

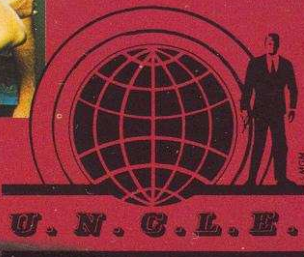
STRANGE THINGS

are HAPPENING

Volume 1 Number 4 September/October 1988

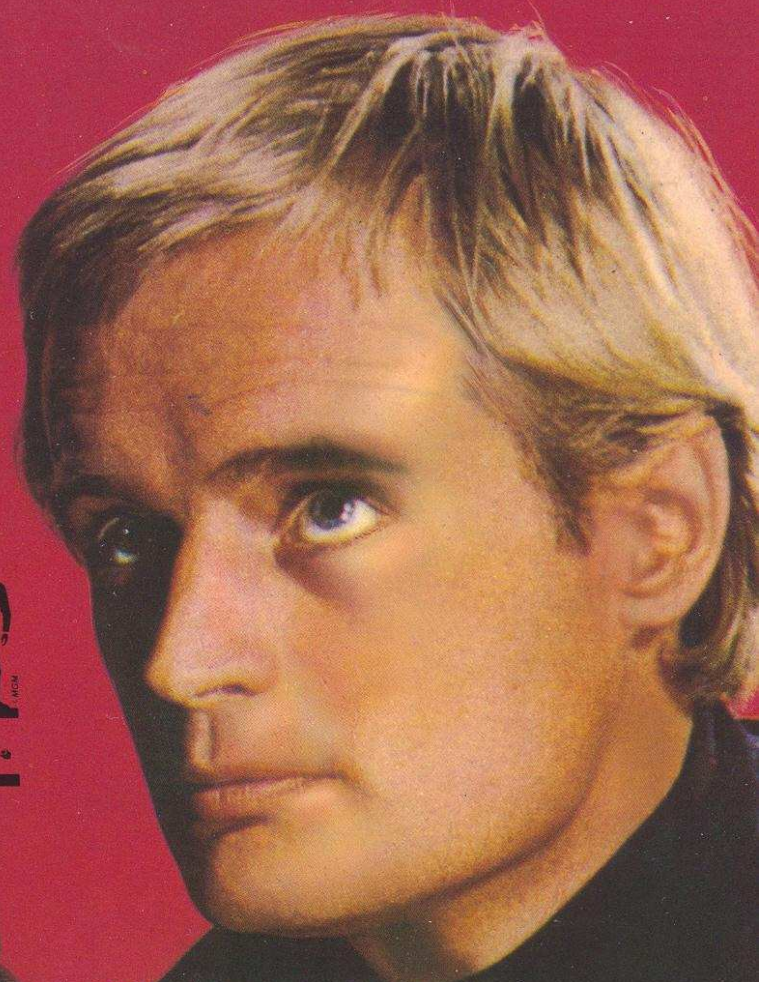


**MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.
VAN MORRISON & THEM**

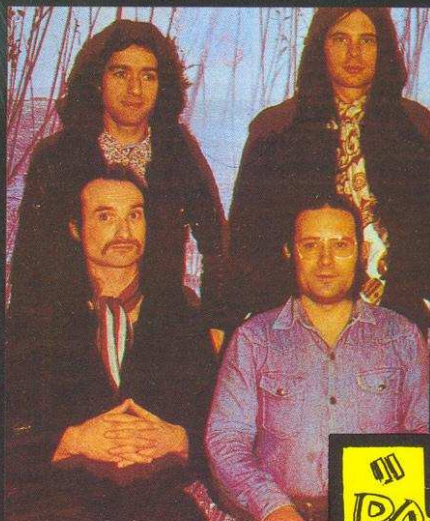


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JOHN FAHEY
SYD BARRETT
FIERCE
AND
MORE**

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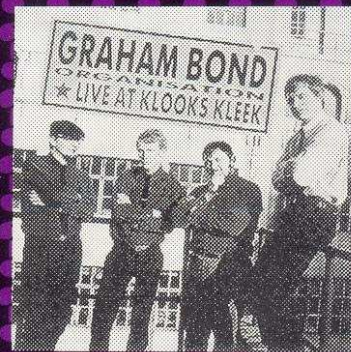
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Volume 1, Number 4, September/October 1988

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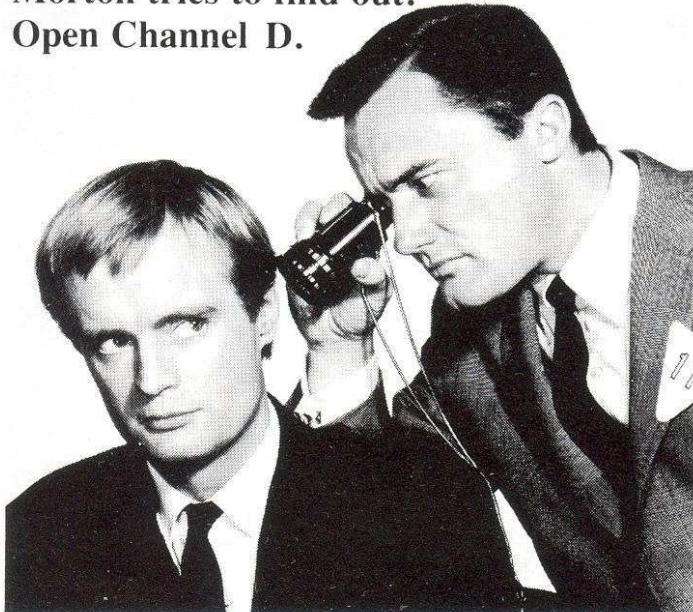


THE POPLAR COUNCIL GOES TO PRISON, LED BY AN IRISH FIFE AND DRUM BAND, 1921.

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The arresting theme tune, the cinematic pace, the developed characters, the pen communicators – what made *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* so appealing? Jack Morton tries to find out. Open Channel D.



On September 22, 1964, NBC TV screened 'The Vulcan Affair', the first episode of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* It's doubtful they foresaw the show's popularity, which was as meteoric as its sudden fall, which would be some three years later when it was cancelled midway through its fourth season.

The original idea was conceived by Norman Felton, a TV producer at MGM who's credits included *Dr. Kildare*. According to Jon Heitland's recent book on the U.N.C.L.E. series, Felton used two basic inspirations for a new show which would somehow involve spying. The first was Alfred Hitchcock and his classic films; *The 39 Steps*, or, especially, *North By Northwest*, where the key is the involvement of an innocent character, who some-

how stumbles into intrigue by accident. The second source was Ian Fleming, but strangely it was not his James Bond titles which provided the idea, but rather his travel tome *Thrilling Cities*, where Fleming recalled parts of the globe he'd seen as a secret service agent. Somehow, thought Felton, these two threads should connect.

Then he 'discovered' the Bond books and indeed met Fleming on several occasions. The two then fleshed out Felton's basic premise; Fleming contributed a name, Napoleon Solo (as well as another, April Dancer, which would resurface later), but by June 1963, the author dropped out as conflicting pressures were brought to bear. Instead, Felton teamed with Sam Rolfe, who in turn



U. N. C.

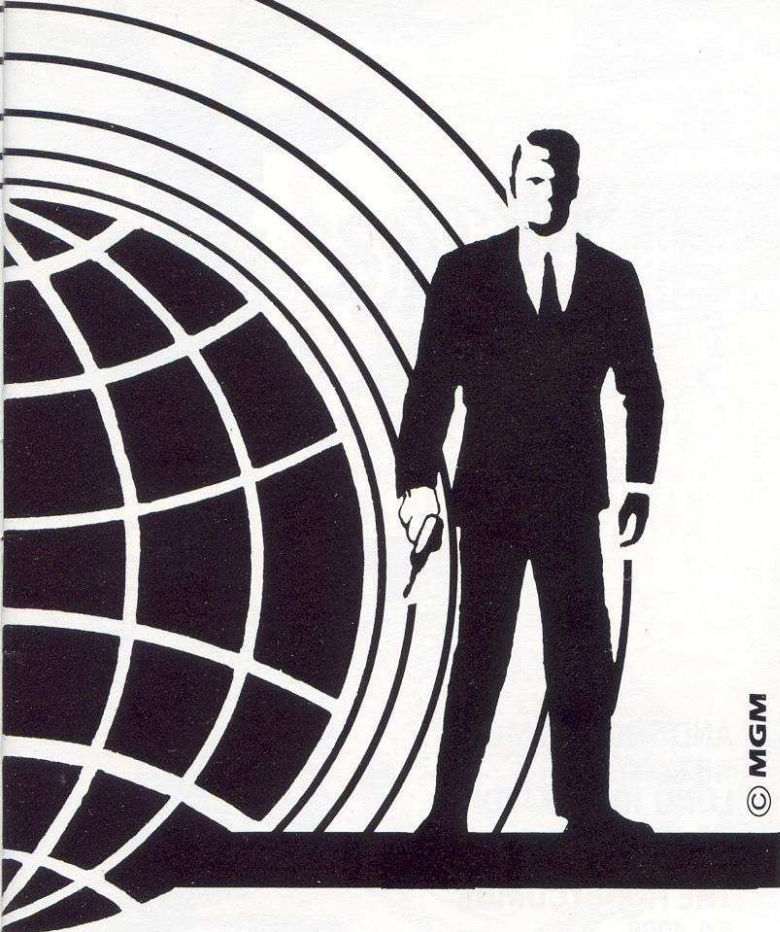
developed the established basics and began building up the entire concept. Napoleon Solo was to be an agent for U.N.C.L.E., a multi-national force; THRUSH, non-assigned but evil, was created as their nemesis. Over the weeks the ideas developed, a second character was added, Illya Kuryakin (Russian to enforce U.N.C.L.E.'s political impartiality), while a Mr. Waverly was given overall control.

Casting began – Robert Vaughn and David McCallum took the Solo and Kuryakin roles, while a lasting link with Felton's first inspiration, *North By Northwest*, was found in Leo J. Carroll, who'd played a chief of operations in that film. Indeed, his paternalistic role in both was almost interchangeable. Carroll, however, was not the first choice for the head of U.N.C.L.E.; Will Kuluva had played the role during the pilot, but his scenes were later recut.

Although created before the Bond films ascendancy, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* was screened just as the spy genre exploded. Yet U.N.C.L.E. was more than a caper. The 'hapless innocent' feature worked perfectly and brought with it an immediate identification. The smooth Solo and more angular Kuryakin proved excellent foils; although an air of tongue-in-cheek filtered through the scripts (the sleep dart guns, the secret entrance through a tailor's shop), it didn't muddle the action and the 60s air of irreverence may help account for the show's appeal.

Within weeks of its first episode, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* soared in popularity, and by mid-1965 even summer re-runs hit viewing highs. The two principal actors were suddenly idolised, especially McCallum. His Illya character, once firmly a support role (the series was originally entitled 'Solo'), was elevated to co-star. His fringe, the black clothes, the mock-Moscow accent, the unconventional approach – McCallum was suddenly worshipped. *16 and Tiger Beat* ran





U.N.C.L.E.

The Dick Van Dyke show. In the UK even Alma Cogan was caught up in the euphoria, when she cut 'Love Ya Illya' as Angela and the Fans'.

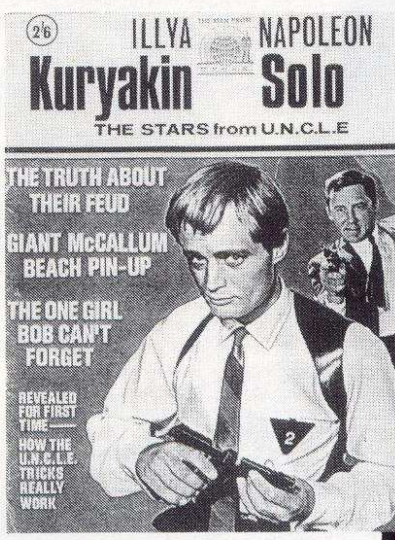
The second series, in colour, maintained the standard of the first, even if Sam Rolfe was not now directly involved. Still not overtly serious, the mix of drama, suspense and light entertainment was again perfectly balanced. Here too came the merchandising - U.N.C.L.E. guns, U.N.C.L.E. cars (the Corgi gunfiring Thrushbuster), U.N.C.L.E. magazines, the U.N.C.L.E. paperbacks (23 US titles, 16 in the UK), an U.N.C.L.E. lunchbox (with thermos), posters, puppets, secret print putty - the list is almost unending, but the popularity can be somewhat gauged by the 200,000 yellow U.N.C.L.E. I-D cards which were sold in Britain alone. Of course, it did follow *Top Of The Pops* on a Thursday evening, a prime slot in teenage programming.

The last, inevitable step was film. The first, 'To Trap A Spy', was made up of the pilot episode with extra footage added, as was 'The Spy With My Face' which was originally 'The Double Affair'. Later the producers

simply extended shooting on certain episodes and used all the reels as a feature film, before finally making two part shows and stringing them together for cinema release. This would cause problems later, when US audiences objected to films they'd already seen as TV shows. The final few (of the eight completed) were thus only shown overseas where the television shows were behind the American schedule.

By that time though U.N.C.L.E. itself was in trouble. The third series opened in September 1966, but its standing had been undermined by several connecting factors. Other networks had been weighing in with competition - *I Spy* and *Get Smart*, while the frivolous camp posture of the magnificent *Batman* had affected NBC's perception of U.N.C.L.E. The show was now burdened by these factors and whatever had made it strong to begin with was lost in an attempt to accommodate these factors. U.N.C.L.E. became more comic, villains were exaggerated, story lines became trivialised as scientists, death traps and the Zap! Pow! approach smothered a show that had previously never needed it. The deterioration is best summed up by Sam Rolfe in a recent interview for *Top Secret*. He was watching 'The Super Colossal Affair', and baulked at

THE MEN FROM U.N.C.L.E. (LEFT TO RIGHT) ROBERT VAUGHAN (SOLO), LEO G. CARROLL (WAVERLY) AND DAVID MCCALLUM (ILLYA).



'David' articles, he was mobbed like a mop-top and the show naturally prospered. He cut albums, conducting (as his father did, legitimately) but here the orchestras swung through hits of the day, assisted by arrangers such as David Axelrod, later a mentor to the Electric Prunes. David even cut a pop single of his own, the brilliant 'Communication', while U.N.C.L.E. was parodied in magazines such as *Mad* ('The Man From A.U.N.T.I.E.'), lampooned in shows by Bob Hope and Tom and Jerry, namedropped in passing on *The Addams Family*, *I Dream Of Genie*, *My Favorite Martian* and

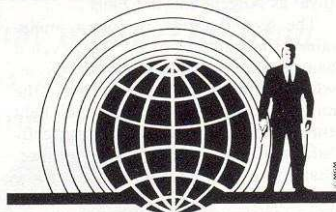


the scene where McCallum rode a falling bomb filled with essence of skunk. "Stop counting the royalty cheques", he said to his wife, "We're finished." Such idiocy might have been fun in itself, but it was in the wrong programme, and the ratings duly suffered.

Paradoxically, problems also came from a spin-off show, *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* Starring Stephanie Powers as April Dancer and Noel Harrison as Mark Slate, this one-season series opened concurrently with U.N.C.L.E.'s third, and it too embraced the *Batman* factor. Drama was almost non-existent, instead it relied on a crazy diet of inconsistency and a hapless silliness. Sure it has charm, the wacky villains, the absurd plotlines and April's bumbling aptitude, but as the parent show crumbled so less and less effort was spent on its offspring. By the time it closed, *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* lay a miserable 57th out of 60 shows.

A change in *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* was clearly needed to stop its erosion. Perhaps it did suffer from 'Girl's' insubstantial diet, especially here where they were screened on alternate weeks. Thus for the 4th season NBC revised the U.N.C.L.E. format, threw out the farcial elements and tried to regain the feel of the original concept. However, it was not to be. The show now seemed stilted and awkward; what was once easy was now deliberate. It was also scheduled across established favorites, and its collapsing popularity could not be halted. Spy shows were suddenly passe, so too their crusading fervour and teen fans now had switched Davids, replacing McCallum with Monkee Jones.

TOP TEN



U.N.C.L.E.S.

Hot Number Affair – features Sonny and Cher in an episode especially written for them. Both work in a clothes design shop and become involved in U.N.C.L.E. operations when a THRUSH code is hidden in a dress pattern.

The Double Affair – THRUSH kidnap Napoleon and substitute a double to infiltrate U.N.C.L.E. See Solo battle himself at the end when the 'real' one escapes. This episode became the movie 'The Spy With My Face' when extra footage was added.

The Deadly Games Affair – rare postage stamps, SS scientists and the body of Hitler in suspended animation. An early classic.

The Deadly Decoy Affair – In a homage to Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*, a secretary on her lunch hour is handcuffed to a THRUSH official being transported by Solo and Kuryakin. To confuse matters, Mr. Waverly is also escorting a lookalike decoy. Or is he?

The Mad Mad Tea Party Affair – A THRUSH agent and an U.N.C.L.E. plant (there to test security) are at large at U.N.C.L.E. headquarters, prior to a conference. All this and an exploding tabletop.

The Discoteque Affair – Illya infiltrates a discoteque run by a THRUSH agent, disguising himself as a musician. Solo has a broken arm, THRUSH have a bug in the apartment next door to Mr. Waverly, Napoleon, Illya and a 'hapless innocent' are caught up in a fire..... what more can you want?

The Brain Killer Affair – Stars Elsa Lanchester as a doctor with a brain altering machine looking remarkably similar to her role in *The Bride Of Frankenstein*. She wants to turn the beast on a hapless, poisoned Mr. Waverly.

The Moonglow Affair – The episode which provided the crossover to *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* With Illya and Napoleon out of the action, HQ calls in April Dancer to find an antidote to a diabolical radiation. It stars Mary Ann Mobley who was then dropped in favour of Stefanie Powers.

The Drublegratz Affair (The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.) – often described as the worst episode of all. April is a gogo dancer trying to foil an attempted assassination. The method? By an avalanche, brought on by a particular song. However, it does feature *The Daily Flash* and that toetapper 'My Bulgarian Baby'. For this, it's priceless.

The Carpathian Caper Affair (The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.) – See a THRUSH agent working as a soup canner. See April placed in a giant toaster.....

Synopses with thanks to *The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Book* by Jon Heitland, published by Titan Books (£7.95).



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**RICHARD NOISE
MEETS
STEVE GREGORY
SCHEMIN' SUPREMO
FROM**



The twilight world of Fierce Recordings is a bizarre and wonderful place. Huddling in one corner is Steve Gregory, DJ, Welsh Person and all-round racketeer, snickering and scheming with his partner in shame, the one they call "the Haggis", aka Kid Chaos, ex-Zodiac Mindwarp sidekick, current Cult object. Glowing in the distance of the other side of the room is a pile of illicit vinyl that would make even the most un-trainspotter collector sit up and grab. These two cohorts have masterminded a series of dodgy releases from a wide variety of sources and are rubbing their mits with glee as the pile grows bigger. Come on down Sky Saxon, Angus McLise, Patti Smith, The Jesus & Mary Chain, Sonic Youth, the JAMMs and Charlie Manson - you've all had the Fierce bootleggin' treatment. And as with all good scams, the records are a minor pawn in the game - its the artefact that's important. Take the Sky Saxon interview disc - not only do you get a few minutes worth of ultimate-Space Cadet babble from our hero, but the package also includes a piece of Sky's shirt, a bag of suspicious Sky coloured sugar cubes and a Sky mail order list that includes such items as the £20 "copy of Sky's birth certificate, proving that his father is really Rocky Erickson"!!!

Steve Gregory has emerged from his top-secret Swansea HQ to give me the full Fierce farce. It all apparently started with one Charles Manson, and the 1985 not-very-legitimate re-release of his 'Love and Terror Cult' LP. "It was an album that came out to raise some of his legal costs" explains Steve. "He recorded it in 1968; there's photos of the girls holding the album up. It originally sold about 2000, which isn't as many as ours sold!" As you can imagine, the reaction to this little number wasn't so hot - various distributors wouldn't stock it, a few strange murmurings were heard throughout the underground. But Steve and Haggis weren't worried - whose gonna sue you to reclaim Charlie Manson royal-

ties? Two Manson-on-45 platters later emerged, just to keep things rolling; the lovingly entitled 'Sick City' and Charlie's rendition of 'Helter Skelter'. "I'd love to meet Charlie" muses Steve, "he writes really good songs. But unfortunately he'd probably ask for some money which wouldn't be so great."

Despite Steve and Haggis' risky battering of the boundaries of good taste, these releases set the ball rolling for a whole bunch of wiggly waxings. How did you get that Sky Saxon interview, Steve? "I spoke to him for an hour from Hawaii. He was just completely off his face. We managed to edit the conversation to the three and a half minutes on the record of vaguely interesting things. He's completely mad - he thinks he's the President of the United States. He wouldn't really talk about The Seeds - I got him to say a couple of things about Yo Ha Wah though. It was very difficult to get that out of Sky - he wouldn't say the name Yo Ha Wah, because he thought it was sacred. 'Yo Ha Wah' like 'Jehovah'. Sky still calls him his spiritual father... he's got hours of stuff they recorded together. I had a letter from him that said 'Hi, how's it going, Aloha from Hawaii, let me know what's happening, Love Sky', something like that. It's framed."

It's that kind of obsession that's at the root of all things Fierce. Steve's infatuation with The Velvet Underground knows no bounds; he even put out a single by Angus McLise, the Velvets drummer who didn't even stay in the group long enough to record the first album! "He recorded a couple of tracks with Sterling Morrison and John Cale - Gerald Malanga's got 'em. Legend has it that the Velvets were offered this gig in a New Jersey High School; they were going to get paid for it and he couldn't reconcile getting paid and art! So he left and they got Maureen in. He used to record a lot of stuff, but unfortunately most of it was quite boring. Our record is everything you want to listen to." Wasn't there even a plan to put out a non-profit making Maureen

Tucker LP? "Yes, 'Playing Possum'. We didn't want to make any money, we just wanted to have Maureen Tucker on the label, it would have been so cool. Her album wasn't available here, so we asked and she referred to her lawyer. They sent off the metalwork, we exchanged contracts that said Maureen would have 100% of the net profits and that we as the record company weren't going to make any money at all. Letters just went back and forth, forever... the lawyer just wouldn't believe it!"

Other legal problems have been more to do with Fierce making money, not giving it away. Patti Smith wasn't too happy about the Fierce 'Brian Jones Stocking Feet Jesus Christ' poetry single; Alan McGee was similarly miffed about the infamous Jesus & Mary Chain 'Riot' 45 (the sound of feedback and a trashed London University gig, now on CD, hi-fi fans...); Bill Drummond likewise objected to the Fierce fake Justified Ancients of Mu Mu sample twelve inch. Steve and Haggis even arranged to do a gig as the JAMMs at the New York Limelight! Needless to say they didn't quite make it. However, the duo have got off with only minor bumps'n'bruises - but if they ever release The Beastie Boys version of 'I'm Down', which was due to be their second single until Micheal Jackson (Beatles copyright owner) put the boot in, the team would be in trouble. Still, they're holding the tape to ransom and may just put it out one day....

In the meantime, watch out for the first major non-suspect Fierce hope, a young and mental New Yorker named, er, Apollo Smile. Hippy parents, perchance? "Yep. They live in a wood cabin in Connecticut by a lake. She's the kind of girl that turns up late when you arrange to meet her because she's been sitting on the roof of her apartment block, programming her crystals for the new celestial year. She can see people's auras and does past life readings. She's small and looks like Mad-

onna but certainly isn't just another pretty blonde. Definitely a true star. When I was in New York her flat burnt down - her room was completely charred apart from the top of her bed and her pillow. Underneath the pillow were the crystals...." Now even Steve couldn't make up something like that. Apollo's recording a monster dance smash as we speak, aided by Stevette from Def Jam and MC Flavor Flav from Public Enemy. So are Fierce going megabucks? Selling out? Not likely. Check out some of the other stuff they're getting into... like 10 Foot Boneless. Apart from being a skate term and rad Californian mag, this bunch are a thrash band fronted by a dwarf bass player called Nuggles Burrito! According to Steve, their debut 'Powerslide' is "as hard as nails. We had to find the world's most ludicrous thrash band." There's also a Roky Erickson interview disc on the cards, which mainly consists of Roky threatening to kill people live on radio.... there's plans for The Shaggs on CD, new product from Savage Pencil's Kray Cherubs (a cover of The Runaways 'Cherry Bomb' with sleeve-notes by Kim Fowley), plus more from The Pooh Sticks and a character called Saucerman. Last but not least is the forthcoming Fierce compilation album, fittingly entitled 'Now That's What I Call A Bootleg'. If any of this kind of tomfoolery appeals, check out your local specialist vinyl emporium for more information. Meanwhile Steve and Haggis will continue beavering away with their scams and manipulations, happy in the knowledge that they're making a few of us chuckle along the way. Find them before they find you!



'YOU DON'T PULL
NO PUNCHES BUT
YOU DON'T PUSH
THE RIVER' ...

Van Morrison

BRIAN HOGG UNFOLDS THE STORY OF

Out of every *Ready Steady Go*, some were more special than others. One, late in 1964, showed The Rolling Stones, poised and confident where the imminent success of 'Little Red Rooster' had added its own new arrogance. There was Marvin Gaye; so cool, so thin, a perfection of elegance, lithely drifting across the studio miming to 'Can I Get A Witness', a contrast to Jerry Lee Lewis, who played live, stomping and smashing his way through 'Whole Lotta Shakin'', pounding the piano, climbing on top, pulling off his jacket to shake that fat,

joined a skiffle aggregation, Deannie Sands and the Javelins; at 14 he played saxophone in The Monarchs, a 5, sometimes 6,7 (or more) piece showband. The showbands were peculiarly Irish, a tumble of pop tunes and sentimentality, a frantic dance music playing the hits, but in its own honed style of racket mixed in rural sweetness. Morrison helped push The Monarchs towards rhythm and blues, much of which was learned from his father's superb record collection; Muddy Waters, Ray Charles, Jelly Roll Morton and, especially, Leadbelly.



VAN MORRISON BLOWS TENOR SAX IN SHADES WITH THE MONARCHS.

his long, greasy hair falling wildly across his face, twisted into a manevolent sneer. I was impressed, even if it was mere rocker music.

Hidden amongst it all was Them, a new Belfast group. They stood around, hesitant and a touch insecure, before the backing tape launched into a sound which clearly contradicted their seeming unease. It had a startling introduction, a metallic lead pinned to a bubbling bassline, both of which shattered under the surge of the organ and drums. The song was 'Baby Please Don't Go', which Them completely rebuilt into a powerful and demonic piece of combo R&B. Out of it all, however, and that included those curling, electric lead notes, it was the voice which startled, one seemingly so unusual, sometimes clipped and bitten, at others roaring; always with an absolute confidence. It pulled pieces from Soul, from Chicago, from country Blues; all tangled and squashed into one expressive howl.

The singer was Van Morrison, barely 19, but one with experience. At 12 he'd

These mixed with Jimmie Rodgers and the traditional folk of the McPeake family to become a stew of inspiration for the fascinated, introverted adolescent. Van had two spells in the line ups, the first collapsing in drink and insecurity, the second beginning before a hurried Scottish tour.

The fact that Morrison would come and go and come back again was merely an adjunct to their turbulent career. The most consistent members included Billy McAllen (l.g.), Wesley Black (p.), Geordie Jones (b), and Harry Megahey (b. sax.). It was via Megahey that Van joined the group, as the two had played together in a club called The Hut; the older saxophonist was also a Ray Charles enthusiast.

By 1963 The Monarchs were established favorites, playing Carrickfergus Town Hall, the Calypso in Lurgan, or even Orange halls where contracts stipulated that "... all members of the band are Protestant." But it was at Thompson's Restaurant in Belfast's Arthur Street that The Monarchs best held sway, where their driving R&B

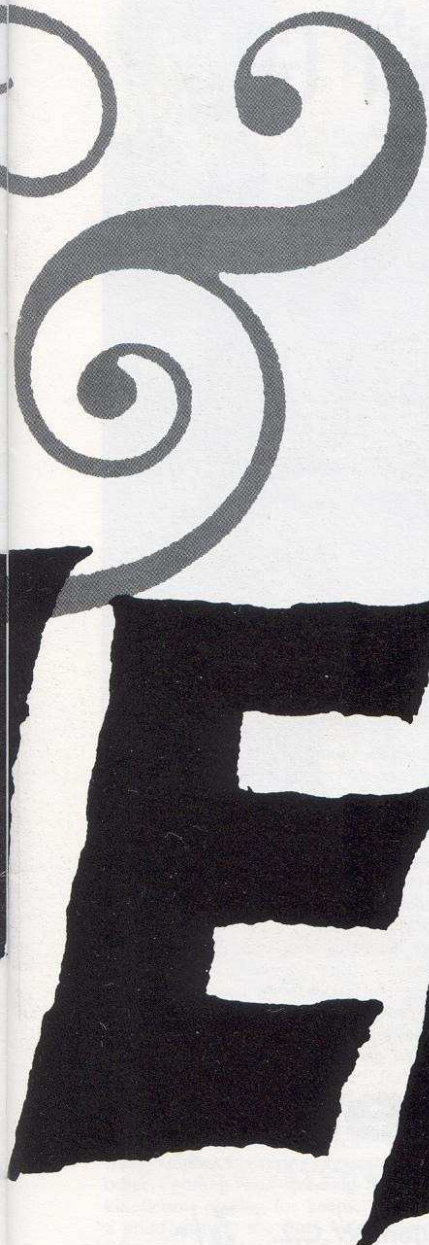
was more fully appreciated. Two more members, Larry McQueen (d.) and George Hetherington (v.) were added to the group when they moved outside of Ireland. Both were from Glasgow and their corresponding love of Blues and Soul became the final shift in The Monarchs direction.

Decked in their sharp mohair suits and pointed Italian shoes, the new lineup hoped to sweep through Scotland, but in truth they were mostly stuck in the newcomer's hometown. A short tour of the North of England did, however, net a deal with the Ruby Ward agency, who, prior to this, almost exclusively booked Trad bands. She brought them to London, and the Irish dance halls, and a brief support slot backing Georgie Fame at the Flamingo Jazz Club. After that, it was Germany, and the Odeon Keller in Heidelberg where The Monarchs played for a month in the accustomed sweatbox routine; six hours a day, plus two matinees at weekends. They then moved to Hamburg for another spell under even harsher conditions before

travelling South to Frankfurt. Here they were most often at the Storeyville, where they faced the somewhat unresponsive British. Frustration and beer would then prove irrevocable; the two Scots were fired and were replaced by friends from Belfast, Roy Kane and Oliver Trimble.

Somehow the young Morrison survived. He increased the Blues of the group's set and developed his tentative improvisation, either on saxophone, harp or as a vocalist. The ritual of daily sets lasting seven hours brought its own intensity, building the contradiction between his love for the form and mistrust of the show, and beginning a recurrent stage fright.

There was the ramshackle 'Boozoo Hully Gully', handed to the group by CBS and backed by the marginally superior 'Twangy Baby', but both were rushed glimpses of a now dying group, recorded for convenience rather than necessity. Although it sold quite well locally, the reception the group received was the final insult to their now fragile makeup.



Frustration and fatigue had set in; Ruby Ward, who'd promised the earth, had lost interest on Hetherington's departure and The Monarchs simply disintegrated. A handful tried to keep the name and played low-key gigs in England before limping home, while Morrison used the German chaos to refine his conceptions. He took a part in a low budget film, playing a jazz musician, then spent some time in London, checking the art school R&B, watching The Rolling Stones, hearing The Pretty Things; aware that his musical ideosyncracies were not simply frivolous, but part of an emergent counter culture.

The early Them had no compromise. The group was a collection of ragged misfits, dragged from dissatisfied pop collections, dirty and surly and smarting the same misunderstood passion as their singer.

Billy Harrison (g.), Alan Henderson (b.) and Ronnie Millings (d.) were a 3 piece group called The Gamblers, popular around '62/'63 at rugby and football club dances. They were then

joined by pianist Eric Wickson (or Wickson or Wrixen or Wrickson) and latterly by Morrison, now back in Ireland. Dubbed "Belfast's Rolling Stones", Them was a name taken from a '50's B horror flick, a perfect description, complete with its implied sense of outcast. They were heckled, booed and shunned, their raucous R&B unacceptable and mistrusted, until a chance set at the Maritime Hotel gave them a residency and receptive audience, an oasis of understanding and hero worship. This was perfection; Them could play any favorite, extend it and improvise, as they would do to 'Turn On Your Lovelight', borrowed from Bobby Bland, then blown out into 15 minutes; changing, weaving, building up a new music from pieces of the old. For Morrison, this was the only Them, the rest was pure pretence, somewhere at the wrong end of business against emotion.

A demo recorded by a Peter Lloyd was recorded and has since disappeared although eerie, poor quality performances have of late surfaced. These

THEM IN THE RUBBLE (L TO R) ALAN HENDERSON, VAN MORRISON, PAT McCaULEY (AND FRONT) BILLY HARRISON AND RONNIE MILLINGS.

don't however seem to be the same, but the ropery sound makes identification hard. Amongst some haphazard blues are 'Spanish Rose', 'Wild Mountain Tyme', 'Don't Start Crying Now' and 'Gloria'; they could be studio, they could be live, they could be The Desparate Bicycles.

Business came with the Soloman family; discovered by one brother (Mervyn), managed by another (Philip). Their Tin Pan Alley vision of clean suits, tours and neatness was clearly incompatible alongside

the mean frustration of their group, sulking and scowling through both their music and the publicity machine.

The Solomans shipped the group to London, where they stayed in a Portobello Road hotel, and jammed with their fellow inmates - The Poets and Little Walter. But collapse was always imminent; the Them which arrived, of Morrison, Millings, Harrison, Henderson and newcomer Pat McCauley (o.) fought halfway into their first Decca session; Millings was fired and replaced by Patrick's brother John (or

"Them was just a name. That's all it ever was, except for the original group that played at the Maritime in Belfast. The group that played there was Them, but after we went out of that club it just wasn't the same....." Van Morrison, Rolling Stone July 9 1970.

BABY PLEASE DON'T GO

by JOE WILLIAMS



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Jackie). Pat, however, had to switch to drums while Jackie played organ, but this too only lasted a matter of months. They refused to settle and an impossibly complex series of events saw each McAuley leave (more than once). Ronnie Millings rejoined (and he retired) come in. He plus Van, Harrison, and Peter Bardens (from The Chyngns) Henderson and Pat McAuley are photographed on the first 'Them' album, but this counts for nothing. Within a month of his release, Joe Boni had replaced Billy Harrison, while Jackie McAuley, who'd rejoined and replaced his brother on drums was himself replaced by Terry Noon. The final, irrevocable snap then occurred in October 1965 when a new group, with Morrison, Henderson, Ray Elliot (sax), Jim Armstrong (g.) and John Wilson (drums) emerge in time for 'Them Again'. At least, once again, 'Them' were all Irish, and Armstrong was once part of another rival group, The Mellotones, resident at a showband haunt called Romanos.

But the changes are essentially irrelevant: 'Them' was always Van Morrison, struggling against a bizarre environment, uncompromising and bitter, each seeming contradiction an addition to his anger. There were many laws; but much was often brilliant, a whirlpool of brilliant, blind ambition and raw emotion.

'Don't Start Crying Now' was a shaky introduction. Originally by Slim Harpo, it was one of his superb laconic country blues songs. Harpo was a marvellous stylist, vital to British R&B, to The Yardbirds, The Rolling Stones and to 'The Pretty Things.

'Them' showed little respect and ripped through the changes. Clearly new to recording they played it much too fast, a substitution of speed against a missing live frenzy. It was outplayed by the flipside, 'One Two Brown Eyes', a Morrison original dating from 'The Monarchs' set. It's sparse; a simple bass figure, some chords and a jangled, sicey guitar flit around the singer, whose confidence contrasts the hurried breathlessness of the topside; which smacks of mere convenience with a true hope lying somewhere else.

The hesitancy of the debut was merely temporary. 'Baby Please Don't Go' was innovative, breathtaking; the black R&B, he'd written 'Twist and Shout', produced much of the best of Solomon Burke, rescued 'The Drifters' from a Leiber/Stoller cast-off limbo, and oozed an empathy for uptown Soul and a quirky sense of hit material. He gave 'Them Here Comes The Night', Morrison piece constructed only for simplicity, allowing the voice a total freedom, to improvise, to suggest, to assert, to celebrate. 'Gloria' is the new blues; the tradition of a Sonny Boy Williamson placed on to Top 40 perspectives.

'Philosophy', the last from 'Them's first recordings, was another Van piece written on the same loose structure. It's a little safer, the organ sound is pure Animals while Morrison meanders around its 'trap what you sow' lyric. The song was thrown away on a catch-the-hit EP, but is equally a part of the early essential trilogy.

'Baby Please Don't Go' was a success, both aesthetically and commercially. It allowed 'Them' a little muscle: some studio time with a name pro-

ducer. Bert Berns was equally uncompromising; a white exponent of the black R&B, he'd written 'Twist and Shout', produced much of the best of Solomon Burke, rescued 'The Drifters' from a Leiber/Stoller cast-off limbo, and oozed an empathy for uptown Soul and a quirky sense of hit material. He gave 'Them Here Comes The Night', Morrison piece constructed only for simplicity, allowing the voice a total freedom, to improvise, to suggest, to assert, to celebrate. 'Gloria' is the simple lost-love story, transformed by Morrison into a pit of self-awareness. He simply touches the notes on the verse; nervy, agitated, until the sight of the girl and his replacement send a thunder of definition, bring a cry for the night and the blackness of his mood. The loneliness is (perhaps unconsciously) echoed in the title of its pure Animals while Morrison meanders around its 'trap what you sow' lyric. The song was thrown away on a catch-the-hit EP, but is equally a part of the early essential trilogy.

'Baby Please Don't Go' was a success, both aesthetically and commercially. It allowed 'Them' a little muscle: some studio time with a name pro-

for the feel than coherence; the whole mutters some basic lyric, aiming more suddenly explodes into a Bo Diddley shuffle and a longish organ solo. Van



CLASSIC SHOT OF THE (L TO R) PAT MCAULEY, VAN MORRISON, BILLY HARRISON, JACKIE/JOHN MCAULEY AND ALAN HENDERSON LINE-UP.

is a startling performance, coming from what seems a throwaway session.

The pairing – Morrison's infatuation and Berns' experience – initially seemed promising, but its results were sprawled over an album and sundry singles, useful among the group's ever-shifting personnel. Despite its patchwork context (with three separate producers), 'Them' is a gripping album, a smouldering collection of individuality and intensity. There was never a beginning like 'Mystic Eyes', a frantic outburst of R&B frustration, a smash of chords and wailing harp driven ever harder, ever faster, screaming for attention. Cut from an 11 minute blow out, this is the Them of the Maritime Hotel, careless in its truest sense, clattering against each other, pulling and pushing a wild kineticism; playing for keeps. There's a point, just at the final fade, where the organ screams uncontrollably into white noise, the inevitable collapse imminent. 'Mystic Eyes' is a pure triumph, the following track ('If You & I Could Be As Two') is almost ended before it's noticed, lost in the effect of its predecessor.

Such contrasts litter the album. 'Little Girl', another Morrison original, somehow hints at Little Richard, before throwing it all away and moving off into something close to the free form of 'Gloria' without ever breaking out so hard. Them would also take the jump blues of 'Just A Little Bit', but fuse it to the 'Green Onions' riff; merging two parts of Memphis, the joy of Roscoe Gordon's boogie joined to its successor, the smokey, sparse groove of Booker T. & The MGs. They were clearly not just playing favorites, the songs were stripped down and reassembled, not merely swamped in an adrenalin rush. 'Them' was never the textured care of 'The Five Faces Of Manfred Mann', where the songs were couched in invention and R&B favorites were merged with cool jazz, flutes or vibes traded for the expected guitar. Nonetheless, its ambition was clear, with 'You Just

Can't Win' the clearest shot. Here Morrison skirts the territory of the Stones' 'Play With Fire'; an ex-girlfriend now seen as a socialite has her past flung in her face. But where Jagger warns, asserting his still-felt superiority and daring her condescension, Van is bitter, scornful, spitting out the early low-life, sneering at the changes. But he overstates it, the title hints at another truth, of the jealousy of someone left behind, of hopes now broken. It's the early Them at their very best, their power as implicit as it could be expressive, an atmosphere carried into 'Don't Look Back', a John Lee Hooker song absorbed by Morrison, reshaped from foot-tapping Blues to deep Soul, careful and haunting. The singer here answers that on 'You Just Can't Win', calming the spite, understanding the anger, surpassing the grievances. That Van could perfectly join his own song to that of another writer is his arrival; an interpreter not just of sound, but of feeling and interplay.

Not everything here is successful. Strangely, the Berns interludes prove the most disappointing; 'I Gave My Love A Diamond' is a plodding rewrite of an English folk song, where '60's materialism replaces the original gift of a cherry. Van sounds bored (and uncomfortable), the band uninspired. 'Go On Home' is another plagiarism, this time of 'Sloop John B', and is equally flat, where as 'My Little Baby' is simply ordinary. The versions of 'Route 66' and 'Bright Lights Big City' are curiously halved; '66' has none of the frantic gush the Stones gave it on their debut; instead it flicks about a random piano feature, looking for some unfound action. 'Bright Lights' lacks the whisky drawl of Jimmy Reed: Van has too much pain in his voice to match his ease and infectious charm.

'Them' may show Morrison's brilliant talent; it also marks his restrictions. Already he showed discomfort, squeezed by the confines of pure R&B. He denied its limitations; its 12-bar or its verse and chorus; they

could be used, but must never constrain. Such contradictions unhinged the group's pop singles progress.

'One More Time' was Them's commercial undoing. A Van original, he was caught up in the mix between a hit and his own integrity. The song is an unhappy compromise, one almost clumsy; a slow, almost throwaway piece, ignored and half-forgotten it ended an optimistic chart career. It's follow up, '(It Won't Hurt) Half As Much' similarly stumbled, as Them swept into outright Soul, rolling around a Bert Berns song also cut by

Garnet Mimms. Them's reading is much too sparse; Morrison is clearly lost in the preach and teach style and lacks the warm flow of Mimms. In keeping with British Beat, Them accentuate the chorus, but at the expense of the song and the seeming potential is thrown away. Further dissent came when Decca pulled out 'Mystic Eyes' as a further 45, reinforcing the Morrison horror of the marketplace.

Somehow, somewhere, amongst all this disintegration, a second album, 'Them Again' appeared. It is, necessarily, bitty; players came and vanished, with the voice its only real consistency. There are fragments of a performing group, spliced into tracks little more than demos, or completed by anonymous sessioneers. That 'Them Again' survives is itself remarkable; its several highlights all the more special. Some is laboured; there's a stuttering take of Chris Kenner's 'Something You Got' and the apologetic tameness of 'Turn On Your Lovelight' is most disappointing; Van rips out but the band just dawdle. The song was once a pure Maritime outburst, the inspiration now is cold, the playing flat; a lifelessness which affected other counterparts – James Brown's 'Out Of Sight' and Ray Charles' 'I Got A Woman'. Such discomfort confirms the Morrison move from the mere copyist.

The original songs, by Van or producer Tommy Scott, are more substantial. 'Could You Would You', although a blatant rewrite of 'Here Comes The Night', was a powerful opening, and 'How Long Baby' carried a confident, mature vocal. 'My Lonely



THE SHORT-LIVED LINE-UP WITH (L TO R) PETER BARDENS, ALAN HENDERSON, PAT MCAULEY AND BILLY HARRISON, WITH VAN SEATED.

Sad Eyes' was even better, with its acoustic, almost folk-rock backing, and the gradual, building organ line. 'Hey Girl' is similarly fascinating; its poignancy blurred in a lyric ambiguous and inexplicit; ostensibly nostalgic, but simultaneously hinting at the forbidden love for a younger girl; its lustfulness captured in "there goes your younger sister", an aside thrown into the fade.

But the track with a real compassion is Dylan's 'It's All Over Now, Baby Blue'; opening with a shimmering, incandescent figure, before evolving into one of Morrison's most perfect vocals; tortured, determined, forthright; grabbing the song as his own, using the lyric as his farewell to Them, as well as a lost affair.

If 'Baby Blue' is the promise, the past is 'I Can Only Give You Everything', itself at least third hand, where the riff of 'Gloria' is threaded through a piece called 'Base Line', the instrumental flipside of a single by The Beatstalkers, a Glasgow group similarly withering on Decca's indecision. The predetermination of 'I Can Only Give You' is enforced by its clumsy key changes, a 'real' Them would scorn such cabaret devices.

That 'Them Again' has such contradictions is frustrating. It was released unfinished, with Them unwilling or unable (or both) to find a last enthusiasm. The material was weighted for producer Scott, who included four of his songs, one of which, 'Call My Name', a plagiarism of Nina Simone (via The Animals) and 'Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood' became a single, following some nip and tuck, some overdubbed backing voices and some scorching Jimmy Page guitar. But six other performances would latterly appear, and fragments of at least one more existed.

Three were certainly cover songs, of Jimmy Witherspoon ('Times Get Tougher Than Tough'), Bobby Bland ('Stormy Monday Blues') and Jimmy Reed ('Baby What Do You Want Me To Do'), of which 'Tougher' was good and 'Baby' was lacklustre, cut when Van was someplace else. Three were Morrison originals, 'Mighty Like A Rose', 'Friday's Child' and the enormous 'The Story Of Them'; by



itself the introduction to Van's stream of consciousness improvisation. In sound, the track is a dull plod; an average workout, whose spare time recording is confirmed by Morrison's off-key harmonica. But its lyric fascinates, not in metre but subject, with its off-the-wall reminiscences of the Belfast good times, of Them's outlaw blues, being "loud, sweaty, crude, ugly

and mad." Recorded as the group, in whatever form, reached exhaustion, the track remains a sad acknowledgement of the true Them and the implied rejection of its recent past. It would be a posthumous 1967 single, its seven and a half minutes spread over two sides, as if, in some way, rounding off a tale.

'Mighty Like A Rose' was withheld for longer; musically it is more inter-

THE SECOND ALBUM - SHOWING (L TO R) JOHN WILSON, RAY ELLIOT, ALAN HENDERSON, VAN & JIM ARMSTRONG.

esting, with an uncharacteristically open lyric, reading like a script from a 'Wild In The Streets' teen trauma flick. With references to 'turning on in classrooms', 'lighting up a joint', 'sugar

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cubes for breakfast'; Van seems struck by a new morality. But both are outstripped by 'Friday's Child', a sombre associate to 'My Lonely Sad Eyes'; filled up with the same echoed acoustics. Here is a newer Morrison, one most conscious of structure and dynamics, more sure of his expression. Here, there's atmosphere and tension, a song at last showing Van a way away from the constraints of both pop and R&B copyism that these originals should have been rejected is at best curious, at worst a cynical manipulation of a group too tired to fight.

But 'Them Again' cannot be pulled out from its context; from the wavering uncertainty of the class of '64, stumbling in the grey transition of Blues/pop to rock. The commercial grip of the single and its necessary hit pick value was balanced precariously against the players' need to challenge. The media machine cried failure - when 'Paperback Writer' missed grabbing No. 1 immediately on release; when The Yardbirds 'Happenings' single flopped completely, when The Who and The Kinks faltered; when the Stones and 'Have You Seen Your Mother Baby' stumbled in spits of a cacaphonic splendour. These were pop's dying moments, at least for a while, the final days of an all-embracing teen scene before a schizoprenic cut into a self-delusion of higher and lower art.

There was a final dart for survival, and keeping to the folky trend of 'Friday's Child' and 'Baby Blue', 'Richard Cory' (Paul Simon's teeming psychodrama) became intensified by the Morrison scorn and performance. It was however mostly ignored; despite the success of its writer's 'Sound Of Silence', the group were now dubbed old fashioned and obscure. They subsequently limped to America, playing around on a shaky tour piece-mealed together according to the early success of 'Gloria', a regional smash hit single and a song grabbed and transformed into a legend by countless garage band imitators. The inevitable irony came with The Shadows Of Knight, a Chicago group, whose cleaned-up suburban rerun became the national hit.

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Them was, most certainly, popular, especially around the West Coast. They played ballrooms and clubs, they played at the Fillmore and someone at least provided copy. But as with The Monarchs some three years before tiredness and disillusion was rife. Them's last gasp came in Los Angeles, sharing a bill at the Whiskey A GoGo with The Doors and Captain Beefheart. The legend tells of a mammoth live 'Gloria', with both Morrison's (Van and Jim) onstage, wailing, pleading, improvising through 20 minutes of mayhem. It was a finale; Them came home to break apart, to splinter into several factions.

With Morrison now uninterested, Alan Henderson assumed Them's name, and having rounded up the final stragglers, carried on. Jim Armstrong and Ray Elliot had survived the 'Them Again' turbulence, while David Harvey had replaced Terry Noone, who in turn had come in for Jim Wilson. The new singer was Ken McDowell, previously a member of The Mad Lads, another Maritime Hotel aggregation and one which had supported Them prior to their move to London. It's been said that Van coped 'It's All Over Now Baby Blue' from McDowell's atmospheric reading, a somewhat questionable claim as Them's version had evolved from a tired, improvised figure, a Blues riff dug up by Henderson. Most likely its 'The Times They Are A'Changin'' that's meant, a McDowell tour de force, although when it came to recording, The Mad Lads also followed the Bert Berns path. It appeared on Decca in September 1965, but to avoid confusion with the Stax soulsters, the group changed its name for the British pressing and became Moses K and the Prophets. Good reviews notwithstanding, the single disappeared, and McDowell welcomed this new opportunity.

The reconstituted Them was, however, destitute, hanging on in Belfast without contract or direction. A plea for help went out to Carol Deck, Californian editor of *The Beat* magazine, who'd given the group some enthusiastic copy, and who in turn would pass them 'on to Ray Ruff, a West Texas figure with his own indie label. Them's reputation was patchy, but 'Gloria' had made them offbeat heroes and Ruff was sure he could exploit this notoriety. The quintet were suddenly relocated, at first, it seems, in their new mentor's state, where they issued two singles. 'Dirty Old Man (at the Age of Sixteen)', a punkoid, leering rocker glued to the 'Gloria' riff, was backed by the haunting 'Square Room' to become their debut on Sully Records. Within weeks it was followed by 'Walking In The Queen's Garden', one of the rejected songs for 'Them Again'. The words stream out in bewildering images, subjects of surreal abstractions. "See the duke in drag, waving a yellow flag" - this was Van immersed in Dylan - he would rarely be so frivolous, and having sensed its escape, denied himself a version of his own.

Reissued, at first, on Ruff Records, the single was then picked up nationally by Tower, who signed Them to a more lasting deal. Imbued with a new enthusiasm, they resettled in Los Angeles, and proceeded to cut a series of stunning tracks. Their first (third?) album was issued in January 1968, and



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while 'Now And Them' skirted the edge of the old group, it clearly embraced a direction that was new. It was, however, something of an awkward compromise, as three different groups struggled for air. The opening burst was promising; they roared through John Mayall's 'I'm Your Witchdoctor', giving it a Soul-tinged swing and splattering some searing lead guitar on top. Jim Armstrong loved sustain and proceeded to prove its exciting qualities. A further Goffin/King song, 'You're Just What I Was Looking For Today' balanced pop and the new rock perfectly, while the retreat of that first single A side also works well. The problem lay in other tracks, 'What's The Matter Baby' or 'Truth Machine', tempting titles but songs closer to The Union Gap than psychedelia. The muted horns and cheerful approach suggest the besotted stance of someone like The Buckingham and dull the entire collection. So too does 'Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out' - the old group may have thrived on such rootsy material, in this line up it's clumsy and out of character.

It didn't really much matter. The crux of 'Now And Them' is 'Square Room' in a form somewhat different to that appearing on Sully. Here it sprawls out over ten minutes, embracing a neo-Eastern progression. The short lyric ebbs and flows as The Yardbirds had on 'Still I'm Sad', while Elliot's wonderful flute and more spellbinding Armstrong guitar punctuate the drifting atmosphere. It's



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THEM

WALKING IN THE QUEENS GARDEN

I HAPPEN TO LOVE YOU

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closest rival is 'The End' (does this suggest that the duet the two groups played at The Whiskey led to a parallel stream of consciousness?), but where The Doors broke the spell with theatre, Them allow its ragaesque quality to quietly assume its effectiveness. It is, unquestionably, a brilliant cut, and one of rock's most inspired extended pieces.

An out-take, 'But It's Alright' then became the next Tower single, before an inevitable crack in the framework. The incessant touring, the ballroom blitz, took an unfortunate toll on Ray Elliot, who's mercurial character was at odds with such a strict regime. Elusive and somewhat left-field, he quit the group and moved to Canada; Them continued without him.

A second Tower LP was completed and released later in the year. 'Time Out Time In For Them' was the group's most realised collection, and not only shattered the myth languish-

ing since the Morrison era, but also embraced a conscious perspective. Them now embraced psychedelia: this new collection travelled the path of a Strawberry Alarm Clock, while crucially it also resembled The Chocolate Watchband - not their punky punch, but their cosmic eye 'Inner Mystique' meanderings. Also recording for Tower, the two shared more than coincidence. The sound of 'Time Out' was that of a cohesive group; there were no ugly, ill-fitting switches, the songs were all strong and Armstrong's cut and run guitar darted everywhere, oscillating wildly, enveloping the sound. His use of sitar was equally innovative, resembling the way early Family used the instrument, only when the structure was relevant. It enhanced, say, 'Black Widow Spider', and was never misplaced or clumsy.

The title song itself was absolutely wonderful, essential West Coast pop at its very best, crying out to be the hit



which would have saved this particular aggregation. 'Just One Conception' meanwhile takes in equal parts of both 'Square Room' and The Zodiac's 'Cosmic Sounds' to create another slice of raga rock. But the strength of 'Time Out' is not the individual tracks, but the whole, which is superb. Had they been called another name than Them, they could have rid themselves of an unenviable comparison, and thus been more rightly recognised.



A final single, 'Corinna' c/w 'Dark Are The Shadows' closed Them's time at Tower in 1969. Disatisfied with Ruff's management and again almost broke, the line-up imploded and this single doubtlessly features yet another Them incarnation. What happened to Dave Harvey is unclear, as is how much drumming he did, as John Guerin certainly played on some of these later tracks. Jim Armstrong and Ken McDowell left America and returned to Belfast, abandoning an irrepressible Alan Henderson in Los

ing Them's career were duly topped; Happy Tiger was affiliated to the Dunwich label, who'd first issued The Shadows Of Knight.

'Them' and 'In Reality', released in 1969 and 1970, have little to recommend them. The first features Jerry Cole (b), Jim Parker (g) and John Stark (d), supported by Ry Cooder and Jack Nitzsche, and it swerves from Soul to rockabilly ('In The Midnight Hour' to 'Lonely Weekends') thus betraying something of its incongruity. 'In Reality' is similarly flawed. It features 'Gloria' and 'Baby Please Don't Go', but these records have nothing to do with Them; it's merely a name to tag on two anonymous workouts. Indeed, it would then be abandoned as Henderson, Ruff and Cole, alongside a cast of thousands, embarked on a Biblical epic 'Truth Of Truths', a double set and a rancid move.

A further, if haphazard, link with Them came from Eric Wricksen, who dropped out, it's said, when his father objected to a disproportionate royalty split between management and group. Wricksen was subsequently involved in The Wheels, a group who also played at The Maritime, but who held a residency at The Plaza, a large dance hall in Central Belfast. However, by the time The Wheels came to record, Wricksen had stepped aside and the group (Rod Demick, Herbie Armstrong, Tinto Tinsley, Brian Rossie and Vic Catling) then made a wholesale flit to Blackpool. Demick, who shaved his head and doubled as a DJ, later claimed Van wrote 'Gloria' for him, which is why The Wheels recorded it as their debut single. A somewhat tenuous claim, it didn't explain why they then continued to evoke the Them myth, by cutting 'Don't You Know' (another song from 'Them') as a flipside, why the splattering 'Road Block' was a ringer for 'Mystic Eyes', or why 'Call My Name' (from 'Them Again') coupled their last 45, 'Kicks'. To compound the ironies, the two groups shared producer Tommy Scott, and The Shadows Of Knight, who'd pilfered 'Gloria' for America, did the same with 'Bad Little Woman', The Wheels only real stab at originality. Curiously, Armstrong would appear at Morrison's side for 1981's 'Beautiful Vision'.



Angeles. He stayed with both Ruff and the name Them; unabashed he'd continue to use it on two further albums which were somehow released on a Chicago-linked outlet, Happy Tiger. It was here that the paradoxes litter-

THE WHEELS - OR THE WHEEL-A-WAYS AS THEY WERE KNOWN IN THE US (TO AVOID CONFUSION WITH MITCH RYDER'S BACKING GROUP: THE DETROIT WHEELS.)

Alan Henderson was not the sole refugee tempted to claim Them's legacy. Billy Harrison and Jackie and Pat McAuley were all dumped unpleasantly following Them's short-lived hit group tenure, and each demanded that their contribution be recognised. Harrison next stepped in for Dick Taylor on a Pretty Things Norwegian tour; his relationship with their circle would remain somewhat close. Having attempted to seize the name 'Them', it's said he even toured as such, using a variety of ex-Them members. Also dubbed 'Some Of Them', he was then signed to Immediate where an ad hoc combination – Harrison, Jimmy Page, Nick Wymer (Fairies) and Viv Prince (Pretties) – cut Graham Bond's 'I Want You' and a Page/Wymer song 'Can You Feel It' as a prospective single. For some reason it was shelved, and with it went Harrison's hopes of securing both a name and a new career. In the meantime, both Prince and Skip Alan (his Pretty Things' replacement) deputised in the 'real' Them as successive drummers were fired.

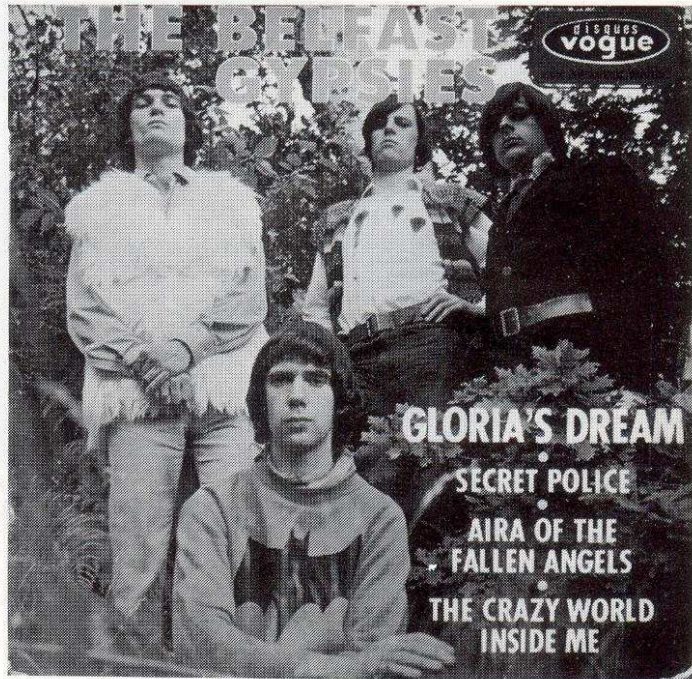
Meanwhile The McAuley brothers returned to Belfast, bitter and disillusioned. Adding Mike Scott and Ken Maleod, they recorded at least four tracks, including 'Portland Town', 'Midnight Train' and 'The Gorilla', the last of which was co-written by Peter Bardens and presumably dated from the first album period. Recorded for Derrytone Records by one Dru Harvey, they were later somehow found by Kim Fowley, visiting the UK to check our emergent underground. The group used a variety of names,

but for most purposes they were The Belfast Gypsies. Kim won them an Island contract (Where he himself cut 'The Trip') and their debut single, 'Gloria's Dream', was duly issued in 1966. Reminiscent, of course, of Them's adolescent whirl, Jackie even manages to palpably imitate Van's phrasing. The flip, 'The Secret Police', was even better, with a pulsating bass line and some menacing organ.



A second single quickly followed, but here Fowley tried another name, and dubbed the group 'The Freaks Of Nature'. 'People Let's Freak Out' was a timely invitation, only the group decided on an R&B root and invoke a love-in with a Bo Diddley beat. If there had been confusion over identities, this was quickly dispelled on playing the flipside, the temptingly titled 'Shadow Chasers'. It was merely 'Secret Police' with another name.

Fowley then took the Gypsies/

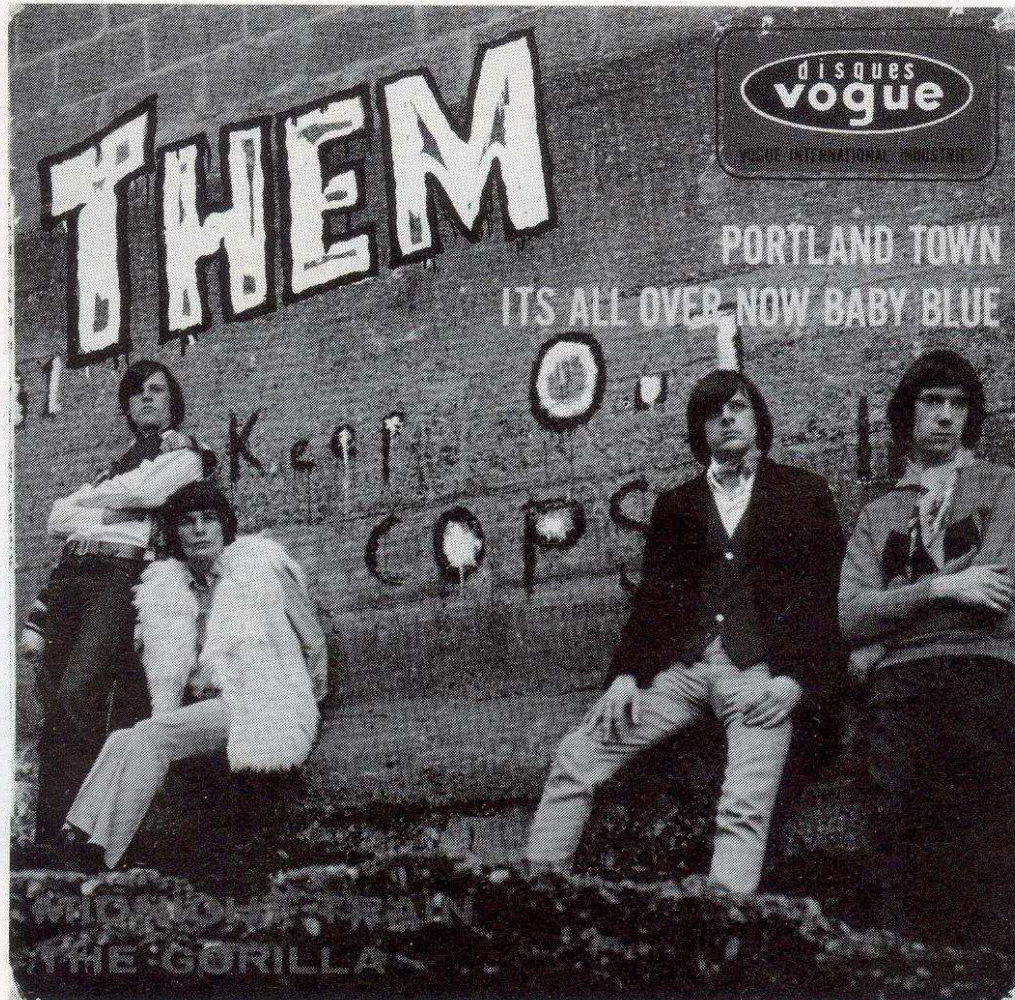


Freaks to Scandinavia, where, as in France and Germany, they played as Them. Signed by Sonet, they completed an album as such, using some of the Island material, the older Derrytone cuts and some newer performances. The result was a superb, if anachronistic album, which has appeared and reappeared as either 'Them', 'The Belfast Gypsies' or

'Them Belfast Gypsies'. Whichever, the group refused to dabble in the eclecticism of the Morrison counterpart, and instead enveloped some similar styles, honed them, and came up with a grungy masterpiece. There was some R&B ('Boom Boom'), some humour ('Suicide Song', 'Aria Of The Fallen Angels') and a sneer at the 'Them Again' imposters, with a corresponding take of 'It's All Over Now Baby Blue', the fourth of the early recordings. Of course it wasn't Morrison, no matter how McAuley tried, but it's still strong and their cheek should be applauded.

Although issued in August 1967, no-one in Britain would touch the album. The Belfast Gypsies were home by then, and had disintegrated, with only Jackie, seemingly, staying in music. He moved to Dublin, where he formed Cult, with Paul Brady, before travelling back to London to form Trader Horne with Judy Dyble. Judy had been Fairport Convention's first singer, and had been with the embryonic King Crimson, but the new duo embarked on a more gentle path. 'Morning Way', their lone 1970 album, was firmly set in folk-based whimsy, reminiscent, at times, of the flower-power Donovan. Yet the subconscious link with Them remained, as it features a version of 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out', more successfully too than that on 'Now And Them'. The final irony, however, was in its flute passage, which was played by Ray Elliott.

The partnership broke up soon afterwards, and although McAuley tried a new singer (Saffron Summerfield), Trader Horne was soon abandoned. Jackie then began work on a solo album, which saw him play with young turk jazzers – Henry Lowther and Roy Babbington, Tony Roberts and Mike Travis. 'Jackie McAuley' is a brittle album, as introspective as might be expected, but without the pitying edge which marred the genre. Yet, like 'Morning Way', it would be largely ignored, and the new decade progressed with only one ex-Them member firmly in control of his progress and destiny.



Despite all these inherent ironies, as sundry musicians rushed in to fill the vacuum, the spark from either group, the Henderson Them or The Belfast Gypsies, would ultimately dry. One pulled the legend too far, and became decreasingly interesting, while the other was consumed in its own garage preoccupations. Them's truest inspiration was Van Morrison, his white Soul and prevalent power, dark, brooding and emotive. 'Them' and 'Them Again' could equally be solo Van collections, their beat group context, and name, a mere convenience of the times.

Thus while the pretenders soldiered on, Morrison hid out in Belfast, occasionally playing with pick-up bands, ramshackle groups put together for convenience. One featured Eric Bell, later of Skid Row, another saw a bizarre Dutch interlude, where Van performed with Cuby and the Blizzards, rocking Deventer with 'One More Time' and 'Gloria'. Mostly, however, he cooled down and wrote songs for his own amusement.

The exile could have been permanent, a lost voice in the changing generation, until the tenuous link with Bert Berns was re-established when the producer mailed over a one-way airline ticket to New York. Berns now ran his own operations, with two labels carefully cut for styles; Bang for pop, Shout for (black) Soul. The balance was impressive; the sweet teen of The McCoys or the Brill Building machismo of Neil Diamond set against the breadth of Irma Franklin or Freddie Scott. Despite the affection for the latter, Morrison was placed on Bang, and into some more of the contradictions he'd already battled. Berns clung to his own past; despite McGuinn and McGuire, The Mamas and Papas and The Lovin' Spoonful, despite 'Have You Seen Your Mother Baby' and 'Tomorrow Never Knows', despite the murmurs of West Coast rock. His preoccupations were still the instant hit, the sculptured single as against the idiosyncracies of the performer, and the early sessions progressed with only the Top 40 in mind. There was a real gem in 'Brown Eyed Girl', a celebration crammed with joy, of sun and summer love, the same tumble of reflections The Rascals would pull together in 'Groovin'. It was a US smash, but successive singles failed completely, and Berns, belatedly, caught the swing to psychedelia with an album, 'Blowin' Your Mind', cobbled together from the 'Brown Eyed Girl' recordings and later tentative Morrison demos. It's release caught the singer off guard, reinforcing yet again his suspicions and distaste for the machinery surrounding the sounds he recorded.

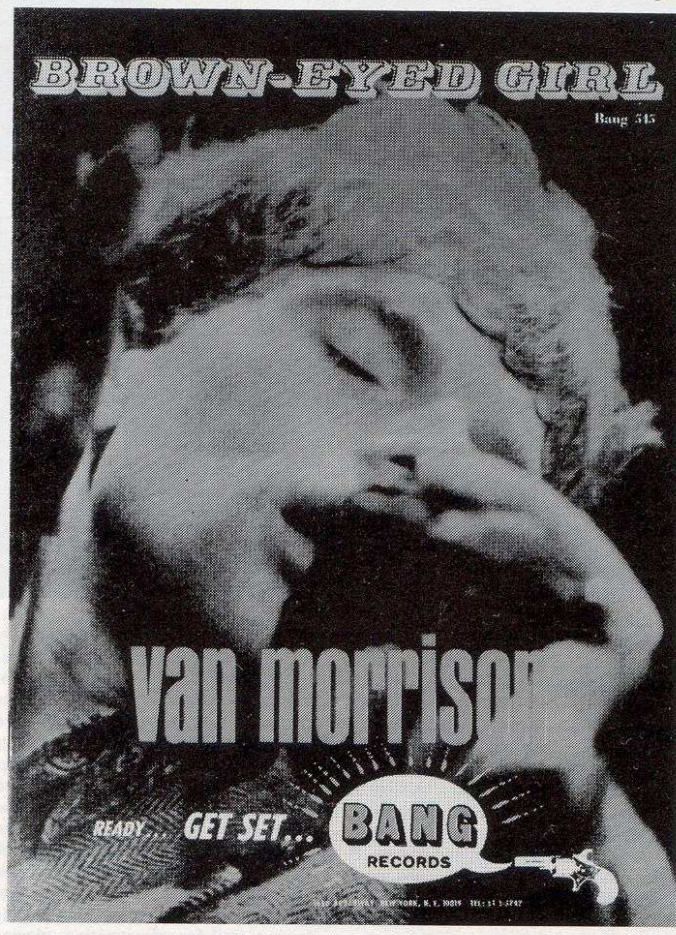
The tenure at Bang carries with it several paradoxes. It has Morrison, the blatant maverick, reeling from a pop process stranglehold, willingly re-accepting the professionalism of Bert Berns and his censorship ('Brown Eyed Girl' was originally written 'Brown Skinned Girl'). Once again there would be an album made with session musicians mismanaging Van's instinctive phrasing and timing. But 'Blowin' Your Mind' did have its relevance, if only for catching a transition from pop to maturity.

The most obvious development is 'T.B. Sheets', a catatonic workout and slab of sprawling improvisation, like



a calmed down counterpart to The Rolling Stones of Aftermath's 'Going Home'. Van's delivery is mostly throw-away and a touch melodramatic, but there are moments of a shaky intensity as the singer, unconsciously, allows through his intuitive emotion. It's lyric and imagery are more mature (if macabre) than it's performance; Morrison tries to match his vision with sound, but isn't yet in control of both, unable to catch the opportunity of

being freed from form and structure. What does persist is his cascade of fleeting pictures – the cracked window panes, the radio, the sick bed, the T.B. sheets; this was the true step between the hit machine and the scope of an individualist, ready to coalesce an array of ideas. Tuberculosis itself was not an original preoccupation – it possibly grew from Morrison's infatuation with Jimmie Rodgers, a white performer from the 20's and early 30's –



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country music's founding father, equally swamped in a Black ethos and style. Tuberculosis killed him; his 'T.B. Blues' was a chilling confrontation, and perhaps, a direct inspiration to Morrison's own predicament. The pity is that he threw out its concise form (and thus the power) of his predecessor.

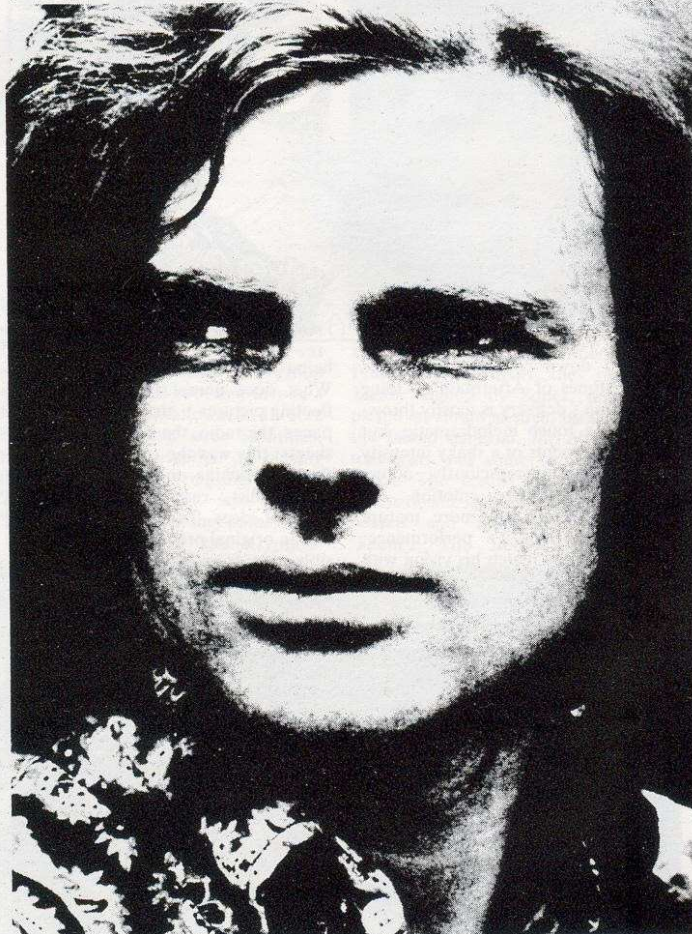
'He Ain't Give You None' was a further stream of consciousness, but couched in a style closer to the previous Them. The embittered singer throws out several sexual metaphors ("he flogs his daily meat", "rock 'n' rolling", "gave you my jelly-roll"), a blues both in form and lyrical expression. Again Van alludes to lost times in London, about being messed up "somewhere called the Notting Hill Gate"; vowing never to return. The performance here is more convincing, the subject less abstract, closer to the defined emotions of disappointment or nostalgia ('The Story Of Them') rather than the bleak inevitability of a coming death ('T.B. Sheets'). 'He Ain't Give You None' was later adapted into a piece of uptown Soul by Freddie Scott for a single on Shout, giving the song a little more direction and a new depth of arrangement.

'Spanish Rose' was the other gem, where Morrison implicitly recalled 'Brown Eyed Girl', the baion rhythm of The Drifters and the allegory of the same flower of both Ben E. King's 'Spanish Harlem' and his own 'Mighty Like A Rose'. Loosely hinged on to the structure of 'Under The Boardwalk', it's a marvellous song, the equal of 'Brown Eyed Girl' and arguably its superior, one performed with an understanding and an empathy of and for its influences.

The rest could be classed as filler. 'Goodbye Baby' was the almost obligatory grab at an old Bert Berns song; one once by Solomon Burke. It's a clumsy reading; Van attempts to liven up the song, straying much too far from the original's deep slowness and into a jerky, slapstick counterpart. It is a disappointing throwaway of an interesting potential - Morrison lags far behind the strength of Burke's performance. It marks a passing of the imitator; there could now be little need for a reliance on Black originals, any later use would purely be either reference or a homage. Of 'Ro Ro Rosey', or 'Who Drove The Red Sports Car', these and the others are merely try outs, with little to distinguish them, or tell them apart.

At the end of 1967, work on a (reluctant) second album was abruptly ended with the sudden death of Bert Berns. These tentative songs were later salvaged and would be scattered throughout several strange collections. Five appeared on the ludicrously misnamed 'The Best Of Van Morrison'; none were exactly essential, hinting at try-outs rather than complete ideas, with two 'The Smile You Smile' and 'Joe Harper Sunday Morning', copping the same "roaming in the gloaming" line. Two further songs surfaced on a third exploitation, 'T.B. Sheets', and were more interesting historically than musically. These were the first, early attempts at 'Madame George' and 'Beside You', both later a part of 'Astral Weeks', but were the unsympathetic background glares, especially as they would only become available some five years after the accepted versions. On 'Beside You',

Morrison's focus is hazy, caught between a 4/4 beat and its later freer interpretation. The music is leaden, pulling the arrangement towards the predictable, plundering Them's contemporary rivals; sounding out organ and guitar lines closer to the R&B of London's 1963 clubland. 'Madame George' is stranger. Van clearly isn't sure how to use the song, it veers from a ramshackle 'party' introduction to a plodding exercise focussed only by its backing vocals. The piece is pure contradiction; it clearly needed one more year's consideration.



The same turbulence affected Van's new live performance. That summer had seen the inevitable tour-to-follow-the-hit circus, with erratic schedules and erratic performances. For a while he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to play the clubs and bars in a measure of anonymity, backed by a local group, The Montgomerys. He also played the Boston Tea Party, joining the local favorites, The Hallucinations, for a stab at 'Gloria'. Van was mumbling and incoherent, the crowd were restless and booed until one of the group, teeming with rage, admonished them. "Don't you know who this is? This man wrote the song." If they cared, it's unrecorded; for historians, The Hallucinations later formed the core of the J. Geils Band.

The new year brought a new optimism; legal moves were begun to end the Bang contract in order to sign to Warner Brothers. In the meantime, the live work continued, with Van backed only by a flautist and bassist. If the public were indifferent, his peer group musicians were not, affording Morrison the confidence to experiment. He had time to work the songs,

opening them up, fusing a poetic license to his ideosyncratic R&B. The resultant recordings were 'Astral Weeks', a startling, shimmering collection, crammed with ambition, and its realisation. Paired, at last, with sympathetic musicians, in particular the bass of Richard Davis and the drums of Connie Kay, Morrison was within the jazz context his phrasing demanded. Davis was perpetually startling, weaving about the songs, sometimes following the voice, at others acting as a counterpoint, jumping octaves, intuitively rhythmic;

off a piece of privacy. Here, however, it's arguably true; the songs mesh together Morrison's vision and its soundtrack, real events blur into fantasy, while the effect of his influences (Ray Charles, Robert Johnson, Bobby Bland, Leadbelly) have their own ideosyncracies squashed and pushed through Van's own catalyst.

'Astral Weeks' isn't Soul, not in the sense of the pumping brass of Memphis, or the measured thrill of Tamla Mowtown. Morrison instead bared raw emotion, uncontained, impulsive; a music never copyist but one firmly within its own terms. They had always scorned expedience, their collapse, in part, due to a lack of deviation, scorning fashion, feedback and temporary trivia. Van's professional control allowed a complete artistic freedom, a voice cut from constraint, to growl, to moan, to scream; a white boy immersed in the Blues and effectively following the intensity of the gospel form.

Morrison's touch remained un-specific, his mentors spread out and diffuse, his experience more third hand than first. Snatches of several generations appear, immersed in the singers own view. Tuberculosis again appears and having spun the emotive pain of 'T.B. Sheets', Van returns to it on 'Slim Slo Slider', a delicate cascade of romantic memories, perhaps adolescent, perhaps more recent, a dream-like fuge of cadillacs, beaches, London and bohemia, fleeting past time, both good and bad, as the crush of the present overpowers him. He watches her die, in utter helplessness: "Every time I see you, I just don't know what to do". Seldom is pop so emotionally raw.

If few of the songs can match such power, almost all carry that insistent rhythm, that aura of excellence. There are two exceptions. 'Cypress Avenue' carries a bittersweet harpsicord, giving off a smell of incense, its tinkling that of bells trapped by 1960's whimsy. It is the album's only pitfall, the sole slip into temporary environments, holding out a recognising nod for West Coast contemporaries. The other is 'Young Lovers Do', a brass laden jump into optimism, a rare grab at an up tempo, a whole song given to the joy the unconscious laugh on 'Astral Weeks' betrayed.

But the strength of 'Astral Weeks' is not held in individual tracks, instead it comes from its cumulative air of passion and mystery. Even the excellence of the best of Them had not prepared us for this shock of brilliance. It was an atmosphere carried over into Van's contemporary live shows, where a sparse back-up band allowed the same liberties and room to breathe. Even the dullards from 'Blowin' Your Mind' were transformed in this new setting of acoustic guitar, stand-up bass and occasional sax and flute. Van would claim that he'd cut a tape in Belfast where these songs were similarly simple and quiet, that Bert Berns had rushed into them with the trappings of heavy rock. Perhaps; although Van would also claim that 'Astral Weeks' was a thematic suite and that the final order was completely wrong: He would also refrain from saying what the correct sequence was.

Although not a startling commercial success, 'Astral Weeks' did confer on Van a responsibility; as each new work was imminent, so, an expectation grew. Initially, the intense structure

freeing the drums for a role of textures, shade and effect. Van is obviously pleased; unable to control his excitement, he allows a laugh to escape (and stay) on the title song. The following unconscious gasp is one feeling a moment of uncontrol, the song tumbling into its very own dynamics.

'Astral Weeks' is Morrison's catharsis, twisting out emotions and frustrations; the anger at Them's abuse, his own seeming manipulation, the confusion of memories, sudden, stark, interlocking; fleetingly introduced then discarded. The pulse is constant, it is the singer who shifts, alternately soft then loud, insistent then unsure, but always only within the context of the song's emotion. The spill of images covers the real and the abstract, here the myth of Celtic Ireland begins its preoccupation, in 'Cypress Avenue' and 'Madame George'. When asked for origins, of titles, lines and poems, or if pushed for meanings, Morrison mischievously evades, throwing back his own ignorance of their beginnings, surprising himself by his own imagination. It is a convenient excuse, cutting down a trail for conversation, closing

prevailant on that album seemed dissipated on 'Moondance', its 1970 follow-up. The new music oozed relaxation, yet paradoxically contained a greater discipline. The arrangements were tighter than those of its predecessor, its songs were more strict, nothing was random other than Van's soaring voice. Such contradictions evolved from the songs themselves; having purged the spectre of his past and ambition, Morrison is free to return to the popular song, to place a precise order within its context, to fuse the invention of a 'Madame George' into the form of a 'Brown Eyed Girl'.

'Moondance' has several claims for importance. Not only would it sell, it simultaneously established the singer's blatant individuality. In keeping with The Band, whose own second album similarly stripped away all pretension and delved into its own deep past, Morrison firmly merged yet more of his influences, but this time in a more concise form. Both releases drew their several inspirations, in neither were there any obvious references. Perhaps only 'Brand New Day', the centre of side 2 of 'Moondance' betrays any blatant root, but its gospel setting shows an acknowledgement of style rather than a particular artist. But where 'The Band' evoked the American frontier, drawing from both literal and musical sources, Morrison retains a personal, accessible approach, with only the twisting ideology of 'Into The Mystic' keeping to the abstract lyricism of 'Astral Weeks'. Thus the focus falls

plores that the radio be turned up; perhaps it is playing The Impressions' song and Van's cavalcade fantasy is his reaction to it. Whatever, the song in itself is impressive, with its wordless chant-like hook and some breath-taking layered horn work.

The 'gypsy' allegory continues on 'Into The Mystic', itself a title recalling the earlier 'Mystic Eyes'. This is a more open piece, held by some sweeping acoustic guitar, punctuated by a horn riff, which if more delicate, is effectively Van's Stax-styled counterpart. 'It's Too Late To Stop Now', he states at the end, almost throwing the line away, but it is meant, and true.

'Moondance' has a wealth of maturity; the delicate understatement of 'Warm Love', its vocal is virtually breathed rather than sung, as if in fear of the song's fragility; the magnificent confidence of 'And It Stoned Me', where the plaintive inquisitive style of 'Astral Weeks' becomes one of openness and celebration, complete with some of the record's most innovative but supportive horns. There's the title song itself, complete with its Sinatresque swing and finger snapping mood, a carefree snatch at jazz which is a total success.

If 'Moondance' has a fault, it's in its anti-climax. The second side treads water; the commitment of its counterpart is teased out over thinner meat. 'Come Running', 'These Dreams Of You' and 'Everyone' are slight, almost perfunctory songs, lacking the depth and delicacy of a 'Caravan'. Only on

of a greater spontaneity which allows the album both its positiveness and irreverence.

'Domino', which opens, is superb. Van, at last, has found the measure of his commerciality, crafting total pop on to fast funk. There's an urgent drive and a grab at contemporary freshness, where the horns echo any number of great number of songs cut at Muscle Shoals, of Aretha, Clarence Carter or Wilson Pickett. 'Domino' gave Van a Top 10 smash and completed the circle from 'Brown Eyed Girl'.

The verve of the performance contrasts with the stark emotion of 'I'll Be Your Lover Too', where Morrison sings plaintively over an acoustic backing. It recalls the nakedness of 'Slim Slo Slider', but in a positive way, its quiet celebration, not remorse. It allows Van an alternative outlet to the jump of joy of 'Blue Money', 'Give Me A Kiss' or 'Call Me Up In Dreamland', whose effervescent bounce takes the songs towards a slightness rather than a strength. 'Domino' proved it was possible to carry happiness and innovation together; those counterparts show a conventionality which minimises the album's other points. 'I'll Be Your Lover Too' not only reminds the listener of a seemingly discarded power, it begs for its reintroduction.

VAN WITH JANET PLANET - WHOSE FABLE ADORNS THE INSIDE OF THE ORIGINAL U.S. MOONDANCE SLEEVE.



on the songs themselves, again in contrast to its predecessor. But 'Moondance' does restate Morrison's ability as a vocalist, and, to paraphrase writer Greil Marcus, his uncanny knack of catching the atmosphere of Black acoustic blues without ever overtly assuming its sound, a factor especially true of 'Caravan' and 'Into The Mystic'. A song of twisting focus, 'Caravan' shifts from its ethereal imagery recalling The Impressions and the sublime 'Gypsy Woman'. Both songs are cut from the same Romany romanticism, and both construct an air of wistful mystery. In 'Caravan' Morrison im-

'Glad Tidings', the closing piece, does Van reassert himself, bringing back those close, almost claustrophobic horn riffs, wrapped in something which becomes the summation of the album, a freer, more open style.

The gradual looseness which parts of 'Moondance' hint at now became more prevalent. Indeed such changes were part of a continuum from 'Astral Weeks' down. Thus 'Van Morrison His Band & The Street Choir', which appeared another year afterwards in 1971, is much less claustrophobic than its predecessor. There's more relaxation, even more openness and a hint

Such recourse to the past, either in lyric or musical homage, of course date back to them. Here the most obvious is 'Gypsy Queen', recalling the subject of 'Caravan', as well as, again, the style of The Impressions. Morrison borrows the Curtis Mayfield song structure, pushes his voice as close to the falsetto as can be comfortable, and has instructed the backing harmonies to be pure Fred Cash and Sam Gooden. As such its immaculate, carrying a real affection, rather than mere pastiche. A same acknowledgement is in 'Virgo Clowns' and 'I've Been Working'; the former follows the structure of a Leiber/

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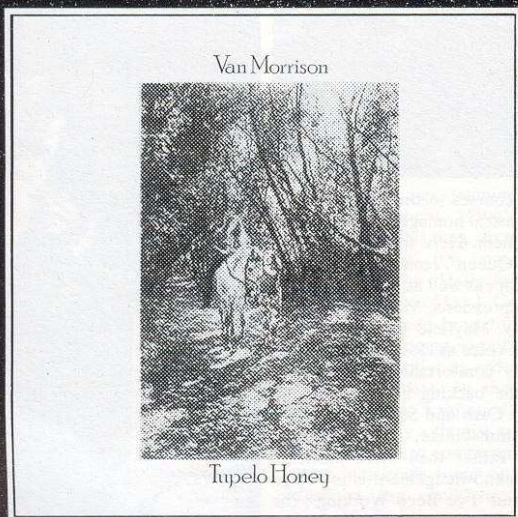
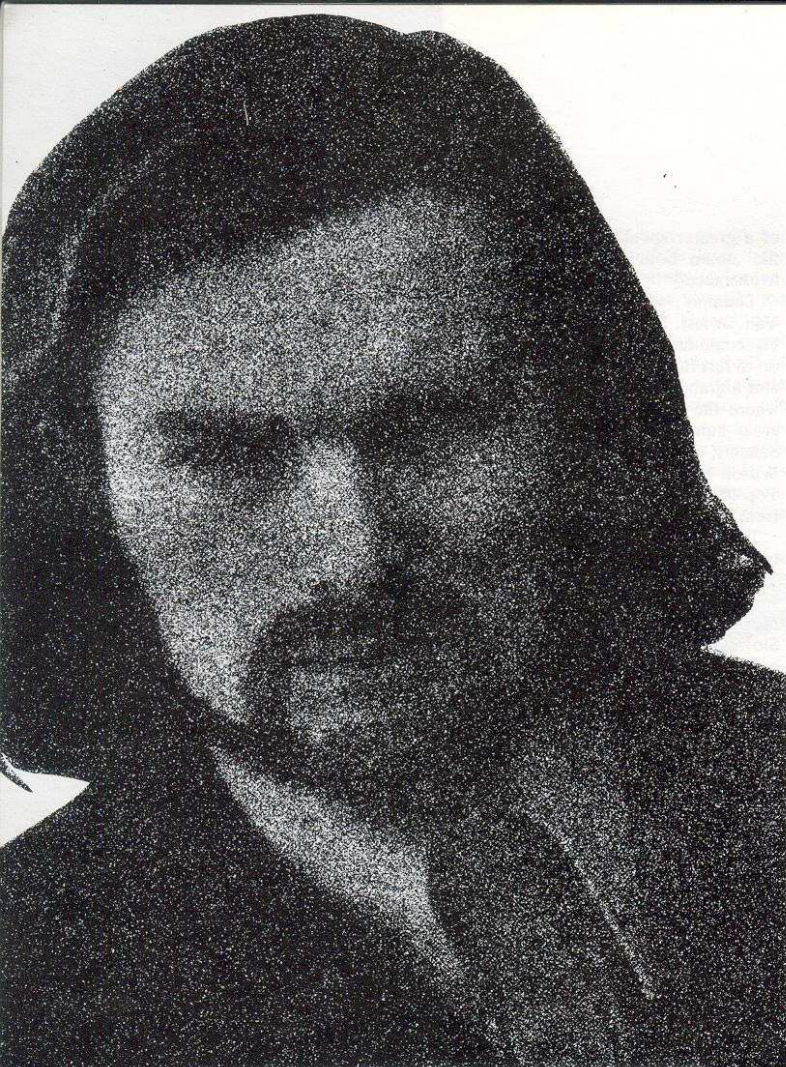
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Stoller Drifters single, its Latin baión rhythm gently, subtly recalling something Ben E. King would sweetly interpret. It's mood is sadly broken by cheap melodramatic laughter stuck in at the close. The Morrison of times past would balk at such frivolity (the escape on 'Astral Weeks' was so natural, here it's mere pantomime); that of 'Street Choir' merely shrugs and enjoys his new goodtime music.

'I've Been Working' is the album's last open sweep at Soul. The horn charts echo James Brown, the song itself is merely a riff allowing Morrison a freedom he chooses (mostly) to ignore, preferring to keep to the verse and chorus. There's a frantic urgency here, a real push and pull which is rare on an otherwise laid back collection, but its fade out hints at a cooking improvisation tantalizingly closed off. Instead it's 'Street Choir', the closing cut, which becomes the album's pivot, it's concise and even contrasting arrangement recalls that of 'Into The Mystic', and the changes around the 'Why did you leave America' lyric are upliftingly beautiful. Yet, in total, 'His Band & The Street Choir' is nearer to frustration than success — one in three tracks are pure throwaway, celebrating Van's self satisfaction, but with little to say other than "I'm happy!" Those with more depth suffer by context, affirming in isolation Morrison's ideosyncratic grasp of pure expression. Yet its glaring inconsistency is in part due to such a self-indulgence; rather than coalescing individual strands into his own music, Van instead attempts a whole version of each one. It doesn't work, and 'His Band & The Street Choir' is ultimately a lesser work, a rushed and sometimes shallow collection.

His spirit of comfort pervading that album became even more pronounced on 'Tupelo Honey', a series of songs designed explicitly to celebrate Van's carefree existence. It remains one of the few Morrison albums to sit squarely in the context of its contemporaries, becoming a part of the prevalent country rock. There's steel guitars and dobros, played in songs whose depth is that they exist, and little more. Some writers have claimed it to be perfectly integrated, effectively to form a single atmosphere, but it's a uniform of mediocrity, a performance with little to excite an outsider. 'Tupelo Honey' is professional, the playing is tasteful and Van sings well, but it's all so indistinct, so smug, that there is little worthwhile to any but a hapless fan.

What it lacks is some kind of passion; that Van Morrison should embrace Country & Western is exciting, yet he chooses to reflect the music's maudlin sentimentality, rather than its earthy frankness. Here is the perfect opportunity to echo Charlie Rich, Hank Williams, Jimmy Rodgers; to bring the generations and styles together... instead Van alludes to "hot-pants... and a Broadway boogaloo..."

'Wild Night', 'Tupelo Honey's' powerage kick-off, is however excellent, continuing the imagination of

'Domino', with an equally effective R&B lick. It leads into 'Like A Cannonball' and suddenly there's a de-emphasis, the pace slips away and if the Sun styled guitar tone is of interest, the song meanders to no real purpose. The same repetition fills 'Old Old Woodstock', where once Morrison used such a trick to build up and reinforce a mood, here it smacks more of emptiness of purpose. Lyrically, 'Tupelo Honey' is too facile, too explicit; 'You Are My Woman', who's musical structure deserved an importance, is bogged down in cloying condescending wordplay, its "you're having my baby" theme is clumsy, at best embarrassing, at worst chauvanistic. Morrison is far more effective where the true meaning is effusive, or where the image is fleeting or impressionistic; the purely specific is often less interesting.

There are other moments: 'Moonshine Whiskey' tinkers with contrasting tempos and stylistic changes in an effort to infuse an interest, and the title song itself, if cloning 'Crazy Love' from 'Moondance', does carry some commitment. But any strength is hindered by a succession of weaker pieces — 'I Wanna Roo You', 'Starting A New Life' and 'When The Evening Sun Goes Down', all trivial pictures from a scrapbook of complacency.



"All this stuff about the artists and pain, and you've got to suffer to produce good music is just bullshit. You don't produce good music when you're like that, you gotta be happy."

Van Morrison in conversation with Happy Traum, July 9 1970.



Van Morrison and the media has been an awkward relationship, one too littered with confrontation and an obtuseness. That a quote with any real perception was allowed to escape and exist is rare, although remarks such as "Can't tell you, it wouldn't be right for this paper" offer their own implicit interpretation. Morrison's manipulation of the interview, well documented elsewhere, has furthered the 'sage' image he studiously denies, perhaps, perversely, in order to further it. This particular contradiction stems from his own self-importance, his arrogance; attitudes to perhaps be questioned, but also to be seen in direct relationship with his music. They are uncomfortable, abrasive, maddeningly rude; but are part of the same disdain for acceptability and convention which forges an 'Astral Weeks', a 'Mystic Eyes' and a 'St. Dominic's Preview'. The remark made to Happy Traum came out of the domestic tranquility which produced 'His Band & The Street Choir' and 'Tupelo Honey', paradoxically albums which Morrison himself would later criticise. By 1972, the idyllic dream was broken by divorce, and the resulting album, 'St. Dominic's Preview', was at last something not merely facile. Here was the lost uncertainty, the clinging to memories, the theories and the eulogising, the grasp of perspectives.

The album begins with the same frantic R&B row which opened the two previous collections. 'Jackie Wilson Said' has the same up front

excitement of 'Domino' and 'Wild Night'; in fact it's even more explicit, this is Van's homage to the great lost Soul singer of it's title. Van sermonised his admiration, throwing in the title of Wilson's hit 'Reet Petite' amongst a song which carried the optimistic excitement of its real life inspiration.

The album then marks time; 'Gypsy' becomes the third and most clumsy attempt at the theme; gone are the pretensions to The Impressions. Where 'Gypsy Queen' is moving, this is rather pedantic, although the 'Paint It Black' styled chorus chant does shift the song a little. 'I Will Be There' is even less interesting; Van attempts to place himself beside Blues shouters such as Big Joe Turner, and, as always, is unconvincing when aping a single style, lacking the necessary poise and authority. Such reservations are suddenly discarded as the muted tones of 'Listen To The Lion' gradually emerge, bringing in a real air of anticipation. The early bass lines immediately recall 'Astral Weeks', but the song is much more focused, musically more specific, with its changes more orthodox. That however cannot lessen its significance as Van grumbles his way through Caledonian mythology and the subsequent Vinland journeys. The aura and scope is impressive, Morrison's phrasing is hypnotic, his technique jumps from whispers to screams, imploring and getting a deserved attention. 'Listen To The Band' brought out a sigh of relief, glad that Van Morrison was not lost to the irrelevance of Californian comfort.

'St. Dominic's Preview' itself harps more to the more straightforward rock-soul of the 'Street Choir' album, with a touch of 'Tuelo Honey' in John McFee's steel guitar. It's followed by 'Redwood Tree', another piece of nostalgia, but here Van refrains from delving deep into the images of the past, but merely recalls them. It's a pleasant exercise, a rare moment of successful insubstantiality, and the two songs taken together capture concisely the atmosphere of all of the previous two albums.

'Almost Independence Day' closes the album. It may seem to falter in its near-eastern tinged introduction, but it's a false premise; these are mere exploratory feelers. It pauses only to re-establish itself, then crawls into a mesmerising, meandering song; one almost devoid of tempo, where a drone and Van's acoustic guitar patrol the lines beneath his voice in an almost haphazard trail of complexity. Slowly the listener is drawn into its images, of the fireworks, the harbour and the cool, cool, night, and, almost imperceptibly, the backing gradually pulls together, partly through the addition of Ron Elliott, second guitarist and ex-Beau Brummell, who's arranging skills may have been brought to bear. The song peaks as Van celebrates the coming of July 4th, acknowledging the same American dream he was finding in his adopted homeland. If no other, this cut is testimony to his burning talent, the ambition, the arrogance and the vision.

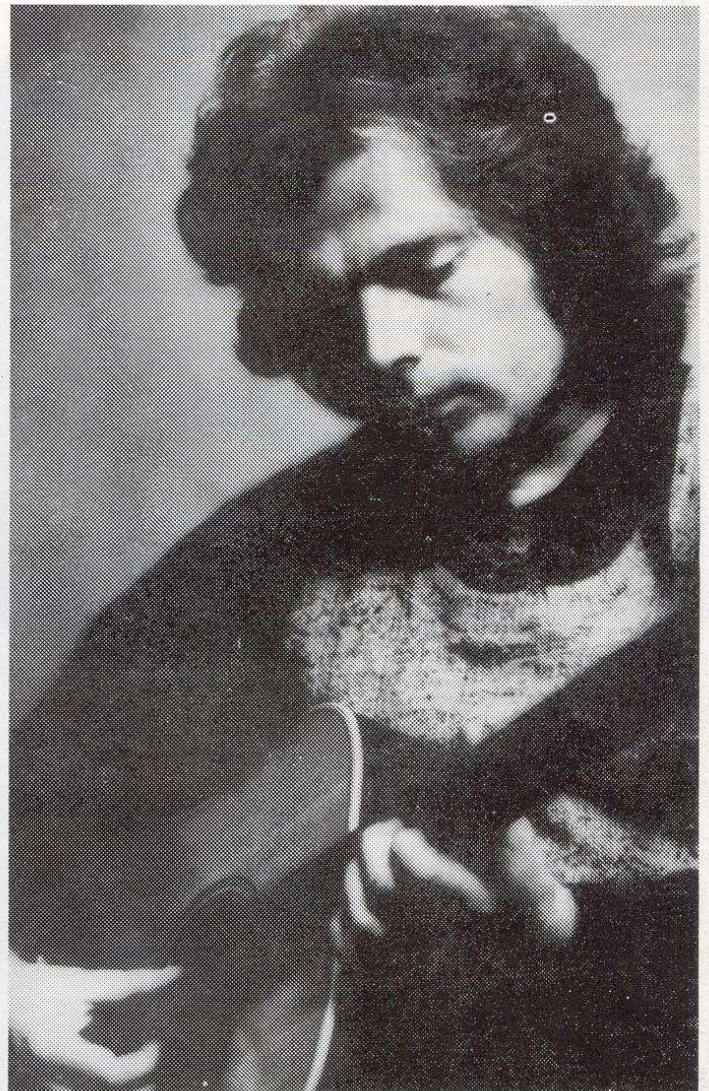
The selfsame qualities can, of course, flounder. 'Hard Nose The Highway', Van's offering for 1973, carried those qualities, but was a curious collection, one in some ways denying his legacy, in others reinforcing it. 'Snow In San Anselmo' must remain one of rock's most ideosyncratic opening songs,

blown out by featuring the Oakland Symphony Chamber Chorus and two ugly jazz rock passages. Together, both afforded the track an importance its slight basis would otherwise lack, but only resulted in clumsiness. 'Warm Love' which followed was the forth part in the 'Domino' Top 40 game, although here it's in a more restrained pattern, a 'Dock Of The Bay' to the 'Respect' of 'Domino'. It was an album where concepts either matched or outweighed their conclusions; of the former 'Wild Children' is a perfect acknowledgement of 50's film (Brando, Dean) and of theatre (Tennessee Williams) and grows into a homage to the post-war generation ("1945, the soldiers came home with love looks in their eyes"). Yet it was curiously understated, given Morrison's love of theorising, but paradoxically was possibly the more successful because of it. It was sandwiched between the autobiographical mood of 'Hard Nose The Highway' itself, and the clumsy, pompous 'The Great Deception', where Van spouts off against writers, Hollywood, John Lennon, Sly Stone, the alternative society; all the while implying his own distance from such preserves and behaviour. Self deception perhaps, where the listener was foisted with bitchiness masquerading as music.

Almost as poor was Van's cover of 'Green', a trivial show tune bafflingly picked as his first cover since 'Goodbye Baby'. 'Autumn Song' was pleasant, but much too long and ill-disciplined, and the attempt at traditional material in 'Purple Heather' (aka 'Wild Mountain Tyme' aka 'Will Ye Go Lassie Go') lacked the innovation of The Byrds, the authority of countless folk singers and the sensuality of Dylan (heard on 'Live At The Isle Of Wight'). In all 'Hard Nose The Highway' fumbled on the Morrison mystique, Van over-reached himself, unable to see his limitations. It smashed the good of 'St. Dominic's Preview', confirming it as coincidence rather than planning.

The early 70's saw a new, obligatory beast, the live double album. Many were used for convenience, to end a record contract, to disguise a lack of current inspiration. A precious few were worthwhile; either reasserting the performer's past either by recreating his/her own material (Dylan's 'Before The Flood', The Band's 'Rock Of Ages') or by acknowledging past influences. Van Morrison did both on 'It's Too Late To Stop Now', a collection spanning his 1973 tour and his use of the Caledonia Soul Orchestra. It included the natural favorites - 'Domino', 'I've Been Working', 'Listen To The Lion', 'Warm Love', 'Caravan' - each one adequately recreated, performed with a hint of the joy of performance. Just for fun ran a medley of 'Gloria' and 'Here Comes The Night', a radical hello to adolescence and early music, and a slew of great interpretations, which, when combined together, gave an image of the man's total music.

Here Morrison clearly defined his influences: Sonny Boy Williamson ('Take Your Hand Out Of My Pocket'), Muddy Waters ('I Just Wanna Make Love To You'), Ray Charles ('I Believe To My Soul'), Sam Cooke ('Bring It On Home To Me') and Bobby Bland ('Ain't Nothing You Can Do'). Of these most are self explanatory, but the choice (again) of Bobby Bland,



particularly at that time, is the most interesting. Them had, of course, attempted his 'Yield Not To Temptation', but where the original cased along, Morrison's counterpart sounded lazy, unable to catch the feel of effortlessness. The years in between had allowed Van's grasp to grow, his take of 'Ain't Nothing You Can Do' is both authoritative and relaxed; he and the band glide through the changes without awe or reservation, playing a version which could stand beside the original.

'It's Too Late To Stop You' was also a means to reassert a slipping respect. Morrison's studio work was progressively lessening - 'St. Dominic's Preview' apart, it was becoming more bland, more vacuous but yet more indulgent. However musically he now regained his authority; he demanded to be remembered and respected again, and the work which followed would be, in it's own way, equally as inventive.

'Veodon Fleece' appeared almost immediately after 'It's Too Late To Stop Now'. If the live set stated Morrison's past, the new album was firmly the present, and the future. Yet it dwelt on memories, reflecting Van's return to Ireland, filled with a feeling of rural precepts and images. Even its titles, 'Streets Of Arklow', 'County Fair', 'Linden Arden'; they each gave off a pastoral feel, a concept Van was keen to exploit. The scattershot of 'Hard Nose The Highway' was forgotten, in its place something more substantial,

even allowing for the drift to West Coast muso extremes in 'Bulbs', 'Cul De Sac' and 'Comfort Me'. In truth, however, only 'Bulbs' was jarringly misplaced. The rest is almost faultless. 'County Fair', for one, reclaims the innovation of 'St. Dominic's Preview'; simpler perhaps, but contextually correct with Van backed only by acoustic guitar and ulean pipe. This was much closer to the spirit of Ireland that the previous, flawed 'Purple Heather' had tried for. 'Linder Arden Stole The Highlights' is equally provocative; this time Van's voice soars over a stark piano and string quartet, a song which in itself sounds more like a fragmented idea, but it achieves a fullness by its being left that way, allowing its quality to remain uncluttered and unchallenged by unnecessary filling. 'Who Was That Masked Man?' works in the same way, suddenly, almost surprisingly, reaching its quick conclusion.

These are followed by the album's two most impressive pieces: 'Streets Of Arklow', which directly conjures an image of Ireland's past communities and their relationship to today, and 'You Don't Pull No Punches', where the gobbledegook title frames a song which sweeps from a wished-for love (a casual chance sighting) into a grander search for the Veodon Fleece, through images of the West Coast of Ireland and the poetry of William Blake. For once, Morrison's pretensions do not glare; the structure of the song is

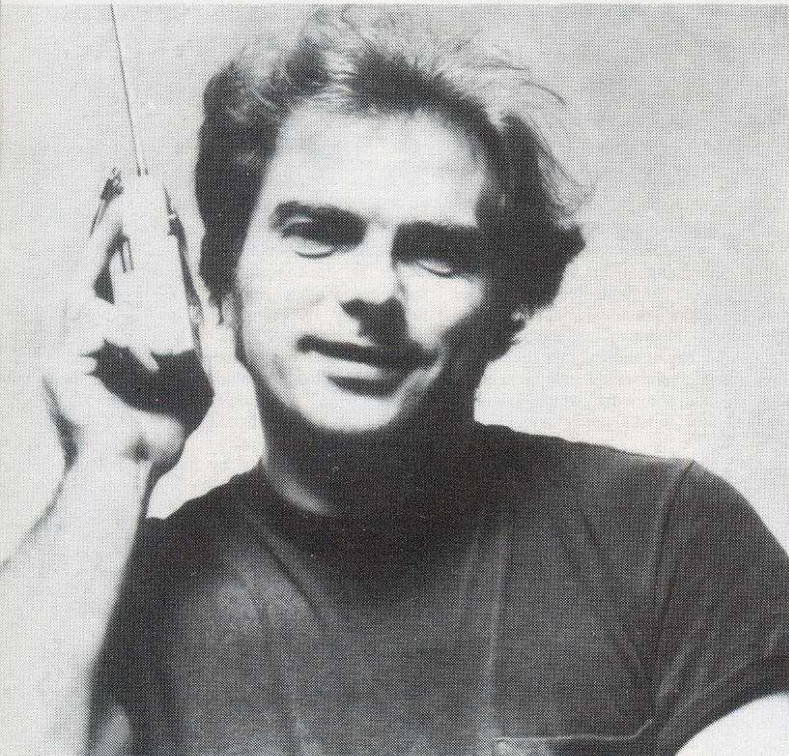
MEANWHILE

strong enough (as it was on 'Astral Weeks') to carry its weight. The use of woodwind and strings is particularly successful, both here and elsewhere, and Van repeatedly refrains from overstatement and excess. This precision gives 'Veedon Fleece' a lasting charm: there's little to jar or to date.

For an artist so self assured, Van Morrison has always been aware of mass success and counted on a part of it. Each album has its hit tricks and 'Veedon Fleece' is no exception, but its over-riding power allowed the retirement which followed to be based on a worthwhile epitaph.

Van Morrison's sabbatical did only last three years. Since then he has issued almost as many records again, but it's here that this writer will close the file. This does not mean to denigrate those later albums; some were poor, more were average, a few were excellent. There were moments of splendour and moments of embarrassment; ambition could be sprawled (as on 'Common One') or almost realised (as on 'Inarticulate Speech'). A perfect scene of nostalgia, where Morrison recalled his early teen enthusiasm was struck in the trite 'Cleaning Windows', and the singer on the pantheon of the metaphysical reared itself on 'Rave On John Donne'. But the premis of his work remains unchanged; the Soul of Ray Charles, the jelly-roll blues of Jimmy Rushing, the scat of Billy Eckstine, the charts of James Brown. There were the literary illusions, the building of a new Jerusalem, the homage to folk myths and medieval tales; Celtic glories in song and imagery. Black 60's urban R&B, country Blues and Gaelic folk; these to Morrison were indivisible, they were the same primal scream, the same emotion. He took and takes each one and mixes them, he'll remain, as always, iconoclast, frustrating, contemptuous, forgettable — then suddenly indispensable.

A PUBLICITY SHOT FROM THE COMEBACK 'PERIOD OF TRANSITION' TOUR, 1977.



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■ In 1969, Ken McDowell and Jim Armstrong put together Sk'Boo, who worked, briskly, throughout Ireland and the mainland, before abandoning the UK for Chicago. Here they were joined by Ray Elliott and a US rhythm section, and as Truth, the new group worked around Illinois for the best part of two years. They recorded an unreleased film soundtrack ('Cum Laude Fraud'), but collapsed on the wrong end of corporate pique. Elliott returned to Canada, while McDowell and Armstrong were back in Belfast, beginning the first of several projects.

One of these was Light, formed by Armstrong in 1978, who survived long enough to record an eponymous album, released, only in Ireland, on the Mint label. He and McDowell then reformed Sk'Boo, but the latest report suggests the two have now split 'irrevocably', leaving a lone 7" as their only legacy. Armstrong now fronts the Jim Armstrong Band, alongside John Wilson, from 'Them Again' who then went on into Taste and Stud (amongst others).



Part of the reason for the collapse of Light can be attributed to a final (?) grab at the past. Following the 'Truth Of Truths' fiasco, Alan Henderson had returned to a Connecticut farm, but the legend of his former group refused to die. He returned to Ireland and reunited with Eric Wrickson and Billy Harrison, adding Billy Bell (d.) and Mel Austin (v.) for a reshaped Them. Germany beckoned and the unit shuffled to Hamburg where they recorded 'Shut Your Mouth' for Teldec/Decca, a frankly uninteresting record, before celebrating their reunion with the kind of upheavals which now seem obligatory. Harrison was ousted, and for the second time, Jim Armstrong replaced him, while Wrickson was removed in favour of Armstrong's partner in Light, Brian Scott (who nowadays is also in the Jim Armstrong Band). Meanwhile, the reconstituted Them struggled on into a German tour, before breaking up again. Paradoxically, it was Billy Harrison who would maintain the legacy; in 1980 he recorded 'Billy Who?' for Vagabond, which featured a silhouette of the 'Them' sleeve on the cover. Also recorded in Germany, it fared even less well than 'Shut Your Mouth', and Harrison returned to a day job and occasional rugby club gigs, where his career with The Gamblers had begun all those years ago.



Thanks to John Berg and Ben Olins for their help in piecing this story together.

Way back in the first issue of *Strange Things* we announced, at the end of our 'Making of The Madcap Laughs' article, that EMI were to issue an album of out-takes and unreleased material. We can now exclusively reveal the contents of that album – which should be in the shops by the end of October on the Harvest label.

Titled simply 'Opel', it's a collection of all the unissued titles that remain in the EMI vaults. Many had to be mixed down from the original 8 and 4 track tapes – and amongst the 'finds' are tracks unheard for twenty years. Here's a blow by blow rundown of the album.

OPEL

This track runs for six and a half minutes and is the ninth take on the reel. Many of the other takes stopped halfway through when Syd either forgot the tune or the words. The second half of the song drifts into a long lament where Syd sings "I'm trying..." to a long chorded strummed backing. A beautiful song that could have been floated out on the 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' album.

CLOWNS & JUGGLERS

In which the Soft Machine valiently follow Syd's crazed path through the song – an early, lopsided version.

RATS

Believe-it-or-not-dept: this original demo, with all its faltering and spontaneity was used for the final take on 'Barrett'. Gilmour dubbed on extra instruments – and swamped Syd under layers of sound. This is what's at the bottom of the heap!

GOLDEN HAIR

This is an early attempt – much emptier and more wistful.

DOLLY ROCKER

As Syd introduces the song on the album: "this is about an old dress... well, months old." The middle section is classic Syd – and could be from any of the early Floyd songs.

WORD SONG

This has cropped up on many bootlegs – but the crystal-clear production (the whole thing was mixed down digitally) breathes life into the music.

WINED & DINED

This demo take was found in an unmarked box – the timing varies slightly to the one on 'Barrett'.

SWAN LEE

Also known as 'Silas Lang', this too has surfaced on bootlegs – but you've never heard the low thud of the tomtoms and the undercurrent of backwards sounds before.

BIRDIE HOP

In the same area as 'Effervescent Elephant' in its playroom simplicity – an allegorical sing-song.

LET'S SPLIT

"This song doesn't have a title..." comments Syd – and even on this take (the only one in existence) he stops twice – and ends whistling the tune.

LANKY (Part 1)

Although Part 2 of this opus consists of the backing drums only (which last for seven minutes), this first part is a

Syd Barrett

OPEL



complete instrumental, which although cluttered and awkward breaks into psychedelic mayhem near the mid-way point. Syd's unmistakable graunching guitar can be heard urging the others on. No-one can remember the other musicians on this track – it's from 1968 – it could be Floyd... the engineer (who still works there) can't even remember.

WOULDN'T YOU MISS ME

A completely different version to the released one (called 'Dark Globe'). Syd sings in a lower register – and the song works even better for it.

MILKY WAY

Classic Syd. Heard on bootlegs, but never like this. From the 'Barrett' ses-

sions, and only passed over because time ran out.

GOLDEN HAIR (Instrumental)

This take was found languishing in a box amongst other out-takes. It's an early attempt at the song – without vocals – and it's so delicate the music is hardly louder than a whisper. The whole thing breathes 'Set the Controls ...' – a track which it now seems Syd does play on (we consulted the tape boxes) and who's to say that's not Nick Mason on cymbals?

At last, a reissue by a major label with thought and expertise. Even the photos on the sleeve are unseen before – one shows Syd at his strangest and moodiest. Put your order in today!

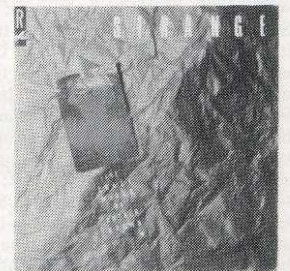


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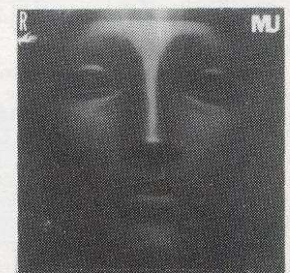
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INTRODUKTION

This article was never meant to be an exclusive study of all music German, indeed that would be about as relevant as a three part article on "groups whose second single reached No. 47". What with the current attention being turned to music made after 1968 and before "punk" (see "Zippo - Prog-Rock Rarities") it has become necessary for your editor to call for an article on German rock of that era, to ensure that people venture further than The Open Mind, Cirkus and various Vertigo swirl barf-outs.

What this piece should do is cause millions (count 'em) of *Strange Things* readers to write in with more information, so that I can set about compiling the nation's greatest discography on German Eurorock (Deutschesbund feldrocken-diskografischebiograhnen).

Very little has ever been written in the UK rock press about German music made in the late sixties and early seventies. Ian McDonald wrote a long two-part article for the NME entitled "Germany Calling" (1972) and coined the patronising title "Kraut Rock". Hurumph. For many the early Seventies became a musical wasteland, and therefore VERY EXCITING. You had to really hunt for good music, ignoring the mainstream chart. There were plenty of places to turn to: US Soul was having a boom period, turning psychedelic 5 years late, and Germany proved to be turning out truly unique music. German youth, being fiercely militant in those days, plunged head first into music (the accent being very much on the head). No bands seemed to dabble with their art; returning now-and-then to copy US or UK acts, it was full pelt out-on-a-limb all the way stuff. Gripping and rarely boring. West Germany's socialism seemed to effect their rock: non-playing managers were illegal and they had to promote their own shows as very few record companies were at all interested. Germany could be divided up into three circuits. First there was Cologne and the Ruhr towns like Dortmund, Essen, Wuppertal and Dusseldorf with places like Munster, Osnabruck and Bielefeld in the North East.

Then there was the "autobahn" route. Going south from Cologne one reached Bonn, Coblenz, Frankfurt, Mainz, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Ulm, Augsburg and Munich.

Lastly there was the north, close to East Germany: Brunswick, Hanover, Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin. Whereas touring foreigners would cover the country in one fell swoop, German bands could take a year to tour their own country, playing many times a week and living from hand-to-mouth. Large promotion companies have now ironed this out to the extent that even visiting groups have to spend a lot longer in Germany if they seriously wish to succeed in that territory.

It's worth discounting some of those 'German' acts for a kick-off. **Nektar** were an Englander-based-in-Germany band, and played siked-up blues, much in the vein of The Groundhogs (indeed, they were stable-mates on the United Artists label. File under "Monstrous UK Heavy Guitar"). **Magma** were French and would have loved to have been German; much in the same way were **Holden**. **Ekseption**, **Pulsar**, **Focus** and **Toad**: sorry guys, wrong country. **Jane**, **Lucifer's Friend**,

Jeremy B. Gash, **Osmundi**, **Scorpions**, **Kraau**, **9 Days Wonder**, **Atlantis**, **Birth Control**, **Hairy Chapter**, **Release Music Orchestra** and many more: sorry guys, we're discussing German groups who sounded unlike any other Western Group, those that were intent on remaining German. In writing about such music a reoccurring adjective seems to be TEUTONIC, i.e. of the Germanic Peoples ("a North European Tribe mentioned in 4th Century BC and attacking the Roman Republic" - Oxford Dictionary, that'll do nicely). German youth may well slap their foreheads in disgust at such a racist generalisation, but for an impressionable 18 year old English lad it seemed to make a lot of sense in 1970, besides, Teutonic music sounded far less of an insult than Krautrock!

Most German-based record companies of the time were only interested in US and UK pop music or oom-pah-pah bierkeller bands. It took the usual spritely attitude of a few misguided souls to set up a homegrown stable of talent. In 1970 Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and Peter Meisel set up OHR MUSIK, distributed by the giant Metronome company. Ohr recorded and released German rock exclusively. They later set up a separate deal with BASF to distribute their sister label PILZ. Later a third label was started called KOSMISCHE KURIERE. The BRAIN label was started a bit later, by Brundo Wendel and Gunther Korber, two Ohr employees, and was also distributed by Metronome. They had a dodgy UK distribution deal via Logo (Transatlantic) for a short period later on, and released a lot of very bad German heavy metal that tended to hide excellent bands such as **Harmonium** and **Novalis**. Brain, however, scored many a gold star by having the taste to distribute all albums by the seminal UK band Steamhammer, as well as other acts, which no doubt kept them financially buoyant.

Ohr managed to trap the most important groups, licensing out rights to Polydor or United Artists in the rest of the world. As we find now, however, many bands issued records on their own 'Private' labels and these, of

Deutsch Nepal

A fleeting dabble in German music 1967-1975

By Armstrong Whitworth

course, have now become very scarce. Even **Can**'s first attempt was handmade, on 'Music Factory', in an edition of 600 copies, later to be snapped up by United Artists and re-issued as 'Monster Movie'.

German studios of that period were very basic, causing many groups to enlarge their line-ups and play everything live. Conny Plank ruled the roost, recording many Ohr acts in his Starstudio in Hamburg. Dieter Dierks was less fussy and had a 16-track in Cologne; **Amon Duul** used Peter Kamper's small Bavaria studio in Munich and Can had their own 'Inner Space' studio run by Rene Timmer.

The only other notable studios of the time seemed to be the converted schoolhouse at Wumme, between Hamburg and Bremen, where **Faust** cooked their stew, and Windrose Studios in Hamburg where Conny Plank recorded the mighty **Neu**. Dierks has since shot to

fame by insisting on thrusting The Scorpions on an uneducated world; Plank sadly died last year of cancer, after having progressed on to Ultravox and The Eurythmics.

A swift review of the main contenders adds up to a comfortable sweep over all things Germanic, so let's start with my personal favorites:

CAN

The 'heaviest' of all early German bands. Can never put a foot wrong in their first 8 years and influenced more musicians than is worth mentioning just now. They first recorded in 1968 (some of which has only recently been released), with a black ex-history teaching American Malcolm Mooney on vocals. The nucleus of Can included ex Jazz drummer Jaki Leibezeit, Farfisa keyboard chopper Irmin Schmidt, guitarist Micheal Karoli and bassist Holger Czukay. Mooney was replaced by a Japanese singer Damo Suzuki. Myth has it that Suzuki knew little English, no German and was found busking on a German street corner. He got the job.

Can contributed much music to complement various German films in the late sixties, a habit that Schmidt continues.

All albums are recommended, none higher than the lengthy UA double 'Tago Mago' which contained shortish rhythmic workouts, long beat-based funk excursions and much ambient sonic meanderings all of the very highest quality. The band recorded most material in a castle in Cologne that once became a cinema, only later to be soundproofed with American Army stained mattresses, to form Inner Space studios.

After many superb solo outings, Can are back in the studio and are set to

THE ORIGINAL PRIVATE PRESSING OF CAN'S FIRST ALBUM, ON THE MUSIC FACTORY LABEL. THIS COPY IS NUMBER 215 - AND IS THE PROPERTY OF STOUT FELLOW ANDREW LAUDER.





but this undersells their uniqueness. Bowie may have nicked sounds and effects, but he stayed well away from the highly risky territory that Neu played in with such gay abandon and disregard for what-the-public-wanted. Neu were utter purists and a VERY

similarity between Hawkwind's metronomic long space-out tracks, with German groups and the admirable 'family' atmosphere presiding at United Artists. Whilst Shirley Bassey hollered her guts out to try to bring in the bucks, stout fellows Andrew Lauder and Richard Ogden went out of their way to have an A&R signing *direction* which involved many German rock acts.

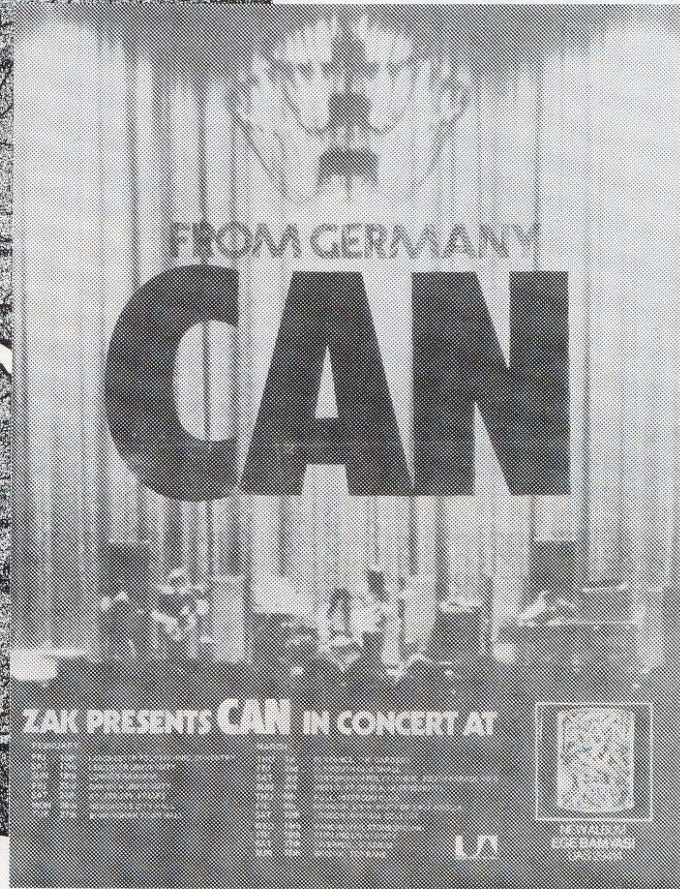
KRAFTWERK

Also from Dusseldorf, Ralf Hutter and Florian Schneider got as near-as-dammit to world domination with their highly influential concept albums of the late seventies. However, it really began in 1970 with two wildly experimental albums on which they seemed to go to all ends to eliminate any rhythmic forms or melodic patterns whatsoever. "Kraftwerk" can mean two things: "Men At Work" or "Power Station", and their first two albums remain true "journeys into sound". Ironically things tightened up after the departure of the Neu members. In came the beat boxes and metronomes along with very strong concepts, around which were built very strict albums. Phonogram had the freak hit with 'Autobahn', which served as their 'Da Da Da' for several years. The rest is well documented history; Ralf und Florian went on to be highly fashionable and obtained well-deserved global success without letting go of their strict quality control. Check out the first three albums and the remixed 'Radioactivity' album for true sonic brain busters.

AMON DUUL II

If Can and Neu's sometime minimalist approach was indicative of a harsh sparse German outlook; then Amon Duul may represent all that was grand and eloquent. Amon Duul performed in 1968 at the now-legendary Song Days Festival held at the Gingahalle Essen, supported by The Fugs

NEU PRONOUNCED NOY NOT NEW



release more new material. The Englishman's idea of 'Teutonic' is fantastically portrayed by Can's powerful music, as timeless as all the best music should be.

Irmin Schmidt and Holger Czukay both studied under Karlheinz Stockhausen, but Schmidt went on record saying how much he'd been influenced by The Velvet Underground. Connections with such a raw, barbaric US band seem obvious; the resultant tie-up between Velvet Underground/Dream Syndicate brainbox Tony Conrad and German heavyweights Faust in 1971 was an inevitable artistic meeting of minds. Schmidt went on to express his admiration for the then developing Roxy Music; Can had just turned down the support slot to Pink Floyd. They usually played for 4 hours and were always the only band on the bill, using such a long set to build up their own rapport with the audience.

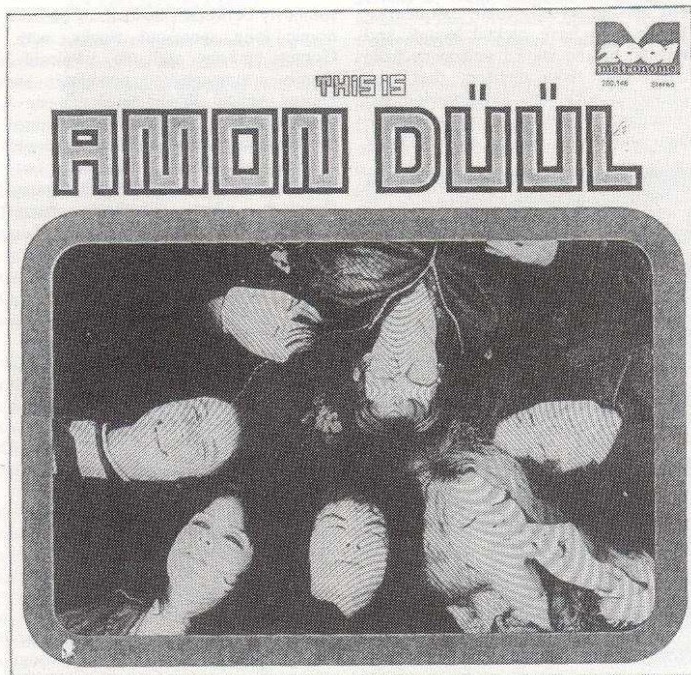
NEU

Formed by Klaus Dinger and Michael Rotker who'd left Kraftwerk after their first album, Neu are the most spartan of any of the rhythmic-based 'Metronomic' German acts. Rumour has it that drummer Dinger would start pulsing at the start of a session, and once he hit his stride, was impossible to stop. Many Neu tracks are distinguished by the bass drum bashing away like a tin can in a Moulinex with layered effects and throbbing bass notes over

the top. Essential listening; buy any album, turn down the lights and blast away. Whackiness abounded, tracks were made up of 16rpm and 78rpm versions of each song. It was pointed out (often) that David Bowie's 'Station To Station' period stole heavily from Neu,

IMPORTANT group. They went on to become part of 'Harmonia' (with Cluster) and punk rock faves La Dusseldorf before releasing magnificent solo albums. Dave Brock wrote the sleeve-notes on their first LP 'Neu' (UK copies on UA), which hinted at the





and The Mothers Of Invention. They split up afterwards becoming Amon Duul I and II. Our first prototype recorded three albums; 'Collapsing', 'Paradieswaarts Duul' and the now ludicrously rare 'Disaster'. All are very hard going, and were the result (as Ian McDonald would put it) of a colossal boom in the sale of bongoes. Not for the easy-of-hearing, these mammoth improvisations were dreadfully recorded and released by Ohr. Brave boys.



Mark II, however, carved a far more rewarding trail. Their first utterance, 'Phallus Dei' (I well remember asking my German speaking mother to translate *that* title) is a gem. UA released it in the UK in a loud psychedelic sleeve (now very hard to find) whilst back home Amon Duul started what was a series of influential light-show based sleeves. Indeed, adopting the American style of multi-slide projections with liquid wheels echoed their musical influences from San Francisco, particularly The Dead and Jefferson Airplane. Amon Duul II always had a floating line-up which included many an enigmatic soul. The second LP (a double – of course) 'Yeti' featured Shrat on bongoes (later with Graupner) and Hawkwind-to-be Dave Anderson on bass. One half of this set was scripted music, the other formed the glorious 'Yeti' improvised saga. Further double albums took them even deeper into floating organic improvisations, and the band toured the UK at least three times. They were often fronted by the beautiful Renate Knaup

Krotenschwanz and featured the highly amplified electric violin of Chris Karrer. Being a young avid fan of theirs was not easy, as members floated in and out, some from Amon Duul I, and sideline albums (Utopia) appeared, sometimes using the same songs. The later albums are much weaker, only because the first eight are the very best examples of random floating acid-head music that didn't rely on sequencers.

There is currently an Amon Duul 3 playing (yike!); a few UK dates were recently performed supporting Hawkwind.

TANGERINE DREAM

Mention should be made of this outfit, even though they understandably draw yawns from many an ex-student. When they weren't trying to be mid-period Pink Floyd (all very nice but not relevant here) or when they weren't relying on sequencer patterns to get them through the next album, they actually shone for a few moments. 1970's 'Electronic Meditation' album consisted of main-man meandering muses which really gave birth to the phrase 'Cosmic Music'. They were from Berlin, essentially, and will be remembered by any student of the seventies as "utterly amazing, man". Tread carefully, abandon all hopes of remaining fashionable.

FLOH DE COLOGNE

They also played at the notorious Essen Festival in 1968. Starting out as a satirical cabaret, they turned to rock music after two albums. 1970's 'Fliesbandbabys Beatshow' (Conveyor belt baby's beat show) contains a remarkable combination of Brecht-Weill theatrics and German rock, whilst the second album, 'Profigteier', is claimed to be Germany's first rock-opera, a bitter response to the pompous 'Tommy'. Deadly serious and often uncomfortable, the propaganda and Marxist slant to their albums can be seriously off-putting, that is, if you manage to track them down!

ASH RA TEMPLE

Very rewarding indeed; once listened to you'll make a pyre of 23 Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV albums. Thrown out of America for being rilly y'know totally faarr out man, Timothy Leary, head-acid guru of the West Coast, sailed to Germany and teamed up with Ash Ra to make the glorious 'Seven Up' LP. This was produced by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser for his Ohr offshoot 'Kosmischen-Kurice' and followed their brilliant, nay, seminal self-named debut and the ultra-rare 'Shwingungen' follow up. This was music made in the heady days where your debut LP *could* come out in a fold-out book covered in psychic poetry and doodles, where Eastern philosophy sloshed around with Western electronic meditation, where line-ups were irrelevant and when the music actually turned out to make a lot of sense. No quality control was necessary with Ash Ra Temple; if you see one, buy buy buy, you won't be sorry! Once again these two names Dierks and Plank crop up as producers. Klaus Schulze, in a rare attack of sense, plays keyboards brilliantly... phew! Later Virgin albums aren't so great however, let's be thankful.

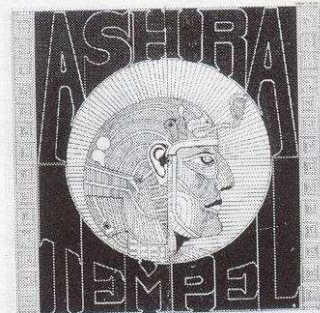
FAUST

"Check that bula Check ulla billasay"



The music of Faust is truly DERANGED. That is, it was never ARRANGED and then UNARRANGED (if you follow); it was actually born in a state of utter dementia. Faust have produced the most original (dare I say "important") music not just of this genre, but in rock

FLOH DE COLOGNE – UNCOMFORTABLE



music ever (*steady on old chap – sceptical Ed*). The first album was released in the UK by Polydor – you remember, clear vinyl, clear lyric sheet, clear sleeve – many bought and returned it two days later... poor folks.

Faust were formed in 1971 by Uwe Nettelbeck, who acted as producer and adviser. The story goes that a German Polydor A&R man suggested the need for such an extreme, pure German rock group. Uwe explained that there was an attempt to sound like no other western music, and that the released records should come across as bootlegs: unauthorised snapshots of work-in-progress by the band. Faust's music is a collage, a barrage of glimpses into their unique world. Christian Lebrun wrote in the French magazine *Best* "Bob Dylan, believing that the Cuba crisis would let loose an atomic cataclysm, composed 'Hard Rain', in which each line was the idea for a separate song he didn't believe he would have time to write. Faust's music is a bit like that; each musical phrase, each fragment, each quotation seems to be part of a whole music that time is pressing them to play." This manifested itself in one of the greatest rock albums ever: 'The Faust Tapes'. Released for the price of a single to celebrate their signing to Virgin, many people bought (and destroyed) the album, enough to put it high in the UK albums chart. The album was a collection of private tapes recorded by the band and put together by a fan, in an amphetamine-crazed collage that makes perfect sense. Faust went on to release a further album for Virgin, who have recently released 'Munich and Elsewhere', yet another excellent retrospective mish-mosh. All material is thoroughly enjoyable. In 1988 they're allowing cheap entry at live shows if you arrive with an instrument and play it during the evening's concert; they place headphones on each seat and relay the whole performance

**CLUSTER –
NEW AGE GURUS**

through just those. 48 pence for the best album in your life? Yes please.

CLUSTER

Made up of two gents Moebius and Roedelius, they are perhaps best known for their collaborations with one Brian Eno in 1977. Indeed, as well as the massive similarities between the first Roxy Music album and Faust, combined with a large chunk of career that formed Bowie's 'German' period, Deutsche musicians have participated with the UK to quite a great extent since those insular early seventies days. Can took on board the Traffic members Gee and Baah; Holger Czukay is well known for his excursions with ex-members of PIL. Japan, Eurythmics and U2 (gulp!)

Cluster lacked the variety of many of their counterparts and perhaps really only found their feet on their later solo outings, especially 'Jardins Au Fou' by Hans Joachim Roedelius (Oh dear, I've just found out that he calls himself a New Age musician now... AAAARRGH!)

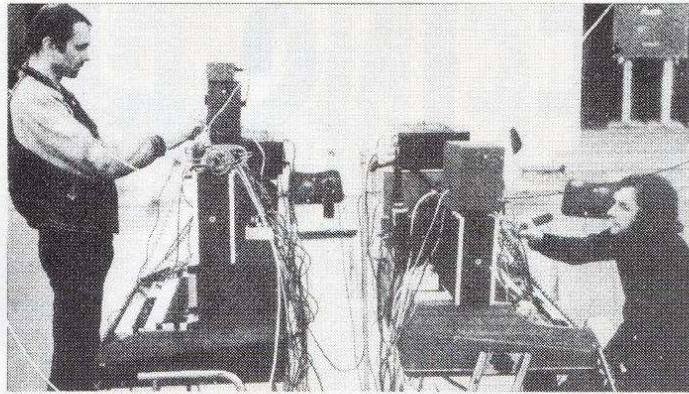
POPOL VUH

Tracing the history of Popol Vuh is not easy. There are a LOT of records. Popol Vuh have two distinguishing factors: the progress made between album 1 and album 50,958 most groups try to do between three albums; and nobody, but nobody, gets CLOSE to sounding as individual and majestic as Popol Vuh.

I have early albums on Liberty with main-man Florian Fricke banging bongoes and playing Moog synthesizer; I have soundtrack albums to most Werner Herzog films which have added vocals and opera singers; I have 'mid-period' albums with Amon Duul members and slightly jazz-ish arrangements and I have tantric songs that span whole sides. Popol Vuh also recorded for Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser's Cosmic Couriers label, indeed these include some of their best releases. Florian Fricke is Popol Vuh, is off his head and is totally brilliant. If you've seen the films *Nosferatu*, *Fitscarraldo* or *Aguirre*, you'll have noticed the ominous gothic chants of Popol Vuh. It really is genuinely haunting music that stays with you. Fricke is carving his own groove and should be left undisturbed but admired by millions.



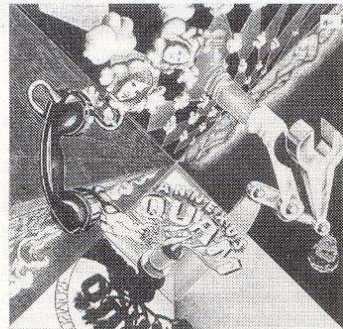
So here comes a general round-up of the also-rans and bands that command high regard (aka "auction only, minimum bid" etc) of which I'd love to know more.



The very best were **Emtidi**, whose 'Saat' album is a much sought-after classic. It's patchy but when it's good it shines! They recorded for the so-called folksy Pilz label, were a two piece and



were produced by Dieter Dierks. **Guru Guru**, also very patchy, were a madcap hippy theatrical pantomime who released several albums both for Ohr and Brain. Approach with caution; most of it is entertaining but mainman Uli Trepte was not known for his strict discipline. **Embryo** from Munich made up of three ex-members of the Amon Duul fraternity plus (believe-it-or-not) an old early Ten Years After member. Recorded several albums, their first



'Opal' standing out as the best. **Annexus Quam** and **Xhol** are lumped together. Both use wind instruments, seem unashamed of their interest in 'jazz' and released truly bizarre but obviously German albums. Buy later. **Witthaser and Westrupp**; **Paul and Limpe Fuchs** were two duos whose interest in folk, the German language (i.e. lyrics), bongoes, alpenhorns and sheep caused them both to remain indigenous, eclectic and an interesting diversion. Mention could be made, here, to **Broselmaschine**, a kind of Teutonic Steeleye Span, but not half as interesting as that may imply. **Wallenstein** claim to have included one Dieter Meier (Yello) in their ranks. This would make sense as he lived in Germany at the time. Slapp Happy member Anthony More insists that this is just another Meier wind-up. I would guess so; Wallenstein turned out pomp

'symphonic rock orchestra' which suffered accordingly. They *do* have their moments, but none worth paying thirty quid for. **Graupner** were a band of 17 musicians who lived in a derelict castle near Marwheijh and released several double and triple albums which they pressed themselves. Most of the material was stunning, much in a Ya Ho Wah way. Indeed I'm told that the original 17 remain and release records "to subscribers only". All are essential purchases, you may need a second mortgage however. **Novalis** recorded several hippy-style albums for Brain, much of which is surprisingly jolly good if a bit whimsical. **Demon Thor** were the brainchild of a Tommy Fortman; the only album I know of ('Written In The Sky', UA Germany) was engineered by Dieter Dierks and is a concept-opic work which has its moments, especially when it was mainly instrumental. Tommy wanted to save the world – it must have worked. **Anthony More** isn't German at all, but lived and played in Germany with Faust before forming Slapp Happy. They released, amongst others, three ultra rare German Polydor soundtracks which were pure German space rock, 'Secrets Of The Blue Bag' (1972) and 'Pieces From The Cloud Ballroom' (1972) being the essential purchases. **Softground** and **Tin Haus** were two acts comprising of many shared members; both recorded and lived in caravans and released only one album each. Both are distinguished by containing early recordings by English drama student Kevin Stapleton. They were the most notable and perhaps only acts to originate from the heavy industrial Ruhr towns in Germany's Black Country. **Agitator Free** released two excellent largely instrumental albums of a very high musical standard. They could play and were intent on letting everyone know as much. **Curly Curve's** debut album on Brain is a Blues-ish acid-mania and shines at times. A classic case of a 'legendary' album commanding vast sums from unsuspecting collectors but musically doesn't really justify the fuss. **Missing Link's** 'Nevergreen' album was released on UA in Germany but never made a UK release, possibly as it often relies on a good deal of Anglo-American influence causing it to be less important. The greatly-named **Grobschnitt** were a rather pompous band singing in strange German accents, certainly "progressive" but not essential.

Hopefully this article may spurn people to write in and tell (sell) all about the following bands. Many released albums on tiny (private press) labels. Some fetch high prices even now. This could be due to their utter

rarity; I'd like to hope it's due to their musical worthiness but we all know better than that eh kids? Who were **Lava** ('Tears Are Coming Home'), **Serqius Golowin** ('Lord Krishna Van Goloka' LP), **Limbus 4** ('Mandalas on Ohr 1970), **Sameti, Brainstorm, Tomorrow's Gift, Association P.C., Droselbart, Iblis, Walpurgis, Hodderlin** ('Traum' on Pilz), **Ihre Kinder, Emergency, Message, Epsilon, Marz, Jeronimo Wyoming, Pell Mell, Frame, Scarecrew** (were they **Eruption** under a different name?), **Dyzan** ('Electric Silence' – Bacillus 1974), **Janus** ('Gravedigger' – Harvest), **G.F. Fitzgerald** ('Mouseproof' – UNI 1970 with Sam Gopal), **Mythos** (on Ohr), **Missus Beasty** ('Nara Asst Inense' OPP 1970), **Out Of Focus** (LP on Cuckuck 1971), **Poseidon** (1975), **Virus** (another Pilz band, 1971 LP 'Thoughts'), **Zweistein** ('Trip Flip Out Meditation' on Phillips 1970, a 3 LP lavish fold out sleeve set), **Joy Unlimited** ('Schmetterlinge' – Pilz 1972), **Twenty Sixty Six and Then** (UA Germany 'Reflections' LP), **Eden's Taste** ('Meilensteine' – private press!), **Rust** ('Come With Me' on Hor Zu – later became heavy band **Freedom**; this, however, is meant to be a minor classic), **Achim Reichel** ('Autovision' on Zebra, Germany meets the East?), **Spacebox** (2 LPs: 'Spacebox' and 'Kick Up'... **Guru Guru** spinoff), **Silverbart** ('4 Times Sound Razing' on Phillips), **Siloah** (2 albums), **Wind** (2 albums), **Necronomicon**, **Think, Da Capo, Langsyne, Mammut, Tetrakon, Vinegar, Friedhof, Tortilla Flat, Eloy, Blizzards** ('I'm Your Guy' LP), **Epidaurus** ('Earthly Paradise' LP), **Lightshine, My Solid Ground, Light Of Darkness** (Phillips LP), **Arktis** (two LP's), **Zeberon, CWT, Royal Servants, I Drive, Nosferatu** (LP on Vogue), **Ardo Dombec** (album on Pilz), **Gila** (BASF LP 1971), **Mythos** (Ohr 1972), **Walter – Wegmuller** ('Tarot' LP for Kosmischen Kuriere), **Sweet Smoke** (acid deranged blues merchants), **Amenophis, Asterix, Cravinkel, Deyss, Erl Koenig, Eulenspygel, Excalibur** (album on German Reprise), **Franz K** (German Phillips debut LP had two tracks only), **Gomorra** (Brain label LP), **Out Of Focus** (2 LPs on Kuckuck), **Schwaizerbeit, Sitting Bull, Tibet** (on Bellaphon), **Verto** (?), **Yatha Sidra, Tetragon, Think** (on Menga – one album, 'Variety').....

Many of these could well be horrendous dinosaur prog-rockers or even late-Sixties beatsters; I dunno, these are all bands who have been highly recommended over the last twenty years. Naturally we're desperate and keen to find out what they're like. Write and tell us, better still, sell us!

And did it all end when das spiken-toppenpunken came along? Well not at all. I'll need a separate issue to rave about the young new German rock acts who took over, some of whom still carry their torches. The glory that belongs to **DAF, Abwärts, Trio** (yes, Trio), **Palais Schaumberg, Der Plan, The Vampyrettes, Neubauten, Heavy Kremlis, The White House Devils** and **Emma Myldenberger** remains to be told another day.

With many thanks to **Ian McDonalds NME article** (2.12.72), **Phillipe Paringaux** (*Rock et Folk magazine, France*), **'Das Buch Der Neuen Popmusik'** by **Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser**, from which sources large chunks of this article rely on.



SID GRIFFINS GUIDE TO LOS ANGELES ROCK POINTS

WITH PHOTOS BY
THE TALENTED
DON WILLIAMS



Los Angeles, specifically the Hollywood area, is, in my opinion, the entertainment capital of the world. If London challenges sunny LA in the world of pop music, if New York threatens in the world of publishing and finance, remember: LA does compete on those levels, and destroys both cities when it comes to film making. Hollywood has more agents, actors, managers, mechanics, musicians, singers, scammers, producers, directors, dickheads, druggies, dreamers and pure nutters per square inch than any turf on earth. Each one of 'em has his own story. I know. My name's Griffin, and I carry a guitar.

The history of Los Angeles' early days is still being written; the city was but a village with surrounding farm land 100 years ago. Until shortly after the end of World War One, sheep were herded down Hollywood Blvd, which was a dirt road then. Santa Monica, Hollywood, Long Beach and Los Angeles were four separate cities until after World War Two and when you drove from one to the other in the late forties all you saw were orange groves and trees, there was no urban sprawl like today.

Remembering this brief snatch of history think about this: if the city of Los Angeles is that young, then the history of the entertainment industry at large is even younger. The first motion picture was not made here until 1913 when Jesse Lasky and Cecil B. DeMille made *The Squaw Man*. Only seventy-five years of movie-making and the history of popular music in Los Angeles is much less than that.

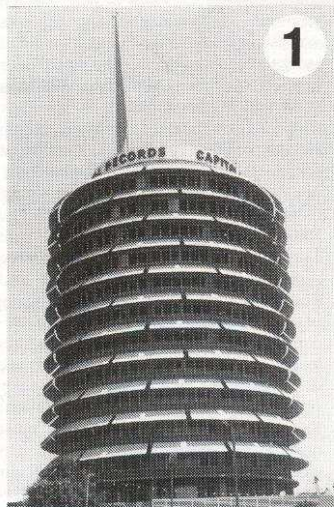
Here is an arbitrary listing of eight Los Angeles rock'n'roll landmarks, chosen because they represent this city's particular contribution to rock'n'roll and because they illustrate why people like me leave their homes in smalltown America to be a pinball on the rock'n'roll roulette wheel. 'Ya pays to play and 'ya takes 'ya chances!

1. Capitol Records, 1750 Vine.

This must be the Hollywood landmark to end all Hollywood landmarks. In 1956 this, the world's first circular office building, was built just north of the historic corner of Hollywood and Vine. The idea of the design was to make the record label's headquarters resemble a stack of 45rpm records on

a spindle. Which it does, given some thought.

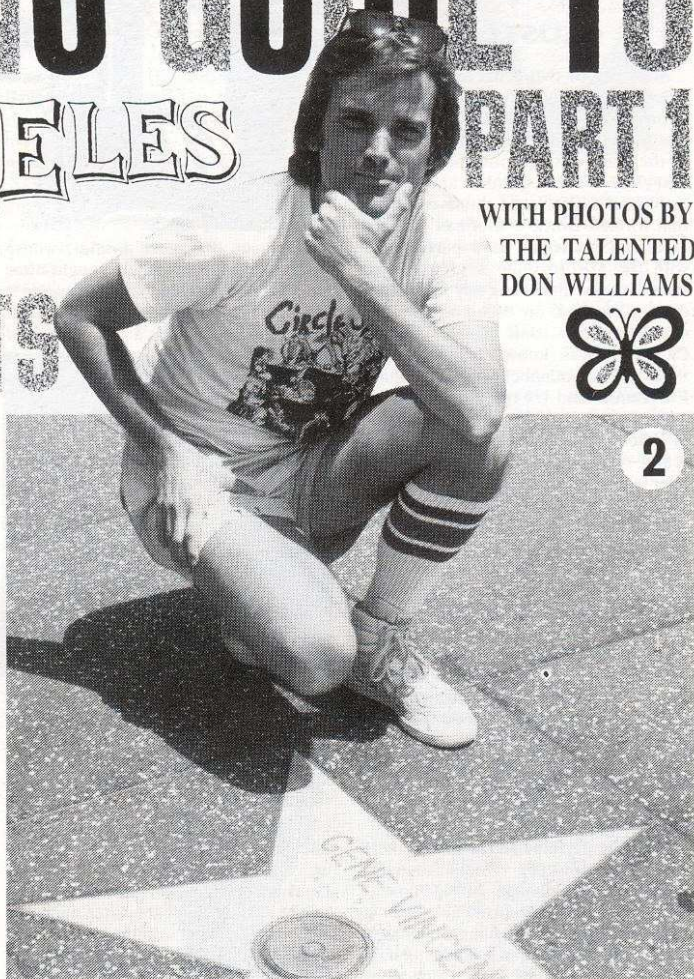
Though the label has fallen on hard times in the last ten years, during the 60's it was THE American record label, boasting both The Beatles and The Beach Boys, amongst others (*Yeah!* - Quicksilver and the god-like Hearts & Flowers - Ed). What is frequently forgotten is as early as the late forties the label was doing very well indeed with middle of the road crooners like Nat "King" Cole and



C&W artists like Tennessee Ernie Ford and Merle Travis. No postcard or photograph of the Hollywood area is ever seen which doesn't feature this building prominently.

2. Gene Vincent's Star, Vine across from Capitol Records.

Sweet Gee Vincent. When Gladys Presley first heard "Be Bop A-Lula" she sent her son Elvis a congratulatory telegram. The ex-Navy seaman from Norfolk, Virginia, was in the car crash in Britain which killed his closest friend, Eddie Cochran. Cursed with a bum leg from childhood, an early motorcycle accident and that car crash couldn't have done Gene any good either. The hits had slowed before altogether stopping and the painkillers and drinking increased in proportion. Thank God none of you Brits saw Gene's "performance" at the Holly-

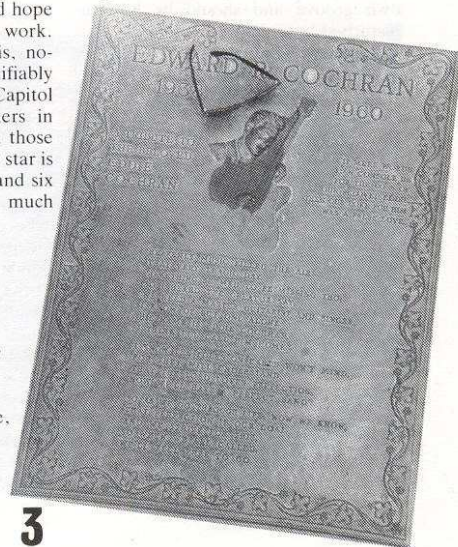


wood Palladium in 1971. Ask Dave Alvin about it, Jesus.... or better yet, don't.

Lately there has been a bit of a scandal about the stars on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, the same stars sung about in "Celluloid Heroes" by the Kinks. Seems almost any geek can get one. Tom Cruise got one and his co-star Paul Newman doesn't have one. All you really gotta do is donate three thousand something dollars to the Hollywood Chamber Of Commerce and then get voted on and hope they know about your charity work. But when Gene Vincent got his, nobody knew this and he was justifiably proud. Perhaps somebody at Capitol pulled some strings since rockers in black leather didn't get them in those days (not that they do now). The star is across the street from his label and six stars south of Chuck Berry's much newer one.

3. Eddie Cochran's Grave, Forest Lawn Cemetery, 4471 Lincoln Ave, Cypress

Rock's own James Dean, they even died the same way. A good enough guitarist to play sessions for other people, he sang back-up for such pals as Gene Vincent when the two could get their schedules



4. Sam Cooke's death site, 9137

S. Figueroa Blvd, The Webb Motel.

Sam Cooke's untimely death in December 1964 robbed Soul music of what may have been its finest voice. Coming out of the Soul Stirrers where he replaced the much-admired R.H. Harris (whom Cooke strove to emulate) Sam was indisputably one of the half-dozen greatest gospel vocalists of all time. From there he moved to Keen Records in Culver City (an LA suburb) and cut a string of pop hits which were, in retrospect, usually cleaned up quite a bit so Cooke could cross over into the white market.

Cooke was not merely soulful, he was flash. How many black cats drove around LA in a red Ferrari in the early 60's? How many knew Muhammed Ali close enough to hang out with him in training camp and sit with Bundini Brown ringside? And our boy was handsome. Aretha Franklin said "the two most startling things about Sam Cooke are his voice and his looks." It was in this motel parking lot where the manageress shot Cooke one night as he pounded on her door demanding a key to his own room. (The girl in his room had locked him out when she decided she didn't want to play with the singer). New owners run the joint today.



5. Ciro's, 8433 Sunset Blvd.

This Hollywood hotspot/nightspot is now known as The Comedy Store and features comedians exclusively. Opened in 1939 and closed in 1957 it spent its first life as a restaurant and watering hole for the stars of one of Tinseltown's best periods. Humphrey Bogart's favorite dinner and dance joint was Ciro's and you had to flash more than a tenner to get a good table near the latest screen sensations.

After falling on hard times in the late Fifties the club re-opened in the early Sixties as a rock'n'roll joint with acts like Little Richard's and Bo Diddley's as headliners. And it is here that the club achieved *real* fame in the eyes of folks like myself because The Byrds first true success came at Ciro's in early 1965. After being booked in a bowling alley and getting gigs at private parties, managers Jim Dickson and Eddie Tickner got them a residency at Ciro's, a now fading nightclub trying to regain its former importance with a younger clientele.

Though The Byrds were under-rehearsed and nervous as hell they wowed the Hollywood faithful, and as soon as the word was out, Ciro's became packed. Sean Connery, Jane Fonda, Dean Stockwell, Brandon DeWilde, Barry McGuire, pre-fame Sonny and Cher, Michael Pollard and punters who dressed in buckskin and leather, fringe and lace, orange and purple. The Byrds were the first long-haired act in LA and they played loudly and didn't speak between songs. The audience was amazed at what they took to be the group's audacity and hipness. Derek Taylor says it was painful to watch the band perform for those who knew what was *really* going on but ask survivors like Rodney Bingenheimer, Cyril Jordan, Billy James, Greg Shaw, the GTOs and a host of others and they will tell you there was nothing like it on the face of the earth. With a tear in their eye, too. It all had something to do with a thing called magic and a thing called chemistry. These people were believers.

6. The Nine Thousand Building, 9000 Sunset Blvd.

This office high-rise is just west of Ciro's/The Comedy Store on Sunset Blvd. with the Whiskey A-Go-Go between them. The Nine Thousand Building is famous in rock'n'roll circles today because it houses many publishers, actor's agents, managers and so forth. But in the years 1965-1968 it was home of Derek Taylor's offices, the man who did publicity for The Beatles and who ghost-wrote *A Cellar Full Of Noise* for Brian Epstein. Tiring of all this Beatle madness he packed up the kids and a-moved to Bever-lee where he opened up publicity offices and was soon showered with clients like The Beach Boys, Captain Beefheart, the Sir Douglas Quintet, Buffalo Springfield, Paul Revere and the Raiders and of course The Byrds, whom Mr. Taylor wisely and righteously adored.

Yet where he merely did publicity for the other bands he let The Byrds use his offices as rehearsal rooms after hours. But there was one hitch. The Byrds were young men thrown together and not used to fame and the pressure that went hand-in-hand and these boys were not, I mean not, getting along. In fact they had fistfights now and then. So they didn't rehearse because they simply couldn't stand each other. Ah, but all is not lost. The amps and drums were in closets ready to be set up. The Airplane were coming to town to make 'Surrealistic Pillow' and they needed a place to routine the material so Byrd David



Crosby said "Hey, use our place, man, we don't need it!" Which the Airplane did.

Those hard-core Byrds fans who know the story of Gene Clark trapped in an elevator for several hours (he's claustrophobic) will be interested to know that it occurred in this very building.



7. Fern Dell Road, Griffith Park.

Griffith Park is the largest municipal park in the United States and possibly the world. It's operated with no entrance fee due to a park dowry donated by the late Col. Griffith J. Griffith. The park is a few miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles (yes, we do have one) just west off Interstate 5. An oasis of rolling hills and lush greenery which includes several golf courses, a riding stable, the Greek Theatre (an amphitheatre for

LOS ANGELES

ROCK POINTS PART 1



8

pop concerts), miles of pathways for strolling lovers, a home for wildlife in the heart of the city, and an observatory which was used in the climactic scenes of *Rebel Without A Cause* (where Sal Minco gets shot). This park is an important part of the city even though it is not a part of the city itself.

And no part of Griffith Park is more green or lush than Fern Dell, a botanical garden on the western edge of the park just off Los Feliz Blvd. A strip of deep green ferns divided by a stream running south right through its heart, Fern Dell must've looked much the same twenty-three years ago when photographer Barry Feinstein brought The Byrds, one of the first rock'n'roll bands ever signed to the then middle-of-the-road Columbia records, to stand on one of the many stone-boarded dirt pathways for their first album cover.

Using the fisheye lens to create a mood-altering image, Feinstein gave the rock world a classic LA band in a classic LA location.

8. The Legendary Norton House, 7621 W. Norton Ave.

This is the primary stomping ground of the bands who came to be known as the Paisley Underground. The fabu-

lous Long Ryders were headquartered here and most of their business decisions were held in the living room; many of their songs were written in the bedroom at the northwest corner of the house. Debbi Peterson of The Bangles lived here for many years before she became famous with all the hit records and decided to avoid the old neighbourhood like cholera. Hey Deb, send us a card, okay? Billy Bremner, ex-Rockpile guitarist, lived at the Norton House too, as have Australia's Celibate Rifles. Sid Griffin still does live there, he can't afford the rent anyplace else. Look, there's Sid and ace roadie Joe Stella on the porch smiling.

Who hangs or has hung out at the Norton House? Why everybody who is anybody, that's who. Like all the above folks plus Pete Frame, Chris Hillman, Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Will Glenn, Matt Pucci, Pat McLaughlin (nice LP on EMI America), Steve Wynn, Will Birch, Neill King, Gert Jonkers of Holland's Landlords, Phast Phreddie, David Kahne, Peter Case, Dave Alvin, Billy Bateman, Country Dick Montana, Billy Bragg, Danny Stuart, Chip and Tony Kinman of Blackbird, Andy Kershaw, Trevor Dann, Ian McLagan and Ronnie Lane and a lot of other people who failed to

pick up after themselves. The humble hostel has been a shining beacon seldom failing to pick up the distress signal of a touring band in trouble, lonely and a long way from home, or of a solitary musician seeking refuge from the gale storm of life in the

windy, windy fastlane.

And there you have it, a few rock'n'roll landmarks still standing which can be found by the most incompetent tourist with a valid driver's license, a decent map of the city and an afternoon to kill.



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RICHARD STIRLING JOINS THE BOYS IN THE BAR — AND SHOOTS THE BREEZE WITH . . .

OK so it wasn't the awesome Green On Red who barnstormed the UK on the 'No Free Lunch' tour and lurched from classic to classic, playing encores longer than the set itself. Since then there was that less exciting visit on the back of 'The Killer Inside Me', following which came a mixture of rumour and gossip and the word that the band were now dead and gone. Dan Stuart had a new pastime, Dan Stuart and the Homebreakers, Chuck Prophet was working with Eddie Ray Porter, the rest of the group were tightlipped. At least, those were the most reliable stories. But Chuck and Dan have duly reappeared, fronting a Green On Red which held a few surprises of its own. For a start they were really strong; different yes, but purposeful, a bedrock for the two upfront to skate on. Danny, still the sub-Bukowski barfly, plastered his songs in that distinctive drone, while Chuck, thin, pale and boney, the exciting, impulsive guitarist, splattered notes and solos in his incisive style. There was a point, near the close, when the next chord was uncertain, when Dan roared the changes out as the 'new' band looked puzzled, and he and Prophet grinned and laughed, locking heads in that impressive, spontaneous moment of joy as sheer spirit carried them through. Here were two guys, playing for the thrill of it and obviously close.

"Danny and I have never been the best of friends."

Chuck Prophet and I are in a bar, some four hours from the gig. It's another one stop, between Newcastle and Manchester; then London, then home. It's been a long few weeks on the road and there's not even a record to get behind — not yet, although finished it's not scheduled for three more months. Last time around it all came together for 'The Killer Inside Me', the main deal, the big budget album. So what's happened since then?

"We finished a gruelling tour of Europe, supporting a record that was barely released. We scattered; Danny went back to Tuscon via Mexico, a couple of guys went to LA, I went home to San Francisco and the band just disintegrated." Were there fights, had they become disillusioned, did they feel they'd gone as far as they could go?

"I don't know why the band broke up, or if it ever did. No-one was fired, no-one quit, it just fell away. Danny didn't even have a phone, we weren't speaking anyway, I looked at my guitar and it just made me ill. But I started working again, bought a car and drove around, and I dug up Danny in Tuscon. We didn't really devise a game plan; Phonogram was out of the picture, some songs started appearing, so we made a phone call and the first deal we found was with Red Rhino. I left a message on their answering machine saying we need so much money, and got a federal express envelope with a big old cheque delivered to the warehouse I live in. I cashed it, booked some airfares and then went to

the dog races."

This almost unconscious stumbling from one stage to the next somehow typifies Green On Red's haphazard development. Musically too they are on the edge, and often hint at an imminent collapse which is somehow averted by pure instinct. How did such a gypsiesque attitude fare with Phonogram?

"It was quite a good stay. They opened up a lot of doors and enabled us to do a lot of things; record in Memphis and get our lives together."

But wasn't there a pressure to conform? Strong as it is, 'No Free Lunch' is closer to a regular release than say 'Gravity Talks', while 'The Killer Inside Me' embraced mainstream expectations much more than any previous Green On Red release.

"Well there was a certain amount of pressure, but they were never clever enough to know how to apply it. We ended up recording in LA and Memphis and taking the phone off the hook, then sending in invoices and they'd pay the bills. We were stow-aways on the label; we were never very visible or accessible, but we did make some token gestures prior to 'Killer'. 'No Free Lunch' was done on a long weekend, we didn't know if it was demos or what, all we knew was that the first advance was spent and we needed some product. Phonogram were pleased but then they put the screws on and suggested that we make a serious record that the machine could get behind. We did some demos — it was a miserable experience, the first time we'd ever done that. It's like sex — you can't pretend and a demo, to me, is something private that you do in your home, that's got so much hiss on it can't be released.

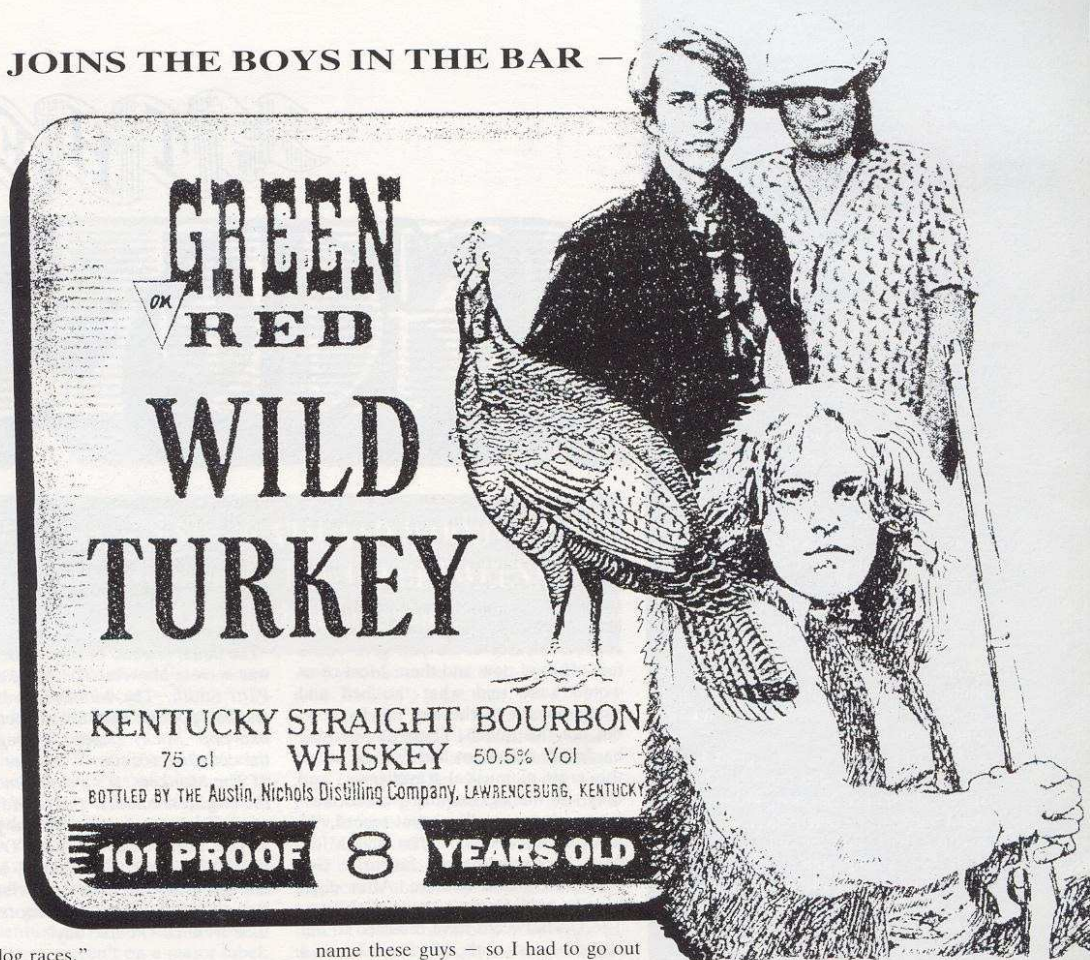
"We never used a producer before, but the company took it upon themselves to deliver the demos to various American producers — I don't need to

name these guys — so I had to go out as a token gesture to meet them. It was hell. I knew that if we were in a room with them for more than ten minutes we'd kill them. So then, by a series of defaults, I was speaking to David Lindley and he mentioned Jim Dickinson — "that guy's completely crazy" — and something about that stayed in my mind. Maybe that's someone we could work with.

"I got his phone number after a couple of weeks. I called him up and he immediately began yelling at me. 'Kids today don't know how to make records, they don't know how to make it squishy or sound like Howlin' Wolf', and then hung up. I realised he was the man, he could catch our chaos and make it aesthetically pleasing. Our A&R guy didn't want to hire him, so I called up the production side of the company and said we're gonna do more demos at an LA studio we know and we're gonna fly this guy in from Memphis as an engineer — they said 'fine, we don't care,' booked the flights, sent the tickets; we went in the studio and that was 'The Killer Inside Me'. We sent the tapes to our A&R guy and he said 'The demos are really great this time.' 'Demos? We don't do demos anymore man, this is the record.' so by being so stubborn we pulled it off."

I wondered if it was necessary to be furtive. Was this merely a way of using a major? Were you obliged to play such corporate games rather than enjoy the seeming empathy of an independent? After all, so many groups from the mis-named 'Paisley Underground' seemed to wither when confronted by the big business companies. The Rain Parade, The Long Ryders....

"I can't speak for these bands, they signed their own series of deals. I didn't have any problem with a major corporation. I enjoyed it. The indies weren't as glamorous as they appear



from the outside. Some, like Slash, figure their name sells the band, not the band selling Slash. You also get young guys on indies who think they're the artists, but when you get to a major, they know they're just merchants, selling the product and they don't get involved artistically. Red Rhino, however, are different. They showed good faith in us, we showed good faith in them and delivered the record. We have a partnership deal, a socialist Rough Trade kind of profit sharing thing which is much more realistic for what we do."

Having lived through LA smog rock ('Green On Red'), contemporary Woody Guthrie styled electric folk ('Gravity Talks') and ringing guitar mayhem ('Gas Food and Lodging'), Green On Red are faced with new possibilities. The Phonogram era offered consolidation where they embraced Country rock and the kind of common-man ethic beloved by John Fogerty. Would there now be a new perspective and does it involve a different way of working?

"Well, when we went to Memphis this time around we didn't even know if it was going to be a Green On Red record. We went out there on the premise it may be a Dan Stuart one. Three days into it Dan came into my room and said 'This is a Green On Red album, we collaborated.' What we do together is pretty good so I sort of kicked him in the ass and he was willing to keep doing it. Because we didn't have a band we just picked up people off the street which made it very interesting; people who'd never been into a studio before. We had a guy blowing harp through an old tin can, like a megaphone, and Jim Dickenson plays the usual broken piano. He swung some rubber hoses; he says 'I don't do this for Ry (Cooper). When Ry does

this he's got to bring a union guy in to do it." It was a painless record to make, if it had been any easier I would have been suspicious. We only booked ten days and we still had a few left at the end. We looked at each other and said let's go home."

The album, 'Here Come The Snakes' is set for release this month, on Red Rhino here and on Enigma in the States. "Ten songs of revenge, murder, and hate," to quote Chuck.

"It's the closest thing to a dance record we've done. It's on the beat, I don't think Danny's whining at all. Consciously, when we wrote the songs, we edited out the ones where Danny whines. We do get deep into the bowels of our own shit."

Which leads to the inevitable — who's now in Green On Red?

"We brought Rene Coleman in from New Orleans who's an awesome up-right player. His father used to work with Dr. John. He played on the record and he's got a real rich history. Brent Newman fills in on acoustic guitar and Hammond organ/piano and on drums is Greg Elmore. No back up singers, no hoopla."

Ah Greg Elmore — a legend hereabouts. Once the drummer in Quicksilver Messenger Service, his involvement gave this resurrection a further exciting twist. So how did Greg fall in with these young pretenters?

"A friend of mine was running a place in Market Street, San Francisco," he recalls. "I set up a blues night there, on Mondays, and anyone who played a guitar could get up and do a few tunes. Chuck was there...."

"I was playing so I could get free beer and John Cipollina, Greg Douglas and all these guys; they sort of let me into the fold."

Elmore: ".....and then I got involved with a band Chuck had started, the Southern Hindu Religious Conference, and we played two shows. I really enjoyed it, and then he just asked me if I wanted to go to Europe. I'd never heard of Green On Red but..."

So is this a permanent line-up?

Chuck: "These guys all have careers in their own right. Danny has this theory; 'I don't want to play with anyone unless they're twenty times better musicians than me.' We don't really work that much, we make a record every year, we tour the whole spring, but I'd enjoy playing with those guys in the future."

So what is the future?

"We're gearing up to make another snowball heading for hell record. 'Here Come The Snakes' gets our feet back on the ground but I think we work best when no-one's looking, when we don't really care and when we've got our pants around our ankles. Things come out a little truer and we don't have to second guess."

"We're talking about doing our next record in Mexico City. There's a lot of interesting records being made down there on real primitive equipment, twisted upbeat shit, and we're also thinking about going to Nashville for the first time. We've never been able to gauge ourselves in terms of success, certainly every time we put a record out on Phonogram we thought we were getting away with something. But aside from all that 60s revivalist shit I still think we make the most current records around, at least thematically."

Some, not too far from here, would change that last 'most' to 'only'.

GO-BETWEEN

Life as a Go-Between ain't exactly easy. Five years nomadic existence away from your home country on a non-residential three month visa might be considered awkward. The blinkered refusal of the nation's pop kids to embrace critically acclaimed, lovingly crafted releases could just give you a few off days now and then. Most of us would have said what the hell and trudged back to the day job by now, but not this bunch. There's something hardened, consistent and realistic about this crew of musical travellers.... and they still manage to surprise and reassure with yet another great record, '16 Lovers Lane', which, after only a few plays, is becoming my favourite Go-Betweens album to date. After eight months back in their native Brisbane, The Go-Betweens have returned to our consciousness with this fine album, a new bassist and a confident, relaxed live set at the London Astoria. If anything they're even better than before....

I'm pondering all this with Robert and Lindy Go-Between at their managers pad in a plush part of town. His magnificent Bristol sits out in the drive, I sip a Becks and lounge on that self same Chesterfield immortalised on the cover of 'Liberty Belle and the Black Diamond Express'. Robert and Lindy do the talking. Having recorded their stunning new collection in Sydney in May, their first Australian recordings in seven years, they are getting used to life in the home country after five years London. "We've missed out of an incredible amount of what has happened in Australia in the last five years", sighs Lindy, "but it's been worth it as far as I'm concerned, because we've certainly discovered what happens in England and in Europe." As a result of which, having played to 250 people in a Sydney pub eight nights previously, they can pack night on 2000 British fans into the Astoria on their return visit here. This must be reassuring, but it's only what they deserve. Unlike our current crop of synthetic posturers, The Go-Betweens present a sincere, natural, emotive, acoustic-based music, more akin to folk in its broadest sense than the fleeting blips of faceless synthipop. Their ability to catch a moment or feeling is faultless, and hits like a revived memory. Their timeless yarns and cinematic focus are perfectly complimented by sympathetic arrangements and expressive melody. The current state of pop culture must be an alien place for a Go-Between. Does it bother you, Lindy? "I'm distressed dreadfully by what's going on musically, but in the last couple of years I've realised I have to work machines and that's okay.... but it's just not the same. The Go-Betweens will only ever exist on an emotional level anyway. I think it's just

a phase, just a fashion; eventually we'll all get back to acoustic sounding music." We can but hope. In the meantime, let's encourage Robert Forster's word-play, his interplay between pop and bad poetics:

"The initial impulse of the Go-Betweens was a cross between The Monkees and Patti Smith. The Monkees were pop and bad poetics; Patti Smith poetics and bad pop. Micky Dolenz we regard as the definitive 60s star. Whenever I think of The Monkees, it's a sunny morning, the brightest colours, and David Jones' eyes. Their music is perfect, as perfect as pop ever could be. 'Last Train To Clarksville' has been written, and we are left with our own imperfection." Robert Go-Between, sleeve notes from 'Lee Remick'/'People Say'

That imperfection creates the Go-Betweens charm. It lies in their awkward gangliness, their cracks and flaws. Robert wouldn't dare be as half as pretentious as that though: "I'll like The Monkees then I'll like Patti Smith, or I'll like The Byrds and then I'll like Bob Dylan. It seems to be a combination I've always liked — people who have a lot to do with words, then people who are singing 'silly' words that have great tunes, great melodies." Surely The Go-Betweens traverse both poles? "I know — that's where we struggle, that's where we are." Still their poetry ain't too bad, and the source material's pretty dandy. "Robert loves Sylvia Plath and has stolen a quote of hers" grasses Lindy, "one line, and acknowledged it. This morning we were driving in a cab and I'd just been reading Hemmingway's biography and I read the quote 'Grace Under Pressure'; I turned to Grant (McLennan, the band's er lyricist) and said 'it's in your song...' ('What was that phrase, grace under pressure') It's taken me this long to find it!" Robert's a recent poetry convert: "I like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. It's only recently that I've come to like poetry — I always found it very dull; you had to decode it, you'd have to find out what that reference is or what that line means. I like poems that you can just read like lyrics, you read it and you know what they're saying, you don't have to have a degree or knowledge of Greek mythology or something to understand it." A bit like Go-Betweens lyrics, really. This is possibly the only group I can think of whose lyrics don't look embarrassing on a record sleeve. They're certainly the only printed stuff I bother to scour when listening to a record. "We put thought into our lyrics", Robert nonchalantly understates in his polite-but-reserved manner. I quip that they print the lyrics to give bed-sitter types something to ana-

lyse, but Lindy bites my head off. "I think we should encourage bed-sitter people because often that's all they live for, their literary interests", she defends, half smiling, "they'd probably be killing themselves if they didn't have that."

But luckily they've got the Gobies and their neo-visual sprawls and ballads. I've often thought their cinematic edge would be perfect fodder for a soundtrack — so far they've only cropped up in the post-Blue Velvet yuppie world of *Something Wild*, which was a nice-but-limited surprise. If The Go-Betweens were scoring a film who would direct, I wonder? Robert plumps for Woody Allen, "because I think he makes films the way we make albums. Very much himself. He doesn't bow to any pressure. He makes them in New York, he has the same five or six people in his films like we have on our albums. He presents very much a private world, but it's very strong. I find his films take me in. I just hope we do the same thing." Lindy favours Derek Jarman, "because he's so damn realistic. And so relevant to this country. *The Last Of England* was such a brilliant film — it's so true. It shows how this society's decaying and no-one has done that... it's one of the cleverest films I've ever seen. It really affected me, because of living here and seeing that and knowing it's what everyone was going through. Of course no-one saw it 'cos no-one wants to believe it."

Pondering that truth, talk turns to the current musical state of their home turf. Peter Walsh and The Apartments get a namecheck; even though people have been unfortunately comparing the two outfits — the only real comparison, apart from the fact that both are Brisbane-based, is that both include classic songwriters in their midst. How's the Citadel set up? "That's strong in Sydney", says Robert. "We play with Died Pretty, we know some of the Citadel bands and Phantom bands. A lot of those bands get lumped with us — it's because all the other bands are doing very Americanised pub rock that we're put in the same category. But Citadel is still very healthy." "Citadel were always the Detroit sounding bands," explains Lindy, "but it's just not true any more. They've now actually got a band that has got women in it (*The Whippersnappers*, debut product out soon — Aus Ed.). They're wonderful." And continue the Australian tradition — stylised but individual. The initial impulse that drew me to The Go-Betweens could be summed up by a particular picture on one of their sleeves — Grant McLennan's wearing a 'Get Outta The Car Ochs' T-Shirt, the rest are standing around under tatty posters of Bob Dylan and Lenny

GO-BETWEENS

Bruce. Their early singles are dedicated to the likes of John Fogerty, Phil Ochs, and Natalie Wood... it's that knowing quality, somehow able to remain uncontrived and fresh but also acknowledging a historical perspective, that marks The Go-Betweens apart. What were the formative influences, huh? "The band that had the biggest effect on me was The Laughing Clowns, which was the band Ed Keupper (Saints) went into" says Lindy. "They were an *amazing* band, an *incredible* group. We toured with them throughout Australia." Sixties Australian pop is also very much part of the group's heritage; "We're all brought up on it," Robert admits. "That's what is so hard — people go on about English groups, The Kinks and all those bands; people don't realise that Australian 60s music was just as competitive and just as good as what was happening over here, but there wasn't any communication. Band's couldn't just come over like us now. People like The Easybeats were always on television. Australia always had huge afternoon shows that would last for about three or four hours. All the bands used to come in and everyone used to sit at home on Sunday afternoon and watch The Zoot, or the Masters Apprentices, The Easybeats and the odd Beatles clip."

Lindy: "It has to be said that that's one

PHIL OCHS, SYLVIA PLATH AND WOODY ALLEN ...Simon Cook meets THE GO-BETWEENS and charts the connections.

of the reasons that Australians are so good at making videos — historically they've been filming bands for years. There's more emphasis on videos in Australia than there is anywhere else in the world. Millions of hours, every single night, just videos being played, over and over." The biggest show was the now departed *Countdown*, a monolithic-Australian TV giant, hosted by Ian 'Molly' Meldrum. "It's finished, and we're so glad", cheers Lindy. "It was so influential and it was such a bitch to get on if you weren't on a major label.

And you had to be on that show to have a hit. Molly's a great man, but I'm glad it's finished." "He's a very sixties figure", says Robert. "He used to compare shows and he had a column in a magazine called *Go-Set*. He also did some production, god knows how. He did a very famous Australian single by Russell Morris called 'The Real Thing'. It goes on for about six minutes; it's a big psychedelic thing with backwards tapes, a bit like 'Hey Jude', around the same time. I don't think he's been back in the studio since." And the sixties influence is still knocking around down under. "The Masters Apprentices have reformed" Robert tells your amazed *Strange Things* correspondent. "They toured Australia at the end of last year. There's a huge thing... The Loved Ones reformed, The Easybeats reformed. Because there's a bit of a lack of new talent coming from Australia. Jim

Keays, the lead singer from the Masters Apprentices, is probably the same age as Eric Clapton, and he's still got a record contract."

Bit like The Go-Betweens really. Their dogged persistence hasn't made them bitter or cynical, just realistic. They know their destiny doesn't lie within the pages of *Smash Hits* or on the *Top Of The Pops* screen, but they carry on regardless. "It's a problem for people who work with us" reckons Lindy, "but as they get to know us, the people who really know us well, they never expect it, and so they never put pressure on you; they begin to love the fact that we'll still keep going whether we make it or not. The fact that we're earning a living out of playing music is sufficient. Occasionally I get depressed, I'm finding photo sessions boring... but what keeps me going is that I'm just still playing drums." Robert agrees: "The fact of writing really good songs, playing in a really good band is what we all want to do." I for one rejoice in their single-minded determination — it means we'll be experiencing a gradually maturing brew of Go-Between tales for some time yet. Long may they continue.





CHILDREN OF THE RAINBOW

The saga of MU and Merrell Fankhauser

Merrel Fankhauser has made wonderful records since 1961. Whether surf, psychedelia or melodic pop, his grasp of each genre and a gorgeous tenor voice have ensured a definitive statement. *Brian Hogg* examines the history of this truly gifted musician and notes that the bulk of his recorded work is now available again.

It seems a simple scenario. A group, The Surfaris, are in the studio, cutting their debut single. With 'Surfer Joe', the track first assigned as the topside safely canned, a coupling is still required. "We worked up a good instrumental lead, our drummer used a marching band cadence and we left breaks in the song similar to Preston Epps' 'Bongo Rock'. A maniac laugh was added to the beginning and 'Wipe Out' was finished ten minutes later." That's roughly how the story has been explained over several years and interviews. Simple, yes. But the truth.....

Pismo Beach, California, c.1960: a haven for surfing, both the sport and the music. Several groups were already playing that innovative style, borrowed from Johnny and the Hurricanes, Link Wray and Duane Eddy, but adapted to evoke the thrill of the wave. One particular group, The Sentinals, was working in a new guitarist, Merrell Wayne Fankhauser, who'd moved into the area with his family from Louisville, Kentucky. His father, Milt, was a racing car driver and Merrell was thus quickly drawn to the hot rod sub-culture while his love

of music made the combination inevitable. John Barbata (drums) and Mike Olsen (guitar) were also, at some point, in the group: when surfing died the former would join The Turtles while the latter evolved into the Fillmore star, Lee Michaels.

Fankhauser was only there a short time before The Sentinals' rivals, The Impacts, tempted him away. There he joined Jose Rose (sax), Wayne Martin Brown (steel g.), Steven Lee Evans (r.g.), John Oliver (b.) and Steve Eric Metz (d.), and for three years the group shut down the opposition, establishing themselves alongside The Counts, The Roulettes and Jim Waller and the Deltas. The Impacts held sway at the Rose Garden, a concert hall owned by Roses's father, which also boasted its own record label. They thus had a natural outlet and 'Exactly Like You/It's True I Love You' became The Impacts debut single, which may or may not pre-date Merrell's arrival. The 45 was somewhat overshadowed by a rush from Del-Fi, who grabbed at a whole series of surfers - The Lively Ones, Bruce Johnson, The Pharos - and scooped up our heroes in the process. They were taken to Los



Popular Songwriter's Contract

AGREEMENT entered into this 28th day of January, 1963
 by and between Anthony Music Co. hereinafter designated as the PUBLISHER,
 and Merrell Wayne Fankhauser author and/or composer,
 hereinafter jointly designated as the COMPOSER.

WITNESSETH:

1. The COMPOSER hereby sells, assigns, transfers and delivers to the PUBLISHER, its successors and assigns, the original musical composition written and composed by Merrell Wayne Fankhauser, at present entitled "WIPE OUT"

which title may be changed by the PUBLISHER; including the title, words and music thereof, and all rights therein; and all copyrights and the rights to secure copyrights and any extensions and renewals of copyrights in the same and in any arrangements and adaptations thereof, throughout the world; and any and all other rights that the COMPOSER now has or to which he may be entitled or that he hereafter could or might secure with respect to this composition, if these presents had not been made, throughout the world; and to have and to hold the same absolutely unto the PUBLISHER its successors and assigns.

2. The COMPOSER hereby covenants, represents and warrants that the composition hereby sold is an original work and that neither said work nor any part thereof infringes upon the title or the literary or musical property or the copyright in any other work, and that he is the sole writer and composer and the sole owner thereof and of all the rights therein, and has not sold, assigned, set over, transferred, hypothecated or mortgaged any right, title or interest in or to the said composition or any part thereof, or any of the rights herein conveyed, and that he has not made or entered into any contract or contracts with any other person, firm or corporation whomsoever, affecting said composition or any right, title or interest therein, or in the copyright thereof, and that no person, firm or corporation other than the COMPOSER has or has had claims, or has claimed any right, title or interest in or to said work or any part thereof or any use thereof or any copyright therein, and that said work has never been published, and that the COMPOSER has full right, power and authority to make this present instrument of sale and transfer.

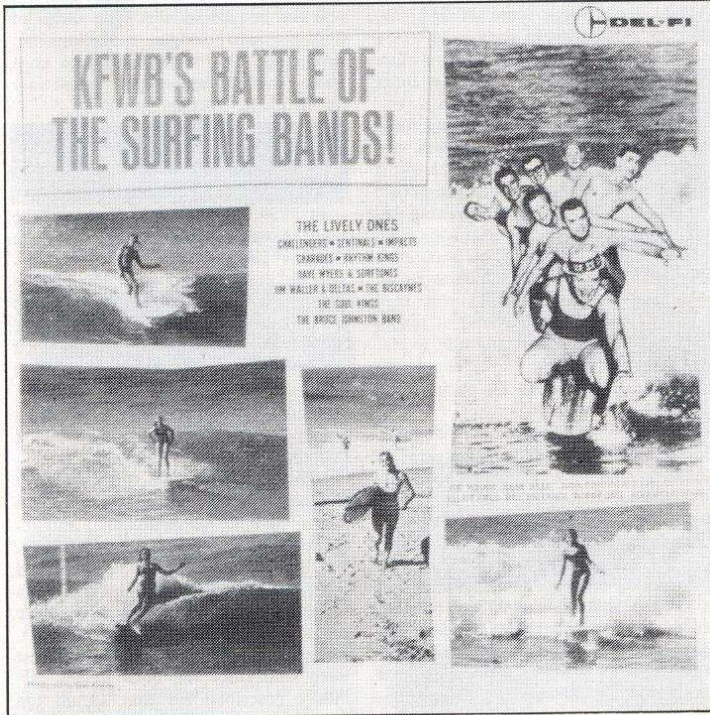
the PUBLISHER agrees to pay the COMPOSER as follows:

Angeles and shut up in their studio, where they put together twenty songs, twelve of which later made up their lone LP, 'Wipe Out', released in November 1962. It's here the story gets complex.

The title track is a Merrell composition of which three versions were recorded. One begins with a teasing introduction, before a scream leads into a repeated guitar figure which is subsequently rather masked by a saxophone and slide overlay. This was the take used on the album. The second arrangement obscured the guitar altogether, but the third was more immediate, the overlay was dropped, the guitar was pushed forward and the remaining space was filled by a drum passage. Intended as a single, this version was never released issued, and

Out' masters to various other parties.

He also held the rights to the 'left-over' tracks and they subsequently appeared on several compilations, including 'KFWB's Battle Of The Surfing Bands' and 'Surf War'. However, it was another such collection, 'Beach Party', which helped fuel the controversy. By the time it appeared, Fankhauser had signed 'Wipe Out' to Hilder's publishing arm, Anthony Music, and side 2 of this album opened with a cover of the tune, by The Surfaris, which duly acknowledged Merrell as the composer. Then, in January 1963, The Surfaris released 'Wipe Out' as a single on their managers label, DFS, which was then picked up by Princess Records, a company owned by Richard Delvy of The Challengers. Finally, it was taken on



the master tape was held by its producer, Tony Hilder. A vital surf entrepreneur, he arranged and produced a whole series of performances, and either licensed them to other concerns or placed them on one of his several companies. As part of this activity, Hilder played the unreleased 'Wipe

by Dot, who leased it for national distribution. On each of these pressings, the Fankhauser credit had mysteriously disappeared, replaced by one for The Surfaris. Clearly, something untoward had occurred - the two songs were obviously the same and however much The Surfaris cling to their story,

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they must have heard The Impacts track from somewhere. The coincidence is too great to ignore. 'Wipeout' clearly belongs to Merrell Fankhauser, a fact which after twenty-five years has finally been acknowledged by the publishing parties involved.

Yet if there was one 'Wipeout', were there two Surfaris? Hilder certainly produced other tracks by a group with that name - 'Moment Of Truth' (issued on Northwest and Reprise) and 'Surfari' (issued on Del-Fi), yet in interviews with the 'Surfin' Joe' participants, they make no mention of any Hilder involvement. It's a confusing saga, not helped when the 'real' group heard their debut album and were shocked to find their own performances replaced by those by The Challengers. They fired their manager, walked away from Dot and into a deal with Decca.

All of this masks what a fine group The Impacts obviously were; 'Wipe Out' is as representative a Surf collection as can be found. Merrell's seven contributions, 'Blue Surf' and 'Impact' in particular, reveal a growing confidence, but by 1963, events took another turn. His family had moved again, and The Impacts brought in Bill Dodd as a replacement. Dodd had previously played in The Biscaynes, Pismo contemporaries who'd also been featured on several of those Hilder collections. Indeed, one of their tracks, 'Moment Of Truth', was coupled with that rogue Reprise Surfari 45. Dodd also seems to have

been a part of The Sentinals, perhaps even at the same time as Fankhauser.

Meanwhile Merrell was now living in Lancaster on the edge of the Mojavo Desert. It was here he met another guitarist, Jeff Cotton (their fathers worked together) and the two formed (Merrell and) the Exiles along with a succession of other local musicians who'd filter in and out of the group over the next three years. Signed, initially to Glenn Records, their first single, 'Send Me Your Love'/'Don't Call On Me', are two Merseybeat-type songs, hinged onto perky hooklines, indicative of a whole shift in Fankhauser's direction. Featuring John French on drums alongside Cotton, it proved to be an important liaison, but somewhat short-lived as by the release of a second Exiles' 45, 'Tomorrow's Girl' c/w 'When I Get Home', three new musicians were alongside Merrell. Mark Thompson (g.), Larry Willey (b.) and Randy Wimer (d.) provided a further sympathetic cushion for his songs, of which the 'A' side, an embryonic folk-rocker with some ringing guitar, was particularly strong. By the time 'Sorry For Yourself' was released in 1965, further shuffling had occurred. Jeff Cotton had returned and a completely new rhythm section was also in place. It was a curiously regressive single, closer to Buddy Holly than McGuinn, and its flip, 'I Saw Suzie Crying', also recalled a somewhat more innocent era. Commercial, however, it certainly was, and it won the 'A' rate contest on Dick

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Clark's *American Bandstand*. The final Exiles single, 'Can't We Get Along' also suggested a simpler idea, but at the same time it suggested something of Gene Clark's 'Set You Free This Time', with just a hint of Brian Wilson thrown in.

This release was also punctuated by the accustomed drop-out rate. Perhaps it was due to a loose, Lancaster attitude, the home of Don Van Vliet, or Captain Beefheart, the stomping ground of Francis Vincent Zappa and other sundry cohorts. Rumours of jams and rehearsals have spread involving these and other local musicians such as Alex St. Claire, and Merrell himself recalls such ad hoc sessions and dates them from after The Exiles had finally split. Both Cotton and John 'Drumbo' French were spending an increased time with Beefheart's Magic Band, and French would later replace John Blakely in time for 'Safe As Milk', while Cotton would officially join once that album was completed.

In the meantime Fankhauser was rebuilding again, and a new group, with Dick Lee on drums and John Oliver and Bill Dodd from the now collapsed Impacts. The new line-up continued to record for Glenn McArthur (the owner, naturally, of Glenn Records), but showed yet another marked progress in style. The soft edge of the previous singles, recorded at the expense of their desert R&B, was swathed in the gentle power of a Love or Byrds, which rushed through the new Fankhauser songs. Snatches of this and most of The Exiles' singles were later pulled together on 'Fapardokly', an album first released without Merrell's knowledge or consent. It's necessarily schizophrenic; the material spans three years of change, but that strong voice and intuitive grasp of melody allow it a cohesive undercurrent. The three 'newest' tracks - 'Gone To Pot', 'The Music Scene' and 'No Retreat' are almost inevitably the most interesting, the first of which is a fabulous sidekick to 'Eight Miles High'. Of the other archive tracks, 'Lila' is a real gem, haunting and absorbing, while the other extreme is found on 'Too Many Heartbreaks', which would have made Ricky Nelson proud.

The new tracks were a stepping stone to a more realised project. With Oliver and Lee now out of the picture again, Merrell and Dodd formed HMS Bounty with Jack Jordan (b.) and Larry Meyers (d.). The new group was based in Los Angeles - Fankhauser had moved there to take a day job and was working as a 9-5 songwriter at Winston Music in Hollywood. A brief

H.M.S. BOUNTY

liaison with corporate demands, the deal with UNI subsidiary Shamley ended it and followed when Merrell sang his songs to the company president.

HMS bounty was a truly remarkable group; they distilled the essence of their new location and fragments of that city's culture was now fully assimilated into their music. It's not unreal to hear Spirit, the Peanut Butter Conspiracy, Bob Markley or Bobby Fuller, but none are overtly obvious. 'Things', the Bounty's lone album, released in 1968, may open with a title cut who's hookline echoes that of Fuller's 'Let Her Dance', but it quickly veers off into another tangent. Indeed, Fankhauser's gift for a tune was never so obvious and tracks like 'Madam Silky' and 'Girl (I'm Waiting For You)' are exquisite. More than one observer has detected Moby Grape in the Bounty approach and indeed there is a parallel. Both groups synthesised their important influences and blended them into something new, and just as Jerry Miller punctuated Grape charm with searing bursts of guitar, so Bill Dodd does likewise here, spilling both sustain and liquid runs into gaps or grooves in the songs. With Merrell adding guitar and sitar, and Meyers some tabla, a perfect framework was set and HMS Bounty emerged full and rich, encapsulating the sound of a generation in one perfect, exotic sweep.

However, despite such promise, and gigs alongside Canned Heat, Paul Butterfield and the Electric Flag, the Bounty tailed into disarray. A curio from Merrell's 9-5 past was resurrected when Shamley issued 'Everybody's Talking'. Cut earlier in a trade off between Harry Nilsson's managers Perry Botkin and George Tipton, who had the office next door to Winston Music, Tipton produced Nilsson's version while Botkin handled Merrell's, both of which were resurrected when the movie 'Midnight Cowboy' used the song. For once Fankhauser is uncertain, and while the flip, 'Tampa Run' is fun, both are marred by some unfortunate horn arrangements. Meanwhile, HMS Bounty had folded, playing its last gig in the summer of 1969 at a military base in 29 Palms. Cut to a trio by the departure of Larry Meyers, a young GI sat in to close the legacy of one of LA's finest hopes.

THE CONCLUDING PART TO THIS STUDY WILL BE FOUND CURLED-UP AND SNORING LOUDLY INSIDE THE NEXT ISSUE.



1. I Saw the Light Come Shining Round and Round

John Fahey was born in Cecil County, Maryland, on February 28th 1939, and grew up in Takoma Park, a town on the outskirts of Washington D.C. His early musical training was formal; he took tap-dancing lessons and learned to play the clarinet. "I was frustrated. I had been playing clarinet in a school band and I was interested in orchestras and symphonic music. Then when I was about 14 some friends of mine started getting guitars.

"Maybe in America in the 1950s it was inevitable. It was the thing in the neighbourhood to get, and play Country & Western music. So I fiddled around with their guitars before getting one from Sears and Roebuck with \$17 from my paper route. After trying to play Eddy Arnold songs and trying to learn how to sing, too, I heard bluegrass, so then I was a bluegrass freak for a while."

Fahey summed up the driving force behind the new depths he was discovering in American music: "I did it so I could entertain girls in the park". In 1982, Fahey gave the following uncomfortable advice to guitar aspirants: "You have to be crazy. You gotta start young and the younger the better. And you have to be lonely. I was very lonely. I was very unpopular in school and I didn't have anything else to do. So I sat around and played the guitar to have something to do during long periods of loneliness."

He was a slow learner, but dogged. He wasn't distracted by Elvis Presley and the first rock and roll explosion, but what did make a difference (as it had for Elvis) was black music, and specifically, the mysterious, completely original, self-contained, self-ministering music of acoustic blues and gospel. His introduction was "Praise God I'm Satisfied" by Blind Willie Johnson, recorded in 1929. "The first time I played it, it made me sick, so I put some Bill Monroe on the phonograph. But that sound kept coming back to me. Like five minutes later I just had to hear Blind Willie again. So I listened to it again and I started crying. I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard."

2. Give Me Corn Bread When I'm Hungry

Fahey's universe had turned inside out. He was a convert, and with the wild energy of evangelism he had to get hold of every note of blues he could find. In the 1950s it was hard to run into a record shop and run out with an armful of stuff. The possessed had to go out and collect the original pre-war 78s for themselves.

With friends Dick Spottswood and Henry Vestine, Fahey began making trips into the rural south, canvassing from door to door in black neighbourhoods, buying every old blues record offered him. By 1958, Fahey's group of obsessives included a guy named Joe Bussard, who turned his huge blues collection into a mail-order business. Joe would send his lists, you'd send back your wants and dollars and he'd then dub the required 78s onto tape.

One evening Fahey and his pals are sitting around getting drunk. He's playing guitar, as usual, probably a Charlie Patton song. Someone says he's getting as good as his heroes, and

an argument follows about *authenticity* - he's white and so he can't really play the blues. Joe has an idea: why don't we record Fahey under a pseudonym, include him in mail order lists of blues records, and see what happens! Maybe the fans will spot it immediately and ask for their dollars back - maybe they won't!

And so it was that Fahey went blind for the first time, and made his first recordings for Bussard's Fonotone label (later called Phonytone by Fahey). Between 1958 and 1961 he recorded 28 songs and tunes under the name Blind Thomas, which Joe solemnly included in his lists of "authentic Negro folk music". It was the first time (and the last) that Fahey sang - he sounds like grit caught in a lawnmower - but more importantly, it was the beginning of a long series of hoaxes, ruses, dodges, mythologising, subterfuge and straight-forward cons Fahey has felt compelled to perpetrate on his public over the years.

3. My Station Will Be Changed After A While

In 1959 Fahey was working as the night manager at Martin's Esso Service Centre, Langley Park, Maryland. A girl he knew heard him playing the guitar there and told him he was good enough to make a record. Well, yeah, maybe, but blues fans would just say it was okay for a white boy but it wasn't *authentic*, you know, so...

Then a lightbulb flashed, and Fahey went blind for the second time, and on this occasion he met Death.

John borrowed \$300 from an Episcopalian priest (or, as another version has it, he sold his motorbike) and recorded his first album in April 1959. No singing, just playing, and no record contract either. This was strictly a homemade operation; 100 copies were pressed, two were broken in shipment, some he sent to reviewers and the rest were sold from the boot of his car. Fahey described his first album ten years later:

"I issued Volume 1 not really believing there would be a Volume 2. One side was credited to me and the other to Blind Joe Death. This was for the people who said if you're white you can't play the blues. It took me three years to sell the hundred copies I made, and people still ask me where Blind Joe Death is."

In 1964 Fahey, and his friend Ed Denson, wrote an only slightly tongue-in-cheek encomium on this landmark of guitar literature: "From listening to these selections it is apparent that by April 1959 Fahey had absorbed direct influence from the works of Elizabeth Cotton, Two Poor Boys, Sam McGee, Barbecue Bob, Charley Patton, Sylvester Weaver and Walter Beasley, Mississippi John Hurt and Frank Hutchison and the Carter family, not to mention the Episcopal Hymnal. His amazing capacity for assimilation and synthesis thus became evident early in his recording career." He was also establishing a flair for odd titles: "The Transcendental Waterfall", "Sun Gonna Shine In My Back Door Someday Blues" - and for refashioning old tunes into new brilliances ("John Hardy" becomes "Desperate Man Blues"). In the meantime life rolled on; Fahey began experimenting with guitar/flute duets, faked some more blues, won a BA in philosophy and

JOHN

Despite the competition of an occasional contemporary — Robbie Basho, Leo Koltke, Toulouse Engelhardt, or the attentions of the Wyndham Hill crowd, JOHN FAHEY remains the guitarist others look to for inspiration. Paul Byrant gives twenty reasons why.

religion at college and then discovered Bukka White.

4. I Got A Letter This Morning, How Do You Reckon It Read?

In 1963 an earth-shattering event happened in the tiny, rapt world of the white blues obsessives: Mississippi John Hurt was rediscovered. It was a strange story: these young college kids had been sitting around glued to records by Charley Patton or Blind Blake or Blind Lemon Jefferson or Frank Stokes, all from the late 1920s/early 30s, and had assumed that the bluesmen were long dead by the 1960s. They were wrong.

Early that year a collector, Tom Hoskins, was listening to "Avalon Blues" by Mississippi John Hurt: "Avalon's my home town, always on my mind". He then got into his automobile and drove there, to Avalon, Mississippi, and asked around for John Hurt. He found him, still alive, still playing, aged 71, having been forgotten for thirty years. It was so simple, and all the blues collectors went crazy.

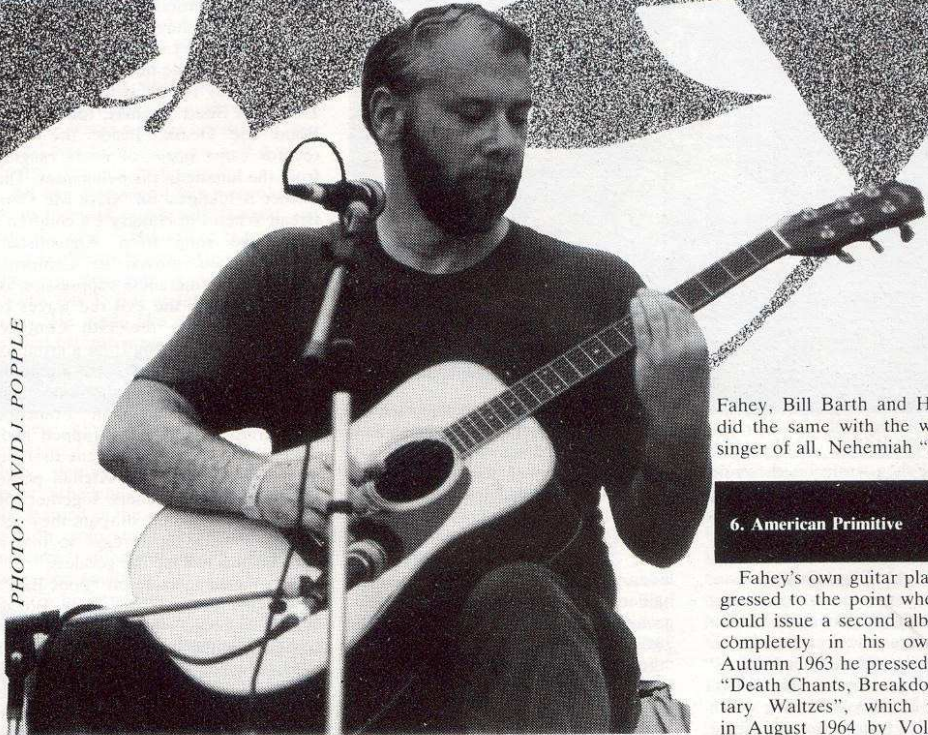
Fahey didn't need telling twice, but he was somewhat lazier. Based on the song "Aberdeen Mississippi Blues" he wrote a postcard to "Bukka White (Old Blues Singer) c/o General Delivery, Aberdeen, Miss." It said: "Hi. If you're alive and well, call us collect. We want you to come out here and make a record."

Booker T. Washington White, aka Bukka White, had actually moved, but his relatives sent along the postcard, and he got in touch. By then, Fahey was living in Venice, California, but he and Ed Denson then got busy recording and issuing the first Takoma Records release, Bukka White's "Mississippi Blues".

5. An Aside On Rediscovered Blues Singers

Such blues singers boast similar career profiles — raised in rural poverty, learn guitar, make obscure records exclusively for black audiences somewhere between 1926 and 1934; get wiped out by the Depression; re-

PHOTO: DAVID J. POPPLE



ABOVE: AT THE CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL, 1983

BELOW: ONE OF THE SUBLIME TAKOMA SLEEVES.



turn to the farm or the factory for 30 years; get rediscovered by young white enthusiasts; spend declining years playing to smart college audience in a haze of uncritical hero worship; end up with The Rolling Stones or some other rock band (probably English) record-

ing one of your songs on a best-selling album; but the catch is that you still don't get any money just like you didn't in the 20s.

Bukka White's emergence led directly to the rediscovery of Eddie "Son" House. Then, in June 1964

Fahey, Bill Barth and Henry Vestine did the same with the weirdest blues singer of all, Nehemiah "Skip" James.

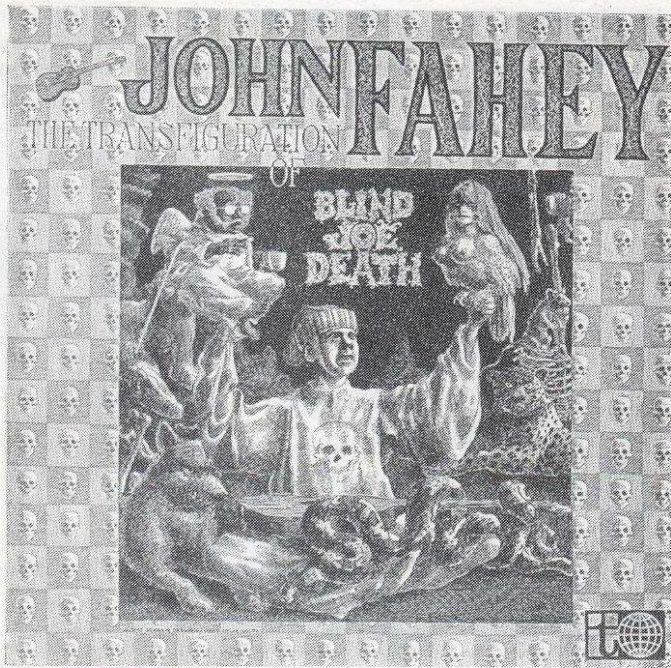
6. American Primitive

Fahey's own guitar playing had progressed to the point where he felt he could issue a second album, this time completely in his own name. In Autumn 1963 he pressed 300 copies of "Death Chants, Breakdowns and Military Waltzes", which was followed in August 1964 by Volume 3, "The Dance Of Death and Other Plantation Favorites". Fahey's music was now making tremendous progress, as seen in his 1970 description of "Stomping Tonight on the Pennsylvania/Alabama Border" on Vol. 2.

"The opening chords are from the last movement of Vaughn Williams' sixth symphony. It goes on from there to a Skip James motif ('Special Rider Blues') following which, it moves to a Gregorian chant, 'Dies Irae'. It's the most scary one in the Episcopal hymn books — it's all about the Day of Judgement. Then it returns to the Vaughn Williams chords, followed by a blues run of undetermined origin, then back to Skip James and so forth."

Again, in "John Henry Variations", classical ideas marry folk music, as likewise in "Variations on the Coo Coo", the basis of which is Clarence Ashley's old-timely version of the English song "The Cuckoo is a Pretty Bird". Volume 2 introduces two beautiful Fahey originals, "Sunflower River Blues" and "When the Springtime Comes Again" while Volume 3 gives us, amongst many other sour, driven pieces, "Poor Boy", a Bukka White slide tune which Fahey transposed into another key and wrote a bridge for, thus copping a co-authorship credit.

The style of playing Fahey perfected in his first three records has been called "American Primitive", a good enough term but prone to misunderstanding. In this context "primitive" is used in the same sense as "primitive" painters, i.e. self-taught, non-academic, as Rousseau or Grandma Moses.



7. Partenogenesis

As the mid-60s stole up over the horizon the blues took on a psychedelic tinge. Fahey wrote his thesis on Charley Patton and he accidentally became midwife to the West Coast's resident blues band, Canned Heat. He'd collected with Henry Vestine, recorded with Al "Blind Owl" Wilson, so perhaps it wasn't too surprising that one story has Fahey playing as a member of the Heat on the occasion of their first performance (November 1965).

In 1965 Fahey recorded "The Transfiguration of Blind Joe Death", which was originally issued on Riverboat Records (of Boston, Massachusetts) in an edition of 50. It was later re-issued on Takoma after threats of a lawsuit to recover the original tapes. This Fahey album has been re-issued in more formats and editions than any other, a painful truth since with the exception of the aching "Death Of A Clayton Peacock" and the implied beauty of "On The Sunny Side Of The Ocean", it's a weak link in the canon, whereas his 1966 release, "The Great San Bernardino Birthday Party and other Excursions", is one of his best but has never been re-issued outside the USA. This LP includes a 19 minute psychedelic symphony and 6 other pieces which range from the lotus-eating oriental luxury of "Sail Away Ladies" to the dark night of the soul exposed in a scary piece from 1962, "Guitar Excursions into the Unknown".

8. Wine and Roses

The mid-60s were as crowded with people and excitements as the 70s were empty and deserted. Fahey and Denson recorded Robbie Basho (an even more neglected guitarist), Robert Pete Williams, the Possum Hunters, JB Smith and Tony Thomas (all blues and country); Fahey issued an EP in Finland only (considered a rare item by collectors), got drunk a lot, fell off the stage at least once, got married, issued Volume 6 ("Days Have Gone By", another masterpiece) and in 1967 entirely rerecorded his first two albums in order to release them in stereo for the first time.

In 1967 Fahey was captured by a big record company, Vanguard. With Sam Charters producing he turned out "Requia", one of four Fahey LPs which are half wonderful and half unlistenable. The bad news was all on Side 2, "Requiem For Molly Parts 1-4"; 20 minutes of doodlings overlaid with, and buried by, a ton and a half of sound effects: yelling, fair-ground organs, Adolf Hitler and old 78s. It was the unhappiest version of "the avant garde" and a failure, which Fahey admitted at the time. The other for Vanguard was the beautiful "The Yellow Princess" (1968), a triumph in composition and recording clarity. There was another little noise collage on there, "The Singing Bridge Of Memphis, Tennessee", but this time sans guitar; neat, funny, haunting and appropriate.

9. Turtles

The sleeve notes of "The Yellow Princess" first alerted Fahey watchers to his fixation with turtles: "But I hear that out where I live, hidden by the Venice seawall, an occasional sea-turtle comes up the cold current to see if things have changed. Some of these turtles are indigenous only to the Pacific. I want to see them and hear their voices. But I have trouble for whenever I try to listen, the rumbling voice of the land-locked turtle comes to haunt me. Sometimes it is loud, sometimes very faint."

Later, in 1970, Fahey had this to say:

"When they start to build a new development in the desert where the desert turtles live and the bulldozers are going to come in and kill all the turtles, we go in and rescue them and repopulate them somewhere else... Turtles are my favorite animal. Everybody runs over them on the highway and that's why I want to kill everybody. That's one reason why I want to kill everybody."

10. Demyth/Remyth

Fahey had started studying philosophy at University of California in

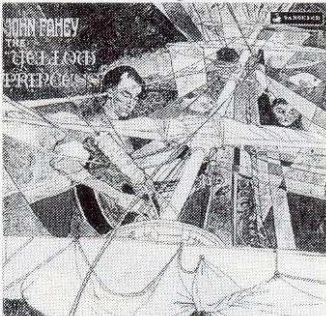
Berkeley but didn't like it. He switched to folklore and mythology because he wanted to "write an empirical thesis on a blues singer or the blues. I wanted to 'deromanticize' wherever it was called for. I mean, all these guys had big romantic legends built up around them, so I went down to try and get the facts."

At this same precise time Fahey was engaged in creating an elaborate, complicated, ridiculous and engaging skein of legend, mystique, fantasy and myth about himself. You still run into people who believe he made several albums he didn't, or even believe he was several people he wasn't.

As already noted, it had started in 1958 with Blind Thomas, followed by Blind Joe Death. Inside the early records came pages of notes ranging from the lunatic to the belligerent. The former is featured on "Give Me Corn Bread When I'm Hungry", a children's skip rope song from Afghanistan. Many Afgans moved to California following the merciless suppression of their nation by the evil red forces of Great Britain in the 19th Century. John learned the song from a group of children whose parents were attending the National Afgan Liberation Day festivities. Believing San Francisco Bay Bridge to be an entrapped goddess which will return them to their native land, the entire Afghan population solemnly gathers together on May 22 and, standing in span, they pelt the shore with rotten eggs so that it may wish to release the goddess.

Fahey's ire surfaces on "Poor Boy": "a variant of the same song Bukka White recorded for the Library of Congress in the late 1930s. It is only a miracle which permitted this song to come to the ears of any, since it has been the consistent policy of the Library to allow its materials to rot rather than allow the public to hear any of it. God alone knows how many masterpieces have decayed beyond salvation in their vaults. This nation needs more thieves and less librarians."

There was always the just about possible - "Shortly after John's disappearance in 1964... I began a search, locating him with some difficulty in Boise, Idaho, living in a converted bread-truck which was parked on a hill outside of town. He was searching for Bertha Idaho, and thought that the studio had probably mis-spelled her name when the records were issued, as was the case with King Solomon Texas."



Then of course there were the titles of the pieces Fahey recorded: "The Dance of the Invisible Inhabitants of the Palace of King Philip XIV of Spain", "View (East of the Top of the Riggs Road/B & O Trestle)", "Commemorative Communion and Transfiguration at Magruder Park", "When the Catfish is in Bloom", "The Downfall of the Adelphi Rolling Grist Mill",

"Revelation on the Banks of the Pawtuxent," an entire poetry made out of the names of rivers and railroads.

The apotheosis of all this came with the Takoma release in 1968 of "The Voice Of The Turtle". That title comes from the Song of Songs in the Old Testament: "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing-birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Here Fahey is using a famous outmoded term to his advantage here: the biblical turtle means turtle-dove. The album's subtitle describes the contents as "a musical hodograph and chronologue", and it was a lavish exercise in autobiographical disinformation which poses a lot of discographical questions. It's a serious man's joke, which rebounded on its progenitor somewhat when after a year someone calculated that with its "Fahey Picture Album" enclosure, and the elaborate gate-fold sleeve, it was costing Takoma 15 cents more to manufacture the record than they were charging.

11. Here Comes Santa Claus

1968, a busy year, ended with the sounds of the only commercially successful idea Fahey had ever had. He made a Christmas album called "The New Possibility" filled with syncopated carols, and it remains his best-seller, very nearly becoming a gold album.

"I was in the back of a record store one July and I saw all these cartons of Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas' album. The clerk said it always sells out. So I got the idea to do Christmas albums that would sell every year."

Since then he's recorded three other Christmas LPs and one of Easter hymns. Out of the five, only "The New Possibility" and "Christmas with John Fahey Vol. II" are musically interesting; the latter contains some gleaming, exciting duets with another guitarist, Richard Ruskin, notably on "Russian Christmas Overture".

12. Blow Up

How it happened we do not know but in 1969 the famous, reverend, intellectual heavyweight Italian film director Michaelangelo Antonioni decided to employ Fahey to record the soundtrack for *Zabraskie Point*, his upmarket youth protest movie. Fahey boarded a plane, flew to Italy and put down at least 45 minutes of solo guitar. Alas, John was not a happy man at that time, he quarreled with the great director and wound up accusing him of working for the CIA. Antonioni then put Fahey back on the plane and sent him on his way, but was gracious enough to include "Dance of Death" in the eventual soundtrack. Perhaps he was a fan after all.

13. 101 is a Hard Road to Travel

Fahey was not a happy man. He told *Rolling Stone* magazine that he spent 1969 drinking and 1970 going crazy. "I just want to make a whole bunch of money so I can pay my psychiatric bills" he said in December 1970.

He recorded a double album, issued half of it ("America") and was then discovered by Leo Kottke, who sent him some tapes. Kottke's album "6 and 12 String Guitar", produced by Fahey and released on Takoma, was good; he

played like Fahey, but always at a hundred miles an hour. The young generation had arrived; Fahey packed his bags and left, pursued by a demon.

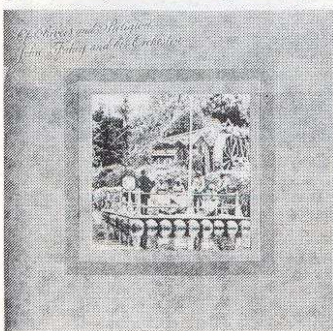
14. I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free

In 1976 Fahey wrote about Bola Sete, guitarist: "I first saw him playing – solo – in 1972. That night I was high on drugs as I had been for several years – I felt that I was one isolated example of an experimental species that God had forgotten about (I was wrong there)... Bola played for about 45 minutes and grimaced and grunted through the whole set. Something was wrong. He couldn't 'get it out'.... The performance had been mediocre so far. However, the audience gave him a long ovation, and he reluctantly got up and started to play an encore, still looking frustrated, impotent, mad, seething. I knew that feeling well. But then suddenly he got *hot*. He got so cooking, he played song after song for another 45 minutes, forgetting (or not caring) that he was doing an encore, playing many of the same songs he had just played. But there was life in this set. I couldn't sit still. I'd never heard anything like it since Charley Patton, and this was better. This was the turning point in my life, though I didn't know it until much later. I was transformed, purged – I was not the same."

Bola Sete, born in Brazil in 1924, died in the USA in 1987. He was originally a jazz guitarist, working with, amongst others, Dizzy Gillespie. He forged a wholly original guitar style, which was described as "a synthesis of European, African, Latin, Brazilian and American influences achieved through a combination of classical, folk and jazz techniques on a classical guitar." (pew). Fahey describes it as "nongeneric. Take a song like 'Black Mommy'. Now if you didn't know anything about Bola (and we still don't know much...) what musical tradition, period or era would you guess this song came from? Tasmania? Easter Island? Next door? It comes from everywhere and nowhere."

15. John Fahey and his Orchestra

Just prior to this regeneration, Reprise, Fahey's second big label, gave



Fahey the opportunity to realise a fantasy, and the result was the first of three albums credited to John Fahey and his Orchestra, "Of Rivers and Religion". Sadly, the orchestra turned out to be some session men and apart from some notable exceptions ('Texas & Pacific Blues', 'Dixie Pig Bar-B-Q Blues'), the "orchestral" tracks sounded a little like Fahey was asked to sit in with a dull bunch of studio cats goofing off. But each of these three albums (the other two being "After The Ball" and "Old

Fashioned Love") of course have some gems, and in the latter's case a whole side of breathtaking duets between Fahey and guitarist Woody Mann.

On the sleeve note of "Rivers and Religion", Nat Hentoff, music critic, wrote: "what came through instantly, is an extraordinary clarity, an opening of emotional space... space is an integral part of his music".

Then Fahey heard Bola Sete, and listened again to his latest album. "I was astounded to find that, although I had thought while cutting this album, that I was playing fast songs fast, I had in fact been playing them very, very slowly and boringly. That album had received reviews which all referred to my special 'inner sense of space and peace' – it was nothing but drugs. This record now sounded to me as if it were moving through thick glue."

All this may sound like a revolution about to erupt – off with the old, on with the new – but in fact it took another ten years before Sete's influence came to dominate a Fahey album ("Let's Go"). But at least Fahey quit drugs. He made like the Beatles, and headed off into a new fad: swamis.

16. Java Shiva Patton

These kinds of oppositions occur throughout Fahey's career: classical vs blues; demyth vs remyth; dope vs booze; achedemia vs anti-intellectualism (the learned vs the unlettered); cynicism vs faith; solo stage performer vs the audience; improvisation (spirit) vs composed (matter); sense vs bullshit. In 1973 he issued two LPs simultaneously, "After The Ball", a candyfloss poppy record full of tuneful bounce, and "Fare Forward Voyagers (Soldiers Choice)" which was serious with a capital S, containing three apparently improvisatory (rambling) pieces named from quotations from T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets". That record came with an earnest endorsement, by Fahey, of the methods of Swami Satchidananda of Yogaville West, California. He later referred to this period as follows: "I used to cruise ashrams to pick up girls".

17. I Do Not Get Up In The Morning In May

So the seventies rolled on and Fahey's creativity attenuated. 1976, 77 & 78 were blank years. During a concert in 1976 Fahey had this to say: "It's been years and I'm still sweating, leading a dissipated, sinful nauseating disgusting life, playing guitar, picking up girls, sleeping, playing guitar. Surely there must be a better way to live, if only I could find it."

As usual there was a twist: in 1977 he recorded an entire album which he decided not to release. It was his best for years, full of melody and invention: most of it has still not surfaced.

The album which finally emerged, in 1979, was a loud effort called "John Fahey Visits Washington DC", full of flash but not of original compositions. The next year saw two LPs, both unoriginal in their own way, "Yes! Jesus Loves Me" (hymns) and "Live In Tasmania" (old tunes). Times were tired.

18. The Bear Went Over the Mountain

If the 60s were crammed and the 70s meandering and often defeated, Fahey revived in the 80s and put out four substantial albums looking back and (en-

couragingly) forward as he clocked up 25 years at the fretboard. The flummery of Christmas continued to pay the groceries, which by now were Oregonian, as Fahey and wife Melody had moved to Salem in 1981. But with the release of "Railroad" that same year, fans sat bolt upright.

"Railroad" was a breathtaking monument to nothing but the blues, a magnificent recapitulation (capitulating again) and a translation of old into new: Patton's "When Your Way Gets Dark" becomes "Oneonta", "Poor Boy Long Ways From Home" is retitled and stretches into "Steve Talbot on the Keddie Wye", and the slide melodramas of "Enigmas and Perplexities of the Norfolk and Western" tease out the anxieties of "Worried Blues". Acoustic blues was revived with this collection.

In 1984 Fahey teamed with Terry Robb, a younger guitarist, and produced "Let's Go", a full-frontal assault on Bola Sete. In 1985 they repeated the trick in "Rain Forests, Oceans and Other Themes". These companion albums burst out in all directions: Latin sambas, old folk tunes, Hendrix! ("May This Be Love"), Clapton! ("Layla") and Stravinsky too! ("Firebird Suite"). Finally there was last years "I Remember Blind Joe Death", which admittedly should have been subtitled "with difficulty", and which Fahey himself called morbid.

19. Things As They Are Are Changed Upon The Blue Guitar

John Fahey is more of an adaptor, arranger, architect or archeologist than an original composer. It is true that (to the best of my knowledge) marvellous pieces like "The Portland Cement Factory at Monolith, California" or "Where the Catfish is in Bloom" are 100% Fahey, but mostly, he pinches a phrase here, finds a forgotten pattern there, adds one and one to make 17.

An example is "Lion" from "The Yellow Princess". This includes the tune of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", and uses parts of the obscure "A Rag Blues" by Buddy Boy Hawkins and the more well-known "New Mind Reader

ON STAGE AT THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CLUB, KENTISH TOWN, LONDON. OCTOBER 1987.

Blues" to create an entrancing five minute guitar excursion. All the quotations and embezzlements are there to be discovered by the resourceful, active listener; some stick up above the surface of the music, clearly marked, and others you have to dive for. I wouldn't have realised that "Sunset on Prince George's County" was a rework of "House of the Rising Sun" unless Fahey's own notes had pointed it out.

This use of *objet trouves* in his music is like that of various other artists; Dylan (in his use of folk tunes or latterly, quotations from Humphrey Bogart and Gregory Peck movies) or James Joyce (in his use of actual conversation and specific autobiographical incident).

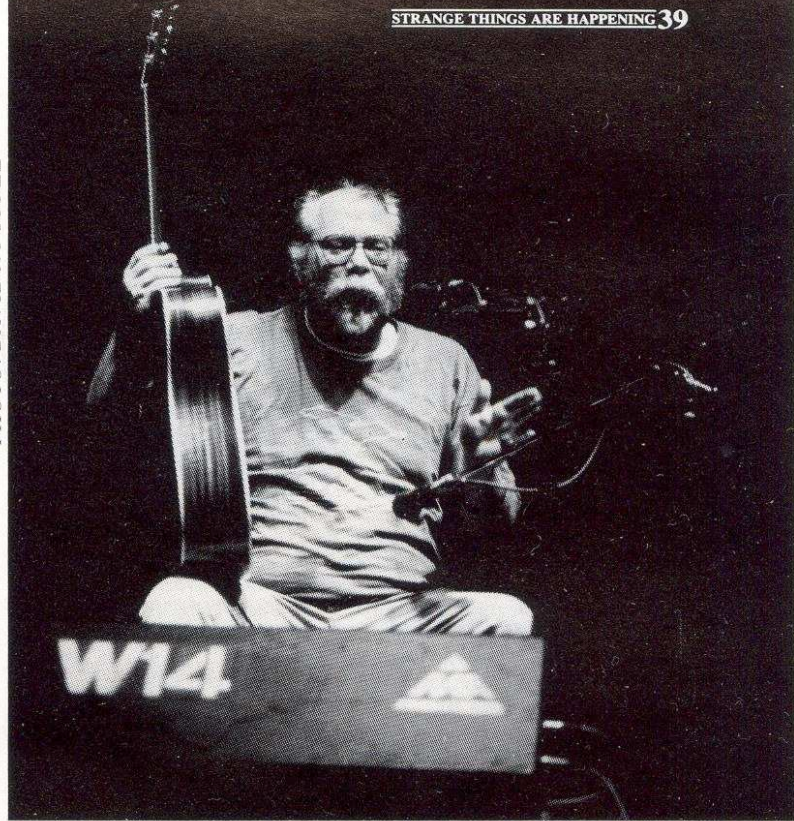
20. And Where is it that I Started For So Long Ago? And Why is it Yet Unfound?

So, in 1988, thirty years after he made his first recordings, what does John Fahey see as he looks back? He feels the weight of his achievements. Is there anything left to do for him? His pioneering use of the solo steel string guitar as a concert instrument has had very few followers. The New Age guitarists (William Ackerman, Michael Hedges et al), though politely nodding to Fahey, travestied his commitment by making records to knit muesli by, but they have stolen his audience and seduced younger guitarists. Fahey says: "William Ackerman and that crowd say they've been inspired by me but they don't play like me.... they're low on melodies, they just play arpeggios."

So Fahey remains a bulky eccentric blundering about on the far fringes of folk/blues/acoustic music. Maybe. But a better way of summing up Fahey is in his own words:

"I try in music to give expression to the full range of emotions from bleak depression to ecstasy and everything in between. So I guess that in that sense you can get to know me, cause I go through all those fairly quickly. Every two days."

PHOTO: DAVID J. POPPLE



JOHN FAHEY

Discography

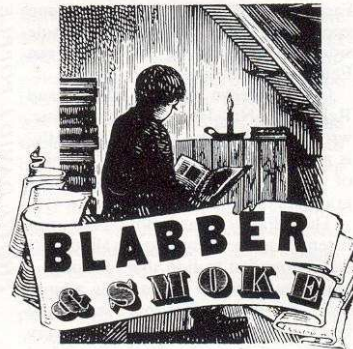


All tracks released on Takoma unless otherwise noted.

- 1959 Blind Joe Death (1st edition)
- 1963 Death Chants, Breakdowns and Military Waltzes (1st edition)
- 1964 The Dance of Death and Other Plantation Favorites
Blind Joe Death (2nd edition; three tracks re recorded)
- 1965 The Transfiguration of Blind Joe Death
(Originally issued on Riverboat; reissued on Takoma in 1967)
- 1966 The Great San Bernardino Birthday Party and Other Excursions
- 1967 Days Have Gone By
Blind Joe Death (3rd Edition; entirely re recorded)
Death Chants, Breakdowns and Military Waltzes
(2nd Edition; entirely re recorded)
Requiu (Vanguard)
- 1968 The Yellow Princess (Vanguard)
The Voice of the Turtle
The New Possibility
- 1970 America
- 1972 Of Rivers and Religion (Reprise)
- 1973 After the Ball (Reprise)
Fare Forward Voyagers (Soldier's Choice)
- 1974 Old Fashioned Love
- 1975 Christmas with John Fahey Vol. 2
- 1977 The Best of John Fahey 1958-1977
- 1979 John Fahey Visits Washington D.C.
- 1980 Yes! Jesus Loves Me
Live in Tasmania
- 1981 Railroad
- 1982 Christmas Guitar Volume 1 (A rerecording of The New Possibility)
- 1983 Let Go (Varrick)
Popular Songs For Christmas and the New Year
- 1985 Rain Forests, Oceans and Other Themes (Varrick)
- 1987 I Remember Blind Joe Death (Rounder Europa)

FAHEY ON OTHER RECORDS

- 1966 Contemporary Guitar (Takoma)
- 1969 Memphis Swamp Jam (later reissued as "Kings of Country Blues Vol. 2") (Arhoolie)
Contemporary Guitar Sampler (Transatlantic)
- 1970 Zabriskie Point (soundtrack) (MGM)
- 1972 Jo Ann Kelly (Blue Goose)
- 1973 Leo Kottke/Peter Lang/John Fahey (Sonet)
- 1978 Acoustic Guitars (Time Wind; Germany only)
- 1982 The Guitar of John Fahey (Stephan Grossman's Guitar Workshop)
(A series of six one-hour cassettes with Fahey giving lessons)



THE BEST OF SCIENCE FICTION TV

John Javna

Titan £5.95

CULT TV

John Javna

St. Martin's Press £11.50

FANTASTIC TELEVISION

Gary Gerani with Paul H Schulman

Titan £7.95

'The Glass Teat' is how Harlan Ellison once described it and, no matter what you really do think about television, there's no denying that a lot of us would be lost without it... at least at some time or another.

expect, from the *Superman* show of the 50's to *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* in the 80's - including supermarination shows, Japanese shows, cartoons, British SF and Golden Age shows such as *Men Into Space* and *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*. But while the 'Recommended Reading' and 'Fan Clubs' sections in the back do provide some much-needed information - even to the knowledgeable fan - the book does eventually become marred by the repetition of the so-called critics' comments and appraisals.

'Fantastic Television', however, is another thing altogether. Covering much the same type of material as Javna's book, Gerani and Schulman provide much more depth, far more cogent analysis and episodic details (albeit brief ones) for the likes of *TZ*, *One Step Beyond*, *Thriller*, *The Outer Limits*, *Star Trek*, *Voyage To The Bottom of the Sea*, *Time Tunnel*, *The Invaders*... and so on. A first-class work of reference, not only for those coming new to the field, but also for the dyed-in-the-wool fanatic who may not have quite so much information in one place. Good use of an index, too.

Last, and by no means least, is Javna again, with 'Cult TV'. The simple message here is: buy it. Over the book's



SOME OF THE INHABITANTS OF GILLIGAN'S ISLAND

256 pages, the author follows a simple but extremely effective four-page format: two pages of background info on the show and the stars, followed by two pages of inside facts, typical dialogue and 'best' episodes. The book features the usual big-names - much of the information from which, surely by now, must be getting a mite yawn-inducing to stalwarts of the genre - along with shows such as *The Honey-mooners*, *I Love Lucy*, the classically under-rated *Gilligan's Island*, *The Many Loves Of Dobie Gillis*, *Dragnet*, and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*... interspersed with occasional pages of peripheral interest such as games based on shows, records from shows and general collectables. Superb.

For those who are studying at ad-



There have always been those oddballs (so we all thought) who could tell you which *Star Trek* episode featured a bearded Mr Spock... and who could sing all the lyrics to 'Mr. Ed'... and who could tell you the names of all the people who visited *Gilligan's Island*... and who knew exactly how many 'Zanti misfit' models were used for that oh-so famous *Outer Limits* story back in god-knows-when. Okay, so oddballs they might have been, but we listened didn't we? And we all chorused 'Oh yeah.... I remember that!'

John Javna, it seems, may well be the grand-daddy oddball of them all - bless his sofa flattened posterior! - and his two books on the old television shows (when they really knew how to fill a half hour) are absolutely indispensable. 'The Best of Science Fiction TV' covers everything you would

vanced level it's worth mentioning John Heitland's excellent 'The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Book' (Titan: £7.95); Joel Eisner's amusing but ultimately tacky 'Official Batman Book' (Titan: £6.95), and the sparse and somewhat imposingly scholarly 'Star Trek Compendium' by Allan Asherman (Titan £7.95).

Pete Crowther.

MECHANICS

Jaime Hernandez
Titan £6.95

DUCK FEET

Gilbert Hernandez
Titan £5.95

The second two volumes in Titan's reprinting of Los Bros Hernandez's tales of mirth and woe down south of the border will have every reviewer reaching for his handy phrasebook of glib statements... although Angela Carter's 'Like Bunuel on speed' comparison for Gilbert's 'Heartbreak Soup' collection of last year (reviewed in ST #1) makes real ground breaking in this department a little difficult!

Suffice to say, these works are every bit as enthralling as their predecessors. Again the brothers' perspectives reveal



different sides of the same landscape: part surrealistic, part documentary, witty and gritty, the work of two highly original, highly individual artists. If you've never heard of them before, welcome back to Earth.

O.J. Nicholas.

TEN EVER-LOVIN' BLUE EYED YEARS WITH POGO

Walt Kelly
Fireside £8.95

OUTRAGEOUSLY POGO

Walt Kelly
Fireside £7.50

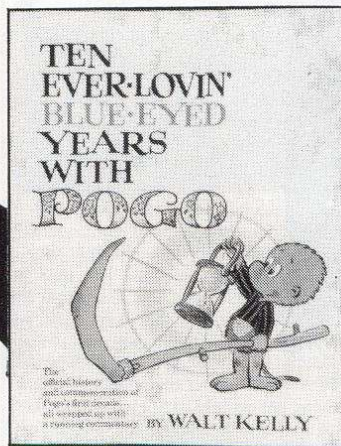
These two – and there is another – have been around for a few years now, in and out of printings, but they're available once more in their 12th and 3rd printings respectively, and as such are well worth your attention.

A kind of funny-animal Doonsbury – and a natural precursor to Schultz's 'Peanuts' – the sultry heart of Georgia's Okfenokee Swamp provided a stage for the madcap and increasingly satirical antics of the swamp's denizens... in particular one Pogo Possum Esq. Pogo came to life in 1943 as only a secondary character in the pages of Dell Comics 'Bumbazine and Albert the Alligator' series, but

reader response was so good that the human element – the child, Bumbazine – was soon phased out and the strip became 'Albert and Pogo'. The possum's popularity continued to increase and, in 1949, hot on the heels of his appearances in New York's sadly short-lived daily *Star* newspaper, Pogo not only got his own comic book but also a nationally syndicated newspaper strip.

Pogo's roster of back-up characters was, and still is, inspired: the nutty but affectedly literate turtle, Churchy La Femme; Beauregard Bugleboy, the soft-centred hound; and perhaps Kelly's cheekiest and politically dangerous parody, Simple J Malarkey (a scathing version of the then powerful Senator Joe McCarthy), who joined the Swamp's increasingly paranoia-laden Birdwatcher's Club in 1953 and promptly appointed himself the club's President. "There has never been much question in my mind", Kelly comments in the pages of 'Ten Years With...', "that the man who (Malarkey) represented was one of the great all-time comedians. This is because he was a true comedian; he was not pretending for a moment."

R. Fidler.



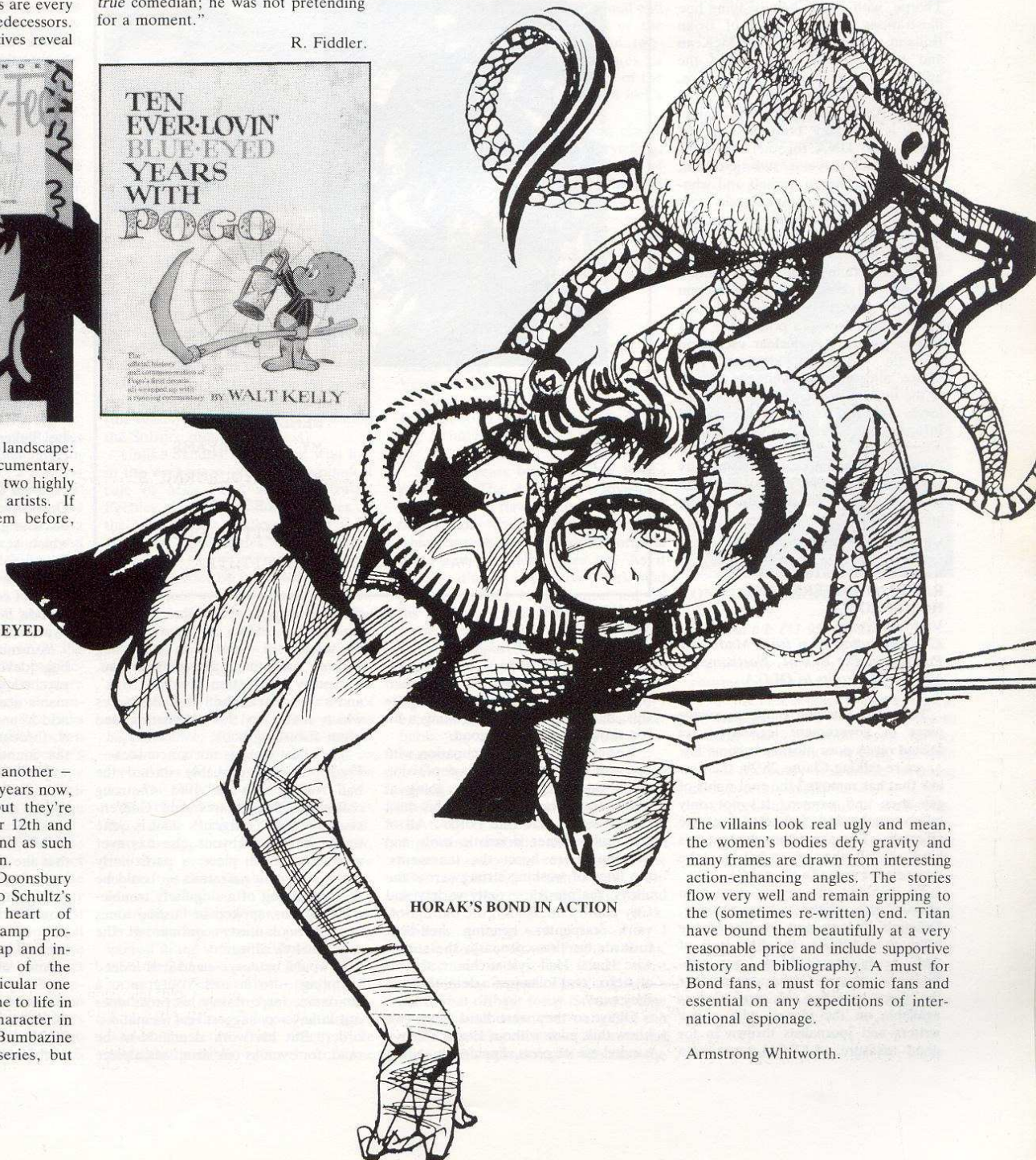
JAMES BOND Volume One: 'The Living Daylights' and 'The Man With The Golden Gun'
Volume Two: 'Octopussy' and 'The Hildebrand Rarity'
Titan £4.95

These are the first two volumes of re-printed newspaper strip cartoons that originally appeared in bold black and white in the *Daily Express* (home of Giles and Rupert) and later the *Daily Star*. They first appeared in 1957 (two years before the first film), beginning with Bond's debut in *Casino Royale* and finally ending in 1983 after having exhausted all the Fleming books and having bespoke stories written for them. After early writers and artists the series settled on American Jim Lawrence for the scripts and Yoroslav "Larry" Horak for the unique art. Horak's Bond is very close to Flemings and consequently appears like the character on the covers of the early Pan paperbacks (pre-Connerney) and maybe even like George Lazenby!

The discipline of writing 2 or 3 frames a day required a peculiar approach in which the final frame usually had to be



action-packed leaving the reader desperate for tomorrows newspaper. Every sixth frame (the 'Monday' edition) has a mild re-cap, probably because *Express* readers are so thick that, given a whole Sunday, they'd lose the plot altogether. Lawrence wisely decided to adapt the stories, adding details, twists and subplots of his own. Horak is deadly accurate in cars and characters; his artwork is unique, using bold slashes of black to create real depth to the situations.



HORAK'S BOND IN ACTION

The villains look real ugly and mean, the women's bodies defy gravity and many frames are drawn from interesting action-enhancing angles. The stories flow very well and remain gripping to the (sometimes re-written) end. Titan have bound them beautifully at a very reasonable price and include supportive history and bibliography. A must for Bond fans, a must for comic fans and essential on any expeditions of international espionage.

Armstrong Whitworth.



DOC CHAOS: THE CHERNOBYL EFFECT

Dave Thorpe
Hooligan Press £2.50. All Profits to
W.I.S.E., PO Box 1007 AP,
Amsterdam, Holland

There's a lotta things you can say about science, but it's never been dead sexy. Same goes for nuclear fallout and radiation... that is, until the creation of Doc. Chaos. In this character Dave Thorpe, with a little help of some fine illustrations from the likes of Brian Bolland, Savage Pencil, Dave McKean and Bryan Talbot, has created the human personification of science, complete with hang ups, needs and desires. And what a nasty little character he is too. 'Hey, baby, let's go and splice some DNA together' he yells, with his usual perverse, sadistic charm, before operating on himself and whoever else is handy. Frankenstein's got nothing on him - this guy changes bodies like yuppies change suits. *Doc Chaos* is a bleak, black work, but it's desperately funny too. Its pointed humour will make you think as you squirm... Dave Thorpe really knows how to drive home a point. The subject in question is nuclear escalation and the Chernobol disaster; *Doc Chaos*' allegorical life veils the growth of the nuclear industry and it's sobering force. All profits go to the World Information Service on Energy, an international safe-energy group dedicated to environmental activism. Buy *Doc Chaos* for this reason, but also because its humour is deadly. Giggle and think.

Vincent Eno.

AARGH: ARTISTS AGAINST RAMPANT GOVERNMENT HOMOPHOBIA

Various Artists
£2.50 including p&p from Mad Love
Publishing, PO Box 61, Northampton
NN1 4DD. Profits to OLGA.

This year saw the most repressive piece of government legislation yet foisted on us poor mortals become law... we're talking Clause 28/29, the new law that has removed the civil rights of gay men and women. It's not only homosexuals and lesbians that are affected... I mean, if they can get this kind of bill through, what are the government going to do next?

To highlight the severe opposition against the clause, Alan Moore, Deborah Delano and Phyllis Moore bring us AARGH, the first fruit of their newly-formed Mad Love publishing company. Gathering together the finest selection of comic artists available on the planet, with a few writers and journalists thrown in for good measure, AARGH presents a

wide variety of perspectives on this frightening issue. Robert Crumb, Kathy Acker, Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, Hunt Emerson, Frank Miller, Posy Simmonds, Art Spiegelman... all the heavyweights are here. Being a big Alan Moore fan I find his opening piece, *The Mirror Of Love* the finest offering, well researched and precise as usual, but generally the standard is as high as the feelings for this issue are powerful. As Hunt Emerson points out, ridicule is still the best weapon; works of this nature also help fight back. Buy it.

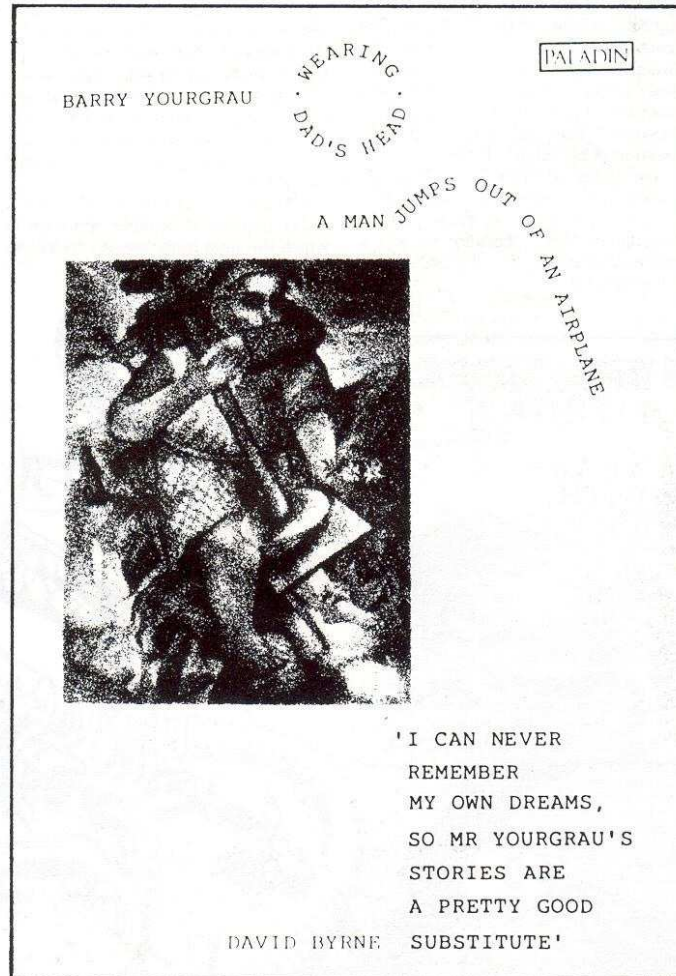
Richard Noise.

of the fact that seemingly everyone lives on bare floorboards; 'Luxury', as Eric Idle's eternal Yorkshireman might say), but enough is enough. There's hard times everywhere, man, and there's many a pissed-off 1988-type person looking for some means of escape. So let's have some, huh?

O.J. Nicholas.

A MAN JUMPS OUT OF AN
AIRPLANE/WEARING DAD'S HEAD
Barry Yourgrau
Paladin £3.95

Let's face it: anyone who can write a



A LIFE FORCE
Will Eisner
Kitchen Sink £7.50

Will Eisner is a superb storyteller/artist. Nobody can seriously dispute this, but lately he's been getting a bit too serious for his own good.

Eisner's seeming preoccupation with the way things were in the depression years can be pretty heavy going at times, and never moreso than his most recent 'novel', 'A Life Force'. All of the usual Eisner dramatic tools and personae are here: the tenements, the lines of washing strung across the alleys, the crooks - petty variety and City Hall - the Rabbi, the old out-of-work carpenter heading hell-bent towards his first coronary, the street-wise Huntz Hall-style urchin... they're all here, 'real folks just a doin' the best they can!'

Okay: so they were hard times (we know this, even without Eisner's heavy handed use of press clippings, by virtue

three-paragraph story about a man who climbs inside a cow on a bet must be worthy of more than a passing glance. And that's Barry Yourgrau. The story in question is called 'Milk', and it's the first of the 149 similar pieces which make up this fascinating and often disturbing book.

The short story is not a new idea - Fredric Brown probably started the ball rolling with his 1961 47-strong collection, 'Nightmares And Geezenstacks' - but Yourgrau's slant is quite unlike anything anyone else has ever attempted. Each piece - particularly the first-person narratives - could be the recounting of a singularly troublesome dream, spoken in hushed tones in the book-musty confines of the psychiatrist's office.

It would be easy - and it is indeed tempting - to dismiss Yourgrau as a charlatan, for certainly his prose does not in any way suggest real mental disorder. But his work demands to be read, for even as one dismisses a piece

with a scoff, the page is already turning to reveal the epic on the other side. And it could turn out, when all the bets are in and the race is run, that Yourgrau is a very astute translator of the oft-touted phrase, 'The Human Condition'.

Certainly there are pieces, amongst the silly and the farcical, that give cause to real unease. In 'Snow', for example, the narrator goes to meet his girlfriend at the train station, there to be told by the conductor that she has had plastic surgery which has gone wrong and now she dares not face him. He goes home, removes the telephone from the freezer and, thinking that his girlfriend can use it to graft with, starts scraping it. The phone rings but he ignores it. Then the door opens and the conductor walks in and says "Didn't you recognise me?" In 'The Joke', a man puts on a silly disguise to visit his mother only to find that she, too, is disguised. Neither one of them acknowledges the other's disguise though each of them believes the other to have cracked up. The visit ends with both of them secretly in tears behind their masks. "Nothing like this dismal, mysterious episode occurs again," writes Yourgrau on the penultimate line (of 17!), "but subtly it haunts their relationship for years to come."

Barry Yourgrau's reading act is a regular feature in the New York art world, combining stand up comedy and, we are told in the book's characteristically brief forward, 'surreal oedipal drama'. The opportunity to decide for yourself will present itself in October when Yourgrau will be talking at the ICA. Meanwhile, this book will serve as an introduction to those things which you know happen in your head during the softly silent hours of the night but which you never remember in the daylight. Or maybe it's better that you never know...

R. Fiddler.

STORMING HEAVEN - LSD AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

Jay Stevens
Heinemann £14.95

As an adjunct to our interview with Quicksilver's Greg Elmore, we began discussing the communal atmosphere which seemed to exist early in San Francisco's Haight/Ashbury era. "There was the war," he said, "and then, of course, there were the drugs," a coda he added with a mischievous twinkle.

'Storming Heaven' retells the spiraling development of 20th Century psychedelia, from Dr. Albert Hoffman's accidental discovery of lysergic acid 25 and the natural highs preceding it, through to the darkest mayhem of the counter culture. Each step of the way he tells how the 'secret' was passed like the Olympic torch, only here sparks scattered at every occasion, making impossible the hope of early zealots, Aldous Huxley in particular, that the drug and its effect would remain their own secret.

By the book's close, however, it would be hard to refute Huxley's elitist perspective as the psychedelic dream became a psychotic nightmare and the promise of the Haight degenerated into rape and murder, bad trips and greed, heroin, speed and Charles Manson. Yet this book is not merely for necrophiliacs - it's 'American Dream' subtitle is double edged; one chemical, the other

material; as Stevens consistently contrasts both and shows how one, the desire to find a greater truth, was only possible thanks to the shallow perspectives and hopes of the other.

His chapters on 50s America and the Hoovervilles of the Eisenhower years paint the kind of dull, complacent atmosphere which the first anti-culture pioneers, the Beats, would so willingly challenge. Wine and Camus may have been their spiritual yogis, yet through Burroughs and Ginsberg, the seeds of the later, greater rebellion were born. LSD flourished when their attitude merged with the rise of Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary. Two opposing messiahs, one saffron-robed, the other in sneakers, they eulogised the drug's effect in similarly contrasting ways – sacred versus polemic – and while Kesey emerges as an elusive joker, Leary is truly a cosmic cowboy. Irritating then, now he seems a dangerous naïf, his pronouncements fatuous and blissfully unaware of the dangers, for some, of the psychic aspirin.

Throughout the book Stevens stays astudiously unattached, taking neither side in the great debate. He emerges with a powerful story, painstakingly researched, and refuses to be swayed by cultural legend. The myth of Owsley as the acid king is kept in true perspective, and if Leary's babblings are a shade too apparent, it's due to his continuing gift for publicity and his undying desire to cheerlead those he paternally calls 'baby boomers'. Perhaps room might have been found to discuss the indirect effect of LSD; how the visions of those who took it, in music, in art, was then absorbed by their audiences. But that is a minor carp. 'Storming Heaven' is an important and full documentary, and could well become the subject's standard work.

Dinnes Cruickshank.

THE LAND OF DREAMS

James P. Blaylock
Grafton h/b £11.95 p/b £6.95

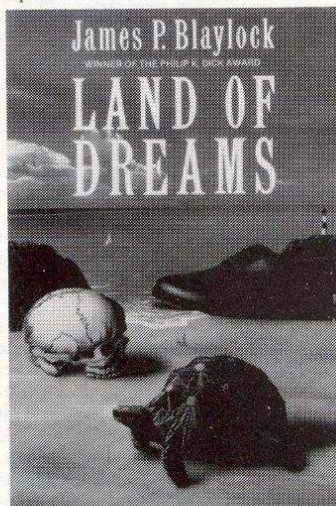
It is inevitable, I suppose, that James Blaylock's new book should draw comparisons with Ray Bradbury's timeless 'Something Wicked This Way Comes' (1963). After all, both concern the arrival of a mysterious carnival in a small American town. But there you have it: the similarities end.

One could just as easily mention the late Tom Reamy's excellent, and more recent 'Blind Voices' (1978) and even Charles Finney's 'The Circus Of Dr. Lao' (1935), though, of course, in the case of the latter visitation, the proprietor is somewhat more benign in nature than his famous fantastic-fictional contemporaries. But such *tenuous* links can be off-putting, particularly when one considers that, like Peake's Gormenghast Castle, Blaylock's sleepy northern California town of Rio Dell exists somewhat out-of-kilter with the mundane and the everyday.

In 'The Land Of Dreams', we are lead to believe – more by virtue of what Blaylock leaves out than what he puts in – that good ol' 20th Century America is hustling and busting just down the coast, while in town itself there are few signs of the world as we know it, although there are no direct references to the technological trappings of civilisation, such as those which peppered Mark Helprin's 'Winter's Tale' (1983). Indeed, Blaylock's Rio Dell has an almost feudal feel, which

makes further comparison to at least the first two books in Peake's trilogy eminently logical. And, while we're at it, for those more overly familiar with this particular room in the sprawling house of fantasy literature, there are also similarities to be found with Michael Coney's 'Hello Summer, Goodbye' (1975) and R.A. Lafferty's 'The Devil Is Dead' (1971).

Which just goes to show that, while we all use them, there is a serious limitation to literary comparisons, particularly when the subject under review is a work as complex as this one: namely, if you're not familiar with the titles being bandied around, it means diddly squat.



We meet the book's three young protagonists, Jack, Skeezix and Helen, as the Solstice begins, a kind of three or four day siesta which occurs every 12 years, and which is marked not only by the arrival of a carnival – which drifts into town on a train which nobody ever sees, but the mournful wail of which can be heard late at night – but also by the fact that, during the event, people are advised not to eat any fish (the reason being that eating fish during the Solstice induces madness).

Unlike Skeezix and Helen, who live in the orphanage under the tyrannical rule of Miss Flees and her 'trusty' Peebles, the slightly older Jack lives up the hill with Mr. Willoughby. It is he who first investigates the carnival's arrival:

He had no idea on earth where he was going. There was really no carnival yet, nothing but half-built skeletons. But they drew him curiously, as if the jumble of debris was somehow magical, the product of enchantment, perhaps, and held him in thrall. It seemed to him, though, that the appearance of the carnival hadn't been just a random happenstance; it had drifted in on the weather and the strange tides and on the colours that had stained the horizon and now tinted the sky.

The current owner of the carnival is the evil Dr. Brown of World Renown, who can apparently turn into a crow, and whose presence in town is far more mysterious than simply to provide fair-ground rides and sideshows. For example, it soon becomes apparent that Dr. Brown has more than just a passing interest in the strange elixir which a tiny man dressed as a mouse left in Jack's room... an elixir which purportedly enables the user to 'go across' to a seemingly endless variety of alternative worlds, the return from which, while perfectly possible, does have some

drawbacks – as Mrs. Langley, a ghost in the orphanage attic, explains to Helen, likening these 'other realities' to stops on a railway line:

"All right. It's four thirty here, and who knows what time at one of those other stops? Midnight, perhaps. Eleven thirty-five. Four thirty and some tiny fraction. Ten years hence, twenty years back. Some of them lurking still in the stone age, I don't doubt. It doesn't matter in the least. The universe, you know, is expanding; that's what science tells us. And travelling backward you shrink and can come along forward again, if you're quick, through a gopher hole.

You'd come sailing in on the Solstice tide or creeping up through a gopher hole or popping in through a cave. Or you'd climb up into the foliage of a particularly tall tree and out onto a limb that stretched into another world altogether, and there you'd be, across. Back again. Just like that. Very simple."

Meanwhile... Skeezix is puzzling over the giant shoe he has discovered on the beach, wondering if the owner has also lost the pair of similarly sized spectacles which Dr. Jenson found and which now hang on the wall of the tavern... 'beside the wonderful two-headed dog'; Peebles prepares a 'special' fish dish; and two sizes of the same man concoct a new batch of Jack's elixir.

'The Land Of Dreams' is a classic example of the very best in storytelling, and though the myriad convolutions of the plot may, one day, grow hazy in your mind, the feel and atmosphere of Blaylock's prose, and the sleepy township of Rio Dell itself, will undoubtedly remain as fresh and sweet smelling as tar and ocean... 'cut suddenly by the sharp odour of dandelion.'

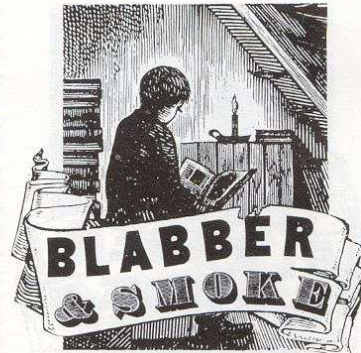
Pete Crowther.

THE FLASHBACK: AFTER THE ACID TEST

Vernon Joynson
Borderline Productions Ltd,
PO Box 93, Telford, TF1 1UE.
£12.50 inc post.

Several years back Babylon Books published 'The Acid Test', Joynson's ambitious but flawed salute to psychedelia. Now comes 'The Flashback', which corrects and expands the original tome and generally tidies up. As it stands, it's an impressive work and Joynson should be congratulated on his diligence, but there are several factors which detract from any whole-hearted support. Given the poor reproduction of photographs and record sleeves, the price is somewhat high, especially in the light of Borderline's excellent 'California The Golden State' book, on which Joynson also collaborated.

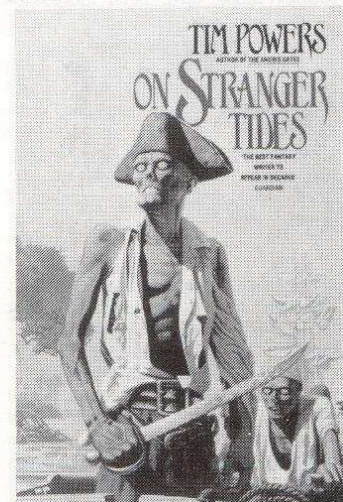
The main problem is that of perspective. Far be it for me to guess the path of the author's musical conversion, but the focus of the book is misdirected, suggesting that the writer has begun from contemporary repackages – the 6Ts compilations which freely proliferate, or the euphemistically named 'repros' – and then worked back. There's nothing wrong with that; I speak as someone who began a Kinks' Collection with 'The Great Lost Album', but it gives 'The Flashback' a somewhat offbeat focus. So much time is spent on counterfeits – any fool can make a bootleg – and on the spurious notion of a rarity, that it obscures the



truly seminal releases. Items seem to be included merely because they've been reproduced – Blossom Toes, undeniably a vital part of British freak-out lore, are absent from the main text, yet appear in an addendae, where their bootlegged status is duly noted.

The other concern is psychedelia itself, a term so abused it ceases to have true meaning. While accepting its general application (The Grateful Dead were acid-rock, not psychedelic, but why argue...), there are several inclusions which jar. Black Widow, for example, deserve only one definition – crap – and pity help anyone who feels otherwise. It's these niggling points which undermine what has been a painstaking work – those just beginning the underground trail will obviously find this fascinating.

Dinnes Cruickshank.



ON STRANGER TIDES

Tim Powers
Grafton h/b £11.95, p/b £6.95

Currently enjoying the appellation – courtesy of *The Guardian* newspaper – of 'the best fantasy writer to appear in decades', Tim Powers looks set to cement his reputation even further with the publication of this, his sixth novel. Certainly it's unlike anything else currently available.

A spectacular mixture of sea battles, mysterious voodoo rituals, shape-changers, zombies and angst-ridden romance, 'On Stranger Tides' reads like a bizarre blending of C S Forester's 'Hornblower' books, Hannes Bok's 'The Sorcerer's Ship' and Lee and Ditko's old comic confrontations between Doc Strange and the dreaded Dormammu. Occasionally the text boards on the juvenile but at the rate at which it demands to be read, you don't really notice.

Pete Crowther.



PSYCHOTIC REACTIONS AND CARBURETOR DUNG
Lester Bangs
Heinemann £9.95

Listen up, and listen well, cuz this isn't a TEST, it could be the MOST IMPORTANT NEWS YOU'LL EVER HEAR, or as close as they'll let you get in these glory-halleloouie-louie times.

Lester Bangs, proto-punk verbal gunslinger, trash aesthete, scourge of mediocrity and prevarication, self-destructive guru of blank generation anxiety and unfortunately dead six years ago, was the finest rock critic of all. His rivals in the USA, Greil Marcus, Peter Guralnick and Robert Christgau, were just *toooo* academic. On the hipper side of the Atlantic, dandies-in-aspic like Cohn, Kent and Morley might have been more eloquent, but they didn't have Bangs' both-ends-burning-and-middle-for-good-measure sense of urgency. Ultimately, all the others just wrote *about* rock and roll. Bangs' work was rock and roll, in its way as good as the groups Bangs rated, and hey, the boy had taste, you know? Bad taste, he might insist, but taste nevertheless. I doubt if any record released this year will match this posthumous selection of Bangs' prose as a peerless rock and roll artefact. Whatever you want from rock and roll - trash aesthetics, big laffs, rhythm, unnatural energy, unnatural practices, phenomenal wit, adolescent angst, lotsa noise - Bangs' work had it, and a whole lot more, all wrapped up in his unique prose style which remains *sui generis*. He had all a critic needs (intimate knowledge of his subject, great ear for its form, matchless sensitivity to its soul, and obsessive belief in its importance - the latter being an especial concern) and he could write the ass of anyone and generally did so. A dazzling stylist, easily worth reading if you know nowt about rock and care less, he had two basic modes. The more familiar is the speed-rushed hyper-colloquial machine-gun burst of jokes, insults, mock-stupidity and gutter insight. Less well-known but equally integral is a more confessional approach which admitted to moral, social and personal crises and sought renewal and humility in the spirituality of great art (such as Van Morrison's "Astral Weeks" or virtually anything by Miles Davies). Both styles, and they often overlapped, pulsed with his love for rock and roll (and for jazz, for which he had an untutored but fine, intuitive ear). The "serious" style can make your heart skip a beat, the punk style can convulse you with laughter. Lester rarely wrote conventional pieces full of scholarly exegesis, but combined ridiculously personal anecdotes, unnervingly clear insights, and way-out

speculations. His notes for a review of Guralnick's *Lost Highway* turn into a dissertation on eating the body of Elvis Presley, and then a fantasy on what it would be like to be Elvis (conclusion: it would be like nothing, the whole matter of Elvis being too big for any of us to understand). If you don't think rock and roll should be ridiculously personal, unnervingly clear, and way out, your wearing the wrong head; Bangs writing was rock and roll and I'll rest my case but not yet.

This anthology was edited by Greil Marcus, and he's served his friend well. Bangs' prodigious output forced many exclusions (I'd have liked a post-humously published piece on Miles Davis which surfaced in *NME* in 1983, and the essay on bubblegum from *The Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll*) but Marcus has produced an admirably coherent book which works as more than a simple anthology. There's a basic but incomplete chronological order covering Bangs' career through protopunk snot in the early seventies, the hilarious vitriol of his legendary stint at *Creem* (1971-1975) with its one-man war on pablum, an almost religious infatuation with punk and a dedicated, painful involvement with post-punk fallout. The later pieces seem more personal, increasingly concerned with social and moral issues, but the prose is matchless throughout and even a very late piece like "A Reasonable Guide To Horrible Noise" (with such record summaries as "The Sounds of the Junkyard" (Folkways): Recorded live, of course, and quite a bit more soothing than you'd expect, though with titles like 'Burning Out an Old Car' you know it can't miss.") is as gut-achingly funny as the 1972 epic "The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies". This besotted it bewildered analysis of a paradigmatic trash movie, written years before such items became camp-cults, extracts buckets of yokks from the movie without ever patronising it - no mean achievement.

Marcus' selections include record and concert reviews, overviews and longer items such as an account of a few days on the road with The Clash in 1977, plus autobiographical sketches, unpublished notes on diverse subjects and extracts from projected works of fiction, which read like nothing else in several dimensions - except Lester Bangs. The two opening essays set the horizons of Bangs' aesthetic. The title essay is an appreciation of the Count Five, written in 1971 when the general appreciation of garage bands paralleled most 1977 punks' love for disco. Bangs defends the Five against hippy snobbery with his usual panache in a way that's pertinent today. Now such groups are recognised, in small but real circles, it seems the general opinion is that the bands were good but neglected. They're almost taken seriously. Bangs, who despised the worship of technique in itself, quite rightly realised that the Five were fatuous crap and that is precisely why they should be treasured. No other critic has been so brave, so passionate, as perceptive (no-one else saw the real significance of 1977 so clearly - The Clash piece shows understanding that it really was the year of irrevocable change, despite what has been claimed since), as funny, or as good a writer. No imitators (and there were lots) have had Bangs

imagination: who else would write a Troggs overview that turns into a homicidal attack on James Taylor, and can you spot the join? Certainly none have had the literary gifts to match him. Dave Marsh said Bangs is to rock writing as James Brown is to dancing, but even JB couldn't match Bangs stamina (writing is exhausting but twelve hours straight on one piece is unholy) or seat of the pants improvising skills. It's also worth noting that the bands Bangs single-handedly defended in an uncomprehending and scornful early seventies have been unquestionably accepted in the eighties - a tribute to the power of his prose to influence readers, musicians and other writers, who all took up the cause. This subterranean but vast influence cannot be denied.

More recently, rebellious critics, especially in Britain, have made concerted Oedipal attacks on the tenets at the core of Bangs' aesthetic - notably the idea of rock and roll as important in itself. It's always essential to question the established order but the vacuity of post-Morley pop and the competent sterility of current rock writing suggest the old bear was right all the goddam time, and didn't he jes' know it.

As much missionary preacher as writer, Bangs felt great horror at the emptiness of late 20th century existence, his own included, and the book contains numerous illustrations of that fear. His self-destructive lifestyle and thirst for trash hid deep moral concerns. In rock and roll he found affirmation of humanity, an incandescent burst of vital and undiluted emotion which he tenaciously touted as antidote to the dehumanisation and alienation he saw rampant everywhere. His writing, and probably his life, was rock and roll

because it had to be; rock and roll's crassness, stupidity, inconsequentiality and occasional majesty were the last solutions of life in a world given over to death. Rock was the only solution to the most horrifying of all problems. Nothing else could be so important. It transcended mere politics (and we always understand other people, past or present, through art, not politics), let alone fashion. Rock and roll gave Lester Bangs instant soul-deep affirmation of the value of human life; not for nothing did he say of an Otis Rush album "It's better than killing yourself" (we don't know how he handled Joy Division). That was always the issue. Rock and roll was all Bangs had, which is why he remained a rock critic despite talent and insight enough to write anything else; nothing else *mattered*. He slaughtered bad rock and roll not so much as aesthetic principle but on the last remaining moral principle. He championed the Velvet and the Stooges at a time when it was neither profitable nor popular because their honest and deeply felt gloom were rare and vital in the cynical "mellow" consensus of the early seventies. Such honest despair was more genuinely optimistic because it showed someone, somewhere, did still feel something.

His genius was that his writing, with its humour, imagination, passion and sheer from-the-gut confessional gall, makes the reader think he IS right. Christ almighty, maybe all the world's problems can be solved by Sam the Sham and the Pharoahs' "Woolly Bully" ("which is indescribable and was recorded by a bunch of guys who rode around in a hearse wearing turbans"). It sounds preposterous but Bangs convinces you that them other guys is the preposterous ones. One of the book's

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umpteenth centrepieces is a section devoted to Lou Reed. Bangs' love-hate relationship with the Loopy One peaked in several bizarre, antagonistic interviews-cum-fights in the mid-70's. Lester adored Lou's best work (to him, the Velvets material, and, ahem, "Metal Machine Music"), abominated the rest and regarded Reed as a grade-Z asshole nevertheless possessed of twisted charisma. These pieces are Bangs at his best, provocative, perceptive, hilarious and filled with serious concerns. It's appropriate; allowing the gender, Reed's "Rock and Roll", now obviously the best ever song on the subject, could and should have been written for and about Lester. If it's reviewed at all by the "serious" press, the book will be patronised and scorned, but in the urgency of the questions it raises and the freshness of the answers no more important book will be published this year. Nor the funnier, more readable, more entertaining. Forget the next two shitty albums you were gonna buy and get this.

Mark Spedding.



Hot Tuna: Historic Hot Tuna (Relix RRLP 2011)

New Riders Of The Purple Sage: Before Time Began (Relix RRLP 2024)

New Riders Of The Purple Sage: Vintage NRPS (Relix RRLP 2025)

Mickey Hart: Rolling Thunder (Relix RRLP 2026)

Commander Cody And His Lost Planet Airmen: Sleazy Roadside Stories (Relix RRLP 2028)

Robert Hunter: Liberty (Relix RRLP 2029)

Bob Weir: Ace (Grateful Dead Productions BS 2627B) (Available in U.K. only from Terrapin Trucking, 93 Balclards Lane, Finchley, LONDON, N3 1XY.)

Relix records began some eight years ago out of a U.S. based Grateful Dead publication. Since its somewhat quiet start, ostensibly as an outlet for Robert Hunter material, the label has grown into an impressive home for related releases, both current and archive. Available here via specialist shops and sundry distributors, Relix will now be handled by the Magnum group. We'll take this opportunity to examine six of the titles.

'Liberty' is the newest of Hunter's six albums for the label. Principally known as the Grateful Dead's lyricist, he's lately proved more active in the recording studio than his parent group. It would be hard to find another outlet so receptive to such a maverick talent, but 'Liberty' may just be his most accessible collection yet. It bears all the hallmarks of contemporary technology – the imposing drums, the Roland sampler, and if Robert's sonorous voice and Jerry Garcia's guitar remain somewhat untarnished, the settings can be incongruous. Whilst acknowledging that it isn't 1969 anymore, and that musicians must progress, I'd argue that Hunter's undoubted craft is better suited to an acoustic, natural setting, than the electronic straightjacket which envelops him here.

Such constraints had yet to evolve in 1973, when Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen put down a series of recordings at the Armadillo World Headquarters in Austin, Texas. Most of these tracks became Cody's first live

album, but a further batch had been resurrected to make up 'Sleazy Roadside Stories'. It's yet more classic stuff – anyone who loved those early Paramount albums, 'Lost In The Ozone Layer' or 'Hot Licks, Cold Steel', will find this a perfect companion as the band roar through such seminal tracks as 'Wine, Wine, Wine', 'Truck Driving Man' and 'Hot Rod Lincoln', with snatches of wild rock'n'roll favourites dosing the cowboy content. The Cody Band were never innovative, they were instead pure bar band fun, a fact this album fully captures.

Hot Tuna, on the other hand, were something else. An offshoot for Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Cassidy, they watched Jefferson Airplane begin their slide from folk rock heroes to Robert Heinlein inspired villains and, when the up finally collapsed, Hot Tuna emerged with the Airplane's soul. 'Historic' is one of Relix's earlier releases and is made up of material pulled from two KSAN broadcasts. Side one recaptures the sound and touch of the group on 'Burgers', their third album, and it's a joy to hear their seemingly effortless interplay again. With Jorma primarily on acoustic guitar and Jack on soaring bass, they prove yet again what a con-

ingman's Dead', the studio releases which sandwich the four PHR Studio recordings. Ignore side two: 'Before Time Begins' is worth investigation for the first side alone.

'Vintage NRPS' catches the group some eighteen months later, following the release of their magnificent debut. Recorded live in February 1971 at the Capitol Theatre in Porchester, this has Dawson and Nelson joined by David Torbert, the group's third crucial member. While Jerry Garcia still adds some impeccable steel guitar, Spencer Dryden had replaced Mickey Hart to begin a relationship with the band which would culminate in his managing them. The recording quality is somewhat rougher than on the Commander Cody or Hot Tuna albums, but the performances are superb – 'Vintage NRPS' brims with the group's magical mixture of cowboys and San Francisco. 'I Don't Know You', 'Garden Of Eden', 'Portland Woman', and a mammoth 'Dirty Business' are amongst its highlights, but it's an album which not only confirms Dawson's excellent songs, but also the individuality of a group which had by then outgrown its part time origins.

One reason for Mickey Hart's defection

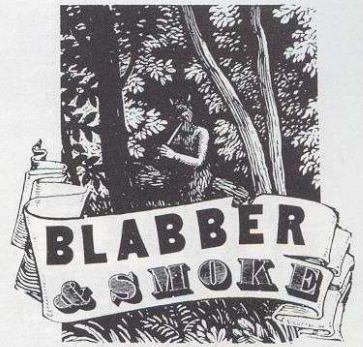


sumate partnership the two had developed. The second side comes from the closing week of the Fillmore West, features Kaukonen on electric guitar and includes a storming take of Lightning Hopkins' 'Come Back Baby'. Given that precious little now remains of Tuna's once impressive catalogue, 'Historic' is a welcome release.

Just as Hot Tuna grew from a parent San Franciscan band, so too did the New Riders Of The Purple Sage. Once firmly beneath the wing of the Grateful Dead, the group then began a path and development of its own. The two Relix albums, however, capture them at a more formative time and offer a fascinating glimpse of a group which is too often overlooked. 'Before Time Began' is the more curious of the two and combines an almost unlistenable side (mixing garbled nonsense with tapes) together with the group's earliest demos. Four tracks feature the genesis NRPS – John Dawson and David Nelson with Garcia, Lesh and Hart from the Dead, while two, the earliest on offer here, were cut by Dawson and sundry friends. They are all superb, and offer not only an insight to the early group, but also form a sideline to the Grateful Dead's transformation from the hallucinogenic 'Axomoxoa' to the Country of 'Work-

tion was the crisis over his father's mismanagement of the Grateful Dead's finances. Mickey Hart left the group in 1970 and would not return for five years, but 'Rolling Thunder', his 1972 "solo" album showed him still firmly within the family. Lesh, Weir and Garcia are all present, as are most of Marin County, on an atmospheric release which blends contemporary Dead ('Playing In The Band' and 'The Greatest Story Ever Told', albeit retitled), Quicksilver/Santana type originals and Hart's undoubted love of percussive patterns. Somewhat obscured at the time by the myriad of Dead related releases, 'Rolling Thunder' is one of the best albums to come from the ranks of the Dead.

Another was 'Ace', Bob Weir's first solo album. Long out of print, it was recently given a limited rerun, intact save a piece of picture reshuffling on the back of Mouse and Kelly's evocative sleeve. It's a curious album; the dynamism is still lost in the flat linear sound the group was intent on foisting round at about this time. In an attempt to distance the collection from a Grateful Dead album, this facet was even more exaggerated in favour of Weir's unexpressive voice, and 'Playing In The Band' is the only track on which things



really cook instrumentally. Nevertheless, 'Ace' boasts some excellent ballads, 'Black Throated Wind', 'Looks Like Rain' and the truly haunting 'Casady', which far outweighs Weir's predilection for Chuck Berry-ish uptempo rockers. It's good to see it available again but the collection pales against Garcia's more impressive first offering.

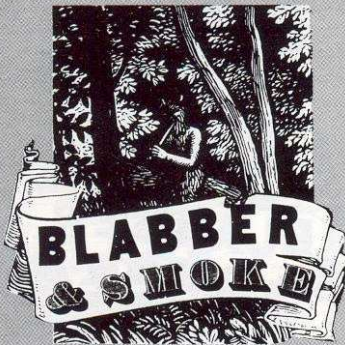
Magic Muscle: The Pipe The Roar The Grid (Five Hours Back TOCK 009)

Following on the heels of last month's 'Rustic Hinge' comes Magic Muscle, its natural and chronological successor. Quintessential English 70s freak out, Magic Muscle inhabit the Stonehenge trip of Hawkwind, the Pink Faries and the pre-accountant Floyd, with a dash of Edgar Broughton in the mix. Light shows, drugs and West Country fields spiked with a dash of of revolution inhabit the entire collection, which is split between the Muscle's more formal style and their brain damaged madness. A four page booklet packed with photos and archive trimmings also spills some wondrous anecdotes. In the meantime, if you've grooved to "What a Bunch of Sweeties," stand back for the real thing, as slabs of guitars and time warp voices splatter together and roar again.

Santana: Santana '68 (Cicadelic 1004)

Time hasn't been too kind to Santana; the vision of endless sambas and poly-rhythmic extravaganza has obscured their other innovative moments. Indeed their Latino development, heard as early as their debut album, pulled the group away from their origins, both as the Santana Blues Band and as a part of the "San Francisco Sound". A glimpse of their pre-'Soul Sacrifice' era has now emerged on 'Santana 1968', where Cicadelic have unearthed and remastered the group's first demos.

Recorded at Paul Curcio's Pacific Recording Studios, these five tracks (three of which are between 9 and 12 minutes) capture their embryonic shape and burst with classic Bay Area settings. Two tracks, 'Jingo' and 'Persuasion', later recut for CBS, are styled more for guitar and percussion; the latter is rawer while the former is extended to show fully the group's demonic interplay. On their debut, Santana muted their uncanny drive, here they allow it full force, especially on "El Corazon Manda", an undoubted highlight, which swerves through contrasting moods and atmospheres. Of any track the group recorded, this best captures a Fillmore evening of improvisation and cascading guitars. Eddie Weiss of Chicago's Lemon Drops adds what must be some post-humous lead, but despite a certain reservation over such studio trickery, it must be said that the join is barely dis-



Little Feat Let It Roll (Warner Bros)

Little Feat were always meant to be a band for elder brothers. They would file their copies next to Allman Bros and Hydra, and gaze into the middle distance believing that no-one REALLY understood the genius that was Lowell George as they did. These elder statesmen have now ended up writing reviews for the music press and have all slugged this, the first Little Feat album since "Down On The Farm" (1979), which contained the last splutterings of a sadly deranged Lowell George. They always were a band, and even tried to oust the drunk or boxed George on a number of occasions. This album shows them to have matured as great players and great songwriters. The unenviable task of vocal duties fell to ex Prairie League singer Craig Fuller, who sounds more Van Morrison than Lowell George, to the chagrin, no doubt, of all those elder brothers. Believe me, ignore the snobs, this is a truly great album. The songs



LITTLE FEAT (L TO R) RICHARD HAYWARD, ROY ESTRADA, LOWELL GEORGE AND BILL PAYNE.

are built up with the greatest feeling and musicianship that would happily show many so-called contemporary musos the door. There is a huge variety of "Country with a boogie beat" contained within; you have here contemporary American music at its finest. Sure the record company are going to be hard pushed at picking a hit single from it; who gives a toss? They'll be playing over here soon, selling out several Hammersmith Odeons, and, like

Ry Cooder, selling albums by the respectable bucketful without appearing on *Top Of The Pops*.

As a footnote to last month's Little Feat article, here's a few additions to the fable....

* Russ Titleman's most famous composition was 'Yes I Will', written with Gerry Goffin and a hit for The Hollies (and, as 'I'll Be True To You', a Monkees album cut). He played guitar on 'Where There's a Woman' and 'Autumn's Child' on Captain Beefheart's 'Safe As Milk'. He then did the same honours on 'Too Much Time' from 'Clear Spot'. Titleman was also

Ry Cooder's brother-in-law, and co-produced Brian Wilson's new solo album (reviewed this issue).

* Two live Mothers' tracks featuring Lowell George - 'Plastic People' and 'You Call That Music' - have surfaced on a new Zappa sampler 'You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore'. More about this next issue.

*The photo of The Mothers Of Invention, which appeared in issue #3, had a caption which included Ainsley Dunbar. This was, of course a mistake - and Strange Things apologise for any distress caused to Mr Ainsley Dunbar and also to the unknown girl in the photo.

tinguishable. By contrast the album closes with 'As The Years Go By' the most obvious legacy of the groups blues past. A ballad, it serves as a further glimpse into a hitherto lost period, and simultaneously adds another perspective. 'Santana 68' is a wonderful document and features much exciting music; unpurgated, it shows the true power of an often underrated San Franciscan group.

Townes Van Zandt: Delta Momma Blues (Decal LIK 25)

'Delta Momma Blues', first released in 1971, continues Decal's admirable re-issue programme of material by Townes Van Zandt. Less sculptured than his earlier work, it confirmed the singer as a country/folk performer, unburdened by the trappings of Nashville, yet more obviously besotted by the heritage of Jimmie Rodgers than, say, Woody Guthrie. That's not to say that there aren't whiffs of Greenwich Village fall-out or even an informal back-up band; 'Tower Song' could be David Blue, while 'Brand New Companion' recalls an earthy Youngbloods, as found in the easy, ramshackle Racoon releases. Yet, such references aside, 'Delta Momma Blues' is mostly another confirmation of Van Zandt's own unique identity.

Sooner or Later: Live In Germany 1966 (Beat Boom BBLP 01, from *Beat Boom Productions, Berghultvagen, 37, S-702 27 Orebro, Sweden*)

Sooner or Later were, between 1964 and 1967, one of Sweden's most popular R and B groups. Only two singles, 'This Hammer' and 'Harlem Shuffle' were issued during their lifespan, but

this newly discovered live session gives an indication of their potential. Modelled somewhat on the Pretty Things and Downliners Sect, they roar through the accustomed material 'Roadrunner', 'Mamma Keep Your Big Mouth Shut', 'Gloria', 'Respect', all of which prove their undoubted love of the genre. It's well recorded, and the whole piece recalls a simpler and more enthusiastic time. It might not be an essential record, especially as the group are relatively so unknown, but it's an interesting document of Beat Club life, and of a time about to disappear.

Mose Allison: Mose Allison Sings (Prestige PR 7279)

Laconic maybe best sums up Mose Allison, his style so cool it's little wonder Mods loved it. *Metronome* once said he lay "between Hoagy Carmichael and Trummy Young", while those besotted by the Georgie Fame of 'Yeah Yeah' or 'In the Meantime' will find an inevitable pattern in both style and presentation. 'Mose Allison Sings' was first issued in 1963, and its seminal place was confirmed by several inclusions - 'The Seventh Son' (also cut by Fame), 'Parchman Farm', and 'Young Man Blues', the last of which was taken up and ground to dust by The Who. The same group attempted 'Eyesight to the Blind' (on, of all places, 'Tommy') and although it was originally by Sonny Boy Williamson, Allison's version was doubtlessly the model. This album, however, is more than a convenient reference point. As an example of his voice and piano, it remains definitive Mose, with 'Allison Sings and Plays' its only real rival. His combining of Delta Blues and Jazz was never so engrossing

- whether it was wrapped around Duke Ellington ('Don't Get Around Much Anymore') or Ray Charles ('Baby Let Me Hold Your Hand'). Witty, wry and very wonderful, this is a vital addition to the reactivated Prestige catalogue.

Soft Machine: Third (Decal LIK 37)

It could be argued that 'Third' was Soft Machine's 'Ummagumma' - it was a double set, part was recorded live at Birmingham's Mothers club; more importantly it affirmed the group's style following several twisting musical directions.

Saxophonist Eton Dean had joined the trio of the previous release ('Soft Machine 2') and added new textures to Mike Ratledge's piano, the bass of Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt's instinctive drumming and superb voice. Romantic souls always argue that Robert was the conscience of the group, and that his Dadaesque qualities were what made them special. Certainly 'Moon In June' is the exceptional piece here, with Wyatt's stream of consciousness lyric thoroughly captivating. As Ratledge took command, however, the Softs became increasingly serious and much less captivating. His compositions here, 'Out-Bloody-Rageous' (where Terry Riley meets the traditional freak-out Machine) and 'Slightly All The Time', which is more muted and reflective, capture him before this unhappy development, and are genuinely beautiful pieces of music. The final side is Hopper's 'Facelift', featuring an augmented brass section which shifts through the rhythmic jazz found on the Pharos Saunders of 'Thembi' or 'Jewels of Thought', liberally swamped in Ratledge's oh so-

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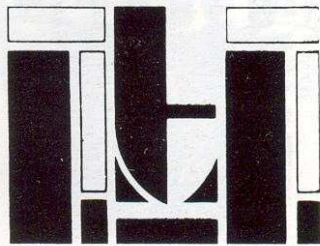
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BILL ALLERTON & BILL FORSYTH

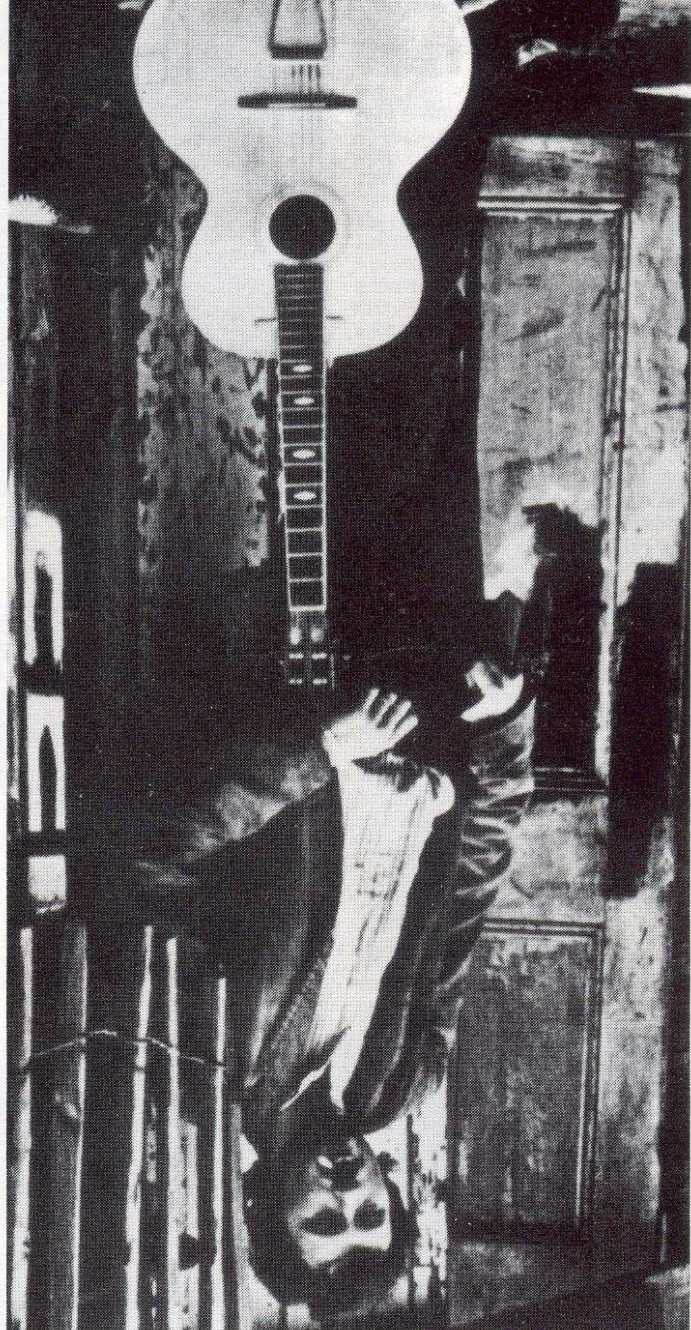
eponymous debut, was recorded at
 Jansch's suggestion, and if the playing
 was strong, the vocals were less con-
 vincing. Much better was 'Another
 Monday', Renbourn's second collec-
 tion, where his folk/blues style was
 somewhat offset by the beginnings of a
 love of medieval England, later realised
 in 'Sir John A Lot'. This new collection
 has most of 'Another Monday' spirit-
 led with the best of that uneasy debut.
 If it is somewhat obscured by the Jansch
 release, it's only because Bert's was so
 strong. 'The Folk/Blues of John Ren-
 bourn' is another fine collection, with
 'Buffalo' and 'Another Monday' won-
 derful highlights. So too is 'Nobody's
 Fault But Mine', where Renbourn is
 joined by Jacqui McShee, preparing yet
 another path towards the Pentangle.

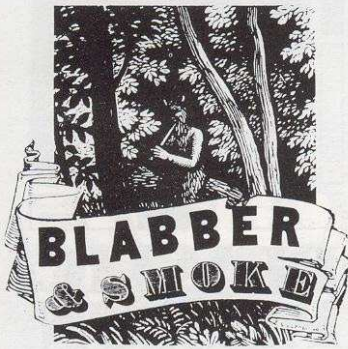
Sweeney's Men: The Legend of Sweeney's
 Men (Demon/Transatlantic TRAN-
 DEM 4)
Gerry Rafferty: Blood and Glory
 (Demon/Transatlantic TRANDEM 3)

Although never revered until much
 too late, Sweeney's Men were one of the
 most influential folk groups of the late
 1960s. Terry Woods, Johnny Moynihan
 and Andy Irvine built a unique blend
 which merged traditional Irish music,
 Childe ballads and American folk cul-
 ture... although such a stew would
 prove too unwieldy to hold together in
 just one group. 'Legend' takes in tracks
 from both of their albums, the first of
 which was ostensibly more orthodox,
 while the second was altogether more
 experimental, showing the influence of
 yet another uncharacteristic input —
 that of guitarist Henry McCulloch,
 BEATLES DAVID BOWIE MARC
 BOLAN BIG STAR TIM BUCKLEY
 BIRTHDAY PARTY CAPTAIN BEEF-
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When Tam Harvey left both Billy
 Connolly and The Humblebums in 1968,
 his replacement raised several folkie
 eyebrows. Gerry Rafferty was pop, he'd
 played in beat bands like The Merdians
 and The Fifth Column, and seemed to
 know little of the pullover circuit. In-
 deed, the sceptics were quite correct,
 but what Rafferty did know was how
 to construct superb melodies. While
 slight compositions, his new partner
 began a succession of brilliant songs.
 The Humblebums staggered through
 two further albums before the inevi-
 table break; Rafferty then cut a solo al-
 bum, 'Can I Have My Money Back',
 before forming Stealer's Wheel and
 beginning a whole new phase. The best
 of that previous era is collected here
 on 'Blood and Glory'; one side to the
 'Bums, the other to that solo collection,
 and it reaffirms his songwriting craft.
 My only complaint is that the wonder-
 ful 'Her Father Never Liked Me Any-
 way' is missing, but anyone can play
 that game. 'Blood and Glory' shows a
 talent both assured and fully confident.

badour or the renowned Les Cousins.
 tion of Davy Graham's evocative in-
 strumental, 'Bert Jansch' nevertheless
 brims with seminal statements, about
 into self-indulgence. This album has
 thus been seen as the beginning of the
 end, but that's a somewhat harsh as-
 sessment. 'Third' remains an innovative
 work, irrespective of what happened
 next.
Bert Jansch: Bert Jansch (Demon/
 Transatlantic TRANDEM 1)
John Renbourn: The Folk/Blues of
 John Renbourn (Demon/Transatlantic
 TRANDEM 2)
 The release of these two records is in-
 deed cause for celebration. Bert Jansch
 was, and remains, one of the finest folk
 duo, and would form the core of the
 later Pentangle always offered up the
 contrast. Indeed John Renbourn, his
 1965, it reflected much of Jansch's Scot-
 tish earliness and mixed it with the
 atmosphere of Soho's taverns, the Trou-





The Great British Psychedelic Trip Vols 1 & 2 (See For Miles)

Oh sure – it's nice to be able to hear some obscure 60's music on CD, but these two volumes are really annoying.

We know from experience that Decca and Deram are amongst the few major companies willing to grant CD rights to small independents. That said it would be possible to compile some KILLER compact discs from the material available.

What we have here is simply the "See For Miles" albums of the same name transferred to CD, and since they were compiled *after* the Bam-Caruso Decca sets they've tried not to pick the same tracks as the Rubble series. This means that they've often included the poorer side of a particular single; (ie "the Muffin Man" by the World of Oz). Calling them "The Great British Psychedelic Trip" also gives the impression that these represent the best examples of psychedelic music – which is nonsense. They do contain *some* psychedelia and some wacky-toons – but the rest is just enlightened pop-music.

If these CD's were presented in a more honest way, (the packages are horrible – sort of 5th form idea of what 60's design was about) – I might feel better disposed towards them. The

music is, of course, great in the most part, but I do get the impression that these guys wouldn't really know the difference between a good package and a cobbled together, half-hearted affair anyway.

Tudor Lodge
Zap! Records • ZAP4

Delving into the murky waters surrounding UK progressive rock from the early 70's is proving too daunting a task for a lot of sixties music fans. The labels that housed the majority of the groups in question (Harvest, Vertigo, Dawn, Deram, etc etc) all signed bands which do exist amidst the dreck tend to get lost or forgotten.

I would urge you all, then, to forget any fears you may have, and investigate Tudor Lodge. This album is really fine, with tracks such as "The Lady's Changing Home" challenging Sandy's Fairports at their best. Beautiful production, close-cropped sweet guitars, and solid folk-rock arrangements give this album a depth you should sample for yourself.

The Soft Machine
Live at the Proms – 1970
Restless • RECK5

There's a note on the back of this rather well presented album. It says: "The banging and crackling towards the beginning of side one is Mike Ratledge kick-starting his organ." Wonderful. The Soft Machine sound veered from mellow wow-wow, rounded bass and tinpani to earth-trembling fuzz courtesy Mr Ratledge and his temperamental keyboards. This album is Soft Machine Three period, but live – and pulling out all the stops. The recording is clean, clear and separation is really good. An essential purchase, 5-stars, thumbs-up and a badge for extra neat work.

The Bonzo Dog Band
The Peel Sessions •
Strange Fruit • SFPS051

From 1969, and Britain's answer to The Mothers of Invention, (they were described as such at the time!), deliver four hearty helpings of Stanshalian lunacy. I would love to tune in to Radio One this Sunday and hear "Sofa Head" dribble from the speakers – fat chance.

I can't help feeling though that Strange Fruit have driven up a cul-de-sac with their boring sleeves. A uniform series design can be brilliant (see Victor Golanze books from the 50's) but the "Peel Sessions" series are a very bad example of how-to-do-it. They do a limited-edition metallic bronze version (ugh!), I'd rather have an unlimited-edition with a great photo of the boys anyway. The Bonzos were visual as well as musical and this is a waste of a good opportunity to create something worthwhile.

Blue Cheer: Outside Inside

If you don't already have this album buy it now! It's Blue Cheer (the howling/feedback amp-splattering version) at their best. The stand out tracks: "Feathers From Your Tree", "Gypsy Ball" and "The Hunter" are all awe-inspiring slabs of US power-graunch. Get this album – but *don't* buy this version of it!! Hunt out an original copy – they're not too expensive – and you get a fold-out sleeve in colour instead of this nasty black and white cheap job. There's one solitary licensing credit on the sparse label – and if this release is legal they've made a pretty good job at giving it the look of a bad bootleg!

**THE POETS; WHO CAN BE HEARD
ON BOTH THE PSYCHEDELIC TRIP
CD'S – ANY EXCUSE TO RUN A
PICCY OF OUR FAVE GROUP.**

Brian Wilson Brian Wilson
(Sire/Reprise)

Poor old Brian, he's had yards of piss taken out of him. Stories about about Beach Boys weirdness, ending in total disinterest around their aimless CBS period. You couldn't give Beach Boys albums away with petrol.

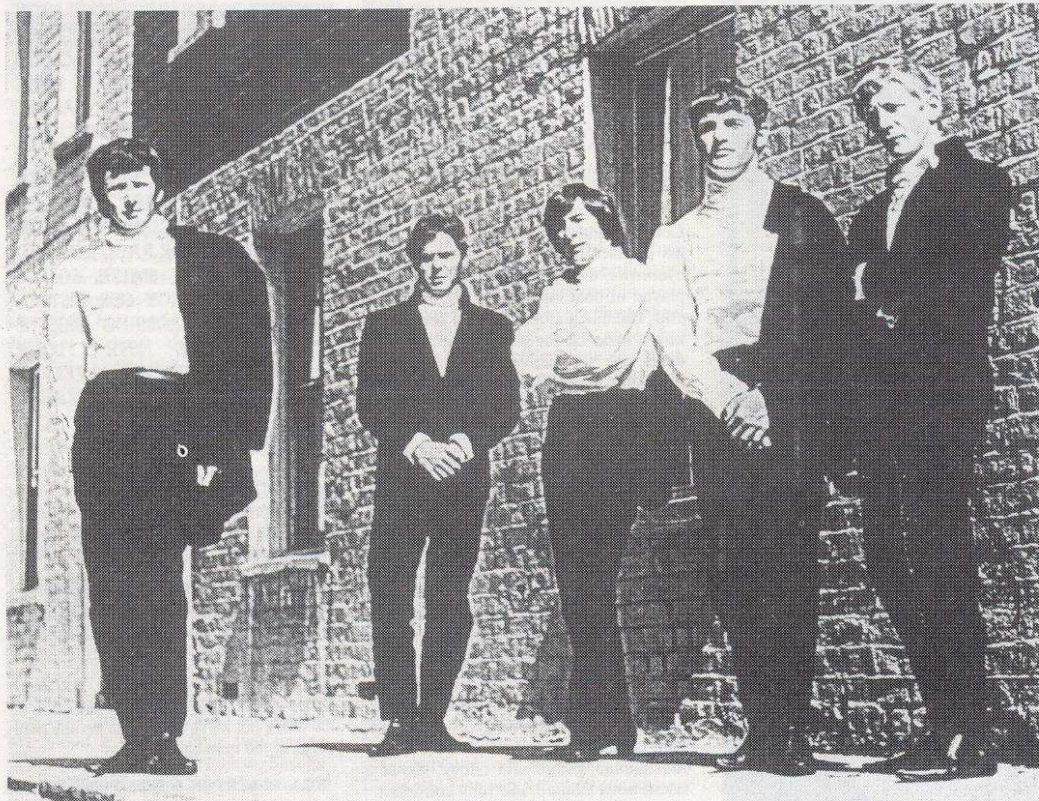
As Brian was the nutter fruit bat who 'retired'. He retained some degree of respect but certainly wasn't ready for the fanfares that heralded this, his so-called first solo album. Methinks that the recording budget amounted to such an obscene amount that his record company found it necessary to gently rewrite history and make out that this album was 'long awaited' fnarr fnarr. The only good stuff on this album are the bits which contain *lots* of Brian's vocals, a strangely underused selling point. He has also retained the unique Beach Boys harmony structure and has added an even higher 'Four Seasons' element that works really well. Sadly the material is patchy, both in content and execution. There is brilliance; the acapella 'One For The Boys' (shades of 'Our Prayer') remains pure and unadulterated, whilst the embarrassing 'Little Children' sounds like Spinal Tap during their 'Spector' phase. Some idiot decided that machines were to play the drums, which may make the timing accurate, but sound wooden and hilarious underneath some undeniably spirited playing. The 8 minute 'Rio Grande' (co-written by Andy Paley) remains undented by 1988 and must be his best work since 'Holland', the last Beach Boys LP to get anything like a good review. Brian is at his best when he recounts tails of Amerikana in his Old-Timey surreal fashion, not when he hollers pointless love songs via the spiritual guidance of his psychiatrists, doctors and analysts. Various 'name' guests appear, who shall remain nameless in their insignificant shame, as all in all, I'd always welcome back Brian Wilson, I only wish people would either let him make a truly great solo LP or leave him in peace. This will do for now, next time maybe?

**Surfer's Stomp: Various Artists (Decal
LIK 39)**

**Various Artists: Angel Dust – Music
For Movie Bikers (Further FU 3LP)**

Dick Dale, the legendary Surf guitarist, once remarked that "real surfing music is instrumental". On the basis of some of the singing here, it would be hard to argue otherwise. The success of the Beach Boys' harmonies forever changed the public's perception of the sound, leaving several combos searching for a likely singer to add to their undoubted ability to play. Thus it's those yet to embark on this direction who are the strongest on this 20 track collection – the Snowmen ('Ski Storm'); Gene Moles ('Burnin' Rubber'); or the Rhythm Rockers ('Rendezvous Stomp'), while the Four Speeds or the Sunsets' voices sound somewhat stilted. The Petticoats and Donna Loren add a female dimension and those with Woodies ready waxed will ignore this writer's reservations about voices and celebrate summer with a collection which neatly encapsulates the various modes combining to create the entire Surf Music cannon.

Culled from several sources (for



which licensing credits are noticeably absent.... hmmm). 'Angel Dust' is a fine salute to a fascinating genre compiled by the King Ink of Scrawl, Mr. Savage Pencil. Interspersed with genuine Harley growls and snippets of movie dialogue, it compiles twelve classic biker performances, mostly from Dave Allen and the Arrows, with contributions from The Hogs, The Poor and Paul Wibier in between. All wrapped in a sensaround double sleeve in glowing picture-disc vinyl, too. Great stuff, this will do nicely until someone prizes Jeff Simmons 'Naked Angels' from out of its contractual malaise.

CHESTERFIELD KINGS



Chesterfield Kings: Don't Open Till Doomsday (Mirror 12, U.S. only)

The Sunset Strip: The Sunset Strip (Au Go GO ANDA 58 from Au Go Go Records, Box 542D, Melbourne, 3001, Australia)

'Don't Open Till Doomsday' is the third album from Rochester's favourite archivists, and isn't quite the radical shift in direction the rumours suggested. Stories of a glam influenced Alice Cooper slant have been greatly exaggerated, although there's no denying the crisper atmosphere which surrounds the record. The mock gothic sleeve may be different to the two preceding it; the mixture, a dash of Rolling Stones, a plateful of garage bands, is still the same, even if covers of material by T-Bone Burnette and Dee Dee (Ramone) King suggest life after 1967. Those who love such revivalism will not be disappointed; it's undoubtedly loving and well performed, those who feel such pastiches are a waste of time will hear nothing to change that opinion. 'The Sunset Strip' belatedly follows on from the group's 1986 single, 'Going Home'. Endless personnel changes and 12 months of remixing have delayed its appearance, but the wait was undoubtedly worthwhile. There's only six songs, three short, three sprawling, each of which are splattered with manic guitar and a screaming intensity. Lying somewhere in the middle of The Stooges and Died Pretty, the Sunset Strip have emerged with an impressive collection and help maintain Australia's sometimes out-on-the-edge reputation.

Talk Talk: Spirit Of Eden (EMI)

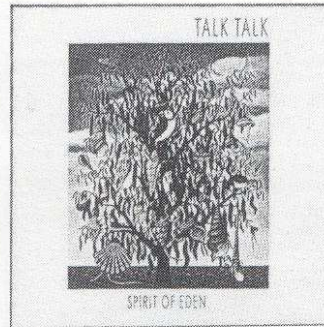
Talk Talk, lately languishing in the "where-are-they-now" file make a welcome return with what could prove to

be the most uncompromising album this year. Four 'songs' (although it's hard to tell where they begin and end) that bristle with such calibre and single-mindedness that one is forced to wonder from what planet young Mark Hollis is from. Two years ago Talk Talk may have been accused of the very worst in conceptual preposterousness with this album... now I'm not sure. With so many of their contemporaries seemingly content to bash out vacuous pop nonsense in their pathetic attempts at performing 'hard', 'back-to-basics' rock'n'roll, Talk Talk are visiting pastures previously frequented by Miles Davies ('Bitches Brew') and Joni Mitchell ('Don Juan's Wreckless Daughter'),

where there is only the singular vocals of Hollis and one instrument, rising to crashing acid blues crescendoes.

Normally I'd balk at the feeling that this is an 'albums band' for 'headphone enjoyment' ("You should hear the CD.... amaaaazing") built mostly for over-rich students grooving on their grants, but things go deeper here. This is a work of such purity and clear-mindedness that I'm tempted to call its release 'important' (gulp!)

Worth taking a risk for (especially) if you've never heard Talk Talk before (I hadn't). In these days of never-had-it-so-good pop, this album is a small desert island on which stands one tree laden with exotic sea shells and a puffin.



The Go-Betweens: 16 Lovers Lane (Beggars Banquet)

Johnny Thunders & Patti Paladin: Copy Cats (Jungle)

The Monochrome Set: Westminster Affair (el)

Would-Be-Goods: The Camera Loves Me (el)

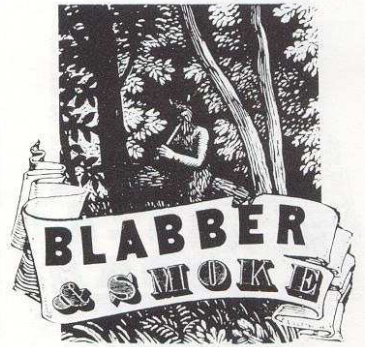
King Blank: The Real Dirt (Situation Two)

Walking Seeds: Upwind of Disaster Downwind of Atonement (Glass)

The Chrysanthemums: The XXXX Sessions (Eggplant)

Bill Pritchard: The Death of Bill Posters CD (Third Mind)

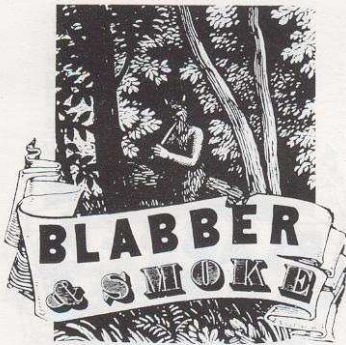
A pleasureable batch of records mark merely a few of this busy summers many highlights; what better place to kick off than The Go-Betweens '16 Lovers Lane'. Spanning a musical heritage that should include Dylan, Tim



Hardin, Tom Rush's 'Circle Game' through Sandy Denny and Richard Thompson to Howe Gelb and Roddy Frame, '16 Lovers Lane' is yet another fine bag of ageless ballads, mini dramas and Super-8 shorts. The likes of 'Clouds', all deep sky and wistfulness, the expansive 'Dive For Your Memory', the Bunnymen-on-a-good-day 'You Can't Say No Forever' or the single 'Streets of Your Town' will remain imprinted on your psyche after a couple of spins. You may not be able to place 'em, but they'll waft back into your consciousness in years to come with ease. Can't recommend it enough. A warm welcome too for Johnny Thunders and Patti Paladin's 'Copy Cats', a handful of vamped covers and kitsch parodies. Johnny and Patti take on everyone from Sky Saxon to The Shangri-las godlike 'He Cried', picking up Natalie Wood, Screaming Jay Hawkins, The Shirelles and a cast of thousands on the way. Massed musos vie with the duo's punch-drunk rockism in a tight but loose collection that would rock the straightest tupperware party. And all housed in a sleeve based on the magnificent 'Co Star' series, a late sixties batch of spoken word releases where you get to act with your fave starlets, complete with your own script. Ceasar Romero, Jimmie Rodgers, Vincent Price, Talulah Bankhead and even the unforgettable "Slapsy" Maxie Rosenbloom all took part... a night in with a Co Star LP is as much fun as Johnny and Patti's collection.

JOHNNY PONDER'S WHILE PATTI POUTS





Whilst still wading through the camp camp, we move on to the latest el releases. The Monochrome Set's offering retrospectively compiles many of their



THE WOULD-BE-GOODS CROPPED SO YOU CAN'T SEE THE STRINGS.

finest moments such as 'Lester Leaps In', 'The Mating Game' and 'The Jet Set Junta', reminding all present how spiffing they were. The Monkees-at-a-spaghetti-western charm of 'Cast A Long Shadow' is the ideal soundtrack for *Lonesome Cowboys*, let alone *Westminster Affair*, the film el assure us it comes from. The Would-Be-Goods are tinged with similar Monochrome-isms (is that Bid we spy, peeping in the corner?); this is finishing school's answer to Bananarama. Jessica Griffin's arch pop vignettes mingle with Cecil Beaton, Valazquez, Noel Coward and a touch of Sophia Loren. Perfect dear.

No doubt Ian Lowery, ex-Folk Devil

KING BLANK - BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME.



and current King Blank, would hate this sort of thing. King of Luxembourg he ain't, more a brooding hillbilly on a trip to the swamp. 'The Real Dirt' is a fine rock LP that consolidates the promise of the debut 'Mouth Off' single. Lowery's studied rockism veers from Mark E. Smith on 'Howl Upside Down' to Iggy on 'Blind Box' or 'Map of Pain', but he manages to stamp his own hang ups all over the shop. The ghost of pub rock hangs gloomily in the air; a solid set nonetheless. Not half as gargantuan as the Walking Seeds new album though... recorded this summer in New York with Bongwater's Kramer at the controls, 'Up Wind...' is the Seeds' finest yet. From the slammng 'Evil Pool' through the mynd-numbing 'We Rise' or epic 'El Sexorcist', the band have thrown aside

accusations of Butthole Surfers worship and emerged as a Blue Cheer power tool for the 1990's. Thrashing, colliding six strings rush past nods to the grunge of the Shadows of Knight or the amphetamine surge of Mad River before wrecking those structures and dancing on the corpse. Powerful, irreverent bliss. And talking of irreverence. The Chrysanthemums' 'XXXX Sessions' really takes the hallibut. This one-sided mini-LP skirts the peripheries of English pseudo-whacky hippidom, you know. Scritti Politti, the aforementioned Monochrome Set, Robyn Hitchcock and especially The Dukes and XTC. And brilliantly executed it is too - superbly arranged and recorded, especially 'The Little Dinosaurs, They Sit In Trees Like Funny Owls', which is infinitely superior to it's title. Considering another Chrysanthemum release was titled 'Is That A Fish On Your Shoulder Or Are You

Just Pleased To See Me?' I think you'll get the drift... members of the Morris Windsor Appreciation Society are advised to buy six copies. The sleeve mimics the covers of the mighty 'Peel Sessions' series, naming thousands of outfits that wouldn't get near a Radio One session. Amongst the likes of The Inkspots, the Chocolate Watch Band and Edith Piaf, lies one Bill Pritchard, whose first two albums have just been released on a double CD. 'Angelique', 'Jerome K. Jerome' or 'Greek Street' sound as reminiscent of Jacques Brel and Dutronc as ever; 'Born Blonde' is indeed classic Bill. The Anglo-French union of 'Helas' hints at the singers forthcoming collaboration with Francoise Hardy (he's already appeared on her TV special), a meeting that's causing concern in the Third Mind office. Mr. Pritchard always said his ambition was to duet with Mme. Hardy, and would give up music on doing so... so maybe this'll be the last we hear of him!

Jali Musa Jawara: Soubindoor (World Circuit)

Rumillajta: Wiracocha (Rumillajta Recordings)

The Four Brothers: Makorokoto (Cooking Vinyl)

Disrhythmia: Disrhythmia (Antilles/Island)

The growth of interest and availability in music from nations previously only represented in dimly lit 'world music' shops, staffed by over enthusiastic beard, sweater and Lennon glasses types has continued to amaze and surprise all at *Strange Things*. Not a day goes without more gems being unearthed from areas of the globe previously uncharted by the majority of the record-buying public.

And there's good stuff cropping up, too. Take Jali Musa Jawara, multi-instrumentalist from the Kantzan province of Guinea. Those familiar with Mory Kante's popularisation of the Kora will find solace here; Jali Musa played electric guitar in Kante's ensemble before forming his own outfit for kora, guitar, balaphon and female chorus, recording their first LP in 1983. If these instruments sound as familiar to you as the electric bass dishwasher, never mind, just check out the record - you'll find haunting, harp-like tones, ecstatic near seat-jazz vocals... a soothing, inspirational music. Better than stuffy old New Age any day.

Rumillajta, from La Paz, Bolivia, present an equally celestial music on 'Wiracocha'. Recorded in Bristol during their 1987 European tour, Rumillajta bring a non urban, Aymara-Inca spirituality to their evocative sound. The title track refers to a mythical Inca figure, and the sense of timelessness and legend abounds this work, despite the modern technological clarity with which it was recorded.

Zimbabwe's Four Brothers present a less cosmic, more instantly uplifting jit dance set, centred around Marshall Munhumumwe's drums and lead vocal. Probably even easier to boogie to than the dictates of Western dance, this sparkly, smiley style can shift your doldrums without any effort. Stick it on when you've just got up and are feeling fuzzy, alongside Kanda Bongo Man's 'Iyole' (Globestyle) or some equally inspirational platter and your morning will turn out breezy in no time.

Disrhythmia's debut for Antilles reminds certain members of the *Strange*



DISRHYTHMIA BRAINCHILD JAKKO.

Things crew of an act named Indo-Jazz Fusions, who opened many a bill at Middle Earth. The brainchild of one Jakko Jakszyk, ace sessioner and one time guitarist for The Inspirational Pentecostal Choir of the First Born Church of the Living God, Disrhythmia fuse lush, breezy jazzbo riffs with the Indian percussive skill of Pandit Dinesh and a host of his contemporaries. Augmented by the legendary bass booms of Danny Thompson and Gavin Harrison's drums, the quartet also utilise notable Western guests such as Dave Stewart and Peter Dinklage. Less gimmicky than your average Indofusion (from Lord Sitar onwards...), 'Disrhythmia' displays both a fine humourous streak and frighteningly competent yet relaxed musicianship. A notable collaboration, proving that the possibilities of global collisions are only just beginning.

Recommended:

The Washington Squares: The Washington Squares

Art Bears: Winter Songs/The World As It Is Today CD (Recommended) (Goldcastle/Virgin)

AC Temple: Blowtorch (Further)

The Trio Bulgarka: The Forest is Crying (Hannibal)

A.R.K.: Listen Up (Rough Trade)

Milton Nascimento: Yaudreite (CBS)

Ciccione Youth: The Whitey Album (Blast First)

A NOTE ON HOW TO PURCHASE RECORDS REVIEWED IN STRANGE THINGS.

There are good record shops and bad record shops. The good ones look like a cross between a Turkish bazaar and a record library. The bad ones are called "Our Price". It's easy to spot them both - but they both share a common purpose: TO SELL RECORDS.

All records on general release in the UK, (ie: that are available through either a major or one of the independent distributors), can be ordered by any record shop in the UK.

Now *this* is where the problems set in. A lot of "high street" shops are reluctant to put themselves out and order records on your behalf. All you can do is give them the title and number and smile nicely. If all else fails contact the record shops that advertise in STRANGE THINGS - they're the good guys!

PUSH THE CAR OUT INTO THE DRIVE – COVER THAT DOOR WITH A CARPET – BREAK OPEN THE ROLLING ROCK – WE'RE GONNA SPEND SOME TIME IN ...

GARAGELANDS

Welcome to *Garagelands*, an occasional *Strange Things* glimpse at world-wide garage music and related noises. From glib Norwegians spouting sociological statements to boisterous Belgians with bucket haircuts, we'll chart the global fuzzlands with glee. Just you wait.

And who better to kick off our trek than Holland's Resonance label, a division of the Semaphore group, and their brace of recent albums licensed from all corners of the earth. First out of the packet are **The Popealopes** from Davis, California, who bring us 'An Adders Tale', ably produced by Russ Tolman. Here's the kind of band that remind you that for all America's bland sameyness, the majority of US musicianship can still stomp all over most British counterparts. 'Poor Tom's muted trumpet and see-saw, singalong rhythms mix Verlaine guitar mathematics with astute lyricism at the drop of the odd Freudian reference; their cover of '2000 Light Years From Home' seems as spaced and spikey as the original. High class stuff for openers – see if you can find it. New York's **Baby Flies** Resonance release is 'Rain', which immediately caught my attention since singer Pat mentions she digs The Shaggs. This is a mighty record, and deserves immediate UK release – Pat's crystal clear early 70's Mellow Candle/Sandy Denny folkisms mingle with King Crimson-ish progressiveness. I know that sounds pretty dire, but imagine a good All About Eve if this is possible, or a pomp rock 10,000 Maniacs. Despite their awful dress sense and worse frame of reference, the Baby Flies manage to win you over. Better NY sartorial elegance comes care of **The Blacklight Chameleons**, who've gotta get a rave review for the totally sexist reason that I've been in lurve with the singer ever since she sent a groovy pin-up of herself my way a couple of years ago. It's been on the wall in the Bam Caruso office ever since. 'The Blacklight Chameleon is crawling through your door' wails Sharon, Patti Smith like, on their theme, backed by cheesy farfisa and meaty slabs of wiggly phazed guitar. Regulars at the Mynds Eye, these are your perfect mondo-psyche party band.

The final Resonance release comes from **The Cynics**, a mega Pittsburgh fuzztone combo I had the pleasure of viewing recently in New York. Covering The Belfast Gypsies' 'Gloria's Dream' proves they've good taste – hope you enjoy the Them article, gang – even more so naming a song 'Abba'. Naturally this was the first I turned to ... 'I saw Abba late last night', the Cynical croon runs, hopefully; however this tome appears to have nothing to do with the sultry Swedes. This

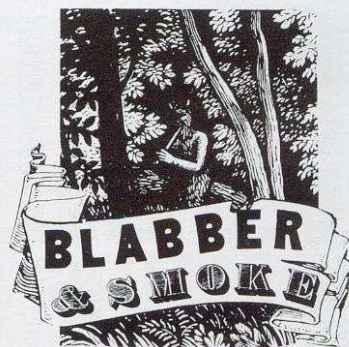


SHARON – FRESH FROM HER SPOT ON THE BAM-CARUSO OFFICE WALL.

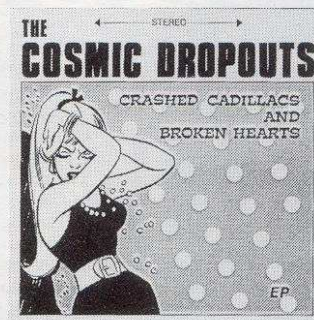
Abba just says 'Get your cut cut, boy', which Benny or Bjorn would sneer at. Oh well, let's get to Scandinavia and see what's *really* cookin'.

Stockholm's **White Stains** weigh in nicely with 'Sweet Jane' their 12" ode to Miss Mansfield and her involvement with San Francisco's Church of Satan. Meandering wah-wah scorches past a Moffs-paced funeral drone in fitting tribute. Tasty.... Meanwhile **The Psychotic Youth** bring us their 'Anything For A Thrill' LP (*Garageland*). Its retina-quivering sleeve hints at some mind-expanding sounds within, but for most part it's well recorded,

rockin' garage with the occasional lysergic tinge on tracks like 'Reverberation', which kicks through with its Prunes guitar swell. Also from *Garageland* come **The Jukon Speakers**, whose 'House On Haunted Hill' comes complete with B-Movie poster sleeve depicting Vincent Price, mutilated female head in hand. The vinyl's pretty good too: scorching guitar licks and a manic, if trifle heavy feel. While we're in *Garageland* territory, possibly their best release of late is a reissue of **The Jackpots**' 'Tiny Goddess' and 'Jack In The Box', two prime cuts from '67/'68. The first is the Nirvana song given the full MOR treatment but great nonetheless; its coupling is a fine Move/Zombies slice of Swedish pop-sike. Investigate.



Still in Scandinavia, Norway to be precise, The Smoke's 'My Friend Jack' guitar churn and Lene Lovich's squeaking yelps seem to have affected **The Willy B. Review**. Their 'Evil Devil of the Female Kind' (That's Entertainment) fuses Cramps riffs with She-Monster theatrics to put the frighteners on. Spooky, Willy B. also handles production duties on **The Cosmic Dropouts**' 'Crashed Cadillacs and Broken Hearts' EP; which given a crisper Rob Younger production could



reach the heights of The Stems. Also through That's Entertainment come **Heyday!** whose 'Cry To The Moon' is a rousing, riff driven ghoul. **The Purple Toads** from Oshawa, Canada, win instant favour since their 'Love Songs For The Hard Of Hearing' LP not only features a picture of their pet cat on the sleeve, but they include a well ginchy 'Tales of The Purple Toads' comic inside. Buzzer! 'The Mystery of Toad Island', which includes Voodoo chiefs and aliens perfectly compliments the Toadies thumping beat... it's certainly on their mental level – this stuff's as neanderthal as The Trogs for chrissakes! Lots of fun.

Back in the States, the chorus of Ohio's **New Salem Witch Hunters**' 'She's Got Wheels' (St. Valentine) appears to be 'She's A Vegetarian!/She's Got Wheels!/Waaaaah!', all tastily snarled in a Sky Saxon meets the MC5 delivery. Birth Records of Boston also score the **The Wild Stares** similarly confusing 'Skorch Turth', a demented collection of Buttholean perversity. Get this charming couplet from 'The Gulf Stream': 'I can't feel my fingers/they're shot full of novocaine/but even the wildest wolf, dear/needs a shelter from the wildest rain...'. A varied and inspired slice of madness. **The Dispossessed**' 'Being For The Benefit of Mr. Kite' is certainly the most awe inspiring slice of vinyl to emerge from East Hartford, Connecticut, of late... the fabs meet 'Interstellar Overdrive' and Syd smiles with glee. How come these guys can speak such good English accents in Connecticut? Ponder on questions like this until next time, pals....

FEEDBACK



LIVES

Dear Strange Things,

I am heartily sick of The Stooges. Of course, that deceptively simple blend of three-chord rock and free-form jazz that wails from their trio of albums will never cease to fascinate me, affecting one as it does in so many contradictory ways.

So, on the whole, perhaps I will be better off declaring not that I am sick of these 'Godfathers Of Punk' themselves, but that I am tired of hearing them lauded at the expense of Iggy's subsequent work!

From the semi-legendary Lester Bangs to contemporary interviewer Barney Hoskyns to Robert Anderson, writing in May/June's issue of this magazine, commentators love to decry The Mighty Pop's solo efforts as somehow antiseptic and self-conscious shadows of his early work. The implication is, of course, that David Bowie engineered such a change, "trimming the dementia with neat little clips" as Bangs would have it, and forcing his own "Eno inspired" synth-scapes onto the submissive Ig.

Naturally, for those fans who don't enjoy the latter-day music, it is very convenient to be able to shift the blame from their hero's shoulders. Sadly, however, this ploy is dreadfully insulting to the idol it seeks to exonerate. Are these people asking us to accept, for a start, that Iggy's musical repertoire is so limited that any ideas which deviate from that old three-chord guitar trick must automatically be someone else's? Why is David Bowie (less intelligent and musically less literate than his friend) seen as the smart 'chameleon' whilst Iggy is supposed to stay stagnant?

Certainly, both 'The Idiot' and Bowie's contemporary albums are influenced by Brian Eno; but, given that 'The Idiot' appeared before either 'Low' or 'Heroes', why is it not assumed that Iggy's interest in electronic music rubbed off on David, rather than vice versa?

In any case, where do critics suppose Eno picked up the repetition and flat musical textures upon which so much of his work rests, in the first place? I think that the man himself would give a nod if not to The Stooges specifically then certainly to the similar-sounding Velvet Underground!

Musical quibbles apart, there is another good reason why those ignoring the post-Stooges work of Jimmy Osterberg are doing themselves no favours. Namely, Iggy happens to be one of the most competent lyricists in rock, and his lines on 'The Idiot', on 'Lust For Life', on 'New Values', on 'Zombie Birdhouse', even on the anodyne 'Blah Blah Blah' (the only album I will concede to be dominated

musically by DB) and certain sections of the half-hearted 'Party' far exceed as testaments to private feeling anything he did with his early band.

He has said himself that he wrote the first album sitting in a coffee house "observing the social patterns" of local youth and generally applying the anthropological techniques he learnt at university and (after dropping out of the course because it wasn't sufficiently stimulating) in his own time.

Stripped to the waist, expressively contorted upon one leg, his skinny arms twisted around his chest or head and yards of elastic microphone flex burning his body, Iggy is oddly non-human and quite weirdly, pathetically beautiful. At times, feeling happier, he will turn in wild over-excitement to the side of the stage and scream — not a rock star's wowl, but the full-throated shriek of a little child out of control.

But, even here, before an audience, Iggy is limited as surely as if he were strolling along a city street. Yes, he is pulling out that private hellishness and pain in a manner he could never do in normal society; but he is doing it *for money*. Even on stage he is restricted by that basic financial necessity to stay alive; he is packaging his own most private moments for public consumption. It is totally appropriate, therefore, that 'The Idiot' should sound restrained; should couch descriptions of Iggy's personality in simplistic imagery ('nuclear bomb', 'ice machine'). A cry from the soul it is not *supposed* to be; it's Iggy's 'album of freedom' in which he celebrates his temporary release from self-hate, and consciously reduces it all to the level of an economic asset.

'The Idiot' made the British Top Fifty — probably on the strength of its author's association with the nascent punk movement — and hence appears to have prompted a return to that old ambivalence. Appearing in September 1977, only six months after its predecessor, 'Lust For Life' bewails this new-found 'success' with the lines

*'Here comes my car
Here comes my Chinese rug...
Oh SHIT!'*

As a triumverate, 'The Idiot', 'Lust For Life' and 'New Values' remain profoundly disturbing albums, driving home again and again man's homogeneity and paradoxical isolation, the futility of his attempts to tear down the wall between himself and his fellows or between his own wilder moments of insight and the workaday mediocrity of everybody's existence; or even to reconcile them. "I feel *incredibly aggressive inside*", Iggy agrees in countless interviews; and there is often a struggle to express himself that is truly alarming. "Iggy does find it hard to give interviews", says early friend and manager Danny Fields. "He's brilliant. He's so intelligent he goes over most people's heads."

Sure; but I suspect that there is more to it than that simple inability to get down to a journalist's level. Beyond this, there is an awareness of the inadequacy of words and of superficial interpersonal relationships. Hence, I suppose, the decision to work with music that affects its audience in a profoundly physical manner; and, furthermore, his obsession with sex, and with its capacity for relaxing human inhibition.

'Fall apart, babe!

'Fall apart!' Iggy shrieks in '1970 (I Feel Alright)' and his classic song 'China Girl' from 'The Idiot' delineates possible effects of this disintegration:

'I'll give you television;

I'll in you eyes of blue

I'll give you men who want to rule the world.'

Too serene in her self-confidence to even be angered by his presumption that he is able to change her, the girlfriend smiles 'Oh Jimmy, just you shut your mouth!'

Yes, we should all rejoice at the hopeful future for female and racial liberation this reply suggests; but at the same time who can escape a certain sadness that this assertion of identity also rules out union between souls; unequal as that union must always be?

The stillness recurs in the classic 'Shades', 'Blah Blah Blah's finest moment.

On the whole, however, I suspect that Iggy is slightly happier with his concessions to society than he once was. The music which once had the violent, distorted quality of a Van Gogh painting — the work of a visionary obsessed with the transience of human experience — was replaced on

the last album by a slick, central-European sound that contrasts harshly with Iggy's rough vocal. It is almost as though Iggy has broken his 'umbilical' reliance upon the music; transferring all of his most private thoughts to his paintings. Leaping with colour, violent and expressive, these pictures' freedom is apparently facilitated by the economic freedom more successful, less obsessively personal music brings him. That said, the new, 'raw' 'Instinct' suggests a testimony of a 'frustrated rock star', as of old. So perhaps I am wrong.

Kate Glades, Oxford

Maybe so, Kate, but at least you get to air your views! More essays and diatribes of this standard are welcomed. Personally I reckon your interpretations stem from a fan's point of view rather than a critics — nothing's gonna convince me 'Shades' is a classic, ironic or not. Similarly the Strange Things crew would probably argue long into the night about your assertion that the Velvets and Stooges are 'strikingly similar sounded', but such is life. And if telling Jimmy O to shut up is going to enhance sexual and racial liberation, I'm James Williamson....

Got a beef? Something making your blood boil? Or do you have an urge to see your name in print?

Write to us, c/o Feedback Lives!

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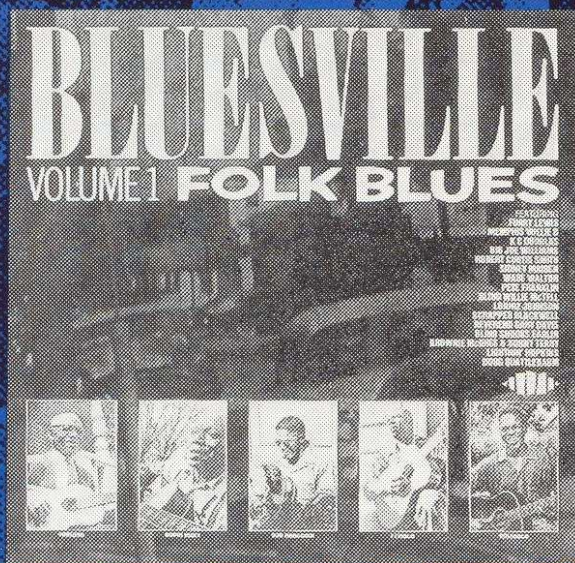
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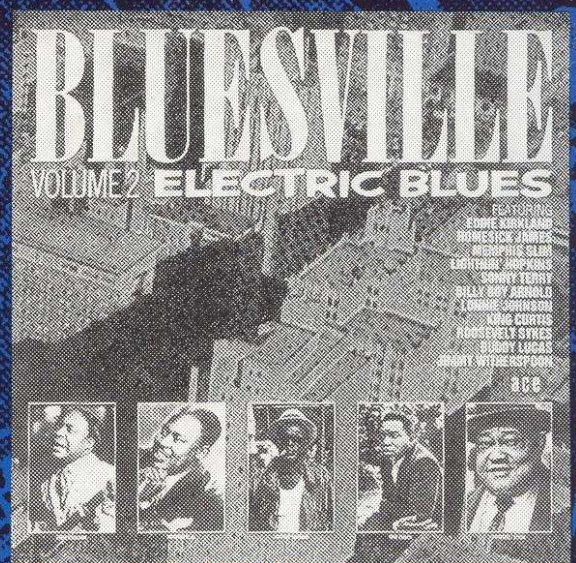


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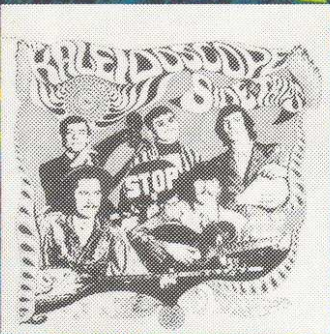


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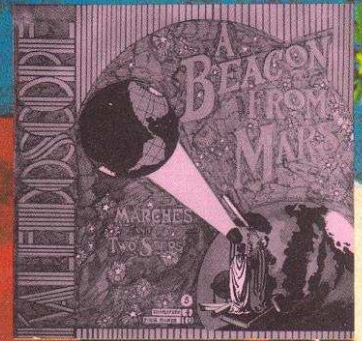
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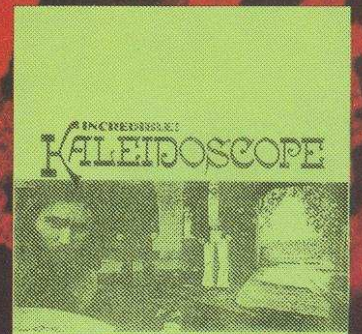
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