this bit of the conversation we verify that story, and examine the parallel developments of our band with those happening in America at the same time.

ZZ: Was the story that we had in ZZ25 about the meeting with Peter Jenner the way you saw it?
RW: Yes as far as I can remember. He must have come to a gig. Maybe it was one of those funny things at the Marquee. But he and Andrew King approached us and said, "You lads could be bigger than The Beatles," and we sort of looked at him and replied in a dubious tone, "Yes, well, we'll see you when we get back from our hols," because we were all shooting off for some sun on the continent.
ZZ: You were all students at Regent Street Poly, right?
RW: No, just me and Nick. Rick had started at the Poly but after about a year he got a heavy elbow.
ZZ: You had a group called The Abdabs at college during this time.
RW: We had one before that called Sigma 6.
NM: That's right. Manager Ken Chapman. I've still got a printed card somewhere which says Sigma 6 available for clubs and parties or something.
RW: We used to learn this bloke Ken Chapman's songs . . . what did he study at the Poly . . . ? Maybe he'd left by then.

Well he knew Gerry Bron, and we used to learn his songs and then play them for Gerry Bron . . .
NM: . . . and hope to be discovered at the same time.
RW: They were fantastic songs. [Sings] "Have you seen a morning rose" to the tune of a Tchaikovsky prelude or something, it was all ripped off from Tchaikovsky.
NM: There was another one, the 'Uptempo' one, what was that? Oh Christ, the memory has seized up. But that article you had was very good.
RW: We like to think that we would have made it anyway, later on maybe. We definitely don't believe in the myth of managers making bands.
ZZ: Were you influenced by American bands, apart from the R&B stuff? For example, 'Interstellar Overdrive' seems to me to have a very Velvet Underground feel to it.
NM: We never heard much of that.
RW: That was nicked from Love wasn't it? It was a cross between Steptoe and Son and that Love track on their first album which I can't remember.
NM: I'd never heard any of those bands. Someone in the band had your original R&B album and that was Authentic R&B Volumes I to II, lots of Bo Diddley, but we never heard any of the other American stuff. It was a complete amazement to us when we did hear them in the States.
RW: We heard the names, that's all.
NM: There was such a confusion. People would come over and talk about those far out West Coast bands like Jefferson Airplane and Sopwith Camel, a whole string of names, half of which were bubble-gum groups.
RW: And the other half were country blues bands.
ZZ: But if you were listening to Love, they were pretty unknown at that time.
NM: We weren't listening to Love, Peter Jenner was. We were listening to Cream, and The Who, Hendrix, that sort of stuff. That was what turned me on to being in a band again.

ZZ: It was true, as Jenner was quoted as saying at the time, that he got you to drop the R&B stuff?
RW: No, that's absolute rubbish—complete crap. He had little influence over what we played at all.
NM: Nick Jones wrote that in the first review that we got in *Melody Maker*. It was a lie.
RW: The idea that Peter Jenner steered us away from 'Roadrunner' into new realms of psychedelia is crap.
NM: And we've got a great battery of solicitors to prove it.
ZZ: What did steer you away?
RW: I dunno, I suppose we just got bored with it.
NM: Syd wrote more songs. That was one reason.
RW: That's true. As Syd wrote more songs, we dropped others from the repertoire. But we went on doing 'Roadrunner' and 'Gimme A Break' and all that stuff for years.
NM: But particularly when Bob Close was in the band. When he left, that was another reason to get rid of old material.
RW: Because we couldn't play it any longer.

THE UNDERGROUND

ZZ: What was UFO like for you? Was it as magical as legend now has it?
NM: It's got rosier with age, but there is a germ of truth in it, because for a brief moment it looked as though there might actually be some combining of activities. People would go down to this place, and a number of people would do a number of things, rather than simply one band performing. There would be some mad actors, a couple of light shows, perhaps the recitation of some poetry or verse, and a lot of wandering about and a lot of cheerful chatter going on.
RW: Mind you there were still freaks standing at the side of the stage screaming out that we'd sold out.
NM: Actually Roger, that was usually the other band. One night we played with a band called The Brothers Grimm and that night at least, it was either the band or their lady

friends. I remember that well—because it hit hard.
ZZ: What about that other legend, The Great Technicolour Dream?
NM: Oh that was a joke. That was the night we did East Deerham as well.
RW: I'll never forget that night. We did a double header that night. First of all we played to a roomful of about 500 gipsies, hurling abuse and fighting, and then we did Ally Pally.
NM: *We* certainly weren't legendafy there. Arthur Brown was the one. That was his great launching.
RW: There was so much dope and acid around in those days that I don't think anyone can remember anything about anything.

THE TRIALS OF BEING A HIT PARADE GROUP

Like many bands of that era, the marketing demands that The Floyd's music made on their record company were never really appreciated. Their music was treated in the same fashion that the company had hitherto employed for everyone else from Frank Sinatra to The Beatles. Nowhere was this fundamental ignorance of what 'progressive' music required, more evident than in the pressure to have successful singles, and related problems such as Juke Box Jury.

ZZ: What's the story behind 'Arnold Layne'?
RW: Both my mother and Syd's mother had students as lodgers, because there was a girls' college up the road. So there was constantly great lines of bras and knickers on our washing lines, and Arnold, or whoever he was, had bits and pieces off our washing lines. They never caught him. He stopped doing it after a bit—when things got too hot for him. Maybe he's moved to Cherry Lynton or Newnham possibly.
MN: Maybe he decided to give up and get into bank raids

or something.
ZZ: What did you think of Pete Murray saying on Juke Box Jury that you were just a cult?
RW: Now he didn't say that. This is where the memory doesn't play tricks, because it will always remain crystal clear. [Menacingly] He said we were a con. He thought it was just contrived rubbish to meet some kind of unhealthy demand.
NM: We thought what we think now.
ZZ: Which is what?
RW: Well . . . the man's an idiot. A fifth rate idiot, and always has been.
ZZ: I remember David Jacobs or maybe it was Pete Murray saying, about Little Stevie Wonder, that it was a disgrace the way that the record company was exploiting his blindness as a gimmick, and another time when he said in the tones of a magistrate, "I understand that there is a lot of this psychedelic stuff in America, but I very much hope that it doesn't catch on here."
NM: That's fantastic. That programme obviously had a great impact on people. The nice thing is that we can all remember it after all these years, and see that they've all been made to look very stupid.
RW: But both our singles were so bloody innocuous, there was nothing difficult about either of them.
NM: But people still say that. You know, "I have to listen very carefully, and I can just about understand the music."
ZZ: You got hassled by the BBC a couple of times, didn't you?
RW: We had to change all the lyrics in one song because it was about rolling joints. It was called 'Let's Roll Another One' and we had to change the title to 'Candy In A Currant Bun' and it had lines in it like . . .
NM: . . . "Tastes right if you eat it right".
RW: No, they didn't like that at all, very under the arm.
ZZ: Doesn't that contradict the image of the Underground

a bit, that you agreed?
NM: Christ no. We were a rock'n'roll band, and if you're a rock'n'roll band and you've got a record that you want to be number one, you get it played and if they say take something out, or whatever, you do it. In fact what you do is exactly what was done—you make as much press out of it as possible. You ring up the *Evening Standard* and say, "Did you know that the BBC won't play our record because it mentions your paper?"
RW: That line was changed to Daily Standard to appease them, but nobody ever heard it because it was such a lousy record.
ZZ: You used to slag off a lot of your records at the time. You once described a record, 'It Would Be So Nice', as complete trash, and added that anyone who bought it needed their head looked at.
RW: [laughing] I think that's the truth.
NM: It was awful that record, wasn't it? At that period we had no direction. We were being hussled about to make hit singles. There's so many people saying it's important, you start to think it is important.
ZZ: Did you get upset by the failure of your subsequent singles?
NM: No. I can't understand why actually, but we didn't.
ZZ: You never had a feeling that you were rubbish—that maybe they were right?
NM: We may have thought that we weren't good musicians but we never thought that they were right. It's funny, but I never did feel that we'd had it when two singles slumped horribly—that it was all over. I don't know why not, because a number of people did think it was all over.
RW: There was only that single and 'Apples And Oranges'.
NM: And 'Point Me At The Sky'.
RW: 'Apples And Oranges' was a very good song, and so was 'Point Me At The Sky'. I listened to it about a year ago, and in spite of the mistakes and the production I don't

think it was bad. 'Apples And Oranges' was destroyed by the production—it's a really good song.
NM: It could have done with more working out, I think.

THE DAYS WITH BLACKHILL

When I was with *Time Out*, we ran a feature on Kevin Ayers who is still a Blackhill artist and, as is normal in such cases, we rang up to ask if there were any nice photos that we could use. Usually in such cases, the management or publicity people assure you that there are and promise instant delivery, and when you've rung off, frantically try to remember where they've put them (if they're old they've probably hidden them under the promotional guff for whatever is about to 'break'). With these Blackhill cats though, they arrived with everything we wanted and proceeded to more or less take the place apart in their efforts to ensure that the feature was good. Running up and down the stairs, making helpful suggestions—a very strange and extraordinary couple of fellows.

ZZ: You applied for an Arts Council Grant in 1968. What on earth was that about?
NM: [Amid explosions of laughter] It was another of Peter Jenner's ideas.
RW: It was a bloody good idea.
NM: But the Arts Council just aren't into subsidising bands.
ZZ: Peter is just great for ideas—free festivals and so on.
NM: There's much more to it than that. Whatever we say about them now, they did discover us, and to some extent they discovered T Rex. They definitely have a talent in a way that other people don't. For example, Robert Stigwood has a talent for picking up the awards . . . .
RW: Put that in. God, we feel strongly about that.
NM: Did you know that Robert Stigwood was given an award, some golden award for putting on free concerts in Hyde Park, by some American paper, because they thought that the Blind Faith concert was the first free concert in

Hyde Park? That is the story of Blackhill in a nutshell. The whole thing had been started by Peter and Andrew.
ZZ: What was the grant meant to be for, though?
NM: I don't think anyone really knew—put on a film or some show, mainly just to keep the finances running, I should think. We've been heavily in debt ever since we started—up until a few years ago—and Blackhill was at the height of our indebtedness—our debt peak.
RW: At the end of the week we'd all go in to get our cheques and week by week people would start to go in earlier and earlier; they'd collect their cheque, dash around to their bank, and have it expressed, because there wasn't enough money to pay everybody, so whoever got their cheque first got their money. Cheques were just bouncing all the time because there wasn't enough money in the account, and if the bank manager wouldn't let the overdraft get bigger, then you didn't get paid.
NM: They were usually 7 or 8, maybe 9 thousand overdrawn, but they were usually owed a fortune too.

ON THE ROAD: HERE AND IN AMERICA

A Floyd gig, as everyone knows, is a truly amazing experience—majestic music impeccably presented, and shaped with their own incomparable flair for drama and excitement. Some background information.

ZZ: Were the gigs in the early days really scary?
NM: No, not really, we got jolly annoyed but we weren't really scared. We just went on and on and on. We never said, "Damn this, let's pack it in." We just trudged around for a daily dose of broken bottle.
RW: Where was it that we actually had broken beer mugs smashing into the drum kit?
NM: East Deerham, and the California Ballroom, Dunstable.
RW: The California Ballroom Dunstable was the one where they were pouring pints of beer on to us from the balcony,

that was most unpleasant, and very, very dangerous too.
NM: And things like the Top Rank suites wouldn't let us drink in the bar, which made us bloody angry. We always swore we'd never go back, but we didn't keep to it.
ZZ: How much were you getting for that?
NM: £250, because we were a hit parade group and we could draw people.
RW: Went down after that though to about a ton.
NM: No. It never went down that low Rog, maybe £135 once or twice.
RW: Actually I remember—the worst thing that ever happened to me was at The Feathers Club in Ealing, which was a penny, which made a bloody great cut in the middle of my forehead. I bled quite a lot. And I stood right at the front of the stage to see if I could see him throw one. I was glowering in a real rage, and I was gonna leap out into the audience and get him. Happily, there was one freak who turned up who liked us, so the audience spent the whole evening beating the shit out of him, and left us alone.
ZZ: Have you ever gone in for smashing hotels and things like that?
RW: No.
ZZ: What do you do on the road in America to combat the boredom?
RW: Unlike most other bands we're not heavily into crumpet on the road. What we are heavily into is swimming pools and trips to see or do things. If we can get together any kind of activity, we'll all be into it. We play football, go to American Football matches.
NM: Eating and talking we do a lot.
RW: If it's in the summer we spend all our time sitting around swimming pools reading, and playing 'get off my rope'. American swimming pools always have a rope that is slung across the pool to divide the shallow end from the deep end, which if you stand on it sinks down so that it's about three feet under the water. So someone gets on and the other guy

climbs aboard and you can play Robin Hood and Little John all day long and the only thing that happens to you is that you get very badly bruised.
NM: And we have crazes like Monopoly and Backgammon. We also tend to work almost daily, which is important because otherwise it is so boring, but none of us are smashers.
ZZ: In the early days you must have toured with other bands?
NM: We don't know any other bands really. The nearest we got to that was The Who, where we did about three gigs with them. It's a whole area of social life that we've missed out on.
RW: I think The Who are still my favourite band to meet on the road, because they're the same kind of people as we are really. They're not all smashers. Moony's a smasher, but he's a very sophisticated smasher—he's got it down to a fine art. When he's not smashing he's incredibly amusing.
NM: He's very good company to sit and have a drink with. A lot of people are just drunken maniacs, just lurching about, being boring.
RW: The Who like a good chat, except for Roger Daltrey.
NM: You've never recovered from the time he thought Rick was Eric Clapton. It was in a band room somewhere.
RW: At the Fillmore.
NM: He came up to Rick and said, "Hullo man, good to see you," and Rick was thinking, "Shit, that's funny."
RW: And when he realised he slunk off and we've never seen him since.
ZZ: About 1968 Roger, you were saying that you wanted to do a rock circus.
NM: The circus was quite advanced in the organisation stage. We actually did have a big top but there was some fantastic reason why the tent people pulled out.
RW: We got a bit of that feel at the Earls Court gigs last week. When we were setting up, I thought that it did look

a bit like a circus with all these wires going into the audience. And the plane we used at Earls Court was very like those circus space rockets that people whip round and round in—it was silver and red and about six foot long, like a bloody great aluminium paper dart, flashing lights and smoke, amazing.

ZZ: What is your feeling about lights now, because I remember you saying that they were OK but you'd gone off them a bit, or at least that's what you were quoted as saying.

RW: What I thought was that they were a very nice surprise device, as far as they went, but during that era, once you'd seen a good one that was it. I went totally off the whole random thing of light shows, I felt that they should only be used to create a specific effect, and now that our music is more deliberate and controlled, so all our visual things now, are specific, and related to something in the music. When the music gets very intense we'll do some big effect, like letting off orange smoke or rockets up into the sky.

ZZ: Have you ever had problems with contracts because of the special requirements that you make on a promoter's resources?

RW: Not problems. We have to get them to provide things like 100 lbs of dry ice and so on. I haven't seen our new rider, but apparently it looks like a small atlas, pages and pages. We've discovered that during our last tour of America, since our rider was like three foolscap pages, that the promoters over there don't take it seriously. And on a tour like that you desperately need things to be there when the road crew arrive, not twenty minutes later. If you stuff all that nonsense in—four locks on the dressing room door and two cases of scotch, then the bloke thinks, "Christ I'd better get this together," and then they might even get your power right, and the number of spotlights. You want the stage the right size and to be built on time.

NM: They bloody well never do it right, they always try to cut it down in size or imagine that they can get away without

building the side pieces or things like that.
ZZ: Have you ever pulled out when it doesn't come up to scratch?
RW: We always mean to, when we arrive at some gig and the bastard hasn't started building the stage by noon, and we know that it's going to take three hours to build and the gig's meant to start at seven, and the electricians haven't arrived, and we always go through a period of saying, "If they can't be bothered then we'll go home," but we always relent because we sit and think that the only people who suffer are the audience.
NM: We've pulled out of places when it's clear, well in advance, that the bugger can't supply the power, and you can always make it clear to the promoter that you aren't going to work for, or with, them ever again.
ZZ: Do you have anyone in the road crew whose job it is to frighten promoters?
NM: All our people have different ways of doing things, and they have a very good reputation. The only time we jump on people is if they're stopping us from putting on the best show we can. If there's some miserable swine there who's being officious about something then we're quite capable of getting as heavy as anybody else. All we're interested in doing is doing the show right, and if they'll let us do that then we don't give a shit.
RW: Getting a bit more beer is easy, but what you can't do easily is suddenly produce two more legs of 40 amp, 110 volt, three phase out of mid air. That's something you have to get together before you arrive, you simply can't fetch 400 ft of cable from the chemistry block, although a lot of these people think you can. And it's all in the contract, if only they'd bloody look. And that's what makes us really angry. There are some good promoters, but most of them are just into selling the tickets and counting the money.
NM: A good promoter is great to work with, and he'll get a much better show. A good promoter will lay on six blokes

to help with the truck, even without looking at the contract.

SOME INCIDENTAL ASPECTS OF THE MUSIC

Whenever you ask a musician a 'penetrating' question about his music, such as, "When you used the same lyrics in two different songs, two years apart, were you consciously, with irony or humour perhaps pointing out the metamorphosis in your work that you sensed had taken place?" you always get a reply like, "Shit no, I only had another hour in the studio to finish it, and I didn't have the time to knock out any more words." That is why there are no such questions here.

ZZ: What do you feel is the role of sound effects?
RW: Speaking for myself I've always felt that the differentiation between a sound effect and music is all a load of shit. Whether you make a sound on a guitar, or a water tap is irrelevant because it doesn't make any difference. We started on a piece a while ago which was carrying this to its logical extreme, or one of its logical extremes, where we don't use any recognisable musical instruments at all—bottles, knives, anything at all, felling axes and stuff like that, which we will complete at some juncture and it's turning out into a really nice piece.
ZZ: Where do you think you most successfully used sound effects, where it was especially good.
RW: Actually I think that the simplest things are often the best, for example just the sound of wind at the beginning of 'Cut You Into Little Pieces', is bloody effective.
NM: 'Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast' is quite interesting, insofar as although we've all agreed that the piece didn't work, in some ways the sound effects are the strongest part.
RW: We did that in a fantastic rush, didn't we?
NM: Right, but it was a fantastic idea but because of the rush it didn't work properly.
RW: I'd like to think that they all worked, obviously, so I

wouldn't like to try and pick out one thing.
NM: 'Money' I think works very well. And the interesting thing about that is that when Roger wrote it, it more or less all came up in the first day.
RW: Yeah, it was just a tune around those sevenths, and I knew that there had to be a song about money in the piece, and I thought that the tune could be a song about money and having decided that, it was extremely easy to make up a seven beat intro that went well with it. I often think that the best ideas are the most obvious ones, and that's a fantastically obvious thing to do, and that's why it sounds good.
ZZ: Now what's the lowdown on all this science fiction stuff and space music?
RW: Christ, I hardly ever read science fiction now. I used to read a lot but only very occasionally now. I suppose that the reason that I liked to read science fiction novels was because they gave the writer the chance to expound and explore very obvious ideas. Sticking something in the future or in some different time and place, allows you to examine things, without thinking about all the stuff that everybody already knows about, and reacts to automatically, getting in the way. Also you get some bloody good yarns, and I like a good yarn.
ZZ: How does that relate to the description of your music as space music?
RW: Not very much.
NM: That was a convenient tag.
RW: Which was held over for so bloody long. People are still calling it space rock. People come and listen to *Dark Side Of The Moon* and call it space rock which is crazy. Just because it's got moon in the title, they think it's science fiction which is silly, and the other thing that they do is say that we've gone from outer space to inner space, which is daft.
ZZ: But it must be hard for those Fleet Street people, they have to listen to so much music that they rely on labels to tell them what they're listening to.
NM: It's not hard at all. They find it very easy and just carry

on.
RW: We haven't done many tracks that had anything to do with science fiction at all. It just depended on what you read into it. We did three songs, 'Astronomy Domine', 'Set The Controls' and 'Let There Be Light'.
NM: 'Saucerful' wasn't.
RW: The title allowed you to think of anything that you wanted, and because it had echo people went "Whooooo, science fiction," but it could be anything.
ZZ: A lot of writers have used analogies with painting to describe their feelings about your music. Do you share that at all?
RW: Maybe. I think that sometimes there may be something that isn't inherently apparent in the piece because of the lyrics, so it becomes very easy to let your imagination go.
NM: People often listen to the music and come up with a visualisation of what it is about and when they've had it they think they've got it, they've discovered the secret. Sometimes they even bother to write to us and say, "I've got the answer, it's cornfields, isn't it?'
RW: And when they say it to us we tell them the truth. We just say, "If that's what it is to you then that's what it is," but it can be whatever you want—it doesn't matter what you visualise—it's not important.
NM: And they're invariably disappointed.
RW: The way our music impinges on your mind makes it very easy to conjure up some vision, very easy to imagine some scene. If you're listening to John Cage or Stockhausen it's very difficult, because the music is all squeaks and bubbles. It is more like hard edge, real abstract painting. There are definite things in it like triangles and squares. It doesn't give you an overall impression of The Battle Of Waterloo or whatever, it's triangles and squares, that you respond to in an intellectual way. Our music is non-intellectual, it is straight emotional response gear.
ZZ: Sensual?

RW: Yeah.
ZZ: What's this famous Azimuth coordinator?
RW: It's just the name we invented for the quadrophonic pan pot that we use. When we started using quadrophonic pan pots, my son, there weren't any, nobody had made them.
ZZ: Where did the name come from, that science fiction geezer?
RW: No, that's Isaac Asimov.
NM: Oh Christ—the Asimov Coordinator. Go home, will you?
RW: Go back to the Kop will you? Go back to where you came from. Azimuth means direction, where's the dictionary? "Arc of the heavens extending from the zenith to the horizon, which it cuts at right angles." That's it. It's vaguely relevant isn't it?
ZZ: What did Ron Geesin do on *Atom Heart Mother*?
NM: I was introduced to him through Sam James Cutler, one of the few good things Sam Cutler ever did—no, that's not true. He was a Scotsman practising in Ladbroke Grove and then Roger met him, and you did *The Body* with him.
RW: Did I? Was that before *Atom Heart Mother*?
NM: Yes. And then when we started it was agreed that it wanted orchestration, and Ron got the gig. Had we got a rough?
RW: Yes I think so. We'd got a lot of backing track, which we gave him so he knew vaguely what we were into. Rick worked with him on the pieces for the people to sing and he wrote the introduction completely out of his Scottish head, and the other things we had vague melodies for, he worked on. That was about all. He walked out of our concert on Saturday. Did I tell you that?
NM: Yes sweetheart. Did you realise where you got that information from? From me.

SYD BARRETT

Syd Barrett is an indisputably great songwriter, and his departure from the Floyd raised doubts in many people's minds

about the viability of the group as both a composing unit and a recording unit. Syd has now virtually retired to Cambridge where he works, among other things, as a gardener.

ZZ: Why did Syd leave—what's the true story?
NM: What true story would you like?
ZZ: I heard that America did him in.
NM: Have you heard the one about how he threatened us with a gun?
RW: That's a good one.
NM: Do you want the story behind the facts?
ZZ: What were your feelings about it?
RW: [heavily sarcastic] We blistered with fury.
NM: We staggered on, thinking to ourselves that we couldn't manage without Syd, so we put up with what can only be described as an unreliable maniac. We didn't choose to use those words, but I think he was.
RW: Syd turned into a very strange person. Whether he was sick in any way or not is not for us to say in these days of dispute about the nature of madness. All I know is that he was murder to live and work with.
NM: [sadly] Impossible.
RW: We definitely reached a stage where all of us were getting very depressed just because it was a terrible mistake to go on trying to do it. He had become completely incapable of working in the group.
NM: And it seemed his whole bent was on frustrating us.
ZZ: Yet you helped him on his album.
RW: That was because—and I still believe this now—he is one of the three best songwriters in the world.
ZZ: What's he doing now?
RW: I don't know. Not very much. Anyway that's why we worked on the album. There was a great plan, and that's something that didn't come out in your Jenner article, to expand the group, get in two other geezers, some two freaks that he'd met somewhere or other. One of them played the

banjo and the other played the saxophone. We weren't into that at all, and it was obvious that the crunch had finally come. One evening we went to UFO to do a gig and Syd didn't turn up so we did it on our own and it was great. We went down well, and we enjoyed playing together, it was really nice.

NM: That's fantastic, because I don't think that's true.

RW: Don't you? Didn't you think it was good?

NM: I think you're imagining a situation that never happened. Syd arrived, but his arms hung by his side, with the occasional strumming. That was the night of doing . . .

RW: Saturday Club.

NM: Right, which was the breakdown, but that wasn't the end of it all. That evening was something referred to four months later.

RW: Anyway, and Nick's almost certainly right, because my memory's a bit dodgy. It was more or less that we did a gig without Syd. He may have been on the stage but we really did it without him, he just stood there with it hanging round his neck, which was something he was prone to do, and after that we realised that we could manage.

NM: But we didn't do anything about it for some months. We had a long think at Christmas.

RW: So it must have been over that Christmas that we got in touch with Dave [Gilmour] and said, "Whooaa, Dave, wink, wink!"

NM: So we were teaching Dave the numbers with the idea that we were going to be a five-piece. But Syd came in with some new material. The song went, 'Have You Got It Yet?' and he kept changing it so that no one could learn it.

RW: It was a real act of mad genius. The interesting thing about it was that I didn't suss it out at all. I stood there for about an hour while he was singing 'Have you got it yet?' trying to explain that he was changing it all the time so I couldn't follow it. He'd sing, "Have you got it yet?" and I'd sing "No, no". Terrific.

ZZ: Were you brought down by Blackhill's support of Syd?
RW: I just thought that they were wrong. We had a big and final meeting at Ladbroke Road one day, which came down to me and Syd sitting in a room talking together, and I'd worked out what I thought was the only way that we could carry on together, which was for him to be still a member of the group, still earn his fair share of the money, but not to come to gigs at all, become a sort of Brian Wilson figure if you like, write songs and come to recording sessions and by the end of the afternoon I thought that I'd convinced him that it was a good idea and he'd agreed, but it didn't really mean very much because he was likely to change his mind about anything totally, in an hour. He then went home, and I went to see Peter and Andrew and said that this was the end—if this didn't work then we were off, and I asked them to leave it alone for a bit, for all kinds of reasons, the main one being that they didn't see things the same way that I saw it. But they went round to see him and laid various numbers on him, so that was it. We never saw them again except at meetings to dissolve the partnership. We had to sort out who owned what, but that was the end, that day. They were managing Syd for a bit, and Peter Jenner spent about a year trying to make an album, and they did about four tracks all of which were an elbow except for one, and Peter finally gave up, and Malcolm Jones who was the first label manager of Harvest, said that they weren't going to put any more money in and then Syd came and saw Dave and asked him to help, and then Peter and Andrew saw EMI and said that the boys were going to help, give us another chance. So EMI said alright and gave us two days, but we had a gig on the second day so we had three sessions, one afternoon and two evenings, and we went in and recorded seven tracks in three sessions. They were fantastic songs.

THE PITFALLS OF SUCCESS

Whenever a band become famous, literally hundreds of people

approach them with schemes to harness their music to some other activity. Whether or not it's because the aspirants genuinely believe that their particular music is important or relevant, or simply because they want to cash in on their success, I wouldn't like to say, but maybe the Floyd's experience will illuminate the problem. The four episodes were: (i) a ballet—their participation in which was plastered all over *Melody Maker*; (ii) a cartoon series called *Rollo* done by Alan Aldridge; (iii) writing the music for *Zabriskie Point*, which music was chopped by the director and that of The Grateful Dead substituted, and finally, (iv) the movie *Pink Floyd At Pompeii*, which the Rank Organisation got banned from showing at The Rainbow last year, amid some very suspicious and devious circumstances.

