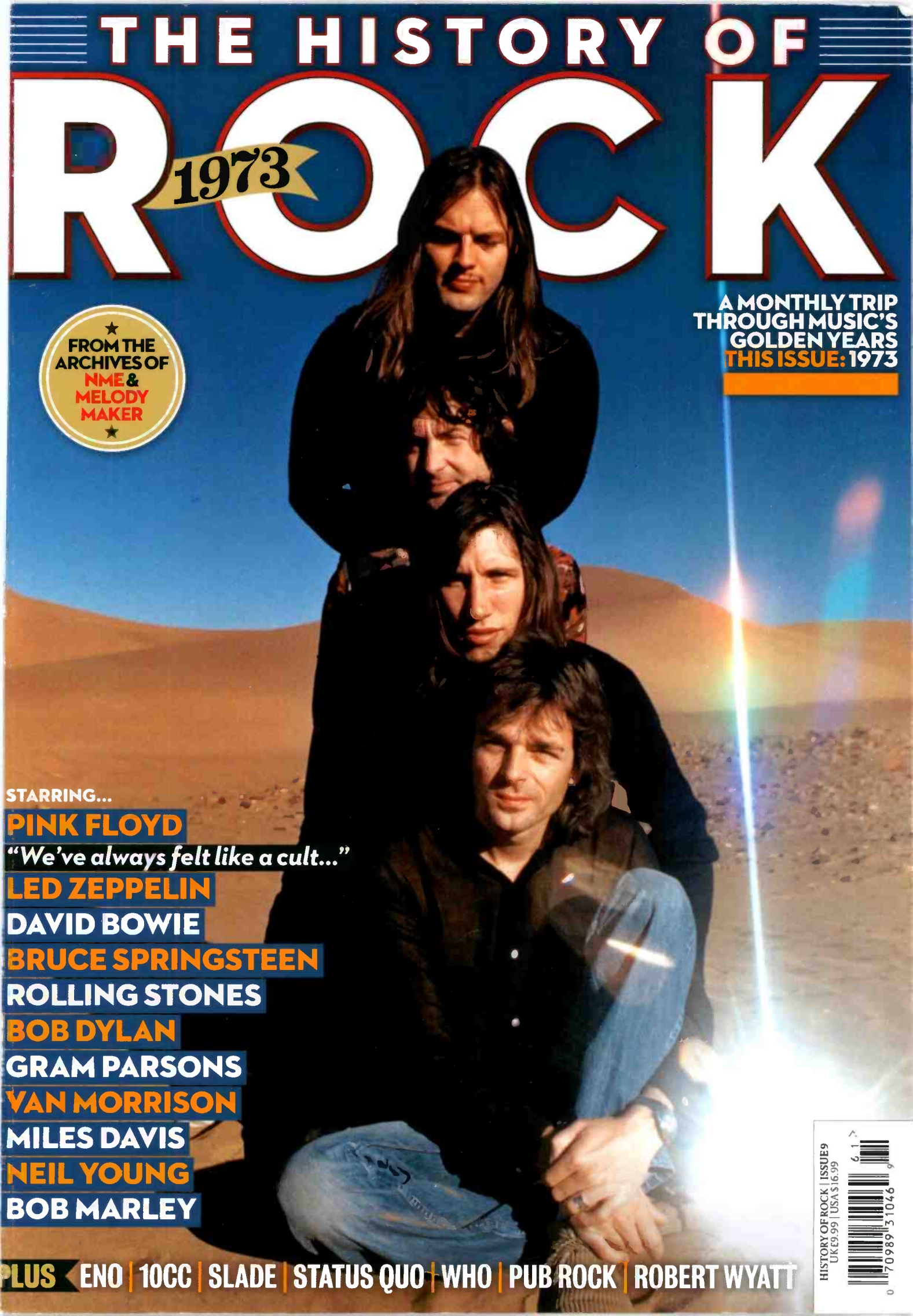
# THE HISTORY OF ROCK

## 1973

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF NME & MELODY MAKER

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS

THIS ISSUE: 1973



STARRING...

**PINK FLOYD**

*"We've always felt like a cult..."*

**LED ZEPPELIN**

**DAVID BOWIE**

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**

**ROLLING STONES**

**BOB DYLAN**

**GRAM PARSONS**

**VAN MORRISON**

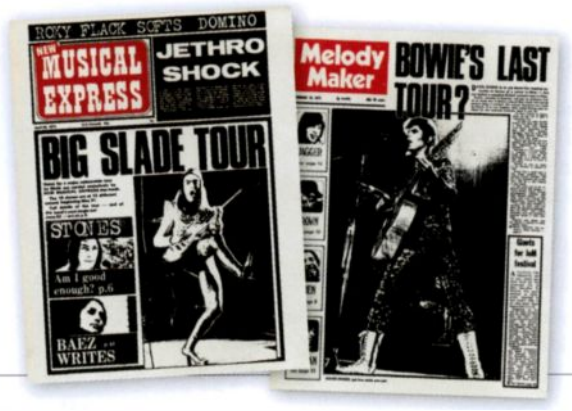
**MILES DAVIS**

**NEIL YOUNG**

**BOB MARLEY**

PLUS ENO | 10CC | SLADE | STATUS QUO | WHO | PUB ROCK | ROBERT WYATT

HISTORY OF ROCK | ISSUE 9
UK £9.99 | USA $16.99




# Welcome to 1973

THIS IS A year in which everyone seems to be saying goodbye. At the start of the year, Leonard Cohen comes to London to say that he is deeply troubled by the music business, and that he's planning a dignified exit. Later in the year, Neil Young says much the same. Brian Eno leaves Roxy, as Ronnie Lane does the Faces. David Bowie, meanwhile, apparently quits music altogether.

Those that remain, however, reap some rich rewards. Bands like Led Zeppelin, The Who or our cover stars Pink Floyd have now all escaped their niches in the previous decade, to flourish in a new context. Zeppelin play to more people than ever before, duly making an enormous amount of money. Floyd do likewise, but are troubled by their conscience and by their past.

For Floyd, the absence of Syd Barrett (and the mental unrest that contributed to it) is articulated in one of the most successful records of all time. Perhaps in homage to a man who was not there, the band fail to appear at the launch for *The Dark Side Of The Moon*.

1973 also brings dramatic new arrivals. The Wailers and their frontman Bob Marley have suffered hardships in the Jamaican music business, but now finally find a patron who will treat them fairly. In New York, the singer Bruce Springsteen is signed by John Hammond – the man who took a chance on Bob Dylan. At a bizarre engagement in New York, Springsteen and The Wailers play a show together.

This is the world of *The History Of Rock*, a monthly magazine that follows each strange turn of the rock revolution. Diligent, passionate and increasingly stylish contemporary reporters were there to chronicle them then. This publication reaps the benefits of their understanding for the reader decades later, one year at a time.

In the pages of this ninth issue, dedicated to 1973, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, compiled into long and illuminating reads. Missed an issue? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

What will still surprise the modern reader is the access to, and the sheer volume of, material supplied by the artists who are now the giants of popular culture. Now, a combination of wealth, fear and lifestyle would conspire to keep reporters at a rather greater length from the lives of musicians.

At this stage, though, representatives from *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* are where it matters. Several miles above Mexico with Bob Dylan. In hospital with Robert Wyatt. Watching as Captain Beefheart meets George Best at dinner.

Join them there. We'll get your table ready.

1973 MONTH BY MONTH

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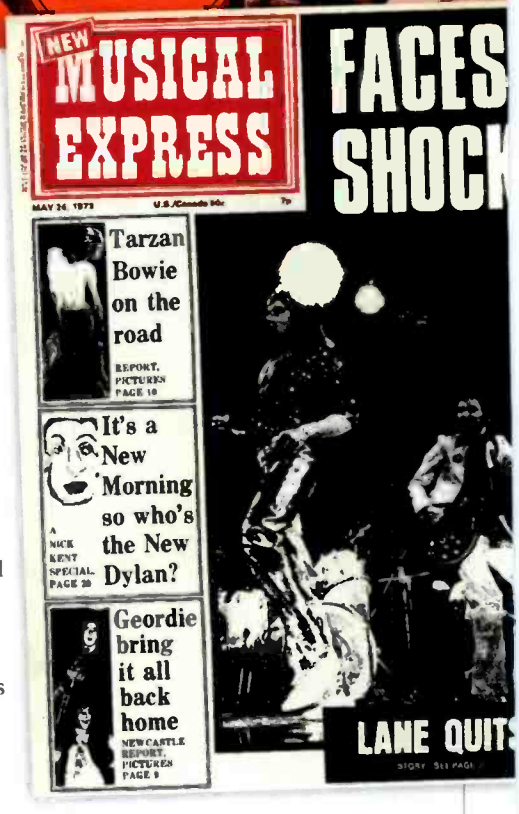