ZZ: What happened to the ballet? It was based on Proust wasn't it?
RW: It never happened. First of all it was Proust, then it was Aladdin, then it was something else. We had this great lunch one day, me, Nick and Steve [their manager]. We went to have lunch with Nureyev, Roman Polanski, Roland Petit, some film producer or other. What a laugh. It was to talk about the projected idea for us doing the music, and Roland choreographing it, and Rudy being the star, and Roman Polanski directing the film, and making this fantastic ballet film. It was all a complete joke because nobody had any idea what they wanted to do.
ZZ: Didn't you smell a rat?
RW: I smelt a few poofs. Nobody had any idea—it was incredible.
ZZ: But you said at the time that you'd just bought the entire works of Proust to study them.
RW: I did.
NM: But nobody read anything. David did worst, he only read the first eighteen pages.
RW: I read the second volume of *Swann's Way*, and when I

got to the end of it I thought, "Oh what, I'm not reading any more, I can't handle it." It just went too slowly for me.
NM: It just went on for two years, this idea of doing a ballet, with no one coming up with any ideas, us not setting aside any time because there was nothing specific, until in a desperate moment, Roland devised a ballet to some existing music, which I think was a good idea. It's looked upon a bit sourly now.
RW: We all sat around this table until someone thumped the table and said, "What's the idea then?" and everyone just sat there drinking this wine and getting more and more drunk, with more and more poovery going on around the table, until somebody suggested Frankenstein and Nureyev started getting a bit worried, didn't he? They talked about Frankenstein for a bit—I was just sitting there enjoying the meat and the vibes, saying nothing, keeping well schtuck.
NM: Yes, with Roland's hand upon your knee.
RW: And when Polanski was drunk enough he started to suggest that we make the blue movie to end all blue movies, and then it all petered out into cognac and coffee and then we jumped into our cars and split. God knows what happened after we left Nick.
ZZ: And *Rollo*?
RW: They wouldn't pay for it. We stuck some old stuff on a pilot that they made but when they figured out the way that they were going to animate it they realised that the cost would be very high; now the only people with the money to back something like that is the Americans. But the Americans can sell Johnny Wonder going at ten frames a second or something, real rubbish, and people will sit and watch it and the sponsors will buy it, so why should they pay for *Rollo*, because they can sell their cornflakes with Johnny Wonder. They don't give a shit about the quality of the thing.
NM: It made us aware of what crap there is—what we'll accept as cartoons now. Compared to Fritz the Cat, or Mickey Mouse even, it's all such crap.

RW: The same bit of background going by, terrible. Alan Aldridge did most of the initial work and a team of Dutch animators did the work on the pilot, which was very beautiful.
NM: The colouring was excellent and the animations were very complicated, with a lot of perspective in it.
RW: It was a great story; the basic idea was that this boy Rollo is lying in bed and he starts to dream (or maybe it really happens), and suddenly his bed wakes up and these two eyes pop out of the bedpost and start looking around, and the legs grow and the bed bounces Rollo round, who wakes up. And then the bed leaps out of the house and goes out down the street, all in beautiful movements, and the bed leaps into the sky, and goes flying off into the sky. And when he gets up there the moon is there and the moon is smoking a big cigar, which turns out to be an optical illusion—it's really a space ship. And then a little plane, like a bird comes out of this space ship and scoops the bed up with its mouth, and Rollo is taken by a robot dog in the space ship to Professor Creator, who owns and runs this space ship, who turns out to be a collector of animals. And one of the preliminary examples was about these giants who lived underground in a complex series of tunnels and corridors; one of the weird things about this planet was that gravity was different for them than it was for Professor Creator and Rollo. They got into the planet using this machine called the Mole which bored through, and in this chase scene, where the giants are trying to get them, the giants are all running along the floor and the others are running along the wall. And things like that looked fantastic. Finally they get into the borer and they come out to the surface of the planet, and as they come out it starts going down like a balloon. Then the ship goes into orbit around the planet, and the giants are crawling across the surface, taking great swipes at the rocket ship. It really could have been so good.
ZZ: *Zabriskie Point*?
RW: We went to Rome and stayed in this posh hotel. Every

day we would get up at about 4.30 in the afternoon, we'd pop into the bar, and sit there till about 7, then we'd stagger into the restaurant, where we'd eat for about two hours, and drink. By about halfway through the two weeks, the bloke there was beginning to suss out what we wanted; we kept asking for these ridiculous wines, so by the end he was coming up with these really insane wines. Anyway we'd finish eating—the Crepes Suzettes would finally slide down by about a quarter to nine.

NM: The Peach Melba was good too. I used to start with Sole Bonne Femme, followed by the Roast Leg of Lamb, cooked with rosemary, and then a Peach Melba or a Crepe Suzette, or perhaps both.

RW: We'd start work at about nine; the studio was a few minutes' walk down the road, so we'd stagger down the road. We could have finished the whole thing in about five days because there wasn't too much to do. Antonioni was there and we did some great stuff, but he'd listen and go, and I remember he had this terrible twitch, he'd go, "Eet's very beauteeful, but eet's too sad" or, "Eet's too strroong". It was always something that stopped it being perfect. You'd change whatever was wrong and he'd still be unhappy. It was hell, sheer hell. He'd sit there and fall asleep every so often, and we'd go on working till about seven or eight in the morning, go back and have breakfast, go to bed, get up and then back into the bar.

ZZ: And the Pompeii film?

NM: That's had a history nearly as long as the ballet. Whenever it's about to be premiered, Adrian Markham the director rings up and says, "Listen I must just have a bit more film." We've been adding little bits to it for ages.

RW: It's not a bad film. I saw the final version in New York.

ZZ: What did you think of that business at the Rainbow?

RW: Rank. That is my answer. I think it's quite witty.

NM: I like Peter Bowyer's comment. He was waiting for the wounds in his back to heal before he undertook any more

such assignments.
RW: What it is, is just us playing a load of tunes in the amphitheatre at Pompeii interspersed with rather Top Of The Popsy shots of us walking around the top of Vesuvius and things like that and it was a bit of an elbow. Since then he came to London and shot us in the studio for a couple of days which has made it much more lively and it's quite an entertaining film. I think Pink Floyd freaks would enjoy it. I don't know if anyone else would. I liked it because it's just like a big home movie.

OUR HEROES TELL ROLLING STONE TO GET STUFFED . . . AND THEIR RECORD COMPANY

With the success of *Dark Side Of The Moon* in America, the band were asked by *Rolling Stone* to do the *Rolling Stone* interview. On several previous occasions, when appointments had been arranged with that same paper, the interviewer had not turned up, and the band had been offered no word of apology or explanation. Naturally enough, on this occasion *Rolling Stone* were told to get lost. In their next issue they carried a vitriolic attack on the Floyd's gig in New York, full of snide remarks and cheap rhetoric. Maybe there was a connection between these two events . . . who knows?

ZZ: What was your reaction to the put down review in *Rolling Stone* recently?
RW: Well you know the story. He never got into the bandroom, everybody else did, but we do draw the line at people from *Rolling Stone*.
ZZ: You think that Leon Russell was right?
RW: Definitely. I love that song. It's hard to generalise about them all, because I don't know all of them but from my experience of meeting people from there, they're all a bunch of power-mad maniacs. They are completely carried away with the idea that the media surrounding rock'n'roll, or at least their corner of it, is more important than the actual thing.

Though they did print a letter in the most recent issue from someone saying, "Dear Ed, if you didn't like it then you were in a minority of one," which is something the *Melody Maker* wouldn't do in similar circumstances, I can assure you.

If there is something that characterises the career of The Pink Floyd, then maybe it's their wholesome "no-bullshit" attitude to the tawdry world of "da bizz", perfectly illustrated by the story of the recent reception to launch their latest album.

ZZ: Why didn't you come to the press reception at the Planetarium?
RW: Nicky and Dave and I thought that it was so daft that we tried to get it stopped, and when they refused to stop it, we refused to go to it. I think it was pathetic.
NM: The intention was to have the planetarium with a quadrophonic mix which I would have been into, because I thought it was a good idea, but there wasn't a quadrophonic mix, there was only a stereo mix, and they'd got the most terrible speakers. I mean no offence to Charlie Watkins but it was WEM, which is not what it would be about. You'd use JBLs and it would all sound pretty fantastic. I heard that it was stereo, not very well done, cold chicken and rice on paper plates.
RW: The only point of it was to make a really first class presentation of a quadrophonic mix of the album, so that it was something special. We didn't have time to do a quadrophonic mix so we said, "You can't do it." But EMI wanted to do something so they went ahead. It was just stupid, the whole thing was pathetic. They spent a lot of hot air trying to get us to go to it, but we just said, "We think it's a bad idea, we don't want to do it, we don't want to know." Obviously we couldn't stop them doing it, but I thought it was daft.
ZZ: Final question: What would you say is the meaning of

your music . . . . No, I'm just kidding; let's go and have a beer.

Connor McKnight

Issue 32, July 1973

Led Zeppelin, clockwise from the top, John Bonham, Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones and Robert Plant.

TALKING WITH JIMMY PAGE

ZZ: Before you were doing session work, you began your professional musical career with Neil Christian and The Crusaders, didn't you?
JP: Yes, I was with them when I left school, but all the travelling to one-nighter gigs made me ill—I used to get sick in the van—and so I left to go to art school. Then, when I left there, I began to do sessions bit by bit, and the work just began to escalate; at first, it was a nice scene, because there were good things to be done—around the advent of the Beatles and Stones booms—and I worked as a freelance and, because I was a new face on the scene, I got bookings all over the place.
ZZ: Legend has it that you got into sessions after you were spotted playing at the Marquee.

JP: Yes, it was something like that . . . I used to go up there and play in the interval spot with three other guys—we didn't really know each other outside the Marquee; we just used to meet there, and get up and play.
ZZ: Was that when you were playing with this pianist. Andy Wren?
JP: That's right—I wonder what happened to him. . . he was really good. To back track a moment, when it came to the point when I wasn't going to go on with Neil Christian anymore, I was approached by Cyril Davies, who was forming a group, and I went as far as rehearsing with them before I came to the decision that there was no point in going on because I'd just get into the same situation of feeling sick during all the travelling—so I packed it in and went off to art school for about 18 months.
ZZ: When you started doing sessions, could you pick and choose at all?
JP: Not really; you'd get the sort of situation where, say, a violinist session fixer, who didn't really know many other session musicians, would hear that there was a new guitar player around, and he'd book me for what turned out to be a ludicrous session—like muzak for supermarkets or something like that. Sometimes, I'd be asked to do a session and the fixer would say, "So and so wants you to do it" and I knew I'd be OK, that it'd be a suitable sort of job, but often I'd arrive without knowing what it was for—and as I got a little more experienced, those were the sort of things I learnt to avoid . . . I mean, they were just a headache—things I shouldn't have been doing.
ZZ: I think the sessions you're probably best known for are those Shel Talmy productions . . . The Kinks in 1964 and The Who just a few months later.
JP: I was thinking about those the other day, and I was wondering why Shel Talmy got so involved with the session men he used to use, because quite often, they just weren't necessary at all. For instance, I wasn't really needed on The

Who's 'Can't Explain' session, but I was there—and all I managed to do was sneak in a couple of phrases on the B side. Maybe Talmy used to have people like me standing by in case the group couldn't quite make it on some level . . . I mean, The Kinks didn't really want me around when they were recording. One aspect of being in the studio whilst potential hits were being made was the press; too many people were making a fuss about the use of session men . . . . I wasn't saying anything, obviously, but it just leaked out, and that sort of thing often led to considerable bad feeling.

ZZ: Pete Townshend acknowledges your assistance on 'Can't Explain', but Ray Davies is adamant that you played nothing but tambourine on any of The Kinks' stuff.

JP: That's fair enough—I didn't really do that much on The Kinks' records . . . I know I managed to get a couple of riffs in on their album, but I can't really remember—I know that he didn't really approve of my presence.

ZZ: I've obviously got a few ideas about various records, where you played the solos and so on, but would you prefer it if I didn't ask you about specific instances? . . . like I can appreciate that session men must have a code of good faith with the people they're employed by.

JP: Well yes, suffice it to say that during the period of 1964-1967, say, I was in there, grovelling around on a lot of sessions, but if I went into details, it would be a bit of a nause for the people concerned.

ZZ: As a session man, and as the bloke who turned down an offer to replace Clapton in the Yardbirds, you became a bit of a cult figure—especially regarding guitars—like when you got hold of a Les Paul Custom, everybody wanted one. A lot of people learnt from you, but where did you learn from?

JP: I chose that Les Paul Custom purely because it had three pick-ups and such a good range of sounds—it seemed to be the best all-rounder at the time. The Stratocaster is probably the best all-rounder now, but at that time it was the Les Paul. But Eric [Clapton] must take the credit for establishing the

"Les Paul Sound", the sort of playing he was doing in the Bluesbreakers, for instance. You see, even though I may have been one of the first to have a Les Paul, I didn't often get the chance to get going on it . . . on the odd occasion, I was able to put a bit of feedback onto some record or other, but it was only after all the other musicians had gone home, because when I played like that, they just used to put their fingers in their ears. The limitations were often really frustrating—a factor which eventually led to my leaving session work—because I rarely had a chance to roar into something . . . the sax players and violinists used to look at me as though I were some kind of joke.

ZZ: So you had no free rein at the time—you just had to play as you were told to?

JP: Not exactly. In most cases, they'd give you a part, which was written down and sometimes it was good, but usually you'd only play it as it was written if you wanted to be really nasty. Often, the part would be really bad, and you knew that you could do so much better if only you had the chance—you know, things that flowed and sounded better, and had more life in them. It all depended how willing the musical director was; if he accepted your suggestions, you obviously had a freer hand, but if he wanted every part to be his invention, you had to follow his instructions.

ZZ: Who were you listening to and learning from—people like James Burton and Scotty Moore?

JP: That's right—I've always listened to them, and the Everly Brothers had a good steel player (on things like 'Lucille' and 'I'm Not Angry') called Johnny Day. I asked the Everlys who that was, because everyone was saying it was Chet Atkins and I didn't think it was. But I was interested in any of those guitarists who were bending strings—all the earthier ones.

ZZ: What about the new wave of British acoustic guitarists who were starting up then [in late '64, early '65], like Bert Jansch and John Renbourn . . . did you pick up on them at all?

JP: I went to see Bert Jansch at Les Cousins, just as his second LP was released [June 1965] and he was great—fantastic, he really was; If he was only still working as a solo now!
ZZ: What about Davy Graham? Bert and John looked on him as a "teacher", and held him above them in stature.
JP: He wasn't for me; I always thought that Bert was the one with the touch . . . he was always far more adventurous and complicated in his technique, although Davy Graham, let's be fair, was the innovator of those raga things and he was really good at those. But you listen to things like 'Alice's Wonderland' and 'Finches' from the first Jansch LP—they're so complex and full of weird timings, and Davy Graham never did anything like that. So, yes, Bert Jansch really impressed me very greatly—his first album particularly, is just great from beginning to end.
ZZ: I thought that you and Davy Graham were matey in those days, and were involved in a kind of parallel development of Indian and Moroccan tunings and so on.
JP: No, I was friendly with Jon Mark, who in turn was a good friend of Davy Graham's, who I've never met.
ZZ: What I was angling at, was this contention over the sitar. A lot of people take the credit for introducing it to Western pop music, but I feel that you were probably the first person to investigate its possibilities.
JP: Davy Graham never had a sitar, but he must take credit for working out those guitar tunings he used on his raga pieces —they had a somewhat similar tuning to the sitar, though I don't know whether it was intentional or not. I know that he'd been to Morocco and played with musicians over there, but I don't know if he ever got actively interested in Indian music. Jon Mark and I got involved in Indian music, and I had a sitar sent over from India, before any other people in pop . . . certainly before George Harrison, for instance. I'd been to see Ravi Shankar, years before he became fashionable because the audience was nearly all adults—there were only about two young people there.

ZZ: I've often read about your having a sitar, but I can't recall your ever using it on record.
JP: I never did—because I knew what would happen when someone eventually did . . . and I wasn't wrong. To use an instrument, which has been developed over thousands of years, as a quick gimmick—well . . . .
ZZ: You're right about the gimmick value—like, I remember Donovan saying he was going to retire for six months and learn the sitar, and I remember the way The Byrds paraded one at the press conference for 'Eight Miles High'.
JP: Yes, but that was a great record. I remember that I, personally, wasn't too happy with the way George Harrison used it on *Revolver*—though everyone else seemed to think it was incredible . . . as far as sitar playing went—it wasn't, but later on when he did 'Within You, Without You', I think that's unsurpassed to this day. So he really did good things for Eastern music and was the one who woke people up to it on mass media level, but it was people like Davy Graham who were into it long before anyone else.
ZZ: Here's a rumour, a Jimmy Page myth, that you can confirm or dispel . . . you are reputed to have followed Albert Lee around with a tape recorder when he was in the Nightsounds, so that you could cop his riffs.
JP: I admit that I used to record one or two people—like Cyril Davies and Little Walter and John Lee Hooker—but that was to listen to rather than copy. No, Albert Lee's in a class of his own—country guitar, and I was never into that style.
ZZ: That single you made on Fontana, 'She Just Satisfies'—why did you only make just the one?
JP: I wasn't allowed to make a second one; but that single was a joke and should anyone hear it now and have a good laugh, the only justification I can offer is that I played all the instruments myself, except the drums. The other side was instrumental featuring harmonica, because I got all interested in that around that time.
ZZ: Hence the Little Walter taping?

JP: Oh no, that was just to listen to—to put in my personal archives, which have quite a lot of interesting stuff—Johnny Kidd, Cliff Bennett, all sorts of people.
ZZ: Can you tell us about that *Blues Anthology* which came out on Immediate [two double albums in December 1969, which was a re-package of earlier single album releases], and which has just been re-released yet again in the States?
JP: That was really a tragedy for me. I got involved with Immediate, producing various things, including John Mayall's 'Witchdoctor', 'Telephone Blues' and a couple of others [around late 1965]—and Eric and I got friendly and he came down and we did some recording at home, and Immediate found out that I had tapes of it and said they belonged to them, because I was employed by them. I argued that they couldn't put them out, because they were just variations on blues structures, and in the end we dubbed some other instruments over some of them and they came out—with liner notes attributed to me [on earlier copies] though I didn't have anything to do with writing them. I didn't get a penny out of it anyway.
ZZ: Well that's amazing, because they were released three or four times. So the tapes you recorded at home were overdubbed—who was playing the other parts? [There are seven tracks attributed to Clapton and Page, and a couple have added rhythm.]
JP: Stu from the Stones [roadie] was on piano, Mick Jagger did some harp, Bill Wyman played bass and Charlie Watts was on drums.
ZZ: There are also tracks on there by The All Stars, featuring you and Beck and Nicky Hopkins—and all credited as your compositions.
JP: Yes—they were tapes Immediate had in their possession from a long time before . . . it was in fact, the Cyril Davies All Stars without their guitarist, and they were just tracks we'd done for fun after the real session was over. It was just a case of Immediate hustling together whatever they could to fill out

the albums, and I'm really embarrassed about the whole thing because everyone thought I'd instigated it, and I hadn't at all. As it was, nobody got paid for any of it and well . . . .

[Note: This is by no means a full history of the pre-Yardbirds or session man Page. There are millions of gaps that may someday be investigated, but for the sake of fitting as much as possible into the time limitations, I chose to leap onto The Yardbirds at this point.]

ZZ: You joined The Yardbirds on bass, replacing Paul Samwell-Smith in July 1966—can you tell us how that came about?

JP: Yes . . . Paul Samwell-Smith said "I'm leaving". It was a great night, because it was at one of those silly ball things—either Oxford or Cambridge, I can't remember which—but everyone was dressed up in dinner jackets, and Keith Relf [The Yardbirds' singer] got totally drunk and was rolling round the stage, grappling with the mike, blowing his harmonica in all the wrong places and just singing nonsense words . . . but it was great, just fantastically suitable for the occasion. But Samwell-Smith was always after musical precision and adherence to strictly rehearsed neatness, and it was more than he could take—it was the last straw, he'd just had enough and decided to quit.

ZZ: Were you there then? Did you used to go to gigs with them before you actually joined?

JP: Yes, I used to go to all the gigs with them because I was really into what they were doing. So he jacked it in, and told the others that they'd do the same if they had any sense, but they had two gigs following closely and felt they had to do them—and it was a case of me helping them out of a spot; I offered to play bass, though I'd never played one in my life before. I knew their act and what they were doing and learnt enough to get through—and then they suggested that I stay on—so I did.

ZZ: We know that you turned down an offer to join The Yardbirds in January 1965, when Clapton left, but you were also rumoured to be joining as an extra lead guitar earlier in '66.

JP: Jeff [Beck, who replaced Clapton] often used to say, "I wish you could join and we could play together" and I agreed that it would be good, but I never took it seriously because there was this thing about five Yardbirds, and to bring in a sixth would have destroyed that . . . so my joining was never a real consideration until Samwell-Smith left and I took over on bass. The idea was that Chris Dreja, who was the rhythm guitarist, should learn bass and when he became proficient enough we'd switch roles and The Yardbirds would then have two lead guitarists, and that eventually manifested itself on The Stones/Ike and Tina Turner tour (which opened on 23rd September 1966). A lot of people think I never played lead alongside Jeff, but in fact we played together for several months.

ZZ: So after about a couple of months, Chris Dreja was able to get around enough on bass?

JP: Yes—but wait a minute, I think the switch was necessitated earlier than planned because of one of Jeff's collapses. We had to play this gig in San Francisco, at the Carousel I believe, and Jeff couldn't make it, so I took over lead that night and Chris played bass. It was really nerve-wracking because this was at the height of The Yardbirds' reputation and I wasn't exactly ready to roar off on lead guitar, but it went off alright and after that, we stayed that way—so when Jeff recovered, it was two lead guitars from that point on.

ZZ: I read somewhere that you and Beck practised Freddie King solos note for note so that you could play in unison on certain numbers.

JP: It wasn't just Freddie King, we rehearsed hard on all sorts of things, especially introduction riffs to things like 'Over Under Sidewards Down', which we were doing in harmonies and we had sections worked out where we'd play rehearsed phrases together . . . it was the sort of thing that people like Wishbone Ash and Quiver have perfected, that dual lead guitar idea. Of course, that was all very well in theory and at rehearsal, but on stage Beck would often go

off into something else.
ZZ: Did it really develop into a scowling glaring battle, with you and Beck at opposite sides of the stage?
JP: No, it was never a case of trying to blow each other off, because I was trying to get it working, so you had this stereo effect on the guitars. There was no point in doing battle, that would've just led to a useless sound.
ZZ: When you left session work to play live, did you have to pay special attention to the visual aspects—like learning to leap around instead of just standing still and playing like a session man?
JP: To tell the truth, I didn't even think about it. When I'd been in Neil Christian and The Crusaders, I'd had to do things like arc over backwards until my head touched the stage—you know those silly things that groups used to do—but The Yardbirds were never into choreography or anything like that . . . it was just a case of acting naturally, I suppose.
ZZ: Looking at release dates and listening to records and so on, I've concluded that the only tracks that you and Beck played on together were 'Happenings Ten Years Ago' and 'Psycho Daisies' [both released on a Columbia single: DB 8024, October 1966].
JP: I think that's right . . . I played bass on 'Psycho Daisies' and there's a bit of a story attached to 'Happenings'. We were in the studio waiting for Beck to turn up, and Relfy had this little bit recorded on a tape recorder . . . the sort of riff pattern for the song. Well, I worked on the riff and the structure of it and we'd got it all ready by the time Beck eventually showed up—and he just put some guitar on top of it and that was it . . . but I think it turned out well. There's also a double lead on 'Stroll On' [presumably the one recorded on the 'Blow Up' soundtrack—though Page was on bass in the film, as I recall].
ZZ: After Beck was kicked out at the end of '66, you carried on for about a year and a half, but only released four more singles and that terrible album called *Little Games* [released

August 1967 in US, but never put out here]. When you consider how immeasurably better the first Zeppelin album [a year later] was in terms of sound, performance, thought, arrangement and so on, it makes you wonder how *Little Games* could've been so skimpy and tatty.

JP: Well, on half the tracks we didn't even hear the playbacks . . . they were first takes. That's how it used to be done; we would spend time on singles, but Mickie Most [the producer] thought that LPs were nothing—just something to stick out after a single.

ZZ: Apart from the title track, which at least had some nice choppy rhythms and things, the rest of it seemed to be basic, naked songs before any ideas or arrangements were developed. . .

JP: . . . which is all it was.

ZZ: And those last few singles didn't seem at all Yardbirdy—especially 'Ha Ha Said The Clown' and 'Ten Little Indians' [neither of which were released here, mercifully]. Were they in fact Relf plus session men who Most had got together to do the track while you were out touring?

JP: No, it was us alright, but both of those tracks were a bit of a con-job. It happened like this: Mickie Most would say, "Why don't we try to do 'Ha Ha Said The Clown" [which had been a hit for Manfred Mann] but in a Yardbirds style?" And we'd say, "Don't be silly". But he'd say, "Come on, let's try it—it'd be an interesting experiment . . . if it doesn't work, we'll scrap it." Of course, no sooner was it recorded than out it went, despite the fact that it was terrible . . . and then, to cap it all, we fell for exactly the same line on Nilsson's 'Ten Little Indians', but at least we managed to get one interesting effect on that one. That was the sort of thing that led to a lack of confidence within the group and its eventual split.

ZZ: I know people with copies of that LP *The Yardbirds With Jimmy Page Live At The Anderson Theatre*, which was put out in September 1971 [on US Epic] but withdrawn almost immediately because you slapped an injunction on it.

JP: If you've heard that, you'll know why it was stopped. Those sort of things are always happening in the record business. What happened was, Epic said to us [in late '67], "Can we do a live LP?" and they sent down the head of their light music department to do it. The agreement was that if it was good, they'd release it, but if not, they'd just file it away. Of course, it was terrible; the bloke had done things like hang just one mike over the drums so none of the bass drum came out, and he'd miked up a monitor cabinet on my guitar instead of the real one, through which I played all the fuzz and sustain notes—so all that was lost, and we knew it was just a joke when he did it. He assured us it would be alright—"It's amazing what can be done electronically," he said, and then when we went to listen to the mastertape there were all the bullfight cheers dubbed on it every time there was a solo and it was just awful, so they had to shelve it. They must've dragged it out of the vaults a few years later when someone realised they had some unreleased Jimmy Page stuff, and out it came. It was just too ridiculous, but it circulated and sold a few copies before we put the injunction on it.

ZZ: It's worth a lot of bread now.

JP: I wish it wasn't; I wish people would accept it for what it is, a pathetic load of crap. We did some studio work with the same guy a little later [their last single 'Goodnight Sweet Josephine'/'Think About It' released here on Columbia DB 8368 in January 1968], but that was desperation, I suppose, because we were so anxious to get something done if only to prove to ourselves that we could still do it.

ZZ: The Yardbirds finally fell apart in July 1968 after a last gig at Luton College of Technology. Relf and McCarty wanted to pack it in, right?

JP: Yes, over the months before the break, Relf, particularly, and McCarty had been talking about starting up a new scene. To counteract the sort of stuff I was listening to, they were into very light things like Simon & Garfunkel, The Turtles and

people like that, and they wrote some songs in that vein, which they wanted to go off and record. I was in favour of us keeping the group together and tried to persuade them to stay and record their songs as The Yardbirds, because I knew we had the potential to pull it off—but they just wouldn't have any of it. Keith was really the instigator, I think, and he said this very weird and interesting thing that I'll always remember: "The magic left for me when Eric left." Now I've always thought that The Yardbirds' best stuff came from the Beck era, when they did all that incredible experimental stuff—but anyway, they decided to go.

ZZ: So you and Chris Dreja looked for some musicians so you could continue the group as The New Yardbirds?

JP: Well, I didn't want the group to break up, and I thought there was a chance that if we made it clear we were going to carry on, maybe Keith and Jim would change their minds and come back—but they went off and made their own record, produced by Paul Samwell-Smith . . . I can't recall their name at the moment. [I think it may have been Together, who made a single on Columbia in late '68.]

ZZ: From what I can remember, the New Yardbirds was to have been you, Dreja, Terry Reid and a drummer called Paul Francis . . . is that right?

JP: Almost, but I can't remember anything about Paul Francis—he must've been someone who Chris had in mind. Yes, it was going to be Terry Reid, because I'd seen what a good singer he was when we toured with him [on that same Stones/Ike & Tina tour]; he was in Peter Jay & The New Jay Walkers then, but by the time I got to him he'd just been signed to a solo deal with Mickie Most, and he'd got a trio together . . . but he recommended this bloke called Robert Plant. The drummer I had in mind was B J Wilson [from Procol] but I don't think we ever actually approached him because when I went up to see Robert, who I immediately knew was the one for the job, he suggested I go and check out his friend John Bonham. When I saw what a thrasher

Bonzo [Bonham] was, I knew he'd be incredible . . . he was into exactly the same sort of stuff as I was.
ZZ: By September '68, Chris Dreja had gone off to America to become a photographer, and that's presumably when John Paul Jones arrived?
JP: Yes, he got wind that I was forming a new group and phoned to see if it was true . . . and then he asked if he could join and I said, "Great—you're in". Chris had always been interested in photography, he'd taken some really good pictures, and it had always been a toss-up whether he'd leave The Yardbirds to do photography full time. I think he got a chance to go to New York to work with Irving Penn and that's what he did . . . went through an apprenticeship thing. He's back here now, I think, doing quite well. [He took the back cover shot on the first Zeppelin album.]
ZZ: Plant and Bonham had been in the Band Of Joy, but John Paul Jones had been a session musician, doing a lot of stuff for Mickie Most [arranging Donovan tracks for instance] . . . is that how you knew him?
JP: Yes, I knew him through sessions . . . he even did that 'cello arrangement on *Little Games*.
ZZ: So you went out as The New Yardbirds and did a tour of Scandinavia.
JP: Yes, but we dropped that name because we felt it was working under false pretences.
ZZ: So, in October 1968, you became Led Zeppelin and started work on the first album. One last Yardbird question: there was a rumour that The Yardbirds were going to reform for one Roundhouse gig in Summer 1970—was there any truth in that?
JP: Yes. Giorgio Gomelsky [the original Yardbirds manager] wanted us to do it; he was going to make a film and a record of the performance and, for my part, I said I'd do it if it was done chronologically—a set with Eric on lead, a set with Jeff, then a set with Jeff and me, and finally a set with me, because it obviously wouldn't work with all of us on stage at once. I

don't know why it never happened—all I can assume is that somebody wouldn't agree to it . . . I don't know.

JIMMY PAGE TALKS ABOUT LED ZEPPELIN

ZZ: I wonder if you could explain how you "auditioned" Robert Plant [who had been suggested as a possible singer].

JP: I went up to see him sing; he was in a group called Obstweedle or Hobbstweedle, something like that, who were playing at a teachers' training college outside of Birmingham—to an audience of about twelve people . . . you know, a typical student set-up, where drinking is the prime consideration and the group is only of secondary importance. He was alright though, singing really well, though it was stuff that I didn't like all that much. Everybody will probably crucify me for this, but he was a Moby Grape fanatic and they were doing all those kind of numbers—semi-obscure West Coast stuff, which, as I say, I was never really keen on because I'd seen all these groups when I was touring with The Yardbirds and, being a guitar player, I was primarily interested in other guitarists—and some grabbed me while others didn't. Mind you, I thought some of those San Francisco bands were ex-

cellent—but I'd better talk about that later or else we'll get too side-tracked. Anyway, Robert was fantastic and having heard him that night, and having listened to a demo he had given me [of songs he'd recorded with his previous group, Band Of Joy], I realised that without a doubt his voice had an exceptional and very distinctive quality.

ZZ: It was an amazingly fortunate choice as it turned out, wasn't it? To find a singer of his class stumbling around the Midlands playing to pitifully small crowds.

JP: What amazed me more than anything else, especially after the first LP was finished, was that nothing significant had happened to him before, despite his having been through so many different systems of management and so many groups. You'd have thought he'd have been noticed at least, especially when they tried to exploit the Birmingham group scene as the successor to the Liverpool thing, but no. Our first meeting, under those conditions, was obviously a bit odd, but I asked him if he wanted to come down and spend a few days talking things over, listening to records, discussing sounds and ideas and whatnot, and to see what he thought. So that's what happened and it worked out very well.

ZZ: By that time the musical policy of the group had been determined, presumably, and to begin with, he adapted to that?

JP: Yes, he suppressed his personal tastes to a degree, I suppose, but he liked the stuff we were doing just as much. I don't really know how fanatical he was about the West Coast groups—you'd have to ask him—but I do know he was very keen on Moby Grape and even more so on the Buffalo Springfield.

ZZ: Right . . . we found out last time how John Paul Jones and John Bonham came to join . . . all you needed now was a name.

JP: Keith Moon came up with Led Zeppelin sometime during our Yardbirds/The New Yardbirds spell and that seemed to fit the bill; we'd been through all sorts of names, like Mad

Dogs, for instance, but eventually it came down to the fact that the name was not really as important as whether or not the music was going to be accepted . . . . I mean, we could have called ourselves The Vegetables or The Potatoes—though at the same time, you have to live with the name you choose.
ZZ: When the group signed to Atlantic, did you have to buy your way out of your old Yardbirds contract with Epic?
JP: No—because I'd never signed any contracts with them . . . they didn't want me at the time. Mind you, as soon as the deal with Atlantic was announced, they started saying things like, "Hey, you can't record him, he's signed to us," but when we asked them to prove it, all they came up with was red faces and shuffling embarrassment.
ZZ: Let's get on to the albums. The first one [recorded October 1968, released February 1969] was allegedly recorded in 30 hours—can that be true and, if so, how?
JP: Yes, it only took 30 recording hours, because we knew exactly what we were going to do before we went into the studio.
ZZ: But you'd only been together as a unit for about two months—if that!
JP: That's right, we'd been together for three weeks, or maybe five, but we'd done a tour of Scandinavia and we'd rehearsed all the numbers before embarking on that, and they were already starting to stretch on stage, which was a sign that we were beginning to feel comfortable with certain songs. I suppose it was the fact that we were confident and prepared which made things flow smoothly in the studio—and, as it happened, we recorded them almost exactly as we'd been doing them live . . . only 'Babe I'm Gonna Leave You' was altered, as far as I can remember.
ZZ: Did it take 30 hours because you were rushed or was it that you were satisfied after that time?
JP: It was a bit of each really; partly a case of "Let's get the job done and not mess about having a party in there" and partly getting things as we wanted . . . it wasn't a first take

effort; we went on until we were happy with each number, but, like I said, we didn't have to worry about working on arrangements because we knew the stuff already . . . and it came out very easily.
ZZ: Compared with your previous album [*Little Games* by The Yardbirds], which was skimped and tatty to say the least, *Led Zeppelin 1* was immeasurably better in every respect, particularly the depth of sound and production. You produced that having had only limited experience—was it a question of observation of other producers over a long period of time?
JP: Well, I'd done that John Mayall single when I was a staff producer for Immediate, and that had given me a limited technical knowledge, but on that first Zeppelin album we had Glyn Johns as engineer and he did a great job on the sound, which is the most important aspect of production really. The most annoying thing that can happen is going into the studio, playing well and sounding great, and then going into the control room to listen to the play-back, only to find that the recorded sound is flat and bears no relation to what was happening in the studio. Now Glyn Johns is, and always has been an ace engineer; things like sound don't hang him up because he's both confident and competent—and so we were able to tie things up fairly quickly.
ZZ: I don't really want to go exploring all the songs because we'd be here all day, but as a matter of interest, where did you dig up 'Babe I'm Gonna Leave You' (which must have been a different source from where Quicksilver picked it up)?
JP: I got it from the Joan Baez version, and I used to do it in the days of sitting in the darkness, playing my six string behind Marianne Faithfull. I was told that it's a traditional song—I hope it is.
ZZ: One last dumb question before we move on to the second album . . . why is 'How Many More Times', which includes 'The Hunter' and all sorts of other bits and pieces, credited as being 3½ minutes long when in fact it's over 8 minutes?
JP: I don't know—maybe it's a misprint.

ZZ: One more last question. At a time when other groups were introducing and exploring varied themes, all the songs on that album (except 'Black Mountain Side') were sexual . . . was that a deliberate policy? Like Robert attracts the chicks with his personality and the lyrics, and the blokes are attracted by your guitar virtuosity.
JP: You're making it sound as though the group was programmed into a certain format. It wasn't, of course. I mean, ever since the guitar became a vogue instrument, the male part of the audience has tended to be fascinated by and involved with the guitarist in the band—like the chicks used to go mad over Ricky Nelson, but the guys were watching James Burton. When you're forming a band, you don't sit back and think how certain aspects can be exploited.
ZZ: Yes—that was an insulting question really, because some groups do, in fact, do exactly that. Sorry about that.
JP: No—apart from anything else, we didn't have time for such considerations . . . things just fell into place and off we went.

Our conversation on *Led Zeppelin II* centred mainly on how influences are assimilated over the years and how bits and pieces of music you've heard and liked, subconsciously get adapted and re-emerge—and it was very long and complicated, so I'm going to miss that out and skip on to the third album.
ZZ: Whereas the second album was recorded in fits and starts over a long period of touring, you went to a secluded part of Wales to prepare the third . . . is that right?
JP: Sort of. We'd been working solidly right from the inception of the group, and we thought it was time to have a holiday, or at least some time off the road—so Robert suggested going to this cottage that he'd been to with his folks when he was much younger . . . he was going on about what a beautiful place it was and I was pretty keen to go too, because I'd never spent any time in Wales and I wanted to.

So off we went. We took our guitars along, of course, but it wasn't a question of "let's go and knock off a few songs in the country", it was "let's go and have a good time". A couple of our roadies came along too, and we spent the evenings around log fires, with pokers being plunged into cider and that sort of thing, and as the nights wore on, the guitars came out and numbers were written. So, though it wasn't planned as a working holiday, some songs did come out of it and were subsequently recorded on the third album.

ZZ: There's some great stuff on that . . . I think 'Tangerine' is my favourite.

JP: Well, funnily enough, that wasn't written at Bron-y-Aur . . . I wrote that years earlier, after an old emotional upheaval, and I just changed a few of the lyrics. I first tried recording that when I was in The Yardbirds.

ZZ: Is there a wealth of unreleased stuff by The Yardbirds then?

JP: Not a wealth, but there is some . . . I don't know where. 'Tangerine' was never actually finished—we just did the backing track for that—but we recorded 'My Baby', which Janis Joplin did; we did a good version of that, and we did quite a few riffy rock things which sounded alright. There is another track, 'Spanish Blood', which was Jim McCartey doing his Roger Moore impersonation—like a story told over a Spanish guitar backing . . . that was really good actually—like one of those old story singles that used to get into the charts a few years back (like 'Ringo' by Lorne Greene and 'Big Bad John' by Jimmy Dean), but this was a romantic thing rather than the usual shoot-out Western theme. Most of these tracks were cut in the CBS studio in New York, but it was very near to the end of the group and they were never really completed.

ZZ: Getting back to *Zeppelin III*, where did you unearth that traditional song—'Gallows Pole'? [which used to be a folk club standard around 1965, with everyone from Bert Jansch to Spider John Koerner doing it].

JP: That was on an old Folkways LP by Fred Gerlach, a twelve string player, who I think was the first white man to pick up on the instrument, having been influenced by Leadbelly. There are certainly heavy Leadbelly overtones on the record, and, as far as I know, the album wasn't well received and Gerlach got despondent and retired to Venice in California, where he kept out of the public eye. He must have kept playing though because he's just recorded a new LP on Takoma, which is very good. Anyway, I used his version as a basis, but the arrangement we use is totally different of course.

ZZ: There's an inscription on the inner circle of the pressing . . . it says, "Do what thou wilt"; was that a message from you to your critics or a comment by the guy who made the master pressing?

JP: That sprang from me. I suppose you could say that it was instructed, but under a strict cloak of secrecy. The story behind it is too long to go into, but it was intended as an esoteric little touch . . . . I hoped that nobody would see it—and nobody did except you, which just goes to show how unobservant most people are and how observant you are. One other person, to my knowledge, saw it because Robert came up to me one day and said that someone had written to Atlantic about a strange inscription on the record . . . you see, I was the only one in the group who knew about it. [There's another on side 2 . . . have a look.]

ZZ: Swiftly leaping onto the fourth [and, at this writing, the most recent, even though it came out in November 1971], I think that album is important in a number of ways—principally for Robert Plant's writing, which seems to hit a peak.

JP: I think his first important lyric is on the second LP . . . you see, I never felt at all confident about my lyrics and I was hoping he could do all that side of the writing, which is what's happening now. 'Thank You' is the song I'm thinking about. . . . I think that was the starting point from which his

writing of things like 'Stairway To Heaven' developed; that and the chorus of 'What Is And What Should Never Be', which was the start of a serious lyric writer coming out.
ZZ: Is 'Rock'n'Roll' as spontaneous as it sounds?
JP: Yes. Bonzo played that drum thing, just messing around while we were working on another song, and I joined in on a riff, and though it only lasted about quarter of a minute, we listened to the playback and heard the basis of a whole song, which we then got together . . . it took about 15 minutes. Things like that often happen—in fact, there are two or three spontaneously written things on the next album . . . usually they're only riff numbers, but they're still loaded up with initial excitement and communication.
ZZ: Yet other songs are obviously developed in a very painstaking way—like 'Stairway To Heaven', say. How was that written? Lyrics first I would imagine from the metre.
JP: It was just the opposite—the music came first. I'd written it over a long period; the intro fell into place in Bron-y-Aur, in the cottage, and other parts came together piece by piece. When we came to record it, at Headley Grange, we were so inspired by how the song could come out, with the building passages and all the possibilities, that Robert came out with the lyrics just like that . . . . I'd say that he produced 40 percent of the lyrics almost immediately. We all threw in ideas, like Bonzo not coming in until the song was under way —to create a change of gear, so to speak—and the song and arrangement just came together . . . there was no uphill struggle on that one at all.
ZZ: How did that no name/no title sleeve come about?
JP: Well, the third LP got a real hammering from the press and I got really brought down by it because I thought it was good—I thought that 'Friends' really had something, and that track by track it was a good LP. But the press didn't like it, and they were also going on about the enigma that had blown up around us. Now, we might have made it relatively quickly, but I don't think we ever over-played our hand in the press or

anything, and yet we really got knocked and we became very dispirited. As a result, we left off for almost a year and when we came to make another album we felt not only that it would make or break us, but that we had to prove something to ourselves. So we purposely underplayed the group and gave no information whatsoever—which most people thought was certain professional suicide—but the LP came out and sold very well. 'Stairway To Heaven' certainly hit a lot of people where they hadn't expected it and lots of reviews said things like, "I haven't liked them up to now, but I'd like to revise my opinion"—that sort of thing.

ZZ: Yes, but from your own experience you must realise that most "rock critics" haven't got a clue what they're talking about.

JP: Well, I begin to wonder. On our last American tour, this guy came up and got talking to me; he said he was from *Rock*, which is quite an eminent, respected magazine in the States, isn't it? He asked me things like "Does Plant still gyrate about on stage?" and I said "Well, if it's a fast number, he does move about, yes, but it depends what we're playing" —and this conversation went on at that sort of level until, bit by bit from the sort of questions he was asking, it became evident that he didn't really know what he was on about. So I asked him exactly when he'd last seen the band. "Quite a while ago now," he mumbled, and when I questioned him a bit more it transpired that the only time he'd seen us was in *Supershow*, which was a film made a couple of months after we'd formed. It featured people like Roland Kirk and Steve Stills and Buddy Miles, and we were well down the list of artists, doing just two numbers at a time, I recall, when Robert had laryngitis—so it hardly did us justice—and that was all this bloke had seen! So here was a respected critic, who had done reviews of our albums, and he didn't know the first thing about us . . . didn't even know that we played acoustic numbers on stage. I'd been nice to him all the way along, but at that point I really let him have it.

ZZ: You punched the creep's teeth down his throat?
JP: No, I just told him that I thought it was a cheek for him to do reviews of the band if he was basing his misconceptions on that film clip. But that's the sort of thing we used to get . . . the public was always a hundred percent behind us, but we had few allies in the press.
ZZ: So many big rock stars seem extremely vulnerable to press opinion and yet most critics have lamentably little knowledge of their subject—but I've seen Hendrix's death, the break up of Cream and all sorts of things attributed directly to the printed word.
JP: Yes, but the thing is, these reviewers are so authoritative. We know they might be twits, but the readers may well believe them because of the eloquent, authoritative way they write. It's so easy to criticise someone's music, but when you think how much thought and care and time it's taken, why not look for the good points at least . . . I mean, if it's not your taste in music, then leave it well alone and let someone else do the reviews. For instance, when you ask me my opinion of certain groups, I'll tell you, but I don't want anybody to be influenced or jaded by what I say, because someone else may hold the exactly opposite view which is obviously just as valid.
ZZ: To stay on the vulnerability/frailty of the rock star theme, it seems to me that you are unusually stable in your profession, as if you discovered how to side-step the pressures . . . you've quit the ostentatious guitarist-in-the-public eye thing and retreated to prolong active life, as it were.
JP: Well, I've been through all that and I have at times felt and been completely shattered by it all. It's not so much a question of retreating or hiding away, as being able to come over the top of it, which is not an easy thing to do. I suppose there's a moment of realisation when the whole thing falls into perspective and you see everything as it really is. I got really despondent and shattered by all the bad press—not because we couldn't take criticism, because we can—but the

prolonged, deliberate snide press comments wore me down until I was becoming very unnerved, especially when I knew I was doing the best I could.

ZZ: So, is press the only real pressure?

JP: Oh no. You can develop a tremendous insecurity if your management isn't totally reliable. I know that money is a dirty word in this business, but the fact remains that if you have any measure of record success, you're going to have royalties coming in. Now, I'm sure you know of groups who have been working for years and years and end up with nothing because they've been screwed all the way down the line . . . . I mean, that sort of thing is heartbreaking. We're very lucky in that respect because we've got Peter Grant who is like a fifth member of the group; he comes on every single gig we do, which is something very few managers would ever consider doing.

ZZ: What about this constant living out of a suitcase . . . surely that can grind you down after a while? For instance, what about that Yardbirds tour you did—which was something like two gigs a night for a month?

JP: Right. At the time it didn't seem as bad as it actually was, because being in a group you expected that sort of thing, but I couldn't do that sort of thing now. It was on the 'Dick Clark Caravan of Stars', and it consisted of living in a bus for a month, travelling fromtown to town, gig to gig. It got to the point where there were so many people on the bus that you couldn't use the toilet; you either had to wait till you got to the gig or else hope that the bus would stop at some convenient place along the way. We were sharing this bus with Sam the Sham and the Pharoahs, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, and all sorts of people and it was so crowded that we often had to sleep on the luggage rack, depending on whether or not Gary Lewis and his crew travelled by plane, as they sometimes did.

We'd get to the gig and pile out, and Brian Hyland, who opened the show, had to leap straight out of the bus onto the

stage . . . there was no time to change or wash or anything like that. And, if it was a double gig—playing two halls in the same city, the bus would do a sort of shuttle service . . . like we'd come off stage, get on the bus which had just returned from taking Brian Hyland and whizz off to the other gig. It's just ludicrous to remember how bad it was.

ZZ: So you don't get exploited like that any more?

JP: I think, when you boil it down, the real pressure comes when you're doing the best you can and people are just writing it off as crap. That really affected me at one point and I know of other people who've probably been affected to a greater extent, but I came to the conclusion that it doesn't pay to be too sensitive.

ZZ: To change the subject completely, whose records to you listen to when you're just lying around at home?

JP: I like Fairport Convention; I just got that double album, even though I had most of the tracks already . . . that's a group I've always liked—especially *Liege And Lief*, which for me was the best LP of 1969. I love those songs with stories, you see, and that LP is full of them . . . and that's one of the reasons I like 'Jack Orion' by Bert Jansch—I still listen to his albums all the time. I've very fond of the early Sun records [true enough; he'd just invested in a pile of Sun singles that very morning].

I don't know, I listen to all sorts of things—like those BBC radio archives programmes that they sometimes have; I always try to listen to those because they invariably have something of interest. They recently had a man who'd travelled through India with a tape recorder, and he'd recorded a bagpipe band, which was fascinating . . . that kind of unschooled folk music always interests me. But I can listen to something like that and then put on a Warren Smith record straight afterwards.

ZZ: On the basis that it's just your opinion and is not intended to sway anybody, can I ask you about certain bands . . . like you mentioned the Springfield in connection with Robert's pre-Zep manias—don't you like their stuff?

JP: I must admit that their music was very good, but I saw them a number of times and they always struck me as being the perfectly balanced/rehearsed group—sort of like The Hollies, where whenever you saw them the harmonies and balance and performance would always be perfect. They were like that; very cut and dried, and samey every night.
ZZ: Like Gene Pitney—putting exactly the same emotion and energy and movement into his performance whether it was Carnegie Hall or the Saturday morning pictures.
JP: I suppose so—but the Springfield were obviously very good, even though they didn't strike me on an emotional level . . . like Spirit did, for instance. I saw Spirit a couple of times and thought they were very good . . . and Kaleidoscope; they're my favourite band of all time—my ideal band—absolutely brilliant. I saw them one time and they played all the numbers off *Beacon From Mars*, all that Moroccan stuff, changing instruments and having a whale of a time they were. They had such good roots and such a grip on their music—and that bloke Sol [Soloman Feldthouse] was a real traveller . . . the sort of bloke you'd meet on the road out in the East somewhere, and you knew there was no phoniness in him, because it showed in his music. One night I saw them playing the Avalon Ballroom, and he was doing a flamenco thing, which was so authentic—easily as good as you'd expect from a top concert guitarist . . . and then this line of flamenco dancers suddenly emerged from the wings and danced across the stage . . . just too much! It sounds a bit corny, just explaining it to you like this, but it certainly wasn't, because the spirit and enthusiasm was so great.
ZZ: And their best albums were never released here! Which other American bands impressed you on stage?
JP: I thought NRBQ were good. They had a nice light-hearted attitude, but the music underneath was very solid too . . . they had a countryish guitarist who was very tasty indeed, but he did a religious thing and left the group.
ZZ: And their albums didn't sell at all . . . . Woolworths'

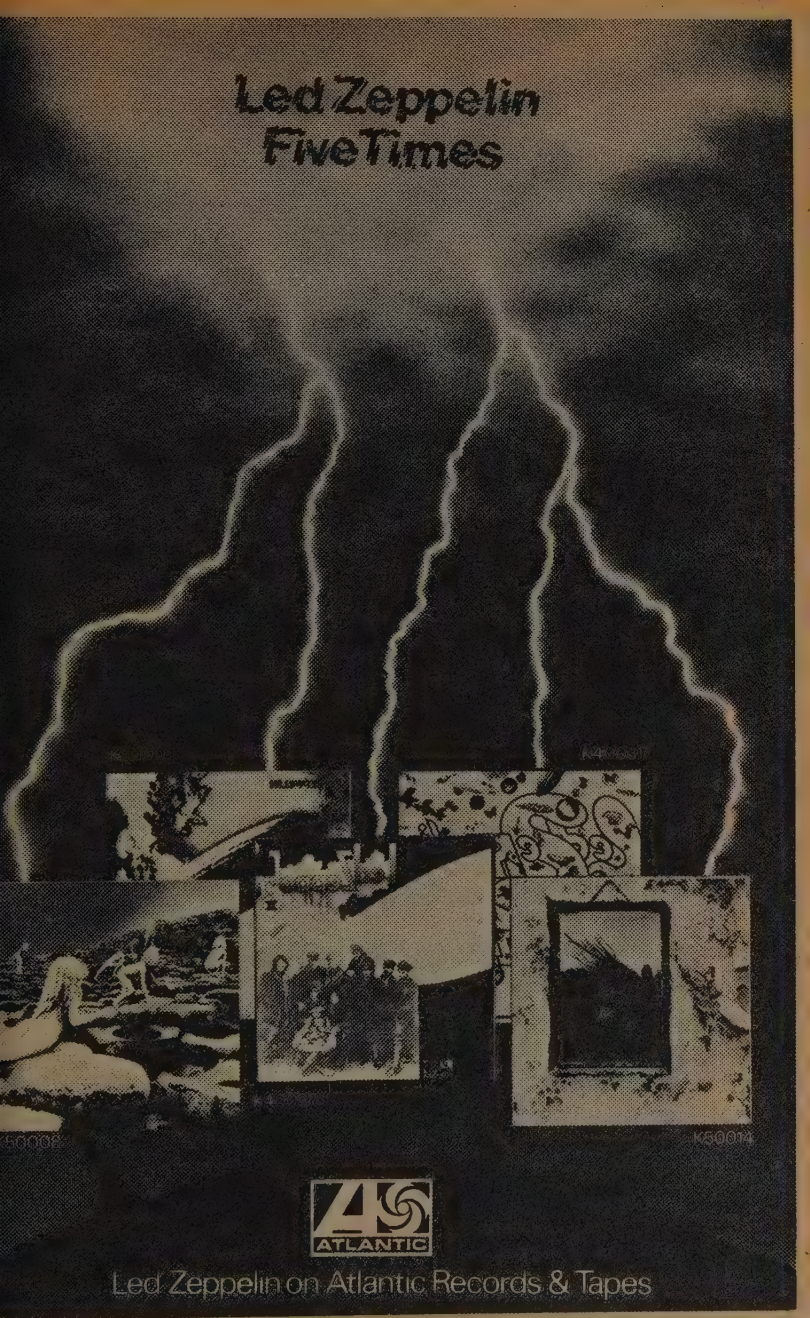
deletion racks are full of them. One final reversion to that fourth album before we go: I don't think anybody ever managed to discover the relevance of those symbols that comprise the title. Do you want to tell us about those . . . those Icelandic runes, or whatever they were?

JP: They're not Icelandic—that was just a red-herring type rumour—and only the middle two are actually runes. What happened was that we all chose a symbol and the four together became the title of the record. Robert's is his own design; the feather—a symbol on which all sorts of philosophies have been based and which has a very interesting heritage . . . like, for instance, it represented courage to the Red Indian tribes. John Paul Jones' symbol, the second from the left, came from a book about runes, and was said to represent a person who was both confident and competent because it was difficult to draw it accurately . . . and John Bonham's came from the same book—he just picked that one out [the three circles]. My symbol was one which I designed myself, but a lot of people mistook it for a word 'Zoso', and some people in the States still refer to the record as 'Zoso', which is a pity because it wasn't supposed to be a word at all but something entirely different . . . and with a different meaning altogether.

Basically, the whole title thing was just another ruse to throw the media into chaos and we all had a good laugh when the record went into the charts and they had to reproduce the symbols instead of a conventional title. Atlantic supplied all the papers with the appropriate sized block, but they didn't like it at all, because it set a precedent . . . so that album set two precedents: firstly the title, and secondly, the sleeve bore no wording at all—not even the number or the name of the printer.

Pete Frame

Issue 27, December 1972 & Issue 28, February 1973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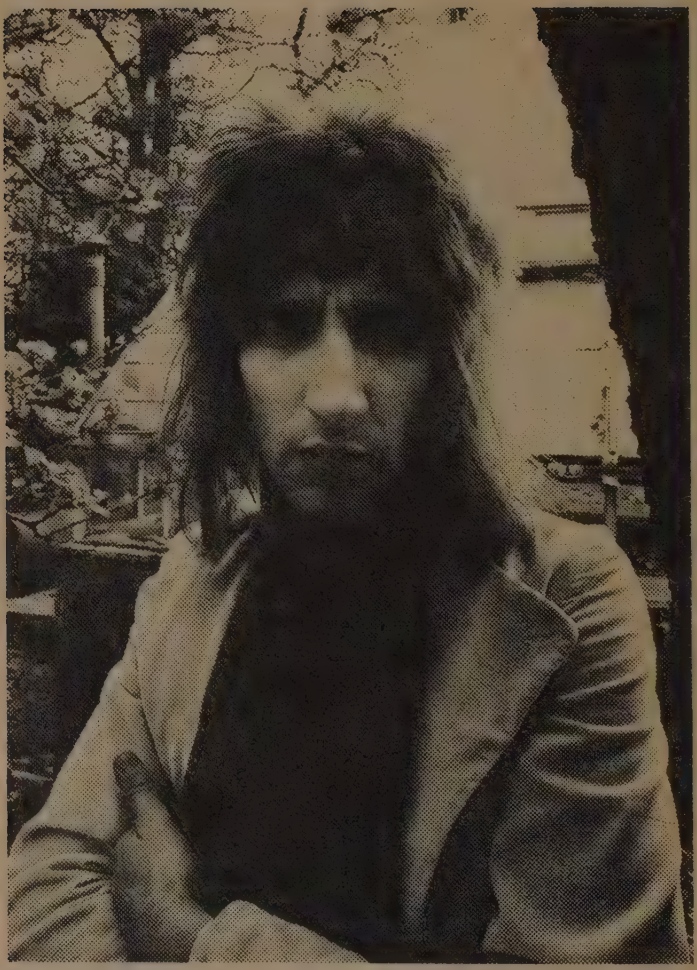


Rod Stewart

FACE TO FACE WITH A FACE

There I was, wandering around Victoria, using an A to Z to supplement my pitiful knowledge of London, trying to find the office of Mike Gill, The Faces' publicist. Well, I eventually found the building, but none of the doorbells seemed to fit . . . . Miss Cane? Maxine and Maggie? I'd probably still be standing there like a berk if I hadn't seen Penny Valentine of *Sounds*, get out of a taxi and vanish down some stairs. The basement! Ah, the penny drops.

So there we are talking to Ellie, his assistant, as Mike attempts to insinuate Lesley Duncan's album into our heads, as well as relating fantastic escapades involving exploding cars, jet flights, Long John Baldry's expensive hats, nocturnal excursions to raid Ian McLagan's drinks cabinet, and other totally incredible happenings the like of which never seem to happen out here in Bucks County.

By the time Rod Stewart rolled up, I'd consumed a pint of coffee and forgotten most of what I was going to ask him; but anyway, we went into the pub next door and he chatted away merrily (besides exchanging shouted abuse with Ronnie Wood, who was over at another table being interviewed by

Penny).

We talked about the new Faces album, The Faces generally, and his solo albums.

Before we start the interview, it might be a good idea to give a brief history of Rod's musical career. He got into the business in 1964 (on the day Cyril Davies died) when he joined Jimmy Powell and the Five Dimensions as harp player. "I couldn't play the harp at all—I used to blow it, and wondered why I kept running out of breath. Then I saw The Stones and watched Mick playing it, and I realised where I was going wrong."

Then he joined Long John Baldry's All Stars, later to be known as Long John Baldry and his Hoochie Coochie Men. As Rod the Mod, he was a crowd puller in his own right (audiences were mainly mods). "I used to be more worried about what I looked like than the music." That was in 1965.

Then came Steampacket, who were together for some time but never recorded because the constituents of the group were tied to different contracts. The others were Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger and Long John Baldry. "I got sacked by Brian Auger—then he kicked the other two out."

Shotgun Express next, with Peter Green, Peter Bardens, Dave Ambrose, Mick Fleetwood and Beryl Marsden. (If we had the bread to defend a libel case, we might print his comments about this band too.)

Then the immortal Jeff Beck Group, which lasted from early 1967 until September 1969, when he joined The Faces.

Right.

ZZ: Why were 'Bad'n'Ruin' and 'Tell Everyone' recorded by The Rolling Stones Mobile Unit?

RS: Well we started off the album at Morgan Studios, because I'd done *Gasoline Alley* there and we thought it'd be a good place for the band, but it wasn't; it took us a long time to get the sound we wanted and we were getting very frustrated, so we booked The Stones' studios for a couple of days and two numbers came out of it.

ZZ: Where exactly is this Stones studio?
RS: It's down in Mick's house at Newbury . . . he's got this ginormous Georgian house and it's in the sort of reception area as you go in through the front door . . . it's like as big as EMI Studios. It's got a very natural sound; it's not dry . . . it's very expensive, mind; it costs around £400 a day, so it was getting on for £1,000 just to get those two tracks down. It was worth it though, because we felt that with our second album we couldn't afford to cut any corners. I'll probably use it for my next solo album too.
ZZ: How did you write the lyric to 'Bad'n'Ruin'? Did you and Mac sit down together and work the number out?
RS: No, the band laid down the track, and I had to go home and put the words to it, which was very difficult because they hadn't worked out the vocal breaks, and I had to find words to fit.
ZZ: Let's talk about 'Maybe I'm Amazed' . . . .
RS: We've re-recorded that for a single . . . aah, it's incredible . . . all 12 strings and things . . . beautiful. We did it over in Sunset Sound and used Bill Lazarus, who's James Taylor's engineer.
ZZ: Who had the idea for Ronnie Lane to sing the first verse, and you the rest?
RS: Well, I think it was down to my idea . . . I just thought the number lent itself to his style—I mean, he's not a bad singer. He's very paranoid about it because he thinks it sounds too much like Paul McCartney . . . specially now that we're going to do it on Top Of The Pops. Oh Christ, wait till we get on that programme; we ain't half going to send it up . . . we wrecked the bar last time, so they insisted that we have a security guard with us from now on.
ZZ: How different is the single from the album track, because I thought the live version had a really good clangy sound.
RS: Oh, the single's got that too, but we cut the length down —cut the instrumental break out and the stupid announcements

at the beginning. Then Ronnie double-tracked the first verse, and there is a little of me double-tracked too—just to make it a bit more interesting and different from the album.
ZZ: You originally planned to record the live tracks at the Marquee . . . did that attempt fail?
RS: I don't know really . . . at the last minute we got a bit worried whether we would get the support from the Marquee audience, but we knew we'd go down well at the Fillmore East . . . though it'd have been even better if we'd done it in Boston or Detroit—but we weren't too sure. We were very unconfident about ourselves over here—we didn't even know if many people would turn up to see us.
ZZ: Did Bill Graham ask you for extra bread for the privilege of recording in his auditorium?
RS: No—he gave us extra money that night . . . he's not a bad old lark really—he's a businessman, knows how to make money, and you've got to admire him for that.
ZZ: A lot of people express great surprise about how good Ron Wood is on guitar, but he's been playing for six or seven years hasn't he? Like he was playing lead guitar in The Birds, wasn't he?
RS: Yeah, that's right.
ZZ: I've read that he was with Creation too, is that true?
RS: He was with them for about three days or something like that—did one tour of Germany with them, when Kim of Ashton Gardner & Dyke was on bass with them.
ZZ: That pedal steel in 'Sweet Lady Mary' is beautiful—how long's he been playing that?
RS: Only about three months. There aren't many people who can play one of those properly—though there's another really good bloke that Humble Pie always use.
ZZ: Yeah, Brian Cole out of Cochise. To get back to your songwriting, do you usually liaise closely with Ron Wood?
RS: Not really, Woody comes up with a chord sequence or a tune and records it on a cassette—then I take it home and work on the words. For instance, on 'Had Me A Real Good

Time', I took the tape home and listened to see what it cooked up in my head; it seemed to suggest a party, so that's what I wrote about.
ZZ: What about those little touches in that—like the 'Auld Lang Syne' bit, and the isolated line about falling off your bicycle?
RS: Well, 'Auld Lang Syne' just came out of our fooling about in the studio—that's how the whole album came about really. The bit about me falling off my bike just came to me out of the blue—I love things when they happen spontaneously like that.
ZZ: What's this bit on the sleeve about 'On The Beach' being recorded on a Revox spare room unit?
RS: Ron and Ronnie did that round Ronnie Lane's house on a little tape machine. They couldn't recreate the feel when they tried again in the studio, so we put it on the album as it was.
ZZ: 'Bad'n'Ruin' is lyrically similar to a lot of your songs in as much as it's about the down and out adventurer crawling back home with his tail between his legs. Are these songs autobiographical or do you find a sort of romance in prodigal son-types?
RS: Well, I don't think I'm the greatest lyricist in the world; in fact I'm very limited . . . but I write about things I've experienced.
ZZ: Have you been through that scene then—going back home in penury?
RS: Oh yes, many a time—which is why I find it so easy to write about. My old mum's really seen a few days, ain't she Sarah? [his girl]
Sarah: Yes—burnt his jeans once, they smelt so much.
RS: Yeah, I had this beautiful pair of Levis that had taken me all these months to fade, and I came home from my travels and she burnt them . . . these beautiful old Levis—it was like losing a leg.
ZZ: This was all in the early sixties, before you got into pro-

fessional music—your current lyrics refer to that period?
RS: Yes—except 'Flying', 'Had Me A Real Good Time' and the things on my first solo album, which were all down to imagination really.
ZZ: I don't know if my copy of the album is typical or just a freak, but it's got loud crackles all over it and a big hole in one place, so the whole thing sounds like it was made out of compressed cowshit.
RS: Really? Mine's OK—get them to send you a new one . . . get 'em to send you two.
ZZ: I thought it might be because it's so long.
RS: Don't think so . . . they haven't cut it very well though, I will say that. The best record company in the world, and they've cut it really badly—there's no middle in it. But it is too long—miles too long.
ZZ: What about the sleeve? I reckon it's a fairly imaginative but fruitless gimmick when you boil it down.
RS: I really like it—seems I'm the only one. Everyone says it looks like an old 78, but that's what it's supposed to look like.
ZZ: I really like this great British image that The Faces seem to have acquired . . . sort of beer/football/cockney/party—a bit like The Kinks and Fairport, only more so, if you see what I mean . . . .
RS: That's exactly how the Americans think of us, I think. When Bill Graham introduced us at the Fillmore last time, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Mateus Wine Company presents The Faces," and it brought the house down—we just fell on the floor. I think it all stems from the early days when we used to think nobody wanted to hear us—so we used to go and get pissed and then go on and have a laugh. The best thing about it is that it's not at all forced—we don't go out of our way to get drunk and purposely fall about.
ZZ: It was originally purely to bolster up your confidence?
RS: Yeah—we thought nobody wanted to listen to us . . . you know, "The Small Faces—bollocks," but now, after a year and

a half, it's alright. I thought it would be like that—that we'd really have to earn our reputation, and I'm glad it's happened that way.

ZZ: Yes—The Faces worked very hard and made the transition, whereas Humble Pie didn't go about it the right way at all, I reckon.

RS: Right; our album sold a quarter of a million copies in the States in the first four weeks—Humble Pie have never had an album in the Top 200. They started out with the wrong attitude, walking out on stage as if they were doing the audience a favour. That's not the way to do it—you've got to be humble . . . especially when you first start out.

ZZ: What about these rumours of the old Small Faces being really broke when they packed it in?

RS: That's true . . . when I joined The Faces, all Mac had was a Mini Cooper and £150 in premium bonds, and he'd been in a band that had three number ones and a whole load of other hits . . . and that's all he had. Kenny had even less.

ZZ: It'd be interesting to know who walked off with all the bread, wouldn't it?

RS: Yeah—well, they learnt their lesson and they're very shrewd now . . . they wouldn't let it happen again.

ZZ: I've seen you quoted as saying "The Faces don't need a producer, they're a dying breed, we can do it ourselves," and other times you say, "We could do with a good producer".

RS: Well, that's one thing that the group is in a real dilemma about. What we want is Glyn Johns. You see, it's easy enough to get my own albums together because it's all my own ideas, but with the band it's five people's ideas and we really need a producer to act as mediator. Glyn Johns is the only one worth having, as an engineer and producer . . . in the beginning, he wanted too much money, but now we can afford him and I think he wants to do us. We don't need him, and he doesn't need us, but I think the combination of the two is a winner.

ZZ: Let's talk about your solo work . . . have you started on a follow up album to *Gasoline Alley* yet?
RS: Yeah—we're working on it now over at Morgan Studios in Willesden. I've done three numbers so far; two originals (one is called 'Mandolin Wind') and an obscure Dylan one called 'If Tomorrow Wasn't Such A Long Time'.
ZZ: Too much—I've got that by Hamilton Camp . . . it's really great.
RS: That's where I got it from, and 'Only A Hobo'. I've found someone else who likes Hamilton Camp! [shouts and whoops] I think the guy's really great, but his last LP was really bad—all strings and things—he's probably thrown up the old guitar and harmonica and dirty coat.
ZZ: Yeah—that first one was a really good record. [It's a 1964 Elektra release with lots of unknown Dylan songs on it—hustle for its re-release!] Judy Collins recorded that song too, didn't she?
RS: Did she? When . . . not recently I hope.
ZZ: Oh, a long time ago—on *Judy Collins 5*—around 1965.
RS: That's alright then. I was going to record 'Amazing Grace' and call the album that, and then she went and recorded it . . . . I'm still going to do it, but put it between two other tracks and not credit it on the sleeve. Her version's far too pure, anyway.
ZZ: What about these songs you were going to write with Paul Kossoff?
RS: Well, he's in America and I'm here and we haven't had a chance to get together yet, but it should be good because he's got some really nice riffs and things, and he doesn't get a look in on Free's songwriting. I'm going to use him on the album.
ZZ: Who else is on it?
RS: Oh, the usual line-up . . . only Woody from The Faces, Micky Waller, Martin Quittenton—but The Faces will be on one track—'(I Know) I'm Losing You' by The Temptations, which we've been doing live.

ZZ: A good old David Ruffin thing—which reminds me, I heard that David Ruffin's wife was so delighted by the way you did that song on stage, that she rushed round to see you in tears, begging you to produce her husband's records. Is that right?

RS: Well, I put in *Rolling Stone* that I'd love to produce him, and he sent me this telegram saying he wanted to know—because he's been putting out some strange things recently, and I think I could give him direction . . . I really dig the guy. Anyway, when we played in Detroit, his wife came, his sisters, his bass player, his mum, everyone but him, and they wouldn't let him in because it was a full house and they didn't know who he was. So, after the show his wife came round and said, "When you did 'Losing You', I really cried because David missed it." Anyway, back at the hotel that night, I'd gone to bed when there was this knock on the door. "Hey Rod, you gotta get up now, 'cos it's big David to see you . . . big David's here" . . . and there he was . . . really big—up to here. And we talked. And we should get it together sometime. As long as he's with Motown, I don't want to know—upset Motown and you end up in the River Thames with a cement boot and your house burnt down—but apparently he's only got seven months to go with them, and then we should be able to do it.

ZZ: What about this other production role you're involved in . . . Long John Baldry?

RS: Incredible! Finished . . . comes out on May 1st. I completely surprised myself, and I think it did Elton John too . . . it's such a good album—really captured him at the right time, with the right songs. I don't want to build it up too much, in case it's a let-down, but I was ridiculously pleased with it myself—because John's voice ain't what it used to be. The two sides really complement each other—the Elton produced side is very relaxed, and the side he did with me's really punchy. I think it'll be a monster—really put him back on the map.

ZZ: Are they new songs, or oldies but goodies?
RS: He's done 'Flying', 'It Ain't Easy', 'Black Girl', 'Morning Morning' . . . .
ZZ: The old Fugs' song? Great number!
RS: Well, that's the only one I don't like—I think he's murdered it . . . he did a real old Derroll Adams on it.
ZZ: There's a name from the past—one of your early 60s folkie mates I presume.
RS: He's dead now, isn't he?
ZZ: No!
RS: Yeah—been dead for about a year now; I'm going to do one of his numbers—off the *Portland Town* LP—called 'Curtains Of The Night', which I'm going to dedicate to him, now he's no longer with us.
ZZ: He can't be dead . . . he's living in Belgium, surely.
RS: That's where he died. He was just beautiful, old Derroll—played lovely banjo.
ZZ: Can we talk about that folk era for a while—you say you used to sing the old Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Woody Guthrie songs—what else did you do besides 'San Francisco Bay Blues'?
RS: Oh, lots of 'em . . . note for note copies off those old Topic albums and so on . . . 'Cocaine' and 'Salty Dog', that sort of stuff.
ZZ: Is that when you were gigging around Europe with Wizz Jones?
RS: Well, I never actually knew Wizz at the time, but I used to absolutely hero-worship the guy because he was such a good guitar player—and I was just around when he was there. People have often written about how we went around together so I wish you'd put that in. I knew a lot of the other folkies—like Alex Campbell, who was in Baldry's band, The Thames Side Four.
ZZ: Why did you stop playing guitar, if you were such an ace flat-picker?
RS: Well, there was no call for it—but I still play a bit on the

records; I played on 'Only A Hobo', 'Lady Day', 'Jo's Lament' and 'Sweet Lady Mary'—all those, and more.
ZZ: You played a lot of acoustic on the 'Gasoline Alley' album? I wish I had the American sleeve to that, because the English one missed out all the track personnel in the usual inept Vertigo way.
RS: Yeah—they really fucked it up—I can't stand albums that have big picture spreads and no information. The American copy [on Mercury] has pictures of all the musicians on it.
ZZ: Is it right that The Faces only played on 'My Way Of Giving' and 'I Don't Want To Discuss It', and the rest was basically Ron Wood [bass & guitars], Micky Waller [drums] and Martin Quittenton [guitars]?
RS: Yes, and a guy called Pete Sears [now with Stoneground, soon to be in Baldry's band—probably] on bass [as well] and piano, and yet another guy, whose name escapes me, played string bass on the two acoustic numbers. The violinist was a bloke called Dick Powell, who I found in a little restaurant in Beauchamp Place. You should have seen the American sleeve—it was really good because I couldn't remember some of the musicians, and I put them down as various footballers—like Stanley Matthews and Denis Law. You have a look at it.
ZZ: The actual title, *Gasoline Alley*—isn't it an old blues song? I remember a group called that, years ago . . . then there was that Hollies thing 'Gasoline Alley Bred'. Were they all from the same source do you reckon?
RS: Well, The Hollies recorded that in the same studios, about three months after I was there. But I don't really know where the phrase came from originally—I got it from this girl in America.
ZZ: Where's your Gasoline Alley, anyway?
RS: Highgate—that's where I was born and bred. The next album is going to be called *Every Picture Tells A Story*—a real old English cliche.

ZZ: I was listening to *Gasoline Alley* the other night, and it occurred to me that it doesn't rhyme, or it only rhymes here and there. Do you just abandon efforts to get it to rhyme for the sake of it?
RS: Yeah—very rarely do my lyrics rhyme. I came to the conclusion, "What do I want to make them pretty for?" They're meant to hit you in the stomach.
ZZ: Again there are lots of little touches on that album—like the two lone chords at the end of 'Alley' and the whistle in 'It's All Over Now'—where did they come from?
RS: Oh, they're just little ideas I had—I think things like that make an album. Those chords were trying to get the train idea—being home and all that.
ZZ: What about the arrangements—are they done impromptu in the studio, or are they well rehearsed beforehand, because some, like 'Only A Hobo', are just amazing.
RS: That was Martin Quittenton's arrangement . . . he's got such beautiful chords in his head—a really clever guy. The way we do it is, I get Martin up from the coast (where he lives) the day before we're going into the studio, and say, "This is the song and I'd like to do it in this tempo." And he'll say, "What do you think about this riff, and this little bit," and so on—and we do a little work on it before we go in. The guy is really gifted, and I pay him well because he's worth every penny of it. So is Woody and Micky Waller. I think they're a winner combination—I wouldn't use anybody else.
ZZ: I know that you consider yourself a Face rather than Rod Stewart, and that you have no wish to go on the road with your own band, but wouldn't you dig to do a few solo shows?
RS: I'd love to do just one show. I don't think I'd get the same kick as I get from The Faces, because that's a laugh, but I'd love to do just one show with Pete Sears on bass, Micky on drums, Woody on guitar, Martin on acoustic and me on guitar too.
ZZ: Yeah—I'd like to see that. Let's get back to *Gasoline Alley* —did the Small Faces originally record 'My Way Of Giving'?

RS: Yes—they did a monstrous version on one of their albums, but Chris Farlowe did a beautiful version just after 'Out Of Time'. That's a song I'd like to do, but I haven't got enough confidence yet—I don't think I could improve on the way he did it, and I'd hate to fall down—especially on my third album. People are bound to criticise it after the other two . . . I can't believe the acclaim I got for those.
ZZ: You recorded 'Country Comforts' long before Elton John—did he offer you the song?
RS: No—I didn't even know he wrote it. I got it off Harry Reynolds who was the singer in Silver Metre [with Micky Waller, Pete Sears and Leigh Stephens] . . . they did it on their album. That's why I sing the wrong words. [Harry Reynolds is also the second voice on the second chorus.]
ZZ: There's a line missed out of 'Cut Across Shorty'—how did that happen?
RS: That was Woody's fault—he suddenly forgot one change when we were laying the track down, but I think it's great . . . it doesn't sound wrong. It was a lovely sort of mistake really.
ZZ: What about that dog-barking imitation, and those asides like, "You remember that story", and the liberal sprinklings of "wooooo hooooo"?
RS: Well, when I put the vocals on, it's just me and the engineer—Mike Bobak, who is a fabulous engineer—and I feel very free and able to put all those things in. But if there are lots of people up in the box I can't stand it. I like the freedom to really get into it.
ZZ: I always thought 'Lady Day' was an allegorical thing about your humble adulation of Billie Holliday, as being your blues singing heroine, but it was really a song about a girlfriend wasn't it?
RS: Yes—a lot of people thought it was about Billie Holliday, though I wasn't thinking of her at the time. She was lovely though—I read a book about her called *Lady Sings The Blues* . . . incredible book.

ZZ: Can we talk about your ancient contract with Immediate?
RS: I never actually had a contract, but I made one single for them called 'Little Miss Understood'/'So Much To Say'.

Pete Frame
Issue 19, May 1971

On Record And Tape

Rod Stewart

AN OLD RAINCOAT WON'T EVER LET YOU DOWN
LP VO4
Cassette 7145 004
8 Track 7779 400

GASOLINE ALLEY
LP 6360 500
Cassette 7145 001
8 Track 7708 042

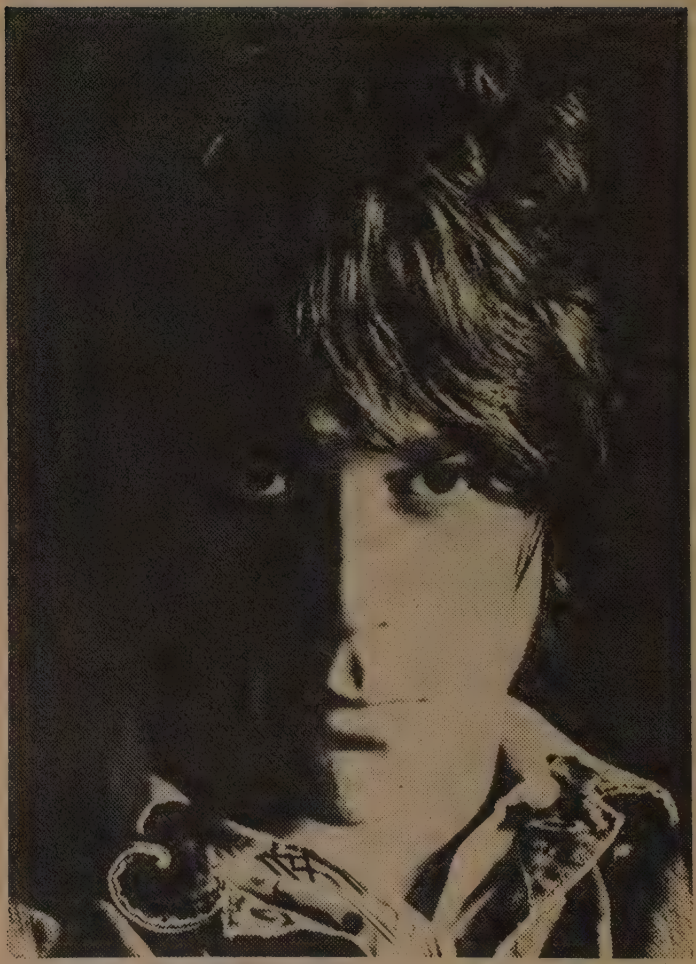
EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY
LP 6338 063
Cassette 7142 042
8 Track 7708 033

NEVER A DULL MOMENT
LP 6499 153
Cassette 7142 071
8 Track 7708 033

SING IT AGAIN ROD
LP 6499 484
Cassette 7142 183
8 Track 7708 161

ROD STEWART AND THE FACES OVERTURE AND BEGINNERS
LP 9100 001
Tape available from Warner Bros.

marketed by phonogram



Jeff Beck

MY BECK PAGES

Rod Stewart sighed. "He's such a good guitar player . . . wish he'd give himself a kick up the arse."

Jeff Beck is one of the truly legendary figures in rock, but for a couple of years now, his legend has been rusting up . . . memories, rumours and fantasies are starting to distort the reality, and Beck is usually depicted either as the amazing guitarist whose brilliance wiped out any competition, or as the irrational bandleader racked by moodiness and indecision. To the current rock audience, he is a name floating around in search of a reputation . . . his present endeavours revolving around his new band, which has been rehearsing and recording at Island Studios during the past few weeks. We tried to get hold of Beck, but one has to do this through various channels, and, well, you know . . . negotiations for an interview (if you want to get high-flown) broke down somewhere between his management and the man himself. (Not that I'm surprised or annoyed—Beck must want something new and concrete to talk about, rather than go over the same old ground that he's covered in a thousand and one interviews before.) Anyway, Rod Stewart didn't mind talking about his old group, so he

was able to clear up a few queries for us.

Though the records always seemed to fall somewhat short, the Jeff Beck Group (at its peak) of Beck, Stewart, Ronnie Wood and Micky Waller was just totally unbeatable. They didn't manage to achieve national superstar status in England (because they didn't get the opportunity to play here all that often), but they set America on fire: "Most of us were just dazed—even the straights . . . devastating . . . passing an incredible new number off as a jam . . . they didn't come on as though they were playing for money, but like they were playing for people . . . they were unbelievable." The printed praise was seemingly undless . . . but the group was buffeted by turbulence through most of its 2½ years.

Right. First a precis of Beck's history (see ZZ19 for Rod's): The Yardbirds, which he joined (from The Tridents and session work with Jimmy Page) in March 1965, when Clapton left to join Mayall, was his "15th group". (I can't remember where I read this, but it seems a little exaggerated in view of the fact that Beck brushes away his pre-Yardbird days as being of no consequence at all.) He named Ian Stewart, the Stones' roadie, as the person who originally turned him on to Chicago Blues and ideas of bottleneck playing. As a matching-suited Yardbird, he played a Telecaster: "I don't think I'd play anything else now," but within months he had switched to a Les Paul. His publicised 'likes' and influences ranged from Howlin' Wolf to Julie London, via Cliff Gallup (of Gene Vincent's Blue Caps), and his plans for the future included a solo recording of 'Summertime' and leading a big band with three guitars, two basses, two drummers, trumpet, trombone, etc. At the end of 1966, he was slung out of The Yardbirds, having just been voted the country's number one guitarist in one poll, and intimated that his future lay in films, though ambitions included co-producing with Phil Spector, sitting in with Ray Charles, and working with Ike & Tina Turner.

According to Beck in an interview we did with him in August 1969 (when, I might add, he was the ultimate in

friendliness—not a trace of this moodiness one hears about), he just packed up playing altogether after The Yardbirds . . . "I didn't even touch my guitar, and when I came to play again, I was hopeless, but I started to do session work again with Jimmy Page." That didn't last long, because a few weeks later he released his first solo single 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'—a piss-take song about plastic hippie chicks—backed with Jimmy Page's 'Beck's Bolero'—featuring Beck, Page and Keith Moon. The single was cut under the direction of Mickie Most and, "I was a star again; I didn't dislike the tune and I tried, but playing my style across a song like that just doesn't make it." Aesthetically, maybe not, but commercially it did—Beck was number eight on the charts and a regular on Top Of The Pops for a few weeks. But he needed a band to consolidate and capitalise on his success, and that was the start of his troubles.

ZZ (to Rod Stewart): Am I right in thinking that the first Jeff Beck Group was you singing, Beck and Ron Wood on guitars, Jet Harris on bass, and Viv Prince [in between gigs with The Pretty Things and Denny Laine's String Band] on drums?

RS: That's exactly right . . . nearly. What happened was, we rehearsed first of all like that down in a place in Goodge Street, but for one reason and another [do you detect a spot of censorship here?] Viv and Jet couldn't make it, so that never came off. So, after a bit of deliberation, Ron switched to bass and the next drummer we had was Roger Cook [now with Blue Mink]—but he didn't stay long enough to do a gig either. Then we had a guy called Rod Coombs, then Aynsley Dunbar, who really established the band and helped get it off the ground, then Micky Waller, and finally Tony Newman. So there were six drummers altogether.

ZZ: I remember seeing Aynsley playing with you at the Windsor Blues Festival in 1967, but I don't remember those other two—what happened to them?

RS: We just rehearsed with Roger Cook in a little studio, but before we did a gig, he went and this Rod Coombs arrived.

Well, the first gig we ever did—in early 1967—was in Finsbury Park, and he just froze completely and couldn't play, so he had to go. I don't know what happened to him . . . it was a real shame actually, because his old man had bought him a brand new drum kit for the tour, and he was sacked the first day. Very sad.

According to Rod, his involvement with Beck came out of sympathy for him; "We thought we'd better help him out . . . I mean, for a guitar player like that to come out with a thing like 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'—it was a crime."

The formation of the group didn't stop the commercial singles however, and the follow-up was a Graham Gouldman (he wrote the first Yardbirds' hits) song called 'Tallyman'. Most played the demo to Beck, who "didn't say anything, but just left it up to Mickie's judgement. I made the record and sort of closed my eyes." The song was cretinous—"shoes and socks, pretty frocks in the latest styles"—but both the Beck arrangement and the guitar were beautiful . . . some of his best work in my opinion—staggering stuff. Rod didn't agree: "That was the worst of the three," he said, scarcely controlling a sneer as he sung a line or two of it.

The B side, 'Rock My Plimsoul', was more indicative of the band as it was then—Beck, Wood, Stewart and Dunbar—and Rod agreed that it was great, "But I really hate talking about those days" . . . the days of trying to thrust Beck to teeny bop stardom via hit 45s.

Shortly after that, Dunbar left to form his Retaliation and was succeeded by Micky Waller, who featured on the next, and last, single, 'Love Is Blue'/'I've Been Drinking'. 'Love Is Blue' was little short of diabolical—the sort of crap you're forced to listen to during the ice-cream flogging interval in suburban cinemas. What could Beck have been thinking about? Well, of course, the idea didn't stem from Beck's mind, but from that of Mickie Most, who, as producer, controlled

his material selection.

"Mickie Most, let me tell you," Beck told us (in August 1969) . . . "all he wants to do is make hit records, and all I want to do is play my music. When 'Love Is Blue' was recorded, he was terribly difficult to work with—he really let me know who was boss. But when he went to the States and saw us play, and realised just how huge the market was, he did a big swallow and said, 'What have I been doing all this time?' And now, he's a lot more lenient as to what material we record; in fact, he's enjoying what we're doing now. He was going to invent an elixir for eternal life—you take a spoonful for breakfast and it makes you last forever. He hasn't invented it yet."

I also seem to recall Mickie Most saying that he was donating a proportion of his income to the government as his contribution to the Back Britain campaign. But anyway, Most wasn't bothered what went on the B sides, so they were consequently much better. 'I've Been Drinking Again' had Hopkins on it (before he joined the group), and Madeline Bell, and is just beautiful . . . beautiful piano, beautiful singing, beautiful guitar . . . beautiful.

Around this time, I remember seeing the group with a different bassist—Wood was ill—but Rod remembers no other bass players except Dave Ambrose playing with them.

The magnificent *Truth* album came out during their first American tour and was immediately put down by Al Kooper in *Rolling Stone.* Beck wasn't worried . . . "From the articles of his I've read, he talks out of his arse," but successful as it was, he reckoned that it was just sort of thrown together and included a couple of filler tracks just to make it a reasonable length. Rod held the album in higher esteem, though he agreed that they went into the studio and bashed down a load of tracks that they'd been playing for almost a year—"But I really dug it at the time . . . even 'Greensleeves'."

Even so, the album came nowhere near to realising the pure amazement of their live gigs during that year of 1968.

Towards the end of the year, Nicky Hopkins, tired of reading the dots in the studio, decided to go out on the road with a band and chose Beck's in preference to Led Zeppelin, who had apparently offered him more money, but then, almost a day before an American tour in February 1969, Beck fired Wood and Waller—and that was the first nail in the coffin. "Their playing had deteriorated," Beck was reported as having said at the time.

This happened at the time when 'Beck Ola' was being recorded and came as a shock to Stewart, who seemed to think that Beck was behind Wood's removal and Hopkins had pushed for Waller to go. "Oh dear . . . silly boy, he really was . . . he's really got to go to get another band as good as that." Too true, mate.

In March 1969, Beck, Stewart and Hopkins flew to the States to pick up the partly cancelled tour and took with them two replacements—Tony Newman (ex Sounds Inc and session man—now with May Blitz) on drums, and a bassplayer called Douglas Blake. After one gig, in Virginia, Blake was sacked and Ronnie Wood was rehired and flown out. Rod: "By that time, Ronnie was well pissed off and from then on he just used the group as a filler whilst he looked for another band."

ZZ: I read an interview with Tony Newman where he said that nobody in the band was happy with the way it was going. Is that right?

RS: Yes it is. The band was together, it was a great band to be in, the music was great, but it was everything that went with it . . . the aggravations and unfriendliness that developed. It was getting too ridiculous for words towards the end when we were trying to escape from each other all the time . . . one would stay at the Hilton and the others would stay at Hotel Third On The Bill around the corner.

Beck Ola came out just as the group were breaking up finally, and this was the first record to acknowledge the fact that it was The Jeff Beck Group, rather than just Jeff Beck.

The old Jeff Beck group (l. to r.) Rod Stewart, Beck, Ron Wood, and Micky Waller.

The album was patchy, to say the least, and it was basically recorded to cater for the US sheep audiences—the group was under the impression that a rock'n'roll revival was about to sweep America and cut the appropriate songs.

When we interviewed Beck in August 1969, the group was just dwindling apart. Nicky had left for the California sunshine and Ron Wood had found a gig with The Faces. Beck, however, hadn't informed (and seemingly had no intention of informing) Tony Newman that his services were no longer required. "You ought to tell him Jeff," his girlfriend was saying . . . "Oh he'll find out," said Beck. Meanwhile, the big Beck plan was to reform with Rod and two members of The Vanilla Fudge—Carmine Appice on drums and Tim Bogart on bass. At the time, Beck was unwilling to divulge their names, because it was still a secret, but he brimmed with enthusiasm: "I nearly fainted on the floor when they phoned up". . . he was totally flabbergasted by the tribute and honour he felt these cats were paying him. I think his adulation was a bit misdirected, because they couldn't hold a candle to the Newman/Wood rhythm section . . . and the Waller/Wood combination would have pissed on them.
ZZ: The end of the group was a very indecisive affair . . . it just fizzled out.
RS: Yes—we just sort of floated apart really—I was worried about various things like management, the future, and Ron Wood had gone, which choked me off because we were getting some nice things together. As it happens, I wasn't really knocked out by the things The Fudge were doing at the time, though Carmine and Timmy were two incredibly nice guys. When a group breaks up, the usual line to come out with is 'we couldn't have gone any further musically' . . . well that's a lot of bollocks—me and Beck could've played together for years and still come up with nice stuff.

So, on October 25th 1969, *Disc* confirms the news that Rod Stewart had now officially joined The Faces along with Ronnie Wood, and that Beck was getting together with

Appice and Bogart. But, it was never to be—as Carmine Appice relates in this excerpt from an interview which appeared in the New Haven Rock Press:

Carmine: When me and Tim left The Fudge, we were going to get a group together with Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart, but their managers weren't going to go through with it. See, Jeff wanted a group to compete with Led Zeppelin because he was mad at them for taking his thing and popularising it and taking all the credit. So he was bitter and wanted to form a group, rather than Beck and his boys, but the managers weren't going to make as much money. Then Beck got in that car crash. [Which is true enough, though Carmine and Timmy had already joined Cactus by then.]

NHRP: I heard that Beck did some Motown work . . . .

Carmine: From what I understood, he just went there to cut an album with some studio cats but didn't like the way it came out and he's not going to release it.

Well, that's one version—I've heard other stories, but since we couldn't get Beck to corroborate or deny rumours, that'll have to suffice as an explanation. But one thing we do know—Beck caused The Fudge to break up.

ZZ: Is it right that The Fudge split up because you wiped them off the stage one night and they just felt they had to give up?

RS: So they say, yes. We did a gig in New York which ended up in what they call 'The nine man jam'; the stage was full of people including Bonham, Page, Beck, me and Planty, and the guy who used to play bass with Jethro Tull—we were doing 'Jailhouse Rock', and it was fucking incredible. I finished the whole thing by shoving a mikestand up John Bonham's arse and he got arrested—the cops pulled him off and I ran away . . . we were all pissed out of our heads. And the Vanilla Fudge couldn't follow it on . . . just couldn't, and they packed up that night. A few days later, Carmine and Timmy got on the phone to Beck and said they wanted to form a band, keep-

ing me on as well.

Though Stewart admired Beck tremendously as a musician, the group was a disaster socially. Rod admitted that in the two-and-a-half years he was with the band he never once looked Beck in the eye . . . he always looked at his shirt or something.

I asked him if Beck was as directionless as he seemed—whether Stewart was in fact the pilot.

RS: No—I think he gave me as much direction as I gave him. In the early group, Dunbar used to lead if anyone did—most of the ideas came from him—and then towards the end, Tony Newman came out with a lot of ideas . . . like the original 'Plynth' was his idea, though it was me and Ron's chord sequence, etc.

Well, as Carmine mentioned, Beck was involved in a car crash, went to do some recording in Detroit, which didn't work out as planned (though one track may get released); he heavied up Donovan's 'Barabajagal' (again under Most's direction), and he has apparently spent most of his time since then in search of a new band. He got Birmingham drummer Cozy Powell fairly early on, but has literally been combing the globe for a singer and a bass player. Snoopy said he went for an audition with a vocalist who said he had rehearsed with Beck and got the boot . . . reckoned he was one of a number. But as mentioned earlier, it seems as if a new Jeff Beck group is at last a reality and that Beck is satisfied with Clive Charman on bass and Alex Ligertwood singing.

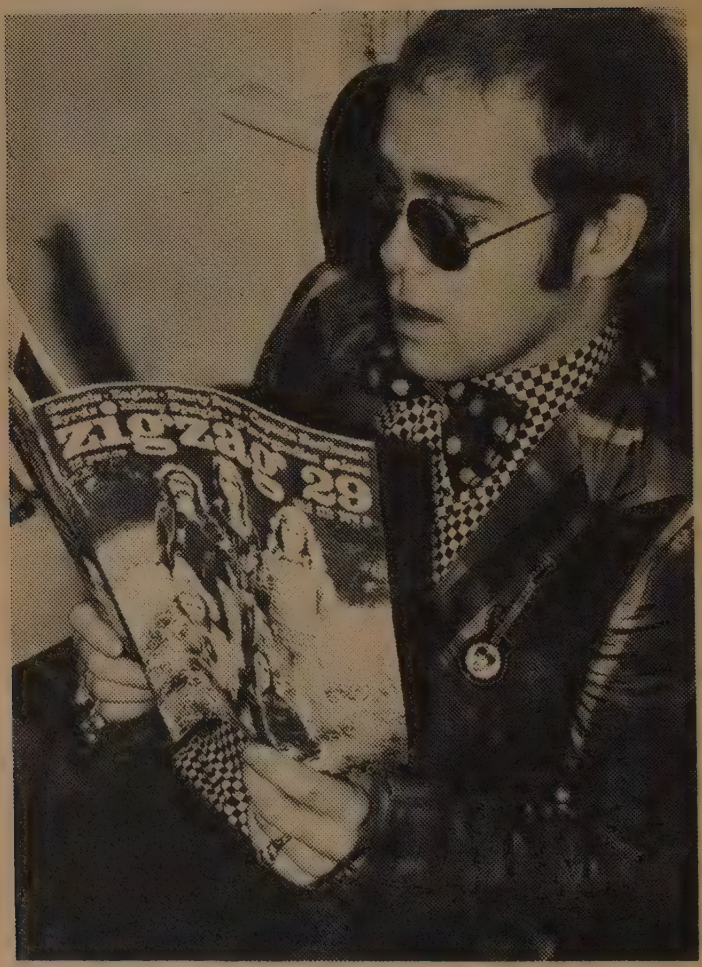
Rod became remorseful and sighed once more: "I've said so many nasty things about Beck and yet they're fucking true . . . but it's very easy to kick someone when he's down, do you know what I mean?

ZZ: But he'll be up again in a couple of months—he's got a new band.

RS: No chance. Woody saw him the other night [this was at Easter] and you know what? He had the cheek to ask him to join him again!

So make what you like of that . . . but pray that he gets off again this time; I really miss Jeff Beck.

Mac Garry
Issue 20, June 1971



Elton John

THE ELTON JOHN STORY

Rather than do a question-and-answer thing, we thought we could make it flow better and compress more fax-and-info in if we edited our discussion into a sort of narrative style, with Elton explaining the downs and ups of his musical career.

PART ONE: PAYING DUES

1. On the road with Bluesology

"Bluesology, my first band, was a four-piece made up from people from the Harrow area, which is where I come from. There was Mick Inkpen on drums; Stuart Brown, from Northwood, played guitar and sang; Rex Bishop played bass—he was from Willesden; and I played organ. As a semi-pro group we got quite a bit of work, and we were ambitious and dedicated—to a point of taking the plunge and deciding to add a trumpet and a saxophone, which was partly because we wanted to expand our horizons and partly because of the emergence of Otis Redding style brass arrangements. You see, thinking that we were a cut above the average club band, we were concentrating on the rather more obscure material—things like 'Times Are Getting Tougher Than Tough' by

Jimmy Witherspoon, who was a sort of blues underground figure at the time.

"Our first sax player was unbelievable—used to travel down from St Albans for gigs—but he decided to go off and play in the Queen Mary band . . . you know, playing on trans-atlantic crossings, and so we got in Pat Hicks on trumpet and Dave Murphy on sax. They were much older than us; sort of frustrated jazz musicians, but as a result of the changes, we were playing places like the Scotch of St James, which was the discotheque.

"All this time, I was working as a tea-boy for Mills Music, the publishing company, and it was all glamour as far as I was concerned; I used to do things like take messages to Joe Loss, and think it was all happening for me.

"One Saturday morning, we did an audition at the Kilburn State and as a result we aroused the interest of Roy Tempest, who used to run an agency which brought in the big American stars to tour. He saw us, liked us and said, 'How would you like to be in the big time, boys? How would you like to back all the American soul men?' Well, I simply couldn't dream of anything better; I was soul crazy at the time—used to spend all my money on soul records.

"Our first job was backing Wilson Pickett—can you imagine how we felt? He was such an important figure in the music we were playing, and here we were about to tour as his band! Well, we went to rehearse with his guitarist—but he didn't like our drummer, and he didn't particularly like the rest of us either, so that tour was blown out, and we were very brought down. A little later, however, we got offered the Major Lance tour, and to be sure of getting that, we went out and bought every record he'd ever made, we learnt every song and rehearsed to the point where he arrived and was so impressed that he didn't even feel the need to go through the songs making amendments.

"It was all happening for us, so I left my job and we started to work for Tempest full time. I was very starstruck; I used to

idolise these stars, but with almost every one I was really disappointed and disillusioned once I'd worked with them and found out what they were really like.

"We backed Patti LaBelle twice—they were so bloody professional, but they were cows really—used to give us hell if we ever played even one chord wrong. They were good musically, but they were doing awful stuff like 'Danny Boy' and 'Over The Rainbow'. Cindy Birdsong was in the group—they were called Patti LaBelle & Her Bluebells, but some of the posters said Patti LaBelle & Her Bellies.

"Then we did Billy Stewart, who was amazing—the only person I really felt a lot of respect for. We did a good job for him—brought out the best in us. He died in a car crash.

"Some of those singers who came over really got exploited; I can't believe how much work we did when I think back. Often the tour would start the day after the guy arrived in the country—so we only had about six hours' rehearsal. Then we would hustle all over the place . . . without any roadies, I might add. I don't know how much they got paid for these tours, but just as an example in one day during the Billy Stewart tour, we played Douglas House, a US servicemen's club in London, at four in the afternoon, then rushed up to Birmingham to do both the Ritz and the Plaza Ballrooms, and then back down to the Cut Club in London at four in the morning . . . and we had to load, unload and set up all the equipment ourselves!

"The saddest gig we ever did was the Ink Spots' tour. They were old guys and should've been doing cabaret to audiences that had heard of them, but they were put on the ballroom circuit and all the kids would disappear back to the bar as soon as they started singing. They'd start up with 'Back In Your Own Back Yard', and the audience would just laugh and go out. The only places where they were appreciated were the Twisted Wheel Club in Manchester, which was the grooviest gig to play in those days, and the Mojo Club in Sheffield, which was like the Fillmore of its

time.

"After a while, we left Tempest to go with Marquee Artists, and we went on the Scotch, Cromwellian, Bag O' Nails circuit again, as well as doing a month at the Top Ten in Hamburg, but troubles started within the group. The brass section was getting on at both the drummer and me and the only thing that kept us all together was the thirty quid a week we were getting. Anyway, Mick our drummer decided to leave (and was replaced by a guy called Paul, I think), and then our bass player went too—so only Stuart and me were left from the original Bluesology. We got Freddie Gandy in on bass; he was a gas—used to be with Twink in the Pink Fairies, or at least their predecessors—and we went off on a tour of France, which was followed by a month in a club in St Tropez. It was quite a nice time for me; I enjoyed all the travelling around on the Continent, and the money was quite good . . . I was growing up, finding out what life was all about.

"When we came back to England, I started getting really frustrated and complex-ridden because I was extremely large; I mean, I'm quite large now, but then I was about fourteen stone—and I was stuck behind a Vox Continental when what I really wanted to do was sing. There was no chance—we'd got into the rut of playing 'Knock On Wood' and 'Shake' every night for about four years. We gigged around, did a tour of Sweden, and when we came back we had an offer to join up with Long John Baldry, who hadn't done anything since his days in Steampacket.

"Baldry's first move was to get Stuart to drop the guitar in favour of concentrating entirely on vocals, to bring in another singer called Alan Walker, and to turn it into a three singers up front sort of band. It started off well and we had a great time because Baldry is a lot of fun to work with, but then there was a big row over the brass section at Klooks Kleek one night and it ended up with one of them running off with the van or something ridiculous like that . . . so we decided to re-shuffle the band a bit.

"We got two new brass players, Mark Charig and Elton Dean, Neil Hubbard in on guitar, Pete Gavin replaced this drummer called Paul, and so it wasn't a bad little band at that stage. A bit later, however, Alan Walker got the bullet and we auditioned potential girl singers, because Baldry had decided that it would be a good idea to get a bird out there in front too. He settled for Marsha Hunt, who, at the audition was frankly dreadful; I mean, so diabolical that even she laughs about it now—she sang something like 'Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing' unaccompanied. Anyway, it worked out great—she looked good and got the blokes in the audiences going—but it was still down to the same old Wilson Pickett/Stax stuff.

"All of a sudden, out of the blue, Baldry got a number one hit record with 'Let The Heartaches Begin', which he had made separately with a big string backing. Within a fortnight, Stuart and Marsha had left, because it obviously wasn't worth John's while to keep them, and we were playing big ballrooms —the high spot of our act being where Baldry used to sing his hit to a backing tape that we had to mime to! It was a great time; I've got no unhappy recollections of working with him at all, but he could be such an idiot at times. Like I remember one gig at Haverford West; he was standing there in his smart suit, singing his big hit, playing the star bit to the hilt. All the chicks were screaming and grabbing for him, and he was loving every minute of it, but then one girl pulled the microphone cable and broke it—and instead of brushing the incident aside with a showbiz-star gesture, he got all serious and angry, and he said to this chick: 'You've broken my microphone . . . that'll cost you fifty pounds' . . . and then he walloped her on the head with the mike. He was really serious about the whole thing—took us ages to calm him.

"As Baldry's style changed towards the soft ballady stuff, we gradually moved into cabaret and . . . oh God, it was really beginning to bring me down. That Christmas, we were doing three gigs a night for a while—the Sheffield Cavendish, Tito's in Stockton and South Shields Latino; we were the night club

entertainment to help the food go down nicely. Well, that was it; I began looking through the papers to try and find a job—I didn't care what it was . . . working in a record shop, anything."

2. Songwriting for Dick James

"I had to do something, and I didn't want to join another band because quite honestly, I wasn't that good an organist and I didn't look that good either. Really, I wanted to be a singer—but who would consider employing me in that capacity? Maybe Fred Bloggs & his Orchestra at Streatham Locarno or something of that sort . . . but nobody that I could enjoy working with. Although I didn't really want to write, I continued to toy with the idea because I thought that was the only way I'd ever get anywhere.

"I was sitting around, wondering what to do, when I happened to see an advert in the *NME*: Liberty/UA Records, having just gone independent from EMI wanted 'songwriters and talent'. So I phoned, got an appointment, and took a couple of songs along to a guy called Ray Williams, who thought they were 'not bad, and not a bad voice'. I was a little disheartened, because I thought they were knockout songs but I explained that I wasn't too good at lyrics and that I was looking for a lyric writer to form a team.

"I didn't hear any more about that, but he did phone up and ask me to turn up at Regent Sound Studios in Denmark Street to do an audition for Liberty. 'Sing five songs,' he said when I arrived, but I only had a couple prepared; I didn't know any others (except Baldry's stuff, which I did not know the words of), and so I ended up singing two Jim Reeves' songs—'He'll Have To Go' and 'I Love You Because'. You see, before Bluesology, I used to sing in a pub, the Northwood Hills Hotel—I was at school and was trying to save up for an electric piano . . . and I sang stuff like that. Well, of course, the audition was just dreadful . . . 'You must be joking,' they said, and I thought that my one golden chance of ever getting anywhere had gone down the drain.

"As Iwas leaving the studio, really brought down, this Ray Williams happened to mention that he'd had some lyrics from a guy called Bernie, up in Lincolnshire somewhere, and would I like to see them . . . so I had a look, and they didn't seem at all bad.

"Now this was around 1967, when soul music was dying out very fast in favour of The Pink Floyd/UFO type stuff. It was the Lemonade Lake era; all the groups (including Bluesology) were putting on their beads and kaftans and, although I enjoyed it at the time, I think that was one of the most hideous periods in music. Well, these lyrics of Bernie's were in this style, and I was quite impressed, because they were so much better and more poetic than anything I had been able to write. I tried to set some of them to music, and I came up with one I quite liked called 'Scarecrow', which I took along to Ray, who also liked it. Having already been turned down by Liberty, he took me along to a company he had associations with, which was part of the Dick James Music companies, and it was there that I met up with Caleb Quaye again.

"When I was at Mills Music, I often had to go to a collecting house in Old Compton Street called Paxtons—they used to get orders from people and buy music from the various publishers—and Caleb used to work for them. I used to hate him—he used to tease me about my being in a group—so I wasn't very pleased to find that he was the engineer in Dick James' 2-track studio. He didn't recognise me however, because I'd lost a lot of weight during the previous months, but when I told him, he collapsed with laughter and we became the best of friends.

"All this time, I was still in Bluesology—I was doing all these things behind their back, because I didn't want to give up a steady income until I'd sorted out an alternative. So, between gigs, I would go up to Dick James Music and make demos of songs I'd made out of this Bernie guy's lyrics . . . it was just Caleb and me—Dick James wasn't aware

of what was going on at all.

"One day, Ray Williams asked if I wanted to meet this guy who was sending all the lyrics in, and I said, 'Sure I do'. So in came Bernie Taupin, looking very green; it was only his second visit to London, and he was staying with his aunt in Putney. I played him the songs, none of which he'd heard, and he was knocked out, so we decided to keep going as a team.

"It was ridiculous how many people were making demos up at Dick James' studio, but one day he discovered what was going on and had a big purge, finding out who was using his facilities. 'Who the hell are Reg Dwight and Bernie Taupin?' he shouted, and he got Caleb to play some of the stuff we'd recorded. I don't think he was very impressed, but he agreed to sign us because Caleb, who was his blue-eyed boy, said he thought it was good.

"So, we signed with Dick James for three years or whatever, as songwriters, and he guaranteed us ten quid a week each. That was less than I was getting in the group, but it was all I needed; so I gave my notice in. I'd been turning up to gigs like a zombie—you've got no idea what it can do to you when you have to play a song like 'Knock On Wood' or 'Mr Pitiful' every gig for four years. That was it; I left and Bluesology carried on with Baldry. Jimmy Horowitz, who married Lesley Duncan, replaced me, and Caleb joined them too for a while to replace Neil Hubbard, who had gone off somewhere (later to turn up in Juicy Lucy, and then Joe Cocker's band). Caleb was in turn replaced by Bernie Holland, who subsequently joined Jody Grind along with Pete Gavin, the drummer. The band carried on for about a year with Baldry, but then it just broke up and everybody drifted off in separate directions.

"You might imagine that a group that lasted as long as Bluesology would have made a lot of records; in fact, we only did three singles. The first was before we'd even turned professional—a song called 'Come Back Baby', which I wrote while I was at Mills Music. In fact, I sang on the record, because it was too high for Stuart to sing, and Jack Baverstock

who was in charge of Fontana at the time, preferred my voice anyway. So though I never sang with the group on stage, I did on that record. The second thing we did was a really diabolical thing called 'Mr Frantic', and then a lot later, Kenny Lynch took an interest in Stuart and Marsha, and he produced a single for Polydor . . . it was a song he wrote called 'Since I Met You Baby'. And that was it—the complete Bluesology discography. We never recorded with Baldry, because he was too busy doing the big orchestra bit with Tony Macauley.

"Back to where we were; I was still living at home, and Bernie was still living in Lincolnshire, which was obviously far from ideal, so he came down and moved in with my parents. I was leading a sort of double existence; I was playing piano on various sessions that Roger Cook and Roger Greenaway had fixed for me, and Bernie and I were writing prolifically . . . total rubbish, but prolifically. I was doing demos of the songs, and we made them into an album, produced by Caleb on the two-track machine. There were songs on it like 'Regimental Sergeant Zippo' and 'Watching The Planes Go By', but of all the songs we wrote in that era, only a couple have ever seen the light of day; there's one called 'The Tide Will Turn For Rebecca'—a Johnny Mathis type thing that Edward Woodward recorded—and the other was one called 'I Can't Go On Living Without You', which Dick James put in for the Eurovision Song Contest. It got to the last six, the year that Lulu did the songs, and Cilla Black subsequently recorded it.

"Anyway, after making this album of our songs, nobody at Dick James wanted to know, and it was getting very frustrating to listen to Dick asking us to write commercial top twenty stuff, which we'd often tried but just couldn't seem to do. We pushed on regardless, and took the advice of Roger Cook and Roger Greenaway, who I'd known for some time; they said that the only way to make it was to work only as we found best . . . they wrote to a formula because that suited

them, but they reckoned we should do what we wanted to, regardless of commercial considerations. So we did—and finally we made a single, called 'I've Been Loving You', produced by Caleb and released on Philips, who had a licensing deal with Dick James Music before they started DJM."

3. Reg becomes Elton

"It was obvious that Reg Dwight lacked the right sort of ring for a singer's name, so we decided to change it to Elton John—the Elton bit was pinched from Elton Dean, and John I got from our beloved Mr Baldry. Anyway, the record, which was an Engelbert Humperdinck type ballad, came out and promptly died an abysmal death. Ironically, Roy Tempest rushed out a cover version by Edwin Bee on Decca, but both records failed abominably, I'm glad to say.

"At this point, Caleb, who wanted to get on to other things, was having violent ructions with Dick James, who just didn't want to know, and Caleb subsequently left, after having had a terrible argument with Johnny Franz of Philips Records. That meant that there was nobody at Dick James Music who was interested enough to help us, and we went through a thoroughly depressing period until a guy called Steve Brown arrived as a plugger for the new DJM label. He listened to our songs and though he liked them, he said there was nothing there that knocked him out . . . in other words, they weren't very good. In fact, he was right—they weren't very good, but we didn't know that at the time and it really hurt us. He said the fault lay in the fact that we were doing things half and half . . . partly as we wanted, but partly as Dick wanted, and it was coming out as a mish-mosh. He told us to go and write what we wanted to—which was an incredible thing to say really, because he was only a plugger for DJM. He was right nevertheless, because in the meantime, two other projects had collapsed—I tried cutting a single produced by Zack Laurence . . . a total failure, and then I cut a Mark London song called 'Best Of Both Worlds' . . . another miserable failure.

"So we went away, and during the few months which followed, we wrote all the songs on the *Empty Sky* album, together with 'Lady Samantha', which Steve was delighted with—he said it was the first really good thing we'd written and that he would like to produce it. By this time, the studio had been converted to four-track and Dick agreed to let Steve handle the production.

"I'll always remember that session; we hired an electric piano which was so abysmally out of tune that I had to play round a lot of the notes. After it was finished, I listened to it and thought it was awful; I told Steve that he ought to stick to plugging . . . I was really brought down. Steve played it to people around the BBC, however, and they liked it and as a result it got a remarkable amount of airplay and went on to sell about twenty thousand. From then on, I came to the conclusion that Steve Brown must have been completely right, and his faith in us and 'Lady Samantha' was what initially launched us and was a starting point as far as enthusiasm goes."

Starting from where we left off last month, Elton resumes his explanation of how he came to record his albums, and to form his group for live gigs.

PART TWO: ALBUMS & GIGS

1. "Empty Sky"

"When he saw that 'Lady Samantha' had done quite well, Dick said that it was alright if we went ahead and made an LP and, though we'd prepared plenty of material which we wanted to record, we just couldn't believe it . . . an album all to ourselves! So, we went in and made the *Empty Sky* album which still holds the nicest memories for me—because it was the first, I suppose. We used to walk back from the sessions around four in the morning and stay at the Salvation Army

Headquarters in Oxford Street; Steve Brown's dad ran the place, and he used to live above it—so I used to sleep on the sofa. It's difficult to explain the amazing enthusiasm we felt as the album began to take shape, but I remember when we'd finished work on the title track . . . it just floored me; I thought it was the best thing I'd ever heard in my life! Caleb played so well on that track—I'd wanted a sort of Stones feel, but Caleb didn't really go for The Stones that much because he was a Hendrix freak, but he finally agreed with us and really pulled it out of the bag.

"The album was released and got quite a lot of play on the radio, but it didn't sell a tremendous amount . . . not that anyone, especially me, really expected it to. It sold around two thousand initially, which wasn't really bad for a first LP—but what really pleased me was the reaction it got from the press, particularly the underground press; I was beginning to get a bit worried that they would typecast me as a Radio One type performer, because I'd been doing broadcasts to get a bit of exposure.

"We thought it was time to move on to something new, so with the next single, 'It's Me That You Need', we used orchestration for the first time. Steve Brown produced the basic track once again, at Dick James' studio, and then the strings were added at Olympic. That came out and again got a lot of airplay, but that wasn't a big seller either—and by this time, I was getting a little worried and a little depressed . . . but we kept on writing all the same.

"Around that time, there was a great lull; nothing much happened until we went to see Gus Dudgeon. Steve Brown had decided that he didn't want to produce us any more; he wasn't really a producer and felt we should be working with somebody who knew more about it . . . and he also suggested that we look for an arranger, because the songs we were writing during that time were better suited to an orchestral setting than just a small group. Well, we went to see George Martin, but nothing came of that, and, frankly, there just weren't any

arrangers in the country that I liked . . . but we went to see Tony Hall, and he put us onto Paul Buckmaster, who had done 'Love At First Sight' by Sounds Nice and 'Friends' by Arrival. Paul had a listen to the tape of 'Your Song' but, though he thought it was fantastic, he was worried that he wouldn't be able to do it justice."

2. "Elton John"

"Paul listened to all the other songs we had ready to record and eventually agreed to work on them with us, and he suggested that we go and see Gus Dudgeon, who he reckoned would be just right as our producer. Gus played it cool at first . . . "not bad," he said, as he was listening to our tapes, but he eventually agreed to do it—so we had a new album. Dick had told me that he didn't mind how much the album cost as long as it was a good one, and so, in December 1969, Gus, Paul, Bernie, Steve and I sat down to discuss plans . . . and we did so in great detail, even down to which instruments were going to appear in which song. The following month, we cut the ten tracks which came out on the album, plus 'Grey Seal' (later the B side of 'Rock'n'Roll Madonna'), 'In The Old Man's Shoes', and 'Bad Side Of The Moon' (which came out on the B side of 'Border Song').

"Not only was Gus a good producer, he was a good planner too; he and Paul organised all the session musicians—a lot of whom I knew already, especially the backing singers. You see, whilst all this was going on, I was also singing at sessions, like 'Back Home', for instance, and I was also making cover versions of hits for Avenue Records, which came out on Marble Arch, and I did a couple for Music For Pleasure . . . things like 'My Baby Loves Loving', 'United We Stand' and 'Signed, Sealed, Delivered'. They used to give me the higher ones, but the guy who did most of them was that bloke in Uriah Heep, David Byron.

"The *Elton John* album subsequently came out in May 1970, and sold about four thousand in the first few weeks . . .

it even got to number 45 on the *Record Retailer* chart for one week! As far as we were concerned, it was a flop—we were really expecting great things to happen, but all that happened was that a lot of the songs got recorded by other people—a million groups did 'Pilot', and there were several versions of 'Sixty Years On' and 'Border Song', including a superb one by Aretha Franklin.

"All this time, Steve Brown and various other people had been pressuring me to get a band together, but I'd been through as much of that as I needed during my four years on the road with Bluesology . . . I was well aware of all the hassles involved in group life and I didn't want any more. In the end, however, Steve got me to realise that going on the road with a band was the only way I'd ever get anywhere. My first thought was to ask Caleb, but he was already involved with his own group, and so I approached Dee Murray and Nigel Olsson, who had been in the last Spencer Davis Group and had been to the States with him a couple of times. Since Spence had disbanded the group, they'd been doing nothing except the odd session, and so they were pleased to join me. Not many people rated Nigel as a drummer, but we did a rehearsal in the DJM studio one afternoon and things seemed to work out alright. Our first gig was the Pop Proms at the Roundhouse; we were third on the bill, above Curved Air, but below Brinsley Schwarz and Tyrannosaurus Rex, who were kind enough to let us use their PA, because we didn't have one. That worked out OK and we went on to play colleges and gigs like that."

3. Jeff Beck and USA

"I always said I'd never mention this, but Jeff Beck came to talk to me after I'd done a set at the Speakeasy one night . . . he said he'd really like to join the band. Well, I obviously wasn't going to let an offer like that go by, but at the same time I was a bit worried that he may try to turn us into a wailing guitar group, which I was always against. Anyway, we set up rehearsals and I just simply couldn't believe how well Jeff

fitted into the band . . . he was so good. But the crunch came when Jeff said, 'I don't really like your drummer too much—I'd like to bring Cozy in'. You see, this was at the time when Beck was recovering from his car crash and he didn't have his group together except for Cozy. Well, we had a big meeting and I decided I'd rather keep just Nigel and Dee because we'd only been going for a short time and I was really enjoying it.

"We'd been offered a gig at the Troubadour in Los Angeles and various other gigs in the USA, but I was going to cancel them to rehearse with Jeff (until he pulled his bombshell), but looking back, I think Jeff maybe wanted to take the band over and go touring the States on his reputation. I've got no malice towards him—in fact, I think he's a really great guy, as well as being an incredible guitarist—but, as I said, I told him no and that was it . . . we went off to the States on our own and it worked out fine. Jeff asked me not to tell anyone about it, but I don't suppose he's bothered any more . . . he's with those guys from Cactus now, so I imagine he's happy enough.

"As it happens, I really like Nigel's drumming—to the extent that I'm sure I'd find it very difficult to work with anybody else.

"I think the start of all the success was the Troubadour thing; it was just amazing. It's an incredibly funky little place, the best club of its kind anywhere, and all it is is some wooden tables and chairs and good acoustics. It only seats about 200, and the first night we played there it was packed to the brim with people from the record industry, who expected me to come on with this 15-piece orchestra and reproduce the sound of the album, which had recently been released there.

"We'd flown to Los Angeles, thirteen hours over the pole in this jumbo jet, and we arrived to find this bloody great bus . . . 'Elton John has arrived' and all that sort of thing . . . and it took another two hours to get to the hotel. Once we'd booked in, we were hustled out again and off to the Troubadour,

where the Dillards were appearing . . . they were incredible, just knocked me out completely. In fact, the Dillards will probably be on our next American tour . . . I'd like to bring them over here too.

"Anyway, that first tour was a promotional thing; we did a week at the Troubadour, where it all happened, and then worked across to New York. If you happen in LA, you happen everywhere apparently . . . that's what they say, because LA is very slow and very fickle. After LA, we went to San Francisco to play the Troubadour there—they'd only just opened it—and that was a disaster . . . horrible . . . a big room with a fountain, and check tablecloths. It closed down, but we had one of the highest attendance rates they'd had . . . about 30 people a night! It was that bad!

"One thing about that week in LA: I was sharing the bill with David Ackles—I was topping the bill, but that seemed just unbelievable to me—there was no way anyone could've convinced me that I should be above David Ackles, but they explained to me that he was almost unknown there. I was flabbergasted, but during that week I discovered that people like Tom Paxton and Ackles, and David Blue and so on are disregarded in LA . . . they're much better known over here.

"David Ackles was brilliant . . . I made a point of watching him every night, and he was just brilliant—and I heard that he only earned something like 5,000 dollars in the whole of 1970. At the end of the week, he bought me a half bottle of Scotch and told me how much he'd enjoyed working with me . . . which was utterly incredible, because I'd always been a number one fan of his. To see that audience just chatting away while he was singing those lovely songs just tore me apart . . . people were there because the buzz had got around that I was the guy to see, and they didn't give a toss about a great person like him. One thing that did come out of that, however, was the album he's just put out; Bernie worked on the production of it . . . the songs are amazing.

"We eventually got to New York to do some East Coast

gigs, and the best one was at a place called The Electric Factory in Philadelphia. We were bottom of the bill to Lighthouse and we just steamed on . . . no-one had a clue who we were, so we had nothing to lose. We just blew the place apart . . . went down a storm . . . and then we had to return to New York, where MCA Records had arranged a press party at the Playboy Club—you know, a 'these are some of our new acts' thing. It was a disaster from the word go . . . we were supposed to go on at 2, but didn't make it until 3, by which time all the press people had gone back to their offices . . . so that was a total waste of time.

"While we were in New York though, I got one of the biggest thrills of my life; I went to the MCA office and they said, 'We just heard that your album is going to be number 17 on the Cash Box chart next week' . . . and it was; me at number 17 with a bullet, and Crosby Stills & Nash at 18! That freaked me out entirely—but I had to return to reality, and to London, to do a film soundtrack, *Friends*, which we'd contracted to do earlier in the year."

4. "Friends" and "Tumbleweed"

"The people who made the film were originally trying to get Richie Havens to do the soundtrack, but that fell through and they asked us . . . they'd heard our songs and liked them. At that point, Bernie and I were in the doldrums and were grabbing at any chances we could, so we agreed to do it—and, in fact, we had a couple of songs ready before we'd even seen the script. The film itself turned out to be a disaster, and anyone involved with it should own up to that fact . . . but the people who made it were really nice people, Lewis and John Gilbert . . . they taught us a lot about film music, showed Buckmaster what it was all about and they gave us plenty of leeway. But I'd never do anything like that again—not unless it was my film and I had complete control—because I reckon that, apart from the Lewises and a handful of others, all film people are bastards. The hassles we had over that film . . . for

instance, we wanted David Larkham, who does all our sleeves, to do the cover for *Friends*, but this guy at Paramount had other ideas: 'I don't like his work, I think it's awful—our boys will come up with a stunning cover'. And they came up with that horrible pink thing which makes you feel ill every time you look at it. Oh, I don't want to go on about it, but I'll tell you—that's the last time I'll ever do anything like that.

"We did all the *Friends* album in four weeks . . . four weeks of very harrowing work, I might add. We did it at Olympic, but for some reason got a terrible sound and had to do the whole lot again at Trident. I didn't want the album to come out like an actual film soundtrack with car horns and things like that, so we filled it out with a couple of songs we were saving for the album after *Tumbleweed*—'Honky Roll' and 'Can I Put You On?' That album was so rushed it was a wonder it ever came out at all.

"By this time, *Tumbleweed Connection* was already complete and ready to come out. Unlike *Elton John*, which had been cut in about ten days, we did this one at odd sessions over a longer period and that gave plenty of time for David Larkham to get the sleeve exactly as he wanted it . . . he took so much care and trouble over it—I think he should get some sort of award because it's certainly the best sleeve of its kind that I've seen.

"Uni Records released *Tumbleweed* in the States while *Elton John* was still in the top ten there—and it went straight into the charts at number 25 with a bullet . . . within a couple of weeks we had two albums in the top five, and when we got back home, all the press suddenly wanted to know us. It was exactly the same thing that happened with Joe Cocker and Cat Stevens and Led Zeppelin . . . but once we started getting all the publicity, both *Tumbleweed Connection* and *Elton John*, which suddenly began to sell over here, zoomed into the charts."

5. The live album

"I agree that the live album (*17.11.70*) is not very good, but I'll tell you the full story behind that; during our second tour of the States, which was mostly us co-headlining with people like Leon Russell, The Byrds, Poco, The Kinks and so on, we were asked if we'd like to do a live broadcast over the air. This hadn't been done in New York for years, and WABC (which is now WPLJ-FM, I think) said it could be done in a studio, sent out in stereo, and that the sound would be really good. Everyone agreed that it'd be an interesting thing to do, so we did it; we played in headphones, and it all came out of this little recording studio which had an audience of about a hundred to create the concerthall atmosphere.

"We didn't know at the time, but afterwards we found that Steve Brown had arranged for an 8-track recording to be made—just to see how it came out—and when we listened to it, we thought it was quite good. Well, because of a combination of many things—like that *Friends* album, over which we had no control, was about to come out, for instance—we did a quick mix at DJM and released an album from the tapes. At the time, I thought it was good enough, and I also wanted it to come out because Dee and Nigel, who had been on very little before, were featured very strongly, of course.

"On the third tour of the States, the radio stations were playing it to death, and because it wasn't scheduled for release for another three months, there were an awful lot of import copies being sold . . . and I panicked: 'You've got to release it now or else it'll be a dead duck in three months'. So it came out in America, but the mix was much much better on the American copy.

"Looking back, it's not a wonderful recording, but I think it's valid—despite the fact that saleswise it was a disaster. Even *Empty Sky* has outsold that one in Britain, and in America it only did 325 thousand, compared with the previous two which both did over a million. But it did mean that I had four albums in the US top 30, which hadn't been

done since The Beatles.

"The *Friends* album was officially certified as gold, but I don't believe that can be true. I think they pumped out so many copies to the shops that it was gold on the day of release . . . but I'm sure it didn't sell very well and that the shops'll send them all back to the company in due course. I'll have a look at the royalty statement and let you know . . . not that I mind having another gold album to hang up—it looks nice on the wall there."

FINAL PART

Orchestra on stage

"The first one we did last year, with a session orchestra, was my idea. I've always said that I'd like to get an orchestra together on stage just for one gig, to hear what it sounds like. So we did it, and it was great. Then Vic Lewis suggested I do one with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, because he's something to do with them, their chairman or president or something. I thought that was great, because a thirty piece orchestra had given me quite a buzz before—think what an eighty piece would do! I'd just go bananas! But the one we did earlier this year, I just didn't enjoy, because I just thought the orchestra were cunts, every single one of them. The one before was with session men, and they're pretty bad, but they really got into it, and freaked out completely. But the Royal Philharmonic—I just thought they gave a quarter of their best, and they didn't take the event seriously, and I was taking it seriously. I felt so tense, because I was uncomfortable playing with them. I talked to a few of them, who said they'd done it with The Nice, and Deep Purple, and they seemed OK. They only had to play dots, and I thought if session musicians can do it, fucking classical musicians can play, because most of the strings on sessions are classical musicians anyway. But it was all snide remarks during rehearsal, like Paul [Buckmaster]

would say to them, 'Can I please have a bit of quiet?' and someone would say, 'Well, if you got your fucking hair cut, perhaps you could hear quiet,' and it was all down to that sort of scene. I financed the whole fucking thing, I filmed it, and the film turned out OK as far as I'm concerned, because I sang well on it, and we're going to flog it to America for a quarter of a million. The film turned out much better than the stage, because we wanted the strings unamplified, and they didn't play hard enough. If they'd played a bit harder, the audience would've heard them. The sound was great on the film, because Gus mixed it on a sixteen track. But that concert was a torture for me, and I was so relieved when it was over. I'd sunk a lot of bread into it. I'll never do it again. Like the live album, you learn by your mistakes, and there will be no more orchestra things in England. I don't know about America, because the sound systems in America are absolutely fucking unbelievable, and I imagine really getting it together. I'd really like to do it in LA or New York, but I'm a stickler for rehearsal, and I like to rehearse for a week, and that costs a lot of money."

Long John Baldry

"No longer Long. I've produced half of two of his albums now. I never really thought I'd want to produce a record, because I'm very impatient in the studio; I like to get things done, and I can't stand wasting studio time. And when I had a phone call in New York from Billy Gaff, saying John was in a bad way, not health or anything, but he's done 'Let The Heartaches Begin' and he's done the cabaret bit, and now he really should be back doing what he was before. I agreed totally, so he asked if I would help doing half an album, although there wouldn't be much money involved. I said sure, because I really love John, and all the time I worked with him, he paid his musicians. Also he's the ultimate gentleman, he's the ultimate guy who'd give you the shirt off his back. We did that first album with him, and it was strange because John hadn't sung

for ages, and he really found it hard to get into that sort of thing again and it showed, but it did incredibly well in America, thousands of copies and got to about sixty in the charts. He went over there, and he got some bad reviews for his concerts, but he really did very well, because he was very theatrical, which they love. Now I've done half the second album with him, and the difference in his voice is remarkable. Because he's so outrageous, I had great fun keeping him down, because if it was down to him, he'd have recorded Peggy Lee numbers on the first album, and Della Reese things."

Current personal listening

I've been raving about Redbone for ages, ever since I got their first double album. I don't particularly like their new one much. It wasn't released here like that, but just as a single album. I also really like Pearls Before Swine which is only Tom Rapp really. He wanders about, doing occasional gigs in folk clubs, and apparently gets incredibly knocked out if you say you like him. He's one of those guys who survives from people's appreciation. His ESP stuff is really nice, but the Reprise things are incredible. Then there's The Grateful Dead. Nobody thinks I like them, because I'm not allowed to. I think *Anthem Of The Sun* and *Working Man's Dead* are excellent. Probably *Aoxomoxoa* is their weakest album, and if that was the first thing you heard, you could get a wrong impression. I think Bernie's been very influenced by them since *Working Man's Dead*. Also I'm really into bands like Fairport and Lindisfarne—the English people don't know what they've got in their own backyard. It's the same with Americans, of course, but people like Fairport are so fucking good, any of the line-ups, but particularly with Sandy Denny and Dave Swarbrick—*Liege And Lief*—but I still love the other albums they've made. Also, Ian Matthews who I think is an incredibly talented person, but again is ignored here. The current heap of albums I've got here for immediate

listening is a good guide. I'm really into soul music at the moment—there's the Stylistics, who are incredible, Paul Simon—I don't like that very much, very hard to get into—Bread, who I quite like because they show no hangups, Jackson Browne—that's a good album—Mylon, who is very good on stage; Hookfoot, which is a better album than the first one, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, now there's a good band—that album *Uncle Charlie And His Dog Teddy*—particularly 'House At Pooh Corner'—John Renbourn whom I love, but who has never made as good an album as *Sir John Alot*; Leo Kottke, Linda Ronstadt who I like tremendously, Brinsley Schwarz—both this one [*Silver Pistol*] and the album before I like tremendously—amazing, and yet nothing happens saleswise. I think people must have forgotten about the hype now, so why don't they sell records? Genya Ravan—Goldie. That is superb—Barry Mann. Ry Cooder is nice but a bit predictable. Freddy Scott—that's really good. He was my original—when I was in the soul band, I was always listening to people who I considered to be obscure like Homer Banks. But 'Are You Lonely For Me' by Freddy Scott is so very good. It was produced by Bert Berns, who also did Erma Franklin's early stuff on London, like 'Piece Of My Heart'. Then there's Billy Preston, Crazy Horse which I like. I really like soul music at the moment. Ah, that is awful—Malo, it's Carlos Santana's brother. Mark-Almond which is incredible [their second album]. They made us play shit-hot every night, because they're so musically good and such nice guys. Judee Sill is nice—ah, I forgot to mention my fave rave of all times, Daddy Cool. I thought they were amazing when I first heard them—nothing complicated. Van der Graaf, Donnie Elbert. Faces—I can't see what all the fuss is about, I much prefer their first album with 'Plynth' and 'Flying' and 'Wicked Messenger'. I can't see why everybody likes *A Nod's As Good As A Wink*, and the Rod Stewart albums are so much better. I don't think The Faces really rate as a musical band . . . ."

Leon Russell and Marc Bolan

"We were happening slightly ahead of Leon in the States, because he's come to prominence not through the Delaney & Bonnie album, which was the thing that turned me on to him, not even his first album really, but it was the Joe Cocker *Mad Dogs* thing that did it. It was coincidence really, but when I saw him in the front row of the Troubadour watching us, I nearly shit a brick, and then he invited me up to his house. I was very frightened of meeting him, but he was really good. Everyone thought there was going to be a big war between me and Leon, but we've always got on very well.

"I've known Marc ever since that Roundhouse thing we did the first time, and we got all the nasties drained away from the things I said about him before. I've really got into his music a lot and I really like him, and we've been friends ever since then. He's been very good to me recently, because I need a boost in this country, and he's mentioned me a lot. It seems as if I'm trying to cash in on his success, but it's a mutual thing, because I give him plugs in the States."

Records

"Rather than being at the Speakeasy every night, I prefer to be at home playing records. I make it my job to listen to everything—not because I want to pinch ideas from people, but I think there's so much that never gets heard, and it's very important to listen to everything that comes out."

"Honky Chateau"

"The general reaction to *Honky Chateau* was pretty good. It served its purpose in more ways than one—it was the first number one album we had in the States, but more important, it established us over here, doing really well after *Madman* hadn't done so well. *Madman* in fact has been the most personal and painful album to make. I really can't see why it didn't go, because it had a lot of our best songs on it. For example, on stage, we still do 'Levon', 'Tiny Dancer' and

'Madman' itself, and it contains a lot of numbers that don't wear thin after they've been played for a long time. *Honky Chateau* is not the biggest one we've had in England, the *Elton John* album is, then *Tumbleweed*, then *Chateau*. It's really only because the *Elton John* album has been out for two years, and still sells like a thousand every week, and so does *Tumbleweed*, and so, actually does *Empty Sky*, which has nearly done as much as *Madman*. I think *Honky* will overtake them all soon."

The new album

"We went to the chateau again, last June, and I was in a terrible state with glandular fever. Before we made the album, I said I didn't want to do it at that time, because it was such a strange situation with *Honky Chateau* released only a month before, and it was weird to make another album at that time. I wasn't feeling too well, and wanted to chuck it in. Gus said that was OK, and we could go back and do it in September. I was going on holiday in July for a month to LA, and I thought it would be great to try one track before I went, so that I could think I'd made a start. So we did the backing track to 'Daniel' and everything worked out fine and we carried on. But I was pretty evil during the sessions, so uptight and shouting at everyone.

"There was very little augmentation to the group. We used the same brass line-up as on 'Honky Cat' for two or three tracks. Even though I was very doomy while we were making it, it's basically a very happy album. Side one is Elton John's Discotheque album. As far as I'm concerned, the band is one step further forward from *Honky Chateau*, tighter, because that was really the first time I'd used the band on record except for a couple of tracks on *Madman*, and a couple on *Friends*. For me, that was one of the turning points—it was either giving up, or using the band on record. When we got Davey in, it's just gone on from then. I could never go back to using session musicians again as such, because it's so much

better now."

Davey Johnstone

"Poor sod, he has to do all the guitar bits on record. If we want to use three guitars, he has to overdub them all. He has enough to do, playing acoustic, electric, mandolin and banjo on stage, and he's slowly slipping into playing electric guitar, although it can't be that easy for him. When he's not playing with me, he's free to do exactly as he likes. He's making a solo album, which is nearly finished, and I've heard some tracks which are amazing, like nothing I've heard before. I'm making a prediction that he'll be one of the world's top electric guitarists in two or three years' time, probably have his own band, and really be a name, which would be great. I'm amazed at how he's adapted, because when I said to Gus that I wanted Davey Johnstone in the band, I'd never heard him play electric, but he's really got into it, although he still loves folk, and most of his album is folk oriented, but not prissy folk, folk with balls. On 'Have Mercy On The Criminal' he's astonishing. On stage, it's a matter of getting used to playing every night, and when you do a ten-week tour of the States, you improve all the time. And it's not just him—Nigel's improved and Dee and I, because there has been less pressure on the three of us, because Davey's taken up some of it. It was impossible with three—it's alright if you're Emerson Lake and Palmer and there's Hammond organs everywhere, but with just a piano—there's no sustaining instrument among piano, bass and drums. I can't think how we coped."

Rocket Records

"Inevitably, it's a label for me to be on eventually, but it wasn't formed for that reason. Davey was going to make an album and we couldn't get a good enough deal for him anywhere. It was while we were making the new album in France, and John Reid and Steve Brown came over and told us that they couldn't get a satisfactory deal on Davey, so we all sat

down that night, and got thoroughly drunk, and said, 'Let's start our own label'. You know what those things are like—next morning you get up and it's instantly forgotten, but we remembered, and I came up with the title of Rocket Records. It's all started from that, from a piss-up one night to reality, and all because Davey couldn't get a good deal. We all discussed it at length later, and decided that the company would be formed for new artists to get really good royalties when they first sign, instead of two or three per cent, which is ridiculous. I really get pissed off with the business sometimes . . . I know it's a bit idyllic, like every three years The Moody Blues start a label, and it's all going to be flowers. Ours isn't—it'll be fucking hard work. It's taken us six months already to get the basic things done. We've got offices now in Wardour Street, and we've got the distribution practically done in the States and here. Next we've got to go all round the rest of the world and see who wants to distribute it. Island are going to distribute—it was a toss-up between EMI and Island, and Island won because of their track record. Everyone was a bit worried about EMI's inability to get records in stock, and overall throughout the country, 99 per cent of the stores said that Island records were practically never out of stock. There's nothing worse than having a hit record that's out of stock. Also Muff Winwood, with whom I have a great relationship, is to be involved, and I know David Betteridge—so, although EMI offered us a better deal financially, we decided on Island because we thought they'd understand our product better. In fact EMI offered us a fantastic deal, and although I know a lot of people at EMI, I didn't particularly want to go with them. Especially in my position you have to be so careful—I mean, I've been offered so many million pounds to sign a publishing contract before my current one ends, and you just can't do it. We did make the mistake when we re-signed with MCA. We should never have re-signed at the time, because if we'd waited we'd have been in a much better position. But that's learning the game. Going back to Rocket, there won't

be any releases made until everything's sorted out. We could put a record out next month, but what would be the point, because there'd be no organisation. When it comes out, it'll be right, and for the artist's benefit. We've got Bruce Johnston, who's written some amazing things, and he phoned us. He's formed a group with Terry Melcher, and I think both the group and Bruce as a solo artist will be on the label. When he phoned and told us, we just stood there chuckling, because I've known him for quite some time. We're trying to sign Jean-Luc Ponty—we've already got John McLaughlin agreed to produce and arrange it, so if we can track him down through the French telephone system, that'll be done, because he's already agreed verbally. I don't want to start out with a bilge of product, like 25 albums. I haven't found an act to produce yet. Long John, who I've produced before, is in the air with his record company at the moment. I don't really want any super-established names on the label just yet. Jean-Luc isn't really that established yet, although I think he's capable of making an album that will sell as well as *Inner Mounting Flame*, say. But if you said 'Jean-Luc Ponty' in the street today, somebody would probably hit you with a marrow. For most people who form a record company, it's an idyllic dream. We're trying to make a better deal for the artist—if an artist is really brought down about something, he comes to 101 Wardour Street, and he doesn't have to wait three hours in reception. Steve Brown is an amazing person who got me together and Bernie together at DJM, and put us on our feet, and that's what he'll be doing for Rocket. John Reid runs the business side of things, and Gus, Bernie and I take an interest and find product. But I do take an interest—the good thing about me not being on it is it's not like a Moody Blues' label or a Rolling Stones'. For example, if I went on the label, when the initial releases came out, my album would receive much more publicity than all the others combined. 'Elton John, and also on Rocket are . . .'. So we don't want to do it like that. None of the other record companies formed this way have

done much. Apple has only really had Mary Hopkin and Badfinger—they told James Taylor to fuck off, and both Billy Preston and Doris Troy had more success elsewhere. Mary Hopkin was just Paul McCartney's little thing for the time being. Still, they've got a good image, and anything that comes out on Apple will probably receive immediate attention—in fact, they've got Lou and Derrick Van Eaton, which is one of my favourite albums of the moment. Even so, Apple has come up with more than Threshold—I can only think of Trapeze, Timon and Sue Vickers—and the only thing the Rolling Stones have had is Howlin' Wolf, Brian Jones and *Jamming With Edward*, which was awful. If we have the same sort of success as Charisma, I'll be happy, although I think they release too much. I like the way things come out and the way they advertise. We want to break acts, though, and neither Charisma nor Island has broken many recently. We're not going to release anybody unless we think they're going to break.

"I'm still on DJM for two years and I'm very happy with them, despite the disagreement we've had recently; but apart from that, they've always packaged my records and promoted my records in a way that has given me no cause to complain. However, my management contract and my publishing contract are up soon, which has got nothing to do with recording. One of the most disappointing things is that we tried to sign Philip Goodhand-Tait for the States, because no one is very interested there, and we'd love to have him, and possibly get him a producer he could have faith in, because he desperately needs that. When we first started to work with Gus, he was someone to fall back on, and he would tell me if things weren't right. You need someone to tell you how you're doing. But because of all the other things, Dick James said no, and it's a shame, because all Philip wants is a little encouragement, someone to rave about you. It means far more than money."

The Bolan film

"I was only involved with it for about four hours. Marc just asked me to come and jam in the studio. I never do jam, but I thought it might be interesting as I'd never met Ringo before, and I quite enjoyed it. We had a nice afternoon in Apple Studios just playing around. The version of 'Children Of The Revolution' we did is far superior to the single Marc put out, and he knows it, but it would be impossible to edit. That was all I was involved with it, and the next thing I knew about was the premiere. I was very surprised to see my name on the poster, because I was only in it for literally a minute and a half out of ninety-eight minutes, but I was very flattered. It's just a film about Marc."

Films

"I don't want to make a film about Elton John, or do a pop music film. I'd like to do a straight role or a comedy role, but it all depends on the script. A couple of years ago I wouldn't have considered it, but I probably would now. I'd like to branch out a bit, but it's very difficult as you're really on the firing range. I know I could make a good one, but it's a question of timing. I'm more interested in the band at the moment. When I first broke in the States, my company being UNI, which is Universal Films, they sent me the most unbelievable scripts. The first one I read was called *Harold And Maud*, which is brilliant. Cat Stevens eventually did the music for the film. I'd have loved to do that, because it was my sort of humour, but when I saw the film it didn't really come off as well as the script or the book. Otherwise I was offered loads of rubbish, or pop films. I've always tried to stay clear of things with other people, like festivals. I'm always asked to do them, but I'm basically against the idea of festivals, which are a bore, and in this country there's always the weather. I mean, to put a festival on in May, you must be insane. Even in July or August you're taking a risk. And it's always the fans who lose out, never the groups. The whole

thing really depresses me. The only one that was right was the Isle of Wight Dylan one, which was magical. There'll never be one like that again, and after Dylan no one wanted to hear another note of music. I don't want to put English festivals down, but they're a succession of not quite stars, no Jagger, no Lennon, just a succession of popular groups. I think if you're going to have a three-day event, you've got to build it on one name, and have all the other groups down below. So pop films find it hard to be other than a succession of acts. The only one I've enjoyed that I've seen is *Fillmore*. That was more or less a documentary and Bill Graham is extremely funny in it, but the music is really good. It's photographed well, a la Woodstock, but the music is far more exciting, probably because I hadn't seen several of the groups, like Lamb for example, Cold Blood who were brilliant, and Quicksilver who were the hit of the film. The guitarist in Quicksilver played the most incredible things I've ever heard. Their first two albums were excellent, and *Shady Grove* was alright, but the inclusion of Dino Valente seems to have affected their records. Even so he was in the film, and the numbers he did were amazing. The Grateful Dead were abysmal, and the Airplane a waste of time. It was like posing—in fact The Airplane mimed. Can you believe that? I sat there and couldn't believe it. The Grateful Dead played 'Casey Jones' which they always play, but hideously out of tune, and then 'Bye Bye Johnny' which was like The Wild Angels. They're a terribly over-rated band. I really liked their first couple of albums, but when they started doing twenty-eight minute versions of Chuck Berry songs. . . . And then this *Europe '72* triple—let's release a triple album and get an instant gold, because you must get a gold album out of a triple. Actually, Garcia has had a go at me, so I don't mind saying all this. *Working Man's Dead* was their best I think and *American Beauty*, but since then it's a succession of live albums. Then there's all this rubbish written about him being a dedicated musician, and playing all the time.

If he does that, then why doesn't he improve? In the film, Quicksilver put the Dead to death."

The Old Grey Whistle Test

"I watch it sometimes, but it's on at such a ridiculous time. It's a typical BBC attitude—put the slightly intellectual music on BBC2. But what really annoys me is those stupid films they show. You mentioned that in *ZigZag*—that if you haven't got a colour TV, you might as well pack up and go home. I suppose the only good thing about it is that a couple of groups play live, like Focus, but it's a bit boring and predictable. The interview spot is usually embarrassing. You could do a much better programme with a bit of imagination. If we had an educational channel over here, we'd be laughing, because in the States they have say, Cat Stevens, live for an hour. You don't get paid for it, but that doesn't really matter. It's great to get live music. David Bowie was on Top Of The Pops, and even though the bass player made a couple of cock-ups, it was great that they were live on TV again. You get into a rut, worrying about the sound if you play live. But when we watched Ready Steady Go we never worried about that sort of thing—it was just great to see someone playing."

Pop journals

"Apart from *ZigZag*, I read *Let It Rock*, which is the next best one to *ZigZag*. I read them all really, but the weeklies are pretty mundane. *Let It Rock* is about the best of the glossies, but Charlie Gillett's tastes are about the worst in the world, like recommending Marty Robbins. Everyone's entitled to their own opinions, but Marty Robbins! I love the poll in *Let It Rock*, but it must have been difficult to be unbiased. You could see the little favourites coming out. Like The New Hovering Dog, Brian Cole's band, who are great. United Artists seem to have so many good bands, but they can't break them, like Help Yourself, Brinsley Schwartz and Man. If Deep Purple can sell that many records, Man should sell

twice as much. Their latest album sleeve was brilliant. I'd just got my album sleeve, and was all knocked out, and I picked up their album sleeve, put the record on, and then opened the sleeve and freaked out. It was like a stand out book only better. Going back to mags, I think *Cream* is a nonentity. It's over half full of record reviews, and I think record reviews can be boring, if there are too many. There's another good rock'n'roll paper coming from Harrow, which has started a little like *ZigZag* [*Fat Angel*].

"Of all the weekly papers, *Sounds* has probably got the best editorial staff—Steve Peacock, Jerry Gilbert, Penny [Valentine], Martin Hayman. They've moved to Holloway Road which is a terribly depressing area. I know, because I used to live there. Penny's leaving—she says she's not going to work there. [Subsequently P.V. became press officer of Rocket Records.] They're all so brought down about it—I was talking to Jerry Gilbert the other day, and he couldn't believe it. Apart from that, as a publication there's only one thing wrong with *Sounds*, that is, its charts are a week late because it comes out on a Tuesday. They should start doing their own chart, because I sincerely believe that the chart produced by the British Market Research Bureau is a complete and utter joke, although we've done really well with it. They only take it from 300 fucking stores.

"I used to be very hostile to the press, but I think they're generally improving. Even so, *Record Mirror* is dreadful—it's just nothing. They say it's bigger and better this week, but surely it couldn't get any smaller? It's such a con—the layout is horrendous. It's funny to say it, but I don't like the typeface used by *Sounds*, when you look at the *MM*, it seems much more direct. Also I wish *Sounds* would get a better American correspondent, because it's all a mish-mosh and out of date. *Melody Maker* seems to be the best value for money, but I'm not very keen on all those instrument surveys, which seem to be fill-ins. It's like that thing in *Record Mirror*—learn to play a song, or something. Unbelievable. I

think *Disc* is improving—I like John Peel's singles reviews, because I think his and Penny's are the best. He likes things that I do, like Mel and Tim . . . . What else do I read? I find less and less music in *Rolling Stone*. The thing that used to be great about *Rolling Stone* was the *Rolling Stone* Interview, and I've got the bound edition with the Pete Townshend interview, the Keith Richard interview, and even the Jerry Garcia interview was amazing. They did one recently with Carlos Santana, which I gave up halfway through because I was so bored. It's still very pro San Francisco—most of the people they interview now are much less interesting. I used to buy *Rolling Stone* as a music magazine, but it's getting less and less so now. I still love their Random Notes—of all the sort of gossip columns, theirs is the best, because it's factual and interesting, and they seem to dig up news when nobody else does, which is more interesting. I suppose the problem is that there are very few people left around to interview, but I find it difficult to believe. I'd like to see a Robbie Robertson interview [see very old *RS*]."

After this enormous excursion I don't suppose he'll want to see another tape recorder for at least two more albums. Anyway, many thanks to Elton, not only for his time, but for his support.

John Tobler

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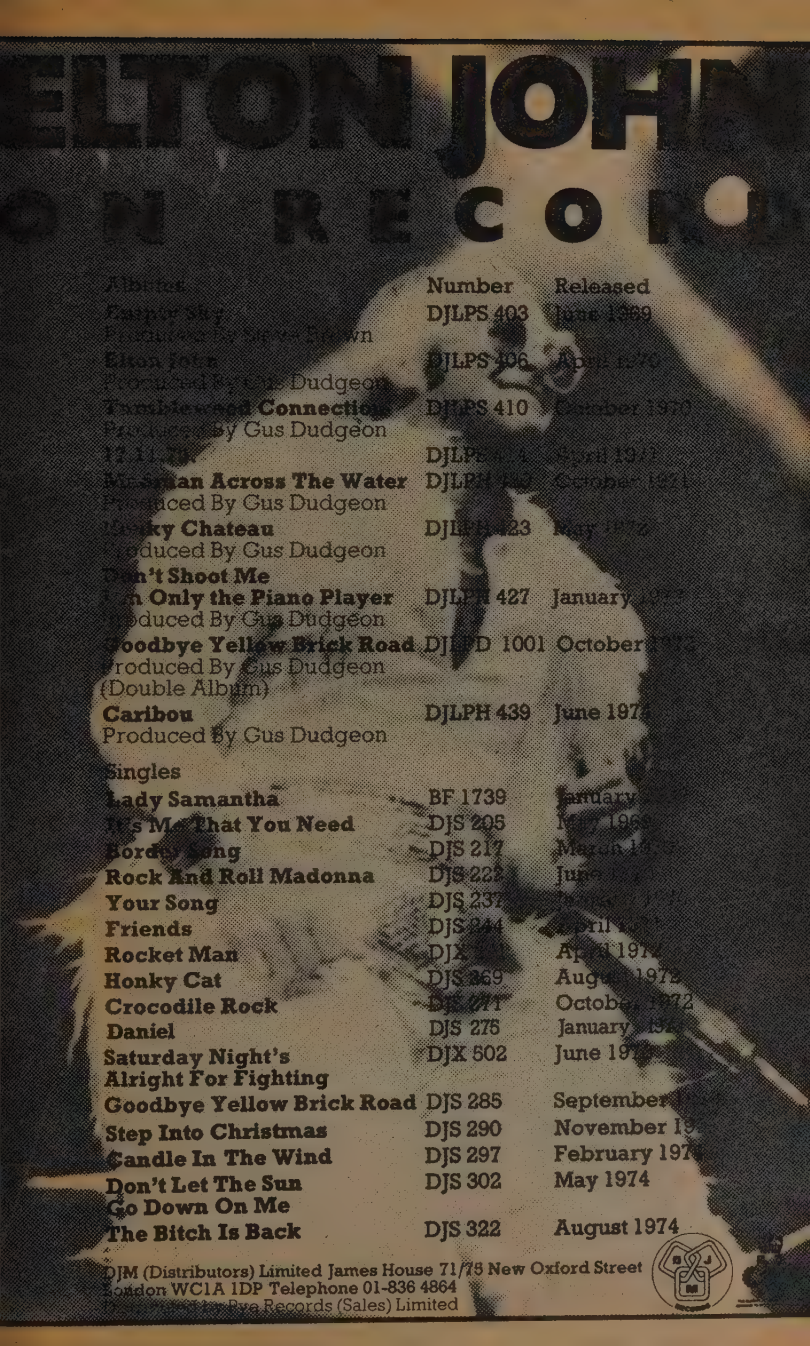

Albums	Number	Released
Empty Sky Produced By Steve Brown	DJLPS 403	June 1969
Elton John Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPS 406	April 1970
Tumbleweed Connection Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPS 410	October 1970
17-11-70 Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPS 414	April 1971
Madman Across The Water Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPH 420	November 1971
Honky Chateau Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPH 423	May 1972
Don't Shoot Me I'm Only the Piano Player Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPH 427	January 1973
Goodbye Yellow Brick Road Produced By Gus Dudgeon (Double Album)	DJLPD 1001	October 1973
Caribou Produced By Gus Dudgeon	DJLPH 439	June 1974

Singles		
Lady Samantha	BF 1739	January 1969
It's Me That You Need	DJS 205	May 1969
Border Song	DJS 217	March 1970
Rock And Roll Madonna	DJS 222	June 1970
Your Song	DJS 237	August 1970
Friends	DJS 244	April 1971
Rocket Man	DJX 501	April 1972
Honky Cat	DJS 269	August 1972
Crocodile Rock	DJS 271	October 1972
Daniel	DJS 275	January 1973
Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting	DJX 502	June 1973
Goodbye Yellow Brick Road	DJS 285	September 1973
Step Into Christmas	DJS 290	November 1973
Candle In The Wind	DJS 297	February 1974
Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me	DJS 302	May 1974
The Bitch Is Back	DJS 322	August 1974

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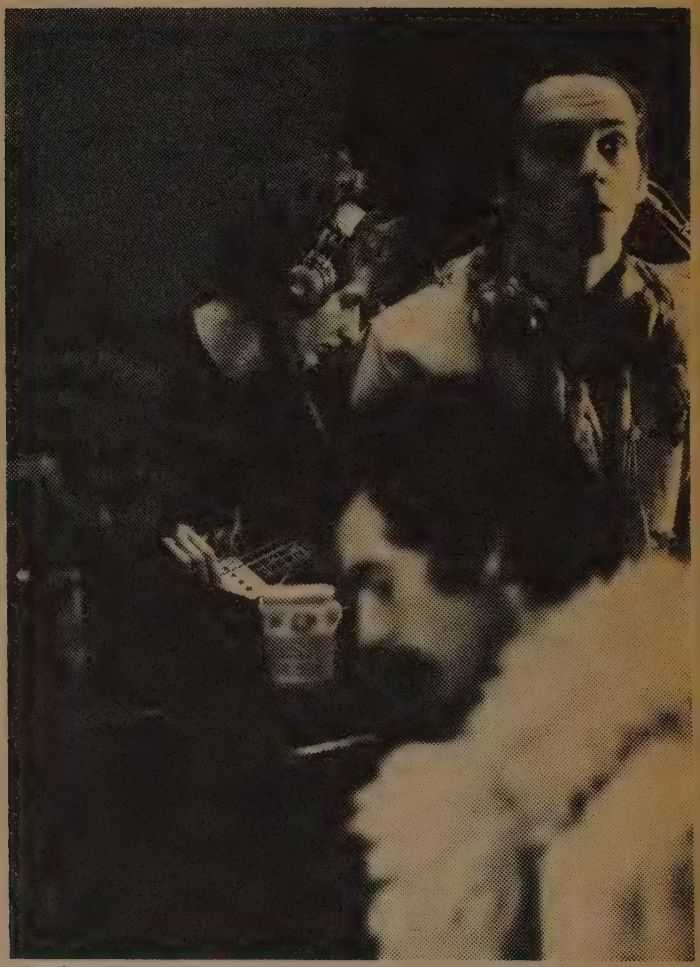

The first Family line-up. From, in the foreground, Jim King (reading clockwise), Rob Townsend, Charlie Whitney, Ric Grech (in headphones) and Roger Chapman.

THIS ARTICLE IS DEDICATED TO TEN MUSICIANS WHO HAVE GIVEN US SOME MARVELLOUS MUSIC AND THEY SHALL BE REMEMBERED AS FAMILY

How do you start to write about Family? It's a bit like trying to explain the finer points of cricket to a Japanese dancer– you know what you want to say, but how do you actually put the words together? Just what the hell does constitute a sweet late cut? So in the worst traditions of waffling I'll just tell you what my reasons are for taking twelve pages of ZigZag to do something on them. Firstly they embody a large hunk of my musical heritage. And what I mean by that is that I have memories of seeing them that are as clear and as strong as an electric shock. And tracks from their albums, and singles have in many ways become the past. And in addition to that, they have reflected many of the musical/showbusiness styles of the period; yet rarely have they let an influence force their music-making into crude mimicry.

From the opening bars of 'The Chase' (remember that half frantic keening) until the last number on *It's Only A Movie*, 'Checkout', they have made six albums of incomparable musical quality. They have made music that is musical without ever being predictable or facile; music that's complex but not

confused and most important of all they have, to my mind, never let their ambition breed self-indulgence. And that's just the music! What about some of Roger Chapman's words? I'll just quote a few lines. They speak for themselves.

A shadow of the evening
Your baby at your side
A sadness that's within you
Your eyes refuse to hide
You lay beside my body
And you love until you cry

Since I've been arguing that they're important because they are interesting at a fossil level and because they made some excellent music, I have to emphasise the importance in both a musical context and an historical one of Roger Chapman's voice. I personally think that of the five great voices that came out of sixties music in Britain—Cocker, Van Morrison, Stewart, Paul Rodgers, and Chapman—Roger Chapman's voice is the best. Great singing is not a matter of attaining pitch, it's a matter of using the voice's tone qualities, and phrasing, to add depth and extra rhythmic firmness to a song—and that Chapman does to perfection. Of how many singers can you say, "The song wouldn't be different without him singing," and I reckon it's bloody nearly all of them. They simply don't use the voice to contribute any musical ingredient—their crutch probably looks inviting, but they don't sing.

The members of Family also happen to be very pleasant blokes. I did interviews with Roger Chapman (who is, with startling originality, referred to as RC in the text) and Charlie Whitney (CW), and I never once got an answer that I felt avoided the issue or I knew to be untrue, and that honesty is a very rare thing in this crazy business of image maintenance and ego preservation.

Finally, I have to say that the real reason—although I didn't know it at the time—why this is so long is that they are splitting up, and it's just a satisfying way to say thank you. So put on the first side of *Fearless* and salute a bloody great bunch of

musicians.

NORMANS

Bands that spend a lot of time together often tend to build up masses of verbal shorthand, that gets refined over years of use into an almost unique language. Family are no exception, and their most famous word is Norman. Typical usage extends from general disapprobation of an activity or person, to more recondite examples, such as refusing an invitation to go out to a club with the disclaimer, "No, my name's Norman." We asked for an explanation.

RC: Oh Lord. We were on a gig somewhere, up in Doncaster—one of those places off the A1 I think. And we left there and we were pretty hungry; and there was absolutely nothing open, only transport caffs, and we stopped at this little place that was just like a wooden shack. So we went in and we weren't allowed to play in the games section because we weren't members—it was called Norman's, and the gaffer was called Norman. Actually, the whole thing was down to Willy Weider—because when the waiter brought the first order of food, Will goes, "Yeah, that's mine," and when we'd all finished, Poli realised that he hadn't got anything, and it rapidly became obvious that Will had eaten both his own and Pol's, and ever since then, to behave in a smiliar manner, has been known as doing a Norman. But it developed into 'a cup of Normans' meaning tea. The tea there was so bad, that the name stuck—the whole place was really grotty, so that now if someone really bugs you he becomes a right Norman.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Family have an engagingly unique way of recruiting new members, and a disarmingly straightforward attitude to departing members. The typical procedure for adding a new member goes something like this: find someone who is a friend, take him out for a few beers, and see how he handles an evening's drinking and cavorting, make sure that, as a

musician, he is sufficiently strong and individual, that he is going to add to the music (rather than most bands' approach which thrives on finding someone who is innocuous enough to fit in with whatever the other members want), and then ask him to join and treat him as an equal. When someone wants to leave, you try to understand his motivation, and wish him all the best, and like with Ken Whetton, you have him back on stage, as Family did at Alexandra Palace. A refreshing and unusual approach.

ZZ: Jim King left in October 1969. How did that happen?

RC: I've only seen him once in the last couple of years, but Charlie saw him on the train coming down from Leicester. He was with his folks heading down to spend a few days in the south. He's not been working much at all. I think he's been ill, but he's coming out of it now. He was great—I hate to say it, but he was doing it before we'd ever thought of it. That was it really—but so was his head, you just couldn't catch up with him at all, that's really why he split.

ZZ: You offered him back his job, didn't you?

RC: No. No, it would never have worked. It's sad really because such a lot of talent went to waste, but his brain stopped ticking over—I think he saw too many bad things, it was as though he had acid in him all the time. He had a down on things all the time; this was shit and that was shit, but in the meantime he still wanted to do it even though he thought it was bad. And he couldn't make up his mind. He was mentally fighting himself all the time; and yet I suppose that's why he played such amazing stuff.

ZZ: Why did Ric leave?

RC: Because he wanted to join Blind Faith—easy as that. Clapton on one hand, Winwood on the other, and Baker at the back. What a temptation. And he couldn't resist it. It was like playing with his musical heroes. And those guys were. Steve had been his favourite since Spencer Davis, but I suppose he's a favourite with most people.

WRITING (AND SINGING) WORDS

ZZ: Did you start writing lyrics before you started to work with Charlie?

RC: Yeah, a bit, but it was a different generation of lyrics, 'Baby, That's Alright'—very different.

ZZ: Why do some of your lyrics rhyme and some don't?

RC: I've no idea—just that it seems to make sense at the time. When you start to put it down you pursue a train of thought and just ramble on.

ZZ: Do you work in the Bernie Taupin tradition of jotting down a lyric and handing it to Charlie to see if he can write anything?

RC: That has been done sure, and it happens the other way too. Charlie has a sequence, and I'll work on the words, or we may do bits and pieces at various times.

ZZ: Is there any special reason why the words that are printed on the sleeve often seem to bear only the most tenuous relationship to what you sing?

RC: I wasn't aware that they did differ all that much. I can remember a track on the live side where I forgot the words and sang the same verse all the way through.

ZZ: You take the words down off the rough mix, don't you?

RC: Yes I do, but sometimes I improvise a bit and forget to change the words that we send off to the publisher, and the other thing is that coming from me they pass through about four or five different pairs of hands, before they finish up on the album, so anything could happen, and very often bloody does.

ZZ: Yes indeed. For some bizarre reason one of the songs on *Family Entertainment* has quotation marks, most odd.

RC: That was probably us throwing moodies in there, so that we can get people like you wondering why we've done it.

ZZ: A lot of your images seem to deal with landscapes, and weather.

RC: Sure, I like working with those images. Don't ask me why. 'Strange Band' is a lyric that I feel very pleased with. It's not

about anything—just this desert, strange people and strange things happening—but in a very lonely way, a very desolate way.

ZZ: I think that three of your most accomplished lyrics recently have been 'Spanish Tide', 'Burning Bridges' and 'Coronation'. Were they written beforehand perhaps, because they have an extraordinary unity and coherence.

RC: 'Coronation' started off as ramblings, and some of that—a couple of verses—was done before, by getting into a certain mood all based around one chord. I can't really play guitar, but I work on chords and they either hit me or they don't, and I got into a Staple Singers kind of thing, with this seventh added on, and the mood of it just set me off. But 'Spanish Tide' was a very bitty thing, Charlie had two or three lines, and probably Ken shoved a few in, and when I got them they seemed maybe a bit too lopsided and I tried to bridge it, but it still was a bit scrappy. 'Coronation' started off from the flat that I lived in, and I was generally in a bit of a blue mood, and those little things build into a ramble and then I can construct them to fit around a sequence.

ZZ: When you write lyrics, do you think of what would sound good or what's got style on its own?

RC: I don't consciously think of singing them but since I'm a singer, I'm pretty sure that anything I write will feel comfortable when I come to sing it. I've never had to rewrite, to make it sing better. I'm writing with my own phrasing in mind anyway.

ZZ: Are there any lyrics that you like especially?

RC: Hendrix—I really like his words. There's a line of his, "Well I stand up next to a mountain/And I chop it down with the edge of my hand"—that's so strong, and there's another one about hippies.

ZZ: 'If Six Was Nine'.

RC: Yeah, what a fantastic song. And what he had is what music is all about, putting allusions into music. All the other people are straightforward choices—The Beatles, Dylan. I love

Dylan's humour, if that's what it is. Leiber and Stoller—the best working class lyrics. Do you know a song called 'Three Cool Cats'? It's beautiful and very simple—three cool cats met three cool chicks walking down the street, eating a packet of potato crisps—and that kind of thing sets me up with an image that I can relate to.

ZZ: Apart from the obvious ones, can you think of any unpardonably bad words?

RC: Oh, quite a few. I ain't into Marc Bolan's lyrics—I think he's unpardonably bad. He's got a lot of bottle though, because I'm sure that he thinks they're unpardonably bad. He isn't stupid enough to write lyrics like that and think they're any good.

MANAGERS

Tony Gourvish, Family's manager—and almost the sixth member of the group, is a good snooker player and a competitive, if erratic golfer. On one occasion on the golf course, after his playing partner—on whom his hopes of victory rested—had hit a particularly bad shot, he turned to him and said, "I don't want to undermine your confidence, but I want to change partners." He had replaced John Gilbert as the band's manager.

ZZ: How did Tony become your manager?

RC: Well actually he was the house-cleaner. Tony came down with us from Leicester because he'd been friends with us up there. We were probably a bad influence on him because we were going down to London and we said to him that he could come down with us if he looked after the house—he'd have his own room, but that was his job, and after a couple of months he was coming on the road and helping us with the kit, and then he started to do work for Gilbert, who was then our manager, and he then became Gilbert's assistant, and it got to the point where we wanted to give Gilbert the elbow, and Tony seemed the logical thing. He was a guy that we could trust. Thinking strictly in managerial terms he probably wasn't the best we could do, but as far as someone we could

work with, and could trust, it was him and he knew a lot about the business by then, and that's what we wanted more than anything—trust, there was so little of it then.
ZZ: What happened when you gave Gilbert the push?
RC: Oh we went through it all. The glossy manager bit trying to sue us for £80,000, and when it finished up I think he owed us two grand. All the usual silly things. It was a big blow to his ego, being blown out by these snotty little Leicester louts. He couldn't believe it.

'BANDSTAND'

ZZ: One of the best tunes on *Bandstand* is 'Coronation' and it's credited to Whitney/Chapman/Wetton. Can you tell me what everybody did?
CW: Ken wrote section two. I wrote the opening part and we got together to write section three, and Roger wrote the words. I find it a lot smoother, more back to *Entertainment* and *Doll's House*, but the biggest thing was that I think we started to get the mixing together.
ZZ: Where did you get that photo that adorns *Bandstand*, where you all look as though you're waiting in a hospital for news of a good friend's brain transplant?
CW: It was taken at Olympic Studios, and there was a lot of hassle because of that, because everyone looked so pissed off.
ZZ: Was the character in 'Burlesque' another dapper type?
RC: I don't think so. I only did half the lyrics on that one and tidied up the rest. That was basically Charlie's idea—the guy wears spats. Rita and Greta were a couple of old rags that Charlie used to get together with at the Burlesque in Leicester.
ZZ: There's a couple of songs on *Bandstand* about very beautiful and superior women—I'm thinking of 'Broken Nose' and 'Glove'. Do you have a fascination with those sort of women?
RC: There's a difference—in one song he pulls, and in the other he gets a punch in the nose. One he scores and one he don't.
ZZ: A very profound difference.

RC: 'Glove' is really about nervousness. He sees his chance and wonders whether he can get it together, and the other is just a young lech, kind of sneering every time she walks by. You know you see them all the time on building sites yelling out.
ZZ: 'The day that I stopped loving you/was the day you broke my nose' is a great couplet.

EXPERIMENTS

Like most bands, Family have at some stage been tempted to try something different in the way of stage presentation, or at least constructing a 'show'. They didn't work for the reasons that Roger and Charlie enunciate.
ZZ: What was the idea behind the Festival Hall concert with jugglers and so on?
RC: It was our first big solo concert and I suppose that we just wanted to try something different. Instead of having a support on, we had this vaudeville thing in the first half. Some of it came off and some didn't. For a first go it was worth doing. It had a boozy feeling—people booed and people cheered—it was like a Mack Sennett film. And the solo spots pinpointed just what everyone in the band did, which we were glad to have done. A lot of people wanted us to do a tour with it, but half the fun was because it was just a once only thing.
ZZ: Now you also worked with The Will Spoor Mime Troupe?
RC: It was just a thing that we got into because Gilbert suggested it, so we gave it a try, but for me they just did mimes to what I would describe as levelled out backing tracks of a couple of our numbers, which on a musical level meant nothing, because that's not what our playing live was all about. It did more for them than it did for the band, we weren't creating at all. I wasn't even part of it—I think I played a bit of harp and that was all. You were just waiting for somebody's cue to come in—it was all very methodical. But we all thought it was quite interesting, but it just wasn't

what we were into. We've got our own theatrics which actually stem from the music. I think that both those experiments showed us that we have to rely on our music to excite, rather than other things. But they weren't experiments really, because we couldn't stretch the music.

CW: It was a Giorgio Gomelsky thing. We were with the Paragon agency at the time and they were bringing these guys over from Holland and they asked if we'd do the back-up for them. We played 'The Breeze' to the leader and he liked that, but they were very strange. Did you see them with all those giant phalluses? A lot of people thought that we were into that kind of thing, but it was a straight business thing. It was the same with drugs—everyone always thought that we took acid all the time, but we're much more of a working class band. Sometimes we'd go down to Middle Earth and they'd look at Roger and say, "He's gotta be on acid . . . he must have taken five black bombers . . .'.

'ANYWAY' AND 'OLD SONGS NEW SONGS'

ZZ: Did you intend the whole of *Anyway* to be a live album, even though one side was cut in the studio?

CW: We did the gig, and it would have meant reissuing old songs like 'Weaver's Answer' again. As it happened, side one of the actual record was nicely filled up by the new songs we had. What we should have done was to record four or five gigs because it could have been really good. Even though some things are good, it could all have been better.

ZZ: Did you choose the Fairfield Halls specially, because just about every musician I know has commended the sound there.

CW: Yes, it has got an excellent sound, but it's a bit like the Festival Hall with all those seats, but the sound is very good. Maybe it's the size of the stage—which is marvellous to work on.

ZZ: Apart from 'Holding The Compass' which is announced as a new song, were all the other songs stuff that you hadn't been doing much before?

CW: They were all one-offs, which is why we should have recorded them on five different occasions, rather than just the first time.
ZZ: Did you pick that painting on the cover?
CW: Sure. Hamish and Gustav brought a book along, but we all thought it was great.
ZZ: Who's this Williamson, who co-wrote 'Strange Band'?
CW: Oh God, that's an oldie. He's an old Leicester friend of ours, more of a friend of Roger really, because he used to play with Roger years ago in 1958. He used to play guitar. At one time Roger used to stay with him when he went to Leicester.
ZZ: He isn't the guy in the song 'Lives and Ladies' is he?
CW: Yeah he is. He's not the salesman. Oh no, he is—you're right.
RC: A lot of that is different now, because no sooner had I written that than they all went to pieces. One left his missus, the other went in the nick.
ZZ: 'Norman's' is about Norman's, right?
CW: Yes, do you want to hear the full story?
ZZ: Roger has told us all about it. Were you influenced by those Zappa records, *Hot Rats* and *Burnt Weenie Sandwich*?
CW: There used to be a guy in Town Records who really used to rave about those records, but I don't think that I was influenced that much by them. I heard them a lot, but I never owned them.
ZZ: How was that remarkable percussion effect on 'Anyway' achieved?
CW: It's like a set of vibes keys, every time you hit a drum, you got a different note. I think they're called something like a Bomm-Boom, but they were in the studio and Poli, being a vibes player, also a drummer, he could well go to town.
ZZ: 'Part Of The Load' seems to suggest that life on the road is a necessary evil but pretty wearing.
CW: You'd best ask Roger that; what I tried to get was a stop-go effect, which I suppose you could describe as like being on

the road.
RC: Well, that was done in an American motel. And over there it's just complete boredom, unless you're superstars, and you go through some very trying times on a long tour of America. It takes all your time just to hang on, and not to argue with people. After four or five weeks everybody gets a little moody, sitting in their rooms for a couple of days, and that was when I was going through one of those periods, trying to mentally pull yourself back. And the way to cope is to say that if you accept this gig, then you have to accept part of the load.
ZZ: Do you find that frustration element a productive starting point for writing?
RC: Sure. Anything like that where you get in a strong mental state—depression, boredom, anger—anything where your brain is not just simply ticking over can be a start.
ZZ: What did you think of *Anyway*?
RC: I liked 'Compass' and 'Strange Band'. But the other two I've never got off on really. 'Good News, Bad News' had power and all that, but if I listen to it I have to fall back on the musical content, instead of taking it for what it is. If I can listen in that way it seems OK, but musically it isn't there. If I listen to those tracks now, I realise how good they could have been, but that's just that couple of extra years' experience speaking.
ZZ: Was there any special process of selection involved with *Old Songs, New Songs*?
RC: We just wanted a well mixed selection of our songs, I suppose. There was a few things that we wanted to do. As I said earlier, if we'd had our way we would have gone in and mixed *Family Entertainment* again—we'd do it now if we had the chance. So we got our hands on 'Don't Look Down' and 'Weaver's Answer' and 'Observations From A Hill' and redid them.
ZZ: Was anything re-recorded apart from the vocals on 'Observation From A Hill'?

CW: I put a couple of guitars on 'Don't Look Down'. There was also a new bass on 'Observations From A Hill' and a new guitar on 'Weaver's Answer'.
ZZ: Why was Ian Ralfini mentioned on the sleeve?
CW: He's been a good lad to us. I think we were the first band that Reprise had, and he became manager of the company just as we joined. They had one small room in Oxford Street at that time and he's always looked on us as his boys.

OTHER MUSICIANS

Perhaps the commonest question ever put to musicians is the one that goes, "What records are you listening to at the moment, and what other musicians have influenced you?" Maybe it is a common question because the answers are always interesting.
ZZ: You were the first to pioneer that abandoned style on stage. You seemed to take that Mick Jagger, Eric Burdon thing a stage further, and then all these guys like Cocker and Stewart came along and made it their trademark. Did that piss you off at all?
RC: Well I think I was the first, but you never like saying that, because it makes you look a bit mean.
ZZ: Do you feel abandon on stage?
RC: Christ, yes. I know that I can get people off on it. I don't think that before I go on, but I've realised that fact because I know I'm pretty strong on stage, and I feel strong on stage; but it's like any musician, somebody gets into a lick, and it's like a big boot up the arse. You take off from it. In a way I'm only doing what people think that, say, a drummer does. A drummer might put in a nice phrase and everybody comes flying in, but from my point of view, I do it vocally. I've always thought of myself as a musician, even though I stood up on the stage and maybe people watch me more, but I always think of myself as part of the group and building with the other musicians, and taking off and interacting with the other guys. So I've never thought of myself as

just standing on the stage being the singer.
ZZ: I saw you at the Rainbow when Beefheart was on, but you didn't say anything. Did you like him?
RC: Yes I did. It was the first time that I'd seen him and I really dug his band, but after about half an hour I'd had enough. He had great presence on the stage. The band with that really straight geezer and the geezer flying on with his guitar, and the crazy drummer and I liked that rhythmic thing they've got, but after half an hour I wanted to go and have a drink.
ZZ: What albums have you really enjoyed recently?
RC: I suppose the most recent has been J.J. Cale, after that I haven't listened to many sounds, because I've been so involved with the new album. But I'm always digging back to the blues—there's certain things that are always there—a bit of Miles. Things that I keep coming back to are *Blonde On Blonde, Electric Ladyland,* Muddy Waters—but I've got quite a few like that. There would have to be some Beatle albums in there. I was influenced totally by American stuff in the early days. Blues, rock'n'roll—I was a complete American music snob—wouldn't look at anything English. Then later there was that amazing spell of British music—Traffic, Hendrix, but there wasn't too much happening before that, except for The Beatles.
ZZ: How about later American bands?
RC: A lot of the stuff that The Byrds did I like. And The Doors too. I didn't like everything that they did but I liked them because they were so strong, Morrison was really strong. The Dead I've only got into recently, after I saw them live at Wembley. I'd never liked what they'd done on record, but after I saw them I felt that now I knew what they'd all been talking about for the last five or six years. When I got there they were just starting up their last number of the first half, and they need like about an hour to get warmed up, and the second half was fantastic; but to get back to influences I think The Byrds most of all, I know

they influenced Charlie a lot with McGuinn's twelve string. But as far as my influences, vocally, go, it will always be people like Ray Charles or Jerry Lee Lewis who still blow me out.

ZZ: Your favourite guitarists in the *NME* poll were Clapton, Bo Diddley and . . .

CW: Gotta be Chuck Berry . . .

ZZ: Yes, it was. Yet you've never sought to emulate them in Family.

CW: Well I'd like to think that I do, but maybe I don't. They're really the musicians who have impressed me. But it's so difficult. I could name you fifty guitarists who are all brilliant.

'MUSIC IN A DOLL'S HOUSE'

ZZ: What about Dave Mason's role as a producer?

CW: We'd met him when we did our first single, because he played on it. Now when we came to do *Doll's House*, Jimmy Miller was producing us, but he began to get involved with The Stones—*Beggar's Banquet*—and I think he and Dave got together and Dave decided that he would like to take over producing the album, so he did. He had lots of ideas. For example, 'Voyage', all those feedback violins were his idea—backward Mellotron. You must remember that style was the thing for that time. A lot of people say that the album was over-produced, and I agree that for 1973 it sounds over-produced, but for 1967, I think he was doing something that was valid for then.

ZZ: Were the 'Theme From' interludes his idea?

CW: No, that was our old manager's idea, Gilbert.

ZZ: Miller was credited with co-production on a couple of the numbers. Was that the extent of his contribution?

CW: More or less, he became involved again, in the sense that he was with us in the studio, when we did the mix. I think he mixed 'The Chase'.

ZZ: Was there a lot of difference between what you had played when you were The Roaring Sixties, and what you

played when you became Family, at Kim Fowley's suggestion I think it was?
CW: That's right—it was his idea. The big difference was that we began to write. Up till then we'd take old blues things and rearrange them. I'd always had the flash that I could write, but I could never get it out; once we'd started, it was like diarrhoea.
ZZ: Roger was credited as playing sax on the album. Did he do much?
CW: Not really. He never thought of himself as a sax player. His playing was very much a means to an end, because when the soul band vogue grew up—James Brown—it was nice to have two saxes, so we went along to Roger's building site and said to him, "Do you want to join the band, but you've got to play the sax?" and he said OK. It wasn't a problem because Jim sang, and Ric sang, so there could be three voices, or Ric and two horns, or any mixture of that.
RC: It was on '3x Time' when we added some piano, and two honking out of tune saxes—well that's me.
ZZ: How did the combinations of styles evolve on '3x Time'?
CW: That was actually how it was written.
ZZ: Now, wasn't that album the first to be released in stereo only?
CW: No. I think there was a mono version, but it had to be pulled out because it was so bad. It kept jumping the grooves, so they withdrew it. There was some interesting things on the mono version, because in those days when you did the final overdubs to a song, since it was only four tracks you had to do your final overdubs—say a few bars of guitar—while they were actually mixing. So the guitar bits were different from mono to stereo, and some of it was much better on the mono mix. I think it was on 'The Chase'.
ZZ: Was 'The Chase' an attempt to compare relationships between men and women to a bloodsport?
RC: Not really. It was just a hard luck love story. A chick who does a naughty on the geezer. It's not a general picture,

just that one type.
ZZ: 'Voyage' seems to suggest the outer extremes of tripdom.
RC: I know, but it never was intended to be like that. It was done when Charlie and I first started to write and I was going through a lot of changes, from working on a building site to being in a group, and a lot of it was random, so it may have seemed to be drug suggestive, but it wasn't.
ZZ: What about the concert that you did at that time?
CW: It was going to be a tour. Tim Hardin just couldn't do it. It's a real shame but he just couldn't do it. Apart from that tour which never happened, it was always things like Portsmouth Birdcage and a few gigs at all these little psychedelic clubs.
ZZ: Steve Miller was in the studio at the same time, wasn't he?
CW: Yeah, but we didn't do much together. We'd go in and have a listen and they'd come in and listen to us, but that was it—we didn't know them very well. By the time that we came to do the second album, Glyn Johns had just finished doing . . . *Sailor* was it?
ZZ: Yes.
CW: Well he brought the acetate round here and played it, and there was that incredible instrumental at the beginning.
ZZ: Did you feel that people were maybe a little surprised when you did a song like 'Mellowing Grey', when your image had always been fairly violent?
CW: Well we never did 'Mellowing Grey' on stage, so the contrast wasn't as clear as you suggest. We'd have loved to have played it on stage, but we never did.
ZZ: Did Dave Mason 'persuade' you to do his song, 'Never Like This'?
CW: That again was a Gilbert thing. He suggested that we do one of Dave's songs. And Dave got it together. It ended up a bit like we were the session men to his song. We never got involved with it really.

ZZ: Whose idea was it for Ric to do the vocal on that?
CW: It isn't Ric.
ZZ: Really. I could have sworn it was.
CW: No, that's Roger, and the high voice on 'Peace Of Mind' and '3x Time' was Jim King. Jim was a very good singer. When we did it live, Roger probably sang the whole thing, which is why you thought it was him.
ZZ: Was there any argument as to where people should go in the Doll's House on the cover?
CW: No. That was another Gilbert trip. We were really naive you know. If he said to me now that I was going to dress up in a red pyjama suit with a bowler I'd tell him to get lost, but then we were five greenies down from Leicester, so we said, "Sure, Mr Gilbert".
ZZ: Why up to *Fearless* are you called John Whitney?
CW: My nickname has gradually taken me over. It's an old Leicester nickname since I was about twelve. Only my parents call me John now.
ZZ: Whose idea was the metronome on 'The Breeze'?
CW: Dave Mason's, but it wasn't a metronome—it was a drumstick on the side of a snaredrum.
ZZ: Were you aware of the sophistication in the music?
CW: Not really. We just went in and did it.

DOWN TO LONDON

After years of working around Leicester and points north, Family arrived in London to break into the big time. Contrary to the impression that may be gained from the music that was made during the period, the actual musicians were the only novel element around. The business side was still run by sharp agents, publishers and promoters, although there were some notable exceptions. To be successful still meant drinking in traditional music biz haunts, clinching deals in cigar-smoke infested offices, and paying severe obeisance to the gods of Tin Pan Alley. And that world was in London.
ZZ: As the Farinas, what sort of material were you playing?

RC: When I joined it became two saxes, lead, bass and drums. We did blues, sort of Ray Charles material and then we grew into doing soul. We played mainly in colleges and clubs which we booked ourselves, and we had an agent in Manchester. We worked for about £30 a night. But as soon as we got this manager he was getting us £60 to £70 a night.
ZZ: What was it like to come to London? Was it a big upheaval?
RC: Well it didn't happen overnight, because we had started to work down here a bit more, and by that time we had a new manager—John Gilbert—and we were all ready to do our album. We'd done a couple of gigs at the UFO at the Roundhouse, after the one in Tottenham Court Road closed, and we got very good reviews. Now, also at that time we'd just started to write our own material—we would still do a couple of blues songs—but the change in our stuff happened at the same time that we started to work down here more.
ZZ: You must have recorded the single on Liberty at about this time.
CW: We were still living in Leicester and we were coming down to work with Jimmy Miller. Roger and I had written a couple of things, nothing really serious, just silly things. We came up with one side, and the other was just a straight blues. It was Family and Traffic on that record, because all members of both bands played. It was done at Olympic on four-track. The titles were 'Scene Through The Eye Of A Lens' and the other was called 'Gypsy Woman'.
RC: Yes. It's funny that you should mention it, because we were in the studio a few weeks ago, and George Chkiantz, our engineer, was bringing the tapes up from downstairs, and he'd found it downstairs, and we had a listen to it. It wasn't bad at all.
ZZ: But you didn't get carried away by being in London?
RC: No, we were very staid in them days. We'd been on the road for some time, and we'd been fairly popular from Newcastle down to Leicester, so in a sense we'd been through most

of it—it was more a business decision to come down—to get contacts and so on.

STARS OF 'GROUPIE'

It was a natural result of the underground scene into which Family found themselves pitched, that documentation of some description would not be long in arriving, and one of its first manifestations was the book *Groupie* by Jenny Fabian. It is a grippingly frightful account of the musicians that the author seduced/had an affair with, or in her own inimitably awful prose "had a scene with". Writing with all the grace of a mutant elephant, Miss Fabian details her relationships with Syd Barrett of the Pink Floyd, Jeff Dexter, someone in the Fugs, members of The Nice, and of course, Family, cunningly called Relation. Most of her encounters with the band take place in their London house and the two members of the band who figure prominently are Ric Grech, and Tony Gourvish, then their personal manager, and now their fully fledged manager.

ZZ: I think that we are getting to the stage where we are going to have to talk about *Groupie*. Her picture of the house . . . .

RC: That was a good house. In Lots Road in Chelsea it was. Gilbert lived around there so it was OK by us. London was just London—we didn't know the difference between one bit and the other. It was a big house and we just lived in it, it wasn't like we came down to London and hired a house like what was in the book, although I suppose that it might have turned into that when we started to meet some people and started socialising a bit. It was bloody funny because everybody had a little number in their own rooms.

ZZ: Was it an accurate picture of Ric and Tony?

RC: Well I don't know about their relationships with Jenny. I think it was exaggerated a bit, but from the flashes that I got it seemed fairly accurate. Tony used to have this room—tiny—with a huge mattress that filled the room. When you

entered you stepped straight onto the mattress, and he had a sink hanging over the end. Of course, he had the tele, so everyone used to gather in there.
ZZ: I wasn't thinking so much about his personal life but Tony emerges as a fairly amusing, high speed kind of bloke, racing around like crazy.
RC: I remember that Jenny used to ring up on a Sunday afternoon and old Tony would be a bit out of it, and she'd ask if she could come over and he'd go, "Yes if you bring me some drugs—if you haven't got any drugs, don't come over." But I think she enjoyed it, or at least they knew where they stood towards each other.
ZZ: She wasn't a real groupie though, was she?
RC: No. She was just a part of that whole underground scene—but she certainly wasn't what I call a groupie.

'FEARLESS'
ZZ: Who did the brass arrangements on the album?
CW: Roger Ball from the Average White Band.
ZZ: Didn't he get a bit pissed off at playing some of it—like that brass band stuff on 'Sat'dy Barfly'?
CW: That wasn't him on that track. It was just some guy who played the tuba. He played on 'Take Your Partners' and 'Save Some For Thee'.
ZZ: Was the co-production credit on *Fearless* because of George Chkiantz' growing involvement?
CW: His involvement has been pretty much the same all along, but he does a good job, and we just thought that it would be a nice one to give him the acknowledgement.
ZZ: Why does John Wetton get credited with "guitars, vocals, contracts and keyboards"?
CW: When he joined he had so many contracts, he had a law suit going on with his old band and God knows what else about this and that, so it was just a joke about all the legal stuff he was going through at the time.
ZZ: The cover by John Kosh is amazing, as is his work on

Bandstand. Have they ever won any awards?
CW: I think they both won awards. A lot of people complained at the time that it was wasteful, but we liked it, and it all came out of our money. The American one was better because it was on better paper and the design was printed more accurately. There was a lot of fuss. He went bananas because the design on the edge didn't line up, he really went mad.
ZZ: It seems to me that your last two albums (*Fearless* and *Bandstand*) were in a way, the culmination of what I've always regarded as Family's style, which uses a very broken structure to the songs, and employs a lot of pauses in the instrumental notes to give it that 'fractured' feel. Do you think I'm talking rot, or have you been aware of the development of that style?
CW: I'm not really aware of it. I don't consciously think of two verses here, middle and an end—I don't see things as that, I see them in sections. What worried me about the time of 'Song For Me' and 'Anyway' was that there was a lot of moods but there was nothing anchoring it. So I've tried to get some basic rhythmic thing anchoring it and the top things can go through all their trips.
ZZ: You would also seem to be getting into sound effects judging from what I've heard of the new album.
CW: I've always been into that. Things that have really impressed me have been songs like 'Tomorrow Never Knows' and a couple of things that The Byrds did. [Maybe 'CTA 102' or 'The Lear Jet Song'.] If there's ever a chance to do that type of thing I'll be into it.
ZZ: Is 'Sat'dy Barfly' a dapper lad about Leicester?
RC: No, it's a dapper 1958 spade driving around Chicago, more than Leicester. I really dig all that Coasters stuff—their imagery. Finger popping stud with a big car. That thing about spats is that they're dapper, not now so much. Maybe it was Leicester because I remember the guys we used to knock about with—mohair suits and a couple of chicks on

the game.

'FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT'

ZZ: When you came to make *Family Entertainment* you must have felt that you would do things differently having accomplished *Music In A Doll's House*?

CW: Certainly we did. We hadn't known too much about making albums, and I suppose that the biggest feeling was that we had made all the songs in little blocks, and now we wanted to have a few blows—stretch out a bit. Another thing was that Gilbert had got Glyn Johns to engineer it, and he wasn't too keen on working with Dave Mason, which left us to work with Glyn on our own. Gilbert had pissed off to Rome to do a film or something. After we'd recorded it we went off to Scotland or somewhere, and when we got back, Gilbert came round to the house with the acetate, and we were meant to have done the mix! We just played it and he mixed it.

ZZ: Yet you didn't give him the elbow for some time after that.

CW: Wasn't for the want of trying.

ZZ: 'Second Generation Woman' seems very feeble to me.

CW: On reflection the backing track does seem a bit weak, but it was Ric's song and he was into his Dylan thing. It's very hard to say about these decisions. 'Observations' is my song and Jim King singing it is a joke—I think it's terrible. He was a good singer, but it was all wrong. That was a terrible mistake.

ZZ: 'Summer '67' is a great song, but it differs from all those songs that tried to evoke that mood by being almost Arabic rather than Indian.

CW: That's interesting what you say, because the real reason that it wasn't Indian was because I'm not that good a sitar player to play it, so I used strings. But the idea came from a tape I'd heard of Ravi Shankar with the All India Orchestra which was unbelievable.

ZZ: What was Nicky Hopkins like?

CW: He's very good to work with. He'll walk into the studio

and you'll play him the back track and he'll ask what key it's in, and he'll get a piece of paper and he'll go, "Right, A minor," he'll get all the bars together, figure the whole thing out and he's away. It's frightening. To have that kind of ear. But actually Glyn brought him in—he really is fantastic. We didn't have to ask him to re-do stuff, because he did exactly what we wanted straight away.

ZZ: Is that a mandolin, or a banjo on 'Dim'?

CW: A banjo, speeded up—I played it.

ZZ: Is 'Processións' the only number that you've ever written without the collaboration of other guys?

CW: No. There's been a few. How that came to be put down solely to me I don't know. There are some songs that Roger wrote completely, where I would just put in a chord or something, and there'll be songs that I write, and he only writes a bit of lyric. But usually we just put it down as Whitney/Chapman.

ZZ: What's that 46 in 'Dim'?

RC: It's three doors away from 40, which was our house in Lots Road and the other lads were 46.

ZZ: It sounds like the 46th position from the A-Z of Spanking.

RC: Yes, it could well be that too. There was a bit of lechery down there. We were always in and out of the two houses.

CW: Christ yes. They used to run the electricity from our house to their house over the roofs.

RC: They used to have about three tents in the living room, didn't they?

ZZ: Was 'The Weaver's Answer' about anyone in particular?

RC: No it was a story, and I don't really understand how I got that together. I was working frantically, beating out my brains, to get it written out. And the next day we were going to Hull in the van, and I finished it during the journey. I never had to do any more work on it.

THE BREAK UP

Of all the recent splits, and partings that seem to have fallen on

the business like a summer stormcloud, the news that Family were to break up came as the saddest, and yet as the most promising, because there can be no doubt, on the evidence of their last three albums, that the fierce streak of originality that has characterised all their music is still in full flow. What is sad, I suppose, is that they had to dismantle such a richly productive ensemble, because of the public's indifference; what is heartening is that the elements have not been lost.

ZZ: Do you plan to go back to the States this year?

RC: No, because we're going to split soon.

ZZ: What! You mean split up. That's terrible.

RC: Well we want to spread out a bit. We've been committed to it for so long—especially me and Charlie and Rob as well. All our commitments have always lain in Family, and we feel we have to commit ourselves to ourselves a bit more. I wake up every day and I think, "What's Family going to do?"

ZZ: Do you think that if you'd been more successful, you might have got the space to relax a bit?

RC: I think we're in a bit of a lethargic state at the moment. We dig gigging together and we have some really nice gigs together, but Tony has got his production thing and Jim's got his things with Linda, and we've got Family which isn't working and the business senses it. The music is still there, but for four years we've stayed the same, and haven't overcome the hassles whatever they are—not musical, but the other ones. We've always been six people, Tony Gourvish being the sixth, because he isn't like a ten percent manager, and in the business where groups are such a big business that is a very freaky situation. We've made ourselves a little bit of an island, and we aren't able to get into the other part of it. It's a bit like England is to Europe—there's this little stretch of water that keeps them apart.

ZZ: I think the old creative punch is still there.

RC: Oh sure. But we want to go to America. We don't want to go in style. We just want to go there and play, and we can't, which is stupid. We had the tour, and nobody to back us,

and without that backing you can't afford to do it. It costs a lot of money—and that's the frustrating state we've been in for four years.
ZZ: But then again, if success comes too easily, it can have a disastrous effect, because a band like The Faces have dried up as far as I can tell, and that's made their music successful.
RC: But they're only playing to an image—I don't think they play on a musical level, and I think that they'd be the first to admit it. But we've always been determined to play good music.

'A SONG FOR ME'

ZZ: I must say that *A Song For Me* is Family's least interesting album. Was it because maybe you had a lot of problems producing it yourself?
CW: We were learning, and I think that we still are learning about sound and the techniques of recording. So I do think that album was thin for a lot of reasons; one, the mix is not too hot. Two, Will Weider as a bass player was a bit too far up the neck, and doesn't anchor it too well.
ZZ: Do you attribute some of the problems to Jim King being replaced by a totally different set of instruments—vibes and piano?
CW: It's really hard to say this without being too knocking, but that album was done as a three-piece—Will Weider, Rob and me. Jim King did not play on any track. We put the backtracks down as a three piece, which is not a good idea anyway, and he'd come to do his overdubs and he was just getting worse and worse. He just could not get it together—no way. So in the end we just had to say, "OK Jim, that's it". And we got Poli in and he had to put his overdubs to our backtracks which is not too good. There's things on the album where we had flute on and it would obviously have been better if it had been soprano sax or a tenor. If the songs had been written with him in mind, or he'd have rehearsed with us, the songs wouldn't have turned out like that.

ZZ: Yes, on one track, Roger sounds as if you recorded him out on Richmond Common.
CW: 'Stop For The Traffic'.
ZZ: Right. That was another symptom of the troubles, I take it?
CW: I can't believe that track. I think it's terrible.
ZZ: Was Bradgate Bush set up so that you could get a piece of the action.
CW: Yes. We set that up with Tony when we split from John Gilbert.
ZZ: Is it a part of Leicester?
CW: Bradgate Park is in Leicester, and Shepherds Bush because Will Weider is from there. It could just as well have been called Shepherds Park.
ZZ: Can you say a bit about the dedications?
CW: They're all pretty odd. We know who they are, but I'm not sure if you'd be interested. It's all Leicester folklore. There's a guy who was a heavyweight boxer who knocked out Joe Erskine in the first round, so he was like the King of Leicester at the time. Len Glover was a Leicester winger, who was the local star at the time. Jenny is Jenny—the famous Jenny. There's a couple of queers who run a hotel in Plymouth. The Boss and his missus of the local snooker hall in Leicester, my mum and dad, just old friends and heroes.
ZZ: There are two little couplets on the cover of *A Song For Me*. Do they have any significance?
RC: I used that later in 'Children'. At that stage, it was just like a bit of a poem.
ZZ: It seemed a bit odd at the time because most people would think that if a child came near you, you'd bite its head off.
RC: I like kids and it was jealousy as much as anything, because I often wish I was back there.
ZZ: Why did you do *A Song For Me* as a long end piece, because you'd always managed without one before.
CW: We'd always played it live. Not that, but that song evolved from 'How Many More Years', a Howlin' Wolf number.

We'd always played that live from Family 66 to then. It sort of evolved. There's a particular riff to 'How Many More Years' which we gradually changed, and Roger changed the lyrics, so it became the last blow number on a gig. I don't think that the recorded version worked too well.
ZZ: You don't seem to play banjo in a normal way, which I always think of being very percussive, almost bluegrassy.
CW: Well I can't play banjo that well. It's really a guitar banjo. You play it like a guitar and it sounds like a banjo—a trick really.
ZZ: Where does the title '93's OK J' come from?
CW: That's the name of the house where we lived. Willy and myself. 93 Oakley Street in Chelsea, which used to be known to us as OK Street.

AMERICAN TRAUMAS

Success for an artist can mean many different things—the opportunity to continue making music which is satisfying, getting that music appreciated by as wide an audience as possible, enjoying the leisure to forge new material, or at its crassest level, making lots of money.

And while by most of these standards, Family have been successful, it has been a Pyrrhic success because it has eluded them in the USA. Why, remains a mystery, for the band have everything that is needed to become widely appreciated in the States: tons of good material, an exciting stage act, and mystique. And the irony of it is that they probably will be successful after the Americans have lost the chance to enjoy them live. Still, it's their loss.
ZZ: The book ended with the band going off to America for that disastrous tour. Can you tell me what happened?
RC: Well, Ric split, which created a few difficulties, but we were there for about eight weeks, and we had a few nice gigs; what really ruined it was the disaster on the first gig, because we got an elbow at the Fillmore. We had a row with Graham, and although he didn't actually go round putting the heavy

word out about us, he was such a force in those days, that a lot of other promoters took their lead from him, and after the row, he raced down to the front and took all our publicity material down. And all the business people who had come to see us at that gig, who normally, if it had gone all right, would have helped us, got put off. I'm sure he didn't do it maliciously—he just ain't that sort of guy—he's hard, and a very good businessman, but he wouldn't do something like that. He isn't vindictive—just very hard.

ZZ: How did the row flare up?

RC: I was doing one of my numbers with the mike, and he'd just arrived at the side of the stage to see the last number and it came as a complete shock to him. It was like someone jumping on your back in a dark passage—even if it's a friend, you react, and it just blew his head off, and he raced down the corridor and started ripping posters down.

ZZ: How did it affect your subsequent tours?

RC: Not much I don't think. The tour that we did after that one, we did some dates for him and he would come up beforehand and hint that there wasn't to be any moving of the mike stand—which created a few problems for me, because it took me mind off singing, since I had to remember not to do it. And during the last tour with Elton John, he came up to me and asked me about it. He said, "Every time I read about you I read that there's this thing going on between you and I," and he begrudgingly added about the gig, "Very good," which was nice of him.

ZZ: Is it as important as everyone says to succeed over there?

RC: Yes, it's everything. But I don't know why we didn't take off. We were going to do a tour with Deep Purple recently, but we hardly got any support from the record company, so we had to pull it out. *Bandstand* did quite well—about 180 in the charts—and we were building up quite a good following—it wasn't huge, but it was there—DJs like us, probably because we haven't been big live over there, and they've heard a few tales about us, so that since they like the music and there's a

bit of an aura it could have helped. But you have to go out on the road—especially a band like us. It's the only way to get through to the audience, it doesn't really matter what people in the business think of your records, you've got to give the audience something.

FRIENDS FOREVER

Family radiate—and it is the corniest thing that you could ever read—a true Family feel, as I hope our photos and conversation reflect. The overriding impression that one gets from meeting and talking to them, and watching them in the dressing room after a gig, is of an extraordinary closeness between them all. And that feel must have accounted for something—although I don't know what—in the music. And although the band is to break up, it will still be there in the future.

ZZ: What's the tie-up between you and Linda Lewis?

RC: She was on Warners too and things weren't working out too well for her, and then Tony asked us if we'd mind if he managed Linda and we thought it would be a good thing for him to have a sphere outside of us, and we had known Jim before that, because he used to play with Poli, and Jim and Linda's relationship was there, and then Ken left, so Jim joined because he was a friend, and the whole thing seemed to have grown closer naturally, it just grew up. And she's also on our label, Raft.

ZZ: There seems to be this feel to a lot of what the band does —a real Family.

RC: Yes it's like what I said earlier—we're a little island stuck in the middle of this amazing business, which on balance has been a great thing—a terrific source of strength.

Connor McKnight with help from Al Clark

Issue 34, September 1973

The final line-up of Family. Clockwise from Tony Ashton (wearing cap at the rear), Roger Chapman, Jim Cregan, Charlie Whitney, Rob Townsend.

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