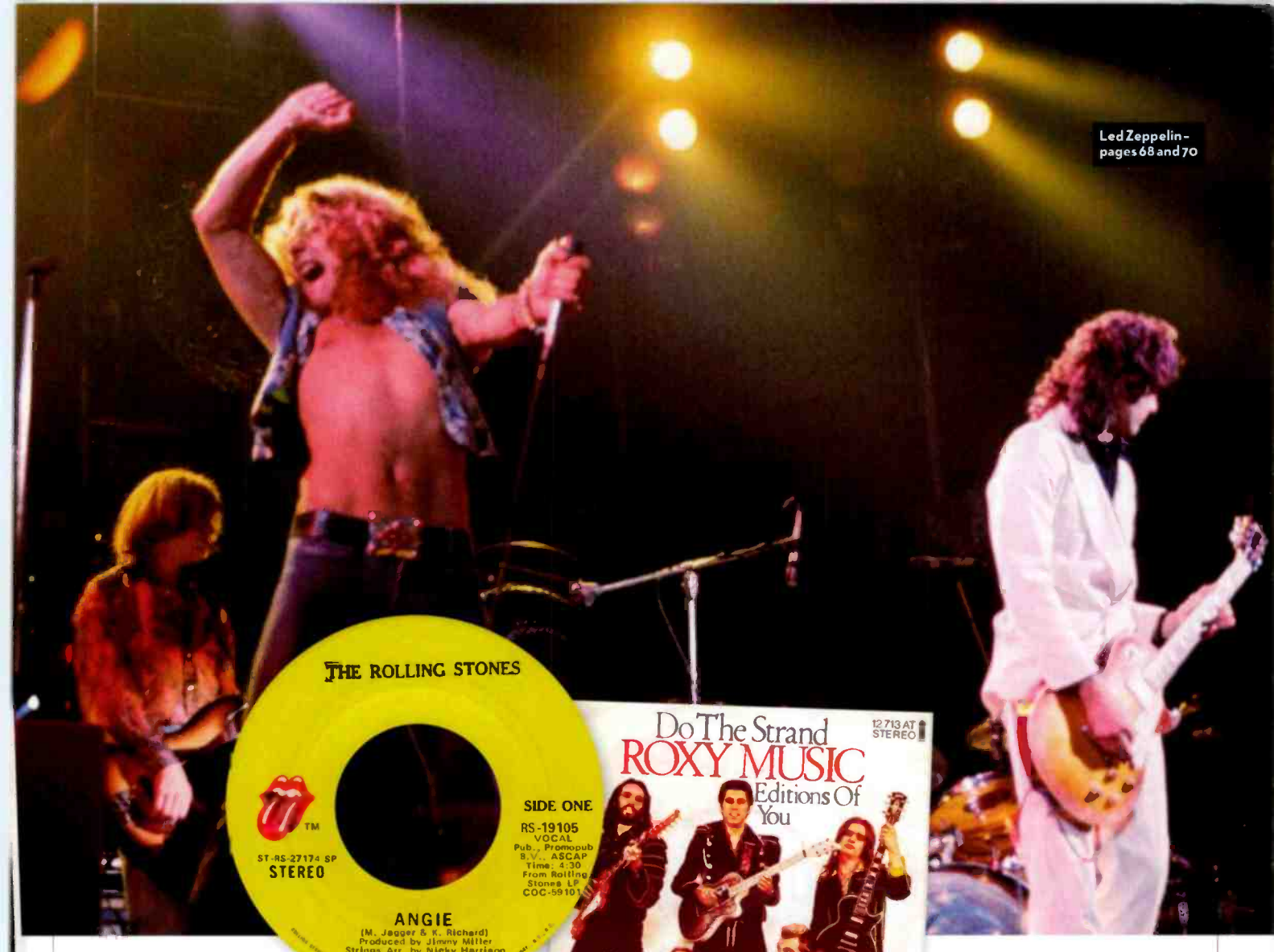





THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 8th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE10SU | **EDITOR** John Mulvey, whose favourite song from 1973 is *Für Immer by Neu!* **DEPUTY EDITOR** John Robinson *Search And Destroy by Iggy & The Stooges* **ART EDITOR** Lora Findlay *Jet by Wings* **PRODUCTION EDITOR** Mike Johnson *Summer Breeze by Earth Wind & Fire* **ART DIRECTOR** Marc Jones *Rock On by David Essex* **DESIGNER** Becky Redman *D'yer Mak'er by Led Zeppelin* **PICTURE EDITOR** Kimberly Kriete *New York City Serenade by Bruce Springsteen* **COVER PHOTO** William Sorano **THANKS TO** Helen Spivak, Rebecca Bench, Georgie Lillington **MARKETING** Charlotte Treadaway **SUBSCRIPTIONS** Sonja Zeven **PUBLISHING DIRECTOR** Jo Smalley **COVERS PRINTED BY** Polestar Wheatons **TEXT PRINTED BY** Polestar Chantry | **WWW.UNCUT.CO.UK**

Time Inc.

Subscription rates: One year (12 issues) including p&p: UK £119.88; Europe €179.40; USA and Canada $203.88; Rest of World £155.75. For subscription enquires from the UK please call 0330 333 4555 and for enquiries from overseas please call +44 (0) 330 3330 233 or email magazinesdirect@quadrantsubs.com. Back Issues enquiries: Tel: 01733 688 964. www.mags-uk.com

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GETTY (2)


# 1973

JANUARY – MARCH

**LEONARD COHEN, BOB MARLEY, STATUS QUO, MILES DAVIS AND MORE**

# "Songs are so important"

**MM MAR 3** LA's Eagles are in London, making album two.

**IT'S A RARE** trip. You hear a band and turn on to their music straight off. Warm and refreshing or hard-driving, straight-down-the-line rock'n'roll. The music's biting hard and filters into the bloodstream.

First time I heard the Eagles it was like that. I popped their album on the turntable, listened to a couple of bars and was totally immersed in the songs. And it was the songs that caught me before their own unique, relaxed country-rock style brought a new awareness. The songs on the debut album are so strong, each one played and recorded with a feeling of love and care.

In the States, the Eagles are home and dry, their album's been a constant seller since it was released around the middle of last year and in the singles market it's had good mileage. Two Top 10 singles and another, "Peaceful Easy Feeling" just working its way into the Top 20.

Yet here they don't mean a light. The name got around to a few people, the buzz went through the music business when their first album was released, but there was little action.

But by the time they've played two concerts here next month at the Royal Festival Hall, London, and the Hard Rock in Manchester, there'll be enough of a buzz for their name to stick.

At the moment they're in Britain, living in a series of service flats just off the Kings Road while they record their second album at Island Studios.

The Eagles are LA people; it was the catalyst that drew them together. Musically, they ended up there after their own areas had run out of experiences; it's a dragnet that allowed some of the finest American musicians to get together and bounce off one another.

New York gave out driving rock'n'roll and its current bizarre side effects, while in the sunshine, LA took away the tensions and gave us relaxed country-flavoured rock.

Linda Ronstadt brought the Eagles together. All the band had worked backing her at one time or another.

Drummer/vocalist Don Henley – who went to California from Texas with his band Shiloh, which included Al Perkins, now with Manassas – and vocalist/slide guitarist Glenn Frey worked with Linda two years ago. They talked about putting a band together and met bass player Randy Meisner, who was in the original Poco when he filled in for Linda's bass player, who couldn't make a gig in San Francisco. »

GETTY

March 10, 1973: the Eagles appear on Dutch TV concert *Popgala* in Voorburg, Netherlands – (l-r) Randy Meisner, Don Henley, Glenn Frey and Bernie Leadon

Don and Glenn stayed with Linda a while, dreaming of getting a band together. Randy split Poco and joined up with Rick Nelson's Stone Canyon Band, a gig that made him quit music for eight months until the Eagles came along.

Circumstance threw the three of them together, they decided on forming a group, and at just the right time Bernie Leadon split from The Flying Burrito Brothers.

"We all knew each other simply because we'd all been playing in the LA music scene," said Glenn Frey. "There must be a pool of about 50 musicians in LA that gravitate between the pure bluegrass music and country pop rock. There's all kinds of people in LA that play music and we got to know one another's music through that scene.

"All of us had played with Linda as part of her band at one time or another. Bernie had played with her three-and-a-half years ago before he joined the Burrito Brothers. Don and I were playing with her when we got together with Randy, and when we heard Bernie was leaving the Burritos we called him up and asked him to have a play with us."

Randy: "It was real nice the way the band came together. It was like things just had to happen."

Glenn: "Putting a band together is real easy, because we were all doing other gigs and meeting people. But finding a band with all the right people who have the ability to shine is another matter. A real band is always growing together and getting each other to play better."

The Eagles have something really positive in their songs and in their sound, which is tight four-voice harmonies and constructive arrangements. Also, with four singers there are four lead voices, which add a whole new edge to their music. But it is the song consciousness, as Glenn puts it, that is so important with the band. That's why from the first album they were able to get three hit singles out of 10 songs.

"It wasn't a planned move that we would record an album full of singles. But we did set out to put 10 good songs on every album instead of having fillers, where one song is the single because it's so obviously a better song than any other on the album.

"Surely you get song conscious," added Glenn. "In LA, you cannot help but be influenced and affected on some level by the people you meet, like Jackson Browne. The people in The Byrds and Buffalo Springfield above all else were good songwriters.

"Songs are so important. It's like loud rock'n'roll has been done at its best; anything else is a poor relation. It's like long guitar solos when I hear them are a poor excuse compared to the things that have gone down before from Clapton and Hendrix.

"But then it's like, are people trying to get better at writing songs, or are they just copping a trip? All musicians tend to confine what they see going on to their own music style. The ultimate in theatre for me was watching Neil Young walk on stage at Carnegie Hall in work boots and denims and the audience just coming to a complete hush. Neil can make that magic work every night. To me that's the get off; that's not just getting real crazy."

Don: "Don't think we're opposed to theatrics, but when you can't play and have to rely on weird clothes, makeup and stuff then that's not valid to me. If you're a good musician, wear what you like, but it seems at the moment there's an awful lot of bands who need all the freakiness to get by.

"It seems that for bands like Alice Cooper and The Sweet the music is secondary to the theatre trip. They try to bash everybody with the body first. For us the music comes first."

"Alice can do what he likes," says Randy "but don't he step on baby chickens? Is that rock'n'roll?"

Don: "No, man, that's burlesque."

It sounds like sour grapes. In fact that couldn't be further from the truth. There's no malice as they talk about other bands. They can't figure it, but then maybe the other bands can't figure them.

The new album, unlike the first, has a concept running through it. The thread that ties the songs together being an outlaw gang in the Old West – the Doolin-Dalton Gang who cleaned up around Kansas in the 1890s. It draws parallels between outlaws and rock'n'rollers. Both basically are the same is the conclusion. Both living outside the laws of normality. The basic story is that of an outlaw's life told in flashbacks. His discovery of a gun (or guitar) in a shop window, becoming a man, getting drunk for the first time, fighting over an unfaithful woman, making easy money and the final big job (or album), before the final burning. Nothing left.

But the Eagles have a lot left to do before the final job. Looking much like an outlaw himself and prime for a movie part, Glenn Frey says they'll be working a lot yet. "While the going's easy," he says, "you can't stop." *Mark Plummer*

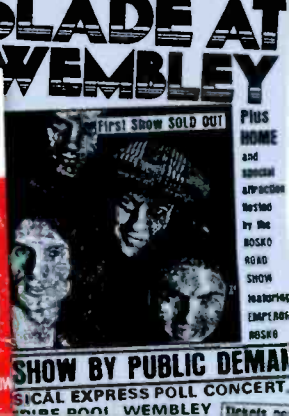
Slade: taking their noize across the Channel and the Atlantic in 1973

## The group play stadiums

**MM MARCH 10 Slade take their unique spelling worldwide.**

**SLADE, WHO CRASHED to the top of the *MM* singles chart today with "Cum On Feel The Noize" in the second week of its release, are set for tours of Europe, America and Australia in the coming months. The group play stadiums in 18 European cities starting on March 23, before leaving for their second American tour on April 20. "Cum On Feel The Noize" had sold 300,000 copies by Monday – at a rate of around 50,000 a day.**





# Beatles seen in LA

**MM MAR 17** Voorman to replace Paul?

**RUMOURS FLASHED THROUGH** Los Angeles this week that three of The Beatles have again teamed up for recording purposes. John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison are all in Los Angeles with Klaus Voorman, the bassist rumoured to replace Paul McCartney after his departure from the group. Rumours that the four were trying to get together were circulating in New York six months ago, though no visible move has been made until now.

# A love of the blues

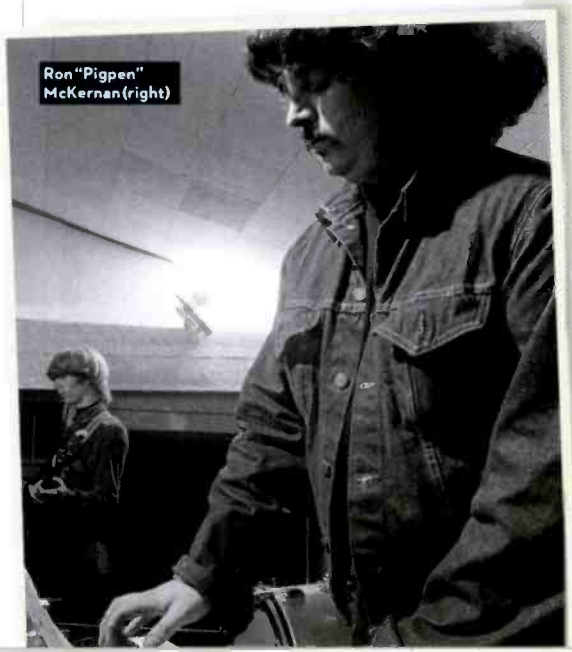
**MM MAR 17** RIP, the Dead's Pigpen.

**RON "PIGPEN" McKERNAN,** organist and vocalist with the Grateful Dead, died last week at his San Francisco home. He was 27.

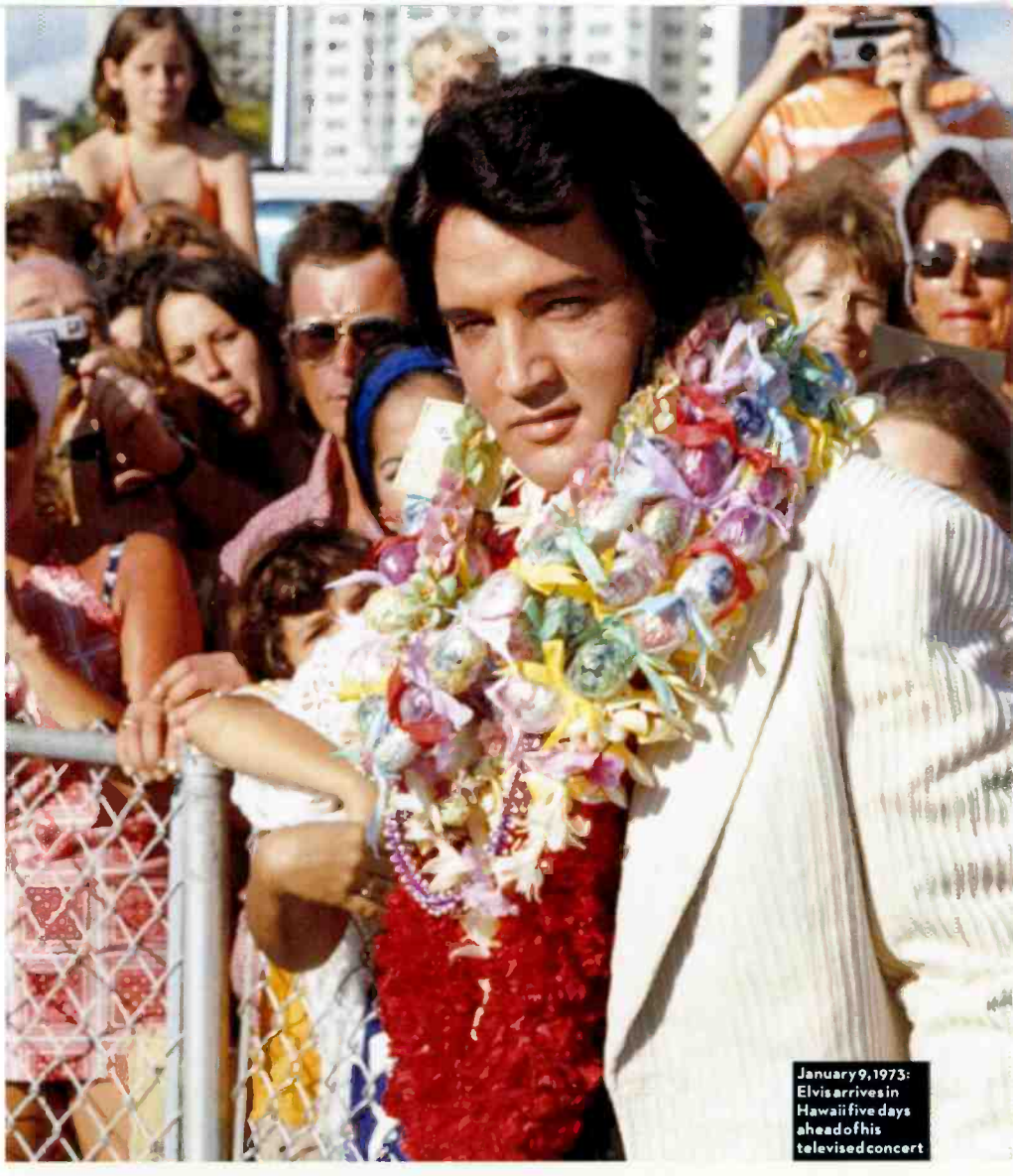
Pigpen had been hospitalised for the last six months, but was allowed home a few days ago. Cause of death was reported to be cirrhosis of the liver, but this has not yet been confirmed. Pigpen – nicknamed after the character in the *Peanuts* strip – inherited a love of the blues piano as a child.

Later he became friendly with Jerry Garcia, then a solo artist, and made his first public appearance at a San Francisco folk club singing blues and playing harmonica backed by Garcia on guitar. He was a founder member of The Warlocks, the San Franciscan band which became the Grateful Dead in 1966.

His organ-playing was an integral part of the Dead's sound. Recently he had been unable to play such an important part in the band's live concerts, missing several gigs through bad health.



Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (right)



January 9, 1973: Elvis arrives in Hawaii five days ahead of his televised concert

# "The stumbling block was financial"

**NME JAN 20** Elvis Presley's new special is returned to sender.

**ELVIS PRESLEY'S CONCERT** at Honolulu International Centre this week, which was made available for screening in this country within 24 hours of the actual performance, was rejected by both BBC and ITV. As revealed in the *NME* last September, Monday's concert was being televised live by satellite to Japan and other Far East territories.

Because of the time differential, it was recorded for later transmission in America and Europe – and the original plan was to screen it in Britain and on the Continent, via the Eurovision link, on Tuesday. But this project fell through as the result of Britain's TV bosses giving it the thumbs down.

An RCA spokesman told the *NME*: "We understand that the stumbling block was strictly financial. Of course, Presley shows always cost a lot of money – but in this case all proceeds are going to cancer charities, so it would have been for a worthy cause. However, the concert is still available on tape should either BBC or ITV have second thoughts, and I am sure that considerable pressure will be applied to them."

**"The concert is available on tape, if the BBC or ITV have second thoughts"**

One consolation is that the concert was recorded for rush release as a live double album. It is hoped that the set can be issued simultaneously throughout the world next month. Titled *Aloha From Hawaii*, the double LP will include at least eight songs never previously performed by Presley.

GETTY (3)

"Some young kids are into something other than The Osmonds": Thin Lizzy in 1973 - (l-r) Brian Downey, Eric Bell and Phil Lynott

REX FEATURES

# "I'm very big in Dublin"

**NME MAR 10** Thin Lizzy celebrate "Whisky In The Jar". Still: "We don't want people to get the impression that we are a folk-rock band..."

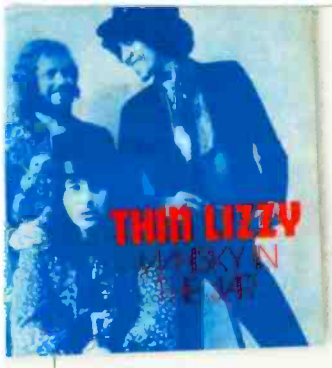
**THIN LIZZY WOULD** like it known that while they're delighted with their hit single "Whisky In The Jar", it shouldn't be confused with the 100 per cent rock proof spirit they present on stage – which is all of their own distilling apart from a version of Hendrix's classic "6 To 9". Hendrix seems a key name in Lizzy's style and presentation, and if you are going to set yourself some kind of standard then the Experience is not a bad criterion.

Phil Lynott, their lanky bass-vocalist, not only looks like the great man's kid brother but also sounds similar. Almost the first question the band asked me as we sat in a small Italian restaurant in London last week was had I listened to the B-side of the "Whisky" single, "Black Boys On The Corner", which was all their own work but in a Hendrix vein.

"We don't want people to get the impression that we are a folk-rock band who do nothing but update old Irish drinking songs," said Lynott in a broad Irish accent. "The flip-side is really much more reflective of what we play on stage. We do all our own material apart from one number, and it's all hard, driving rock.

"At one time I made an effort not to sound like Hendrix," said Lynott over a plate of two eggs and bacon, "but it just happens. I've got that kind of husky inflexion, so I thought what the hell – people seem to like it. I wasn't consciously imitating him, although I've always thought his stage act was the perfect balance of showmanship and music."

Lynott is as Irish as the shamrock. Like Brian Downey, he was born in Southern Ireland. Guitarist Eric Bell comes from Belfast, and idolises Jeff Beck. Bell was considerably hungover from a party the previous night, but managed to recount the story of the single. "We were rehearsing in the Duke Of York pub




in Kings Cross [London] and Phil picked up the Telecaster and just began singing 'Whisky' to his own accompaniment, and I found that little riff which announces the song and runs through it now on the disc.

"Our manager Ted Carroll heard us fooling around on it and started enthusing about how good it sounded. So we put it together a little more solidly and released it as a single last November, prior to our tour with Slade."

The single had been out for almost four months before it began to move into the charts, and Lizzy see that largely as a result of their exposure on the Slade tour, coupled with the enthusiastic support they've had from DJs like Kid Jensen and John Peel.

"Kid Jensen virtually made this band," said Lynott. "He's supported us right from our first Decca album, and the Slade tour finally broke us here. We learned quite a lot from Slade about stage presentation - we were a bit cool and laid-back until we saw how uninhibited they were - really natural blokes, both on stage and off."

Phil got a bit fed up with Dave Hill nicking his birds, but... "I told him he couldn't do it to me in Dublin. I'm very big in Dublin."

In fact, prior to their Irish exodus Lizzy reached the top of the Irish pops shortly after their formation two years ago - when Downey left a group called Sugar Shack and Lynott another called Skid Row to join forces at the Count Down Club, where they made their initial impact. Bell had been playing with a top showband for several years, but good money would prove no substitute for having to play the same old commercial pop.

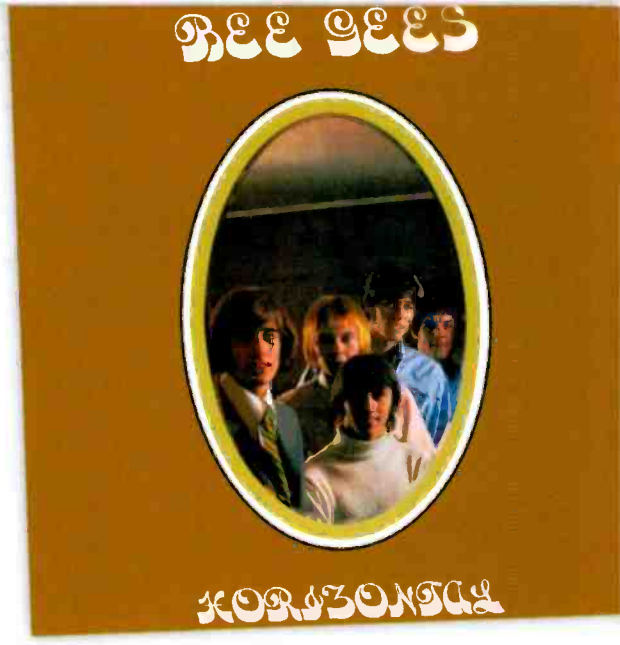
"The only problem with having a hit record is that you get the impression your audience now expect something of you they did not before," said Lynott. "You're expected to prove yourself, but that's OK because we'd built ourselves into a good working band by word-of-mouth reputation previously, so we've got something to back up our hit with.

"I really think there's a third generation among young fans now who are not just content to be fed weeny-bop material. I think Alice Cooper is a positive sign that some young kids are into something other than The Osmonds, and we like to think that ourselves, Slade and groups like Brinsley and Patto offer the alternative.

"Essentially we play hard rock, but now we're giving much more attention to 'melody' because it seems to be the one factor that's indestructible. The songs that last and are remembered are the ones with a strong melody line - and there's no reason why you can't retain intricacy or beat." *Keith Altham*

# "Lennon's become a real inspiration"

**NME MAR 3** Robert Wyatt discusses his influences.




**Gong** *Camembert Electrique*
About the first album made by one of our "family" to have been created in sympathetic circumstances, and it shows. Appropriately enough, if our "family" has a father it's Daevid Allen. So he deserves the opportunity.

**Miroslav Vitous** *Infinite Search*
Vitous apparently gave up the opportunity to swim in the Olympics [for Czechoslovakia] in order to concentrate on music. What a disappointment for his school. How ungrateful to his parents. No wonder patriotism is decaying all around us when such people are allowed to indulge their sinful practices.

**The Beatles** *Magical Mystery Tour*
My snobbish and elitist tendencies usually prevent me from sharing heroes with the loud majority, but Lennon reached me with his two books, and some of his music is so breathtakingly imaginative that he has become a real inspiration for me.

**Bee Gees** *Horizontal*
About my favourite pop group.

**John Coltrane** *Africa Brass*
I first heard this in Collets' record department, which was about the only place an innocent provincial lad visiting London could hear new uncommercial records without the shop staff getting hostile. Thank you, Ray Smith!

**Candid label**
Not a specific record, but a label: Candid. They made several equally amazing records, giving unprecedented freedom to the musicians on the date. Cecil Taylor's "This Nearly Was Mine" and Mingus' "Fables Of Faubus" are outstanding in my memory. Even Don Ellis was able to make a good record on Candid!

**Mingus Presents** *Quintet Of The Year*
My copy is on Vocalion LAE12031. Max Roach, Charles Mingus, Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker at the Massey Hall in Canada, in 1953. My bebop bible.

**Duke Ellington** *Such Sweet Thunder*
My mid-'50s nostalgia orchestra, and about the last particular record my father and I agreed on. (When people generalise about jazz being an improviser's art, they shouldn't neglect that enormous amount of beautiful writing and arranging for which some jazz musicians have been responsible).

**Sonny Rollins Quartet** *Live At The Village Gate*
With Billy Higgins and Don Cherry. Everybody takes ludicrous risks and they all come off as a great advertisement for anarchy, and just the thing if you're in an inhibited mood.

**Larry Coryell** *Live At The Village Vanguard*
I think someone is just as influenced by things that don't work as by those that do, and this choice falls into the category of an Awful Warning. It's a self-conscious attempt to do something that doesn't suit him, something that he's been on the fringe of for several years, without really understanding what it involves. I saw him jamming with Alvin Lee in New York and it was only too clear what was going on. It's the kind of record that's so terrible it can't fail to encourage you to do something better.

## Under the Influence


THIS WEEK: ROBERT WYATT

# "It's over. I'm off"

**With adulation for him reaching a peak, LEONARD COHEN has had it with the rock business. "I've decided to screw it. And go," he tells *Melody Maker*'s man. "Make this your last interview, and let's both quit together."**

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 24 —

*"Let's sing a song, boys... This one has grown old and bitter"* – fragment from *Songs Of Love And Hate*

THERE WAS THIS room. Two storeys up from wet Holborn. It was a damp room, and on the floor of it – covered in paper and an old cardboard coffee cup – was a gold record.

It bore the legend "*Songs Of Leonard Cohen* – 250,000 UK Sales". Gold discs look cheap when you look at them closely. But this one didn't.

"He's coming at 4pm – er, I'll put you in a room", said somebody. "Do you drink? What do you want? Will scotch do? I think there's some in the other room", said the somebody. The room was depressing.

CBS is motion... crank... ring... phone... bla... crank.

"He's in reception. For God's sake get somebody down there! He's in reception, and he's talking to the receptionist. Get somebody down there, and get him up here. He's in reception... Would you believe that. He's standing in reception!"

CBS people functioned. Somebody was sent down to get him – but he'd already come up – hands in pockets, smiling in a whimsical way. I think he was wearing carpet slippers. He looked smaller than he did the last time I saw him. »

REX FEATURES

Leonard Cohen on stage at the Royal Albert Hall, London, March 23, 1972

# Cohen, going, gone

But it was unmistakably Cohen. A day's growth lay black across his olive-skinned chin and cheeks. He stood, and looked somehow pointless. Stood, surrounded by people who were fussing. He wanted no fuss. He didn't talk to them, but meekly followed the mass of instructions he was being given. "Come this way, we'll do this now... Can you come here?... I'm so-and-so, Mr Cohen."

To all intents and purposes he looked like some half-tramp who'd been brought in from the cold, and was about to receive the sort of treatment old tramps are given every now and then. You know, they're given a meal, champagne, and put in the best hotel – and they appear as chatty stories in the *Mirror* – or the like.

Still smiling this strange but warm smile, he half-followed the "scene". Still with hands in pockets. Then a look spread over his face – I think I was the only one to catch it. It was a look of "What am I doing here? I don't want to be here." It vanished quickly.

They – CBS – fussed, and continued to fuss, and after five minutes the two of us had been ushered like children into this even smaller room. It contained a large desk, behind which was a large dudey chair. In front of the desk was a narrow wooden chair, slightly lower than the other.

Cohen – now a little more relaxed, took the small chair, slumped, and sat in a huddle. It can only be described as a huddle, for he still refused to take his hands out of his pockets. I lounged into the big boss' chair.

We exchanged pleasantries. It was nice to see each other again. It was.

"I feel like a boss man in this chair. Have you come for the job?" – I spoke.

"Actually, that's not such a jest," said Leonard, laughing a little. "I could do with a job." His hands came out of his pockets. One hand dropped a pack of Turkish cigarettes on the table – the other hand took a Turkish cigarette, and then both hands lit it, and delivered it to the mouth.

An unusual conversation followed. It went a little something like this.

You've been in England for a while now. What have you been doing?

He began to croak. His voice was very croaky, and slow, and drawn out. His words were punctuated with sighs.

"Yeah, I've been here for a while, off and on. You see it's all been to do with this film they made of me on the European tour last year. It was a case of me wanting to cut out of everything indefinitely – but to leave a film of me for what you might call promotional purposes.

"So a film crew followed me around 23 cities, and spent an enormous amount of money. It was my money. I was paying for the film. Well, the film was shot, and when all the concerts were finished I was happy. I wanted to get out of the scene, and just forget it.

"But, a couple of months later we get a call saying that the film's ready. So we fly to London, and see the film and, well, it's totally unacceptable – so, like, that was $125,000 on something that was totally unacceptable. That's a lot of money, and I don't really have all that much money.

"Yet I was in a financial crisis, and something had to be done with it. I think there still might be a film of sorts. It was something I didn't want to go through – I just wanted the film done, and then get out of the scene."

You say 'get out of the scene'. What do you mean?

"Well, I'm leaving. I'm leaving now."

> "Somehow I haven't organised my life within rock very well"

Are there any specific reasons for you leaving?

"Oh well, I don't want to cut out completely. I want to continue writing songs, but I want to return to another rhythm; a rhythm I'm more used to."

You don't want any sort of 'one album a year' thing, then?

"Well (*laughing a little*), they never got me to do that anyway. I don't write that many songs. You know, my interests are in other places now. At one time I really thought music had some sort of social import – now it's just MUSIC... wonderful.

"You know, I like to listen to music myself, but, well, I don't feel I want to have the same involvement with it. It's over."

He talked of the rhythm he wanted to find... And that would be found in maybe a monastery. "I want to think about things in a more direct way. You can't overlook the fact that you get to a stage with records when you're purely doing it for money – you know you try and keep something going. But you've got to pay attention to the thing. Sure you can leave it all to the hands of others – but when you see them put back an echo that's so distorted you realise that it's YOU who has to pay attention – all the time. If you don't want to pay attention – well, then you cut out.

"The public may not know whether I've cut out or not. I don't know how it will appear. There WILL be a record every now and then."

What do you feel about these people, Leonard? I mean, there's an album in a room back there which they're going to present to you. It's for 250,000 sales.

"Right. Oh, if I have songs, then they'll be recorded. But first I have to make sure that I go away, and find a style of life I'm more suited to. Somehow I haven't organised my life within rock very well. Somehow IT – the rock life – became important; rather than the 'thing' that produced the song."

I feel that feeling is at a high in rock at the moment. There are a lot of people who have suddenly found that they've lost themselves. There's much disillusionment about. Do you agree?

"I don't even want to talk about it. I don't want it to be the substance of an interview. But look, write anything you want. I don't like hearing myself speak about the problem. To me, you know, it's the substance of an interview, like how they say in the monastery, 'May all beings accomplish whatever tasks they are engaged upon.'

"Well, I wish everybody well on 'the rock scene', and may their music be great. May there be some good songwriters – and there will. But I don't wanna be in it. I have songs in the air but I don't know how to put them down. Anyway, I'm going."

Have you been writing much recently?

"I've found myself not writing at all. I don't know whether I want to write. It's reached that state. I have a book of poems out, and I'm pleased with them. But I don't find myself leading a life that has many good moments in it.

"So I've decided to screw it. And go. Maybe the other life won't have many good moments either... but I know this one, and I don't want it.

"No matter how withdrawn you feel from the scene – no matter how protected you think you are. No matter how little you think you're really involved with it... You find yourself drawn into it.

"You find yourself worrying like, 'I should have another song. I should write this. I should do better. I should appear more in public. I should be greater. I do envy that song, I do envy this one.' Well... forget it.

"I just feel like I want to shut up. Just shut up."

It wasn't an interview. We were just talking. The next topic was Derby County vs Tottenham Hotspur. That may sound a bizarre thing to talk about. We shared each other's feelings for the state of the music business. Goddamnit, I nearly gave it all in right there and then – but thought, 'No, people have to read what this man is saying.'

"Make this your last interview," said Leonard. "And let's both quit together." We'll see.

Dylan disappeared successfully – and came back. What do you feel about that?

"Yeah, he did, and I admire him. I've heard stories about him, and I've heard his music, but I don't know him personally. Yeah, he did get out of the public's eye. But you see I have a different problem – I've never been in the public's eye. But even so, I just wanna take off. I don't want to hear about this business. I want to get back to working."

Are you going to vanish forever – do you really feel it's going to be a permanent thing?

"I've no idea. It's not like I'm announcing my retirement. No, not at all. It's a totally psychic thing, on a very private level. It may turn out that the public won't realise any difference. It may turn out that the records still

ARD COHEN: LIVE SONGS

keep coming, and the books keep coming. But I won't be there, I won't be part of it. Can you see what I mean?" Yes.

"It's really ironic," he continued, "that there's that gold record out there, because it's come at the very end of things. I finished work yesterday; I'm going back to the States tomorrow. That's that. It's over. I'm off. I have nothing to do, no concerts, no commitments."

You've obviously made enough to exist off the money you have, then.

"Well, this film's been a blow financially, but I don't have a great deal of bread. Well, I don't really know." He stopped and, smiling, said: "My lawyer tells me I have money. But I never see it."

I think I want to go away too, I said. But I know damned well I haven't got any money.

"But do it," he said. "This is the time. This is the time to retire to another life. This is a time to retreat. It's a time when inferior men are coming forward, and the scene is being taken over by men who are rather shoddy. This is a purely personal feeling, from personal experiences. They may want to make me a bigger star – but I have other plans."

Is it totally ego?

"I think it's a matter of pride. Yes pride, and manliness, and dignity. It's a subtle thing. I mean, we're not doing anything different than when we sat down and talked a year ago. But in the last 12 months we've been feeling things, a lot of us have been feeling things. A lot of us have seen what's been happening to this scene.

"I feel happy now. Happy that I've made my decision. Now I have no problems."

The room now seemed to be a sealed chamber – a sort of timeless zone. Cohen emits a charisma of tranquility, of calmness, and a very beautiful warmth. We smiled, and smoked cigarettes; and talked about New York City, and drugs, and other things.

I told him: "I played *Songs Of Love And Hate* all over Christmas. It meant something. There was a certain sacredness about it. Myself and my lady couldn't stop playing it."

"Thank you," he said. "I don't want to stop that; I don't want to stop that sacred thing I know I have with some people. Gee, I wish you could hear some new tapes that are ready."

You mean you've done another album?

"Well, I taped some stuff off the tour – which 'they' wanted me to do, and which I wanted to do, because the treatment of some of the songs was very different. It really does show the band."

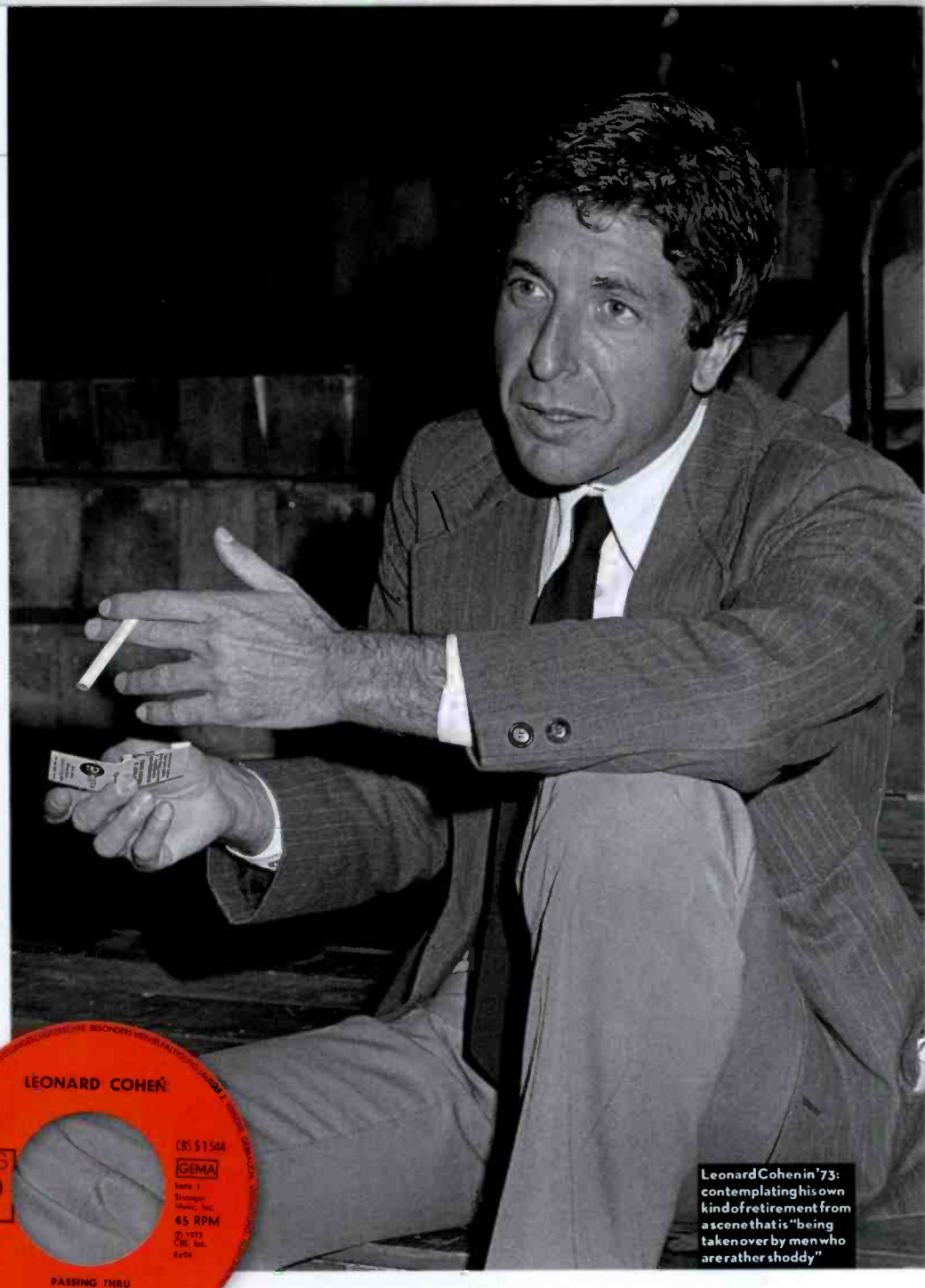
I heard there were some weird things going on with the tour. Something went wrong in Tel Aviv, didn't it?

"Yeah, there was a riot. We were supposed to be playing a small hall – two to 3,000 people. Well, when we got off the plane they drove us into this sports arena! It was huge – there were about 10,000 people there. Well, that would have been OK. Horrible, but OK.

"Anyhow, nobody was allowed to be seated on the floor – so the audience was about a quarter of a mile away. They had huge speakers – about six feet tall. So I asked the people to come down, and sit closer to me, and they started to come, and the usher wouldn't let them. It wasn't a serious riot, but one or two people got it. It made me sad.

"Then there was Jerusalem, which was beautiful. It was sort of the end then. It was planned to be a sort of farewell tour. I was going around playing for the people I'd been writing for... and then it was all over."

He paused, and gently rubbed the side of his nose, gently stroked his chin, and then held both hands out – a gesture of an emotion about to flow.



Leonard Cohen in '73: contemplating his own kind of retirement from a scene that is "being taken over by men who are rather shoddy"

"I feel it in my hands when I pick up the guitar. I feel that I'm no longer learning, and that my life is not right for it. I began to feel I was doing some of the songs a disservice. So I have to get into something else."

His voice had now dropped to a low, croaking whisper. His lips hardly moved, but his eyes were fixed clearly and firmly on mine whenever he spoke. He lit another cigarette, and smoked it in a very soft way.

If you could – how they say – "do it all agin", would you "do it all agin"?

"What I wanted to do was to make one record, and have it reach a lot of people. I had a feeling that the songs I had written were destined for people; I didn't have a "private" feeling about them. I knew my work was for people.

"But it didn't happen like that. It took a number of years to reach people, and somehow I got involved with the 'marketplace', and I got involved with my progress... which I never wanted. It didn't happen overnight, like I wanted it to. I thought it would."

"But, as I say. It took time. And now it's incredibly ironic that after five years there's this gold disc... (*a half-laugh*) five years!

"It's curious," he added.

Yes, it's CURIOUS.

"Yeah, I suppose I'd do it again, because I suppose I was doing what I wanted to do."

A completely private conversation followed – again regarding our disillusionment with rock, again regarding it being a time to leave.

"Maybe you should write that we both sat down, had a private conversation and both quit. Maybe you should do that. Just write that."

*Roy Hollingworth* •

CORBIS

November 13, 1973: Yoko Ono attends the opening of an exhibition by illustrator and photographer David Croland at NYC's Artworks Gallery

# "I belong in the next generation"

**YOKO ONO has made an album, *Approximately Infinite Universe*. And it's very good! "I didn't want to be that intellectual woman wearing a black turtleneck," she says.**

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 27 —

**THERE'S A TOUCH** of irony in the fact that among those sympathetic to the campaign opposing the deportation of John and Yoko from the States is *Playboy* magazine, one of the major symbols of sexism, which in its new February edition speaks of the "heartening broad" range of support for the Lennons in America.

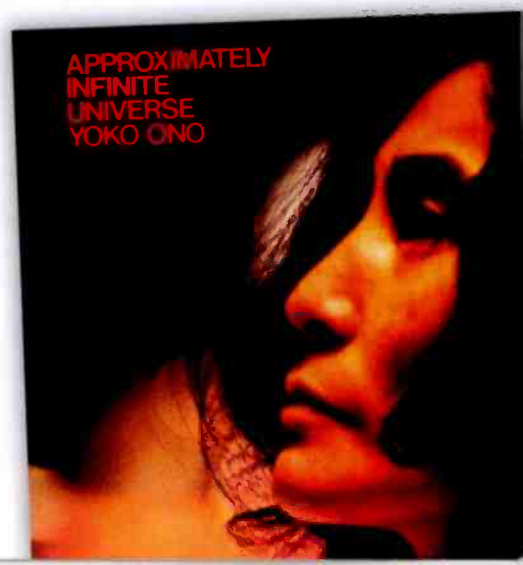
The two of them will be grateful for any encouragement, but it's a slightly quirky juxtaposition considering Yoko's strong role as a feminist. But then again, a good pair of boobs have long gone hand in hand (sic) with the magazine's suitably hip liberalism.

The Lennons haven't been seen much of in recent months. John sits cross-legged on his huge bed with the black satin sheets, flicking the channels on the large colour TV that sits at the foot of the bed like a wise Buddha. And Yoko does whatever she does. Most recently this has been the making of a striking double album called *Approximately Infinite Universe*, which was written entirely by her and co-produced with John.

The album is extraordinary for several reasons. It explodes the myth that she's a talentless artist on the make, most principally.

She has settled for a more conventional way of creating music than the screams and sighs with which she's been generally, and dismissively, associated, and the enhanced accessibility reveals a gift for poignancy and sensitivity of mood and lyric. It is painful, but poetically so.

It is also, in many of its lyrics and in an article of hers printed on the album sleeve, a rather »

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# LADY OF PAIN

sympathetic and certainly un-rabid appeal for a more feminised society – a society, however, which I'm sure, would not include *Playboy*.

As she states in her article, which is an abridged version originally published in the *New York Times*, her aim is for a world that is non-competitive but organic, based on love (feminine), rather than reasoning (masculine).

But she isn't necessarily carrying a banner or strapping on armour. In fact, her song "What A Bastard The World Is", she wrote as a satire on the militancy of the female lib movement. "So they would scream and shout and kick out all men," she explains. "Then what are they going to do?"

The Lennons live in a rather nondescript street down in the Village, by the river. They have no Rolls now, just a station wagon. From the name plaques on the door you wouldn't find them. I was alerted by a telegram, addressed simply to "John and Yoko". Next door lives John Cage. He has little parties and cooks delicacies; Jasper Johns and Salvador Dali are sometimes there, and sometimes too are John and Yoko.

Before Cage went on his European tour last year, he asked the two of them how to prepare his voice for singing, and John was astonished at the sounds that came out of Cage's mouth. It's a very quiet life, though, all in all. It probably has to be. The threat of eviction from the US immigration authorities looms large and Yoko still hasn't found her daughter, Kyoko.

There's one word that is always writ large in the conversation of these two. That is "pain". Although their company is fun and quicksilver, they don't mind admitting that some of the hard knocks get through to them. There's something somehow embarrassing about hearing this word in an emotional context. It's so very bare and personal. But they apparently have no trouble with it.

Yoko's album was conceived in a state of some pain. This has to do with immigration and her daughter, and then both she and John were depressed about the election and its implications for society. "Is Winter Here To Stay?", one of the songs, was written after McGovern lost. But it was, oh, so many things. Being a woman was one, and being Japanese didn't help. It was just the world, really.

"They were pretty hard on me, you know."

She sits in the kitchen-cum-office of their house, which is really no more than a one-floor studio apartment consisting of two large rooms, and collects her thoughts. She supposes, she says, that before this album she was getting desperately lonely. She was waving a flag for things she believed in, but it was a lonely road in a way. She got more desperate about communication, which has always been the basis of any project she has been involved in.

"I think all my other things, like the screaming and moaning and sighing, do express certain emotions just as painful as this one, but just because of their abstract nature..." The sentence trails away.

"Probably words are more tangible, more acceptable."

> "It's easy to say, 'All men are pigs, let's just get on without them"

**SHE'S SAD THAT** the public still thinks of her essentially as Mrs Lennon – ex-Beatle John's wife in England – rather than what she does and has done as an artist. She's in her 40th year now and her artistic status is relatively unknown; or at least, relatively unappreciated. She's a celebrity, unfortunately.

She had started off being a household name and then had tried to communicate her art: that's how the public understood it. In fact, it hadn't been like that at all. She had started off as an artist. Music wasn't something she had happened on after she met Lennon. She was playing piano and studying composition when she was five. By the time she went to New York's Sarah Lawrence School she was interested in composing music that challenged; she was looking for complexity. And so she wrote songs with complex chords that it would be difficult for people to sing.

With the *Fly* album she was trying to expand certain possibilities of form. With this one she was hoping to communicate with people who would understand her lyrics, mainly. "Musically I felt like I had 2,000 miles of emotion and I was a long-distance runner. I just went through that distance. To cover it I went the most functional route, just running."

She had got to the point where she needed to communicate to people who would understand her. With a song like "What A Bastard", which on one level deals with the situation of a woman whose man has walked out on her, she was conscious of trying to get across to housewives.

I wondered if, by becoming more accessible, she felt she had compromised any of those original concepts and values. She laughed and said it was very symbolic, it was a double album. If it had been a single it would have been a more commercial proposition, because with a double sales were right away cut in half.

But she wrote enough for a triple album, which she'd decided against, so she had compromised in a way. "I'm not worried about being more communicative in the conventional sense. I think it's a good sign, because I can see myself as being sort of a snob in a way."

She meant intellectually, and I asked her if there was ever any conflict between her and John over their respective backgrounds – hers Harvard and artistically and intellectually elitist; his essentially that of a pop musician. Friends, for instance.

Not really, she replied. John had begun in art school, so he had that background, and he was already sophisticated enough to understand that side of life. And her friends were certainly interested in talking to John, not just because he was John Lennon, but because of shared interests and subjects, like extra-sensory perception, say.

"From my point of view, I was just getting sick and tired of the pseudo-intellectual, elitist atmosphere of the circle I was in, in London. I was thinking, 'Am I gonna end up as the Queen Mother of the avant-garde world, always meeting these snobs talking about elitist kicks?' and I was starting to feel frightened.

"I was 34 or whatever, and I could just see myself as starting to be that." – *Women's Wear Daily*'s idea of an artist? I put in – "Yes, and I didn't want to be that, that sort of liberal, intellectual woman in her middle age, always wearing a black turtleneck sweater. I didn't want it, and I didn't know where to go, though.

"When I started to make the *Bottoms* film I became known in England in a strange sort of way – like to taxi drivers, that sort of thing – and my elite friends were so very upset about that. They were saying, 'Well, she copped out, she went commercial, or something.'

"They thought it was a very vulgar move to make. So I was already becoming very lonely, even before John and I got involved, because my friends in the theatre world thought I was becoming vulgarly famous. I said, 'It's great to communicate your art with the working class, what is this?' But all the same they stopped inviting me to their tea party; just sort of inverted snobbery.

"Around this time I met John. The first song we recorded on this album was 'Song For John' and it was a song I made actually before I met him. I was hoping to find somebody who'd fly with me, or whatever, and I made a demo record.

"In those days Island Records was interested in letting me do whatever I wanted to do, which is sort of avant-garde music. I was thinking maybe it's a good idea to include one or two straight songs on it and I made this demo.

"It's the first demo of mine that John listened to when he visited me, and that's why, for sentimental reasons, I called it 'Song For John' later. It's the same tune, same lyrics."

**LONG BEFORE SHE** met Lennon, therefore, she had acquired the knack of needling people, of forcing them, however unconsciously, to take sides. It still goes on much the same as ever, of course. She says that the sensitive people who wish them nice things are too shy to come forward, so the ones they're always facing, the ones that say things like 'You Jap bastard'



THE Lennons live in a

Yoko and John Lennon on stage at Madison Square Garden, NYC, as part of the Plastic Ono Magic Memory Band, headlining a benefit concert for the Willowbrook School for childen with mental disabilities, August 30, 1972

come across better, if that's the word. Against all this flak, she said, one could react in two ways. One was to be extremely callous about everything, forget the muck-stirrer and escape from the world. The other one was to become someone like Pat Nixon, and hide behind a smile: those people who are so afraid, they don't speak a word, or if they do, make sure it doesn't mean anything. I didn't think the Lennons fitted either of these categories.

Speaking of Pat Nixon, I asked her what woman she identified with, if at all. "Well," she replied, "John had been saying we were Scott and Zelda, because if I don't make this record I'm going to go insane. As an artist if you have 20 ideas in your mind and for many reasons you feel you shouldn't make it, then you go crazy."

But the Fitzgeralds were victims, weren't they? "Yes, we have that side, we have that side. In a way we were going to be that and we overcame it. Now it's the past."

So what women, I repeated, did she identify with?

"Joan Of Arc, maybe," and she gave a small laugh.

But that was another victim?

"I know, but is there any woman who isn't? I can't identify with past female figures, because they're mostly victims, and I really think I belong in the next generation."

So did she see herself spearheading a whole feminist revolution?

"I think that crusading stuff the militant feminists are doing is a bit skin deep in a way. I do understand their point, but I was trying to bring out the side that was deeper than that.

"You can't say, 'Let's dispense with all men and shove them into a slave house or whatever.' Then the problem isn't over. With lesbianism and whatever, all women are tempted to avoid a meeting with men at this point because we've been suffering so much, so it's easy to say, 'Well, men are all pigs, let's just get on, without them.' I think it's like an escape."

Even with two women, I said, one of them would assume a male role.

"That's a possibility too, oh yes, and many women are getting into that trap. I know lesbians who say, 'Look at those tits, they're just too good for pigs', so they're commenting on sisters like they were pigs themselves."

But when she talked of moving society in a more feminine direction, what did she mean by "more feminine"?

Most artists, she explained, were already very feminine. With the conventional idea of masculinity/femininity, masculinity was supposed to be the symbol of power and competition.

And women weren't competitive?

"Well, we're masculine, most of us. In other words, the only reason we get accepted in this society at all is to use the same game that men use, to get there and be approved by the male society. I mean, men say, if you want to be equal you gotta go to war. But not really, because if we bring out the feminine side of society, nobody wants war."

India, I retorted, had a woman as prime minister, and her female population was nothing if not subjugated.

"The reason is they have a masculine female as a prime minister. Because it's a masculine society, most women who make it are not any kinder to women at all; they're just like other men.

"It's amazingly similar to black society. The blacks who've made it in white society have sold their souls to the point of being white, actually. They look black, but they're white inside.

"That's why society is so perverted. They plant in you the idea that unless you're aggressive you're gonna die or fail, and everyone is so insecure, they're always trying to exert power..."

**AT THIS POINT** I leaned across and lit her cigarette. I asked if my action offended her.

"No, no," she replied airily. "I light men's cigarettes too. I think it's just being friendly."

But in New York, I continued, where homosexuality of both kinds was very overt, women seemed to be emasculating many heterosexual men.

Ah, she said, but the statistics showed that men were getting more impotent, anyway – caused by severe, neurotic competition, she supposed, between themselves. The more impotent they became, the more they had to compensate by seeking power; it was a vicious circle.

"That's why the typical male figure is Nixon, who has to kill 2,000 people a day to feel secure or something."

She stopped. She didn't want to pursue the conversation along the line of politics. The immigration problem, she murmured. We talked about New York. They liked living there, she said, because compared to other cities it was pretty liberal, not just for women but for mixed, racial marriages, like theirs. England was basically a WASP society. Only when you went to a restaurant did you see foreigners – and they were cooks and waiters.

I asked her if she and John were happy people. Not necessarily, she replied, but she said it lightly.

"Sometimes we're very happy, sometimes we're not. We're human. There was a negative situation at one time, like Scott and Zelda, but we overcame that because we were a bit more aware, thank God.

"Maybe I'm stronger than Zelda and John is a bit more aware than Scott, or because we live in a more aware age. Being two artists living together, we're doing pretty well considering."

She smiled. It had an air of optimism. *Michael Watts* •

CORBIS

# "What should I do? Smile at 'em?"

**An intimate audience at home with MILES DAVIS quickly becomes a witty, passionate rant about the record business. "I will make $500,000 in a year," says Miles. "But I will do it for five dollars if my music would get to the black people, so I will be remembered when I die."**

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 20 —

GOD, PEOPLE KEEP moaning, all these rock'n'roll superstars, and how many of them know even how to act like a STAR, let alone a superstar!

It's so depressing for these tastemakers. You know, all they really want to do is swoon at someone's feet, someone with IT, the indefinable quality, and be regarded with a few crumbs and maybe a benign pat on the head, just like it was in Hollywood in the good old days. Hell, they don't even mind being kicked around a little, as long as they can get close to... a somebody. But now! Why, who acts more like a superstar, us or them?

Nobody ever had to explain this to Miles Davis. It's something he knew instinctively the moment he first put that horn to his lips. Man, he was a star and the whole goddamned effing world was gonna know it! And more than that, he was gonna rub their noses in all that fame of his, and do it with all the arrogance he could muster. »

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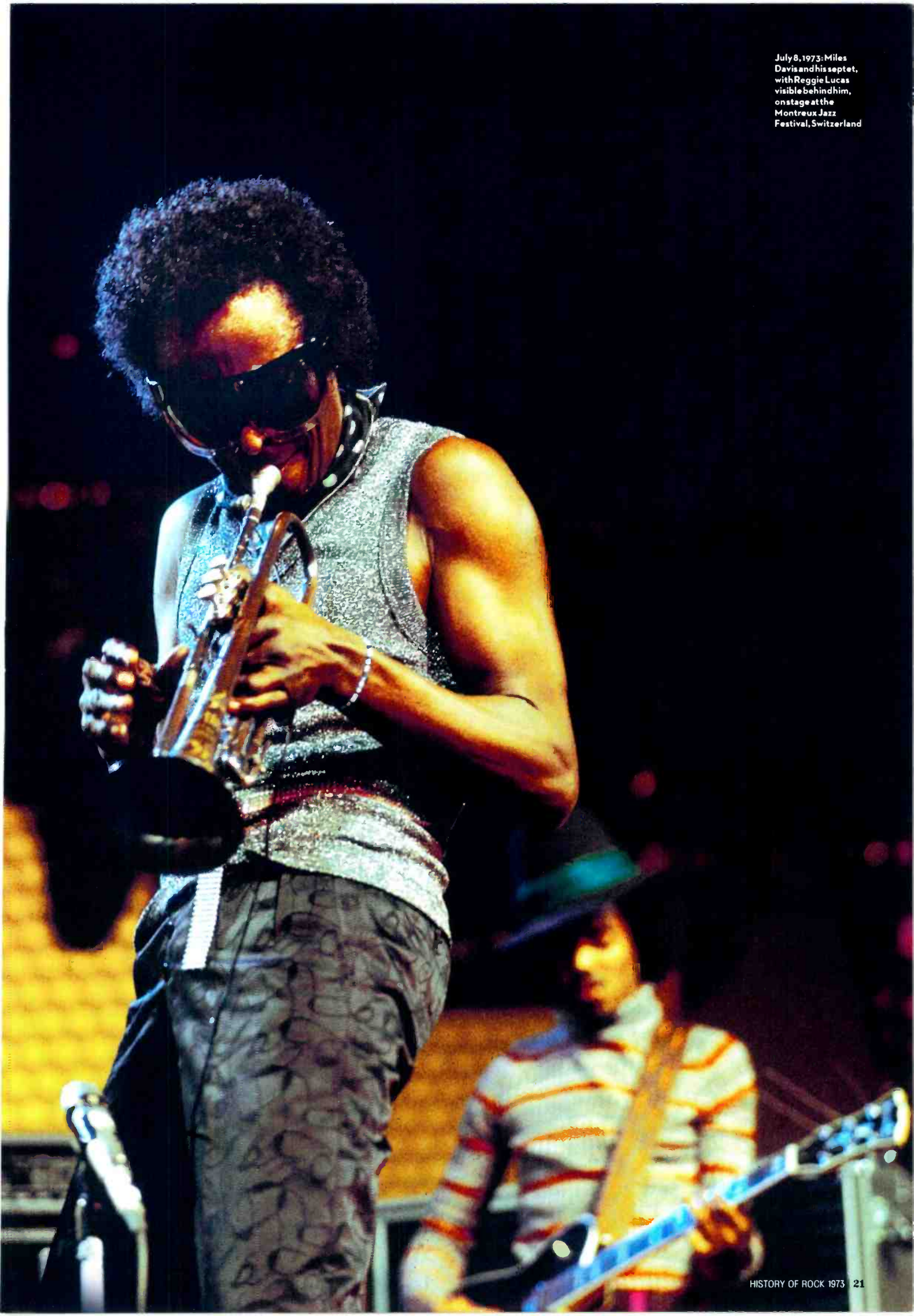


July 8, 1973: Miles Davis and his septet, with Reggie Lucas visible behind him, on stage at the Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland

So all those whites bought his records, told him they were mad about him, went to his concerts in droves – well, he was just gonna turn his back and play that trumpet, look cold and mean and splendid in the spotlight, and let them come to him, because he was Miles and didn't even need a surname to be remembered by. Just Miles.

And him playing jazz, too – jazz in this time of rock'n'roll, and theatre-rock and soul! Especially soul, what with Sly Stone and all. So here he is, a black man in his forties who plays trumpet of all things, not even guitar, and he's a bona fide superstar – the only jazz superstar as far as all those out there in the great global village of rock'n'roll and beyond are concerned. Ask them.

"Well, I don't really like jazz, but Miles Davis, sure, I've heard of him." It's really sweet.

Yes, it's sweet to have the man at Columbia Records ring up and say, "Hey, Miles, I have a cat here who wants to do an interview with you sometime this week," and him to croak over the telephone in that weird voice of his, "Not this week, man; if he wants to do it he's gotta do it now, right this hour, right this minute, right NOW!" That's called being Miles, and the hell you don't do it his way!

So sure, I dropped everything. I got a cab straight away and went out to his place on West 77th, and I didn't even have to look for the number to know that Miles lived there.

> "I get tired of critics. They don't do anything in this business"

**AMID THE SHEER** perpendicularity of those towering concrete blocks was this rococo house front inset with two arched, heavy wooden doors and looking like the El Morocco club someplace. I chose the door on the left, which opened easily, and stood in a small, stone entrance.

On my right were the speaker buttons for the four apartments in the building, but before I could press the one furthest left, marked "Davis", a door opposite swung open and there was this young guy who seemed to have been waiting for me all the time. Although he was black his hair was thick and straight, like a white boy's, and combed right back. He wore a beard and a faintly amused expression, like, "Boy, do you know what you've let yourself in for?"

A flight of stairs was facing, but we entered a door on the right. Inside there hung a pale gloom like that of a church vestry, which tapered away in the left directions to stark, cold light, splashing through cream-stucco arches and disclosing a small, walled courtyard at the end. But here in the darkness, lit by a softly glowing light, was the centrepiece: an electric organ, with a large, beaten gong hanging just beyond the keyboard, like an instrument of Damocles.

There was a tiger's head resting with bared teeth in one corner and a stack of black amplifiers in the other. On top of them lay a pale-green horn and a sign made out of thick cardboard, like those that hotel guests can hang outside their doors. It said: No Visitors.

The guy, thickset and in jeans, led the way up a short flight of steep stairs set against a wall opposite. At the top it was even darker, with a clinging, musky smell. As I came off the top step, blinking, I was confronted with a small open alcove made in what appeared to be dark marble. One side was a large mirror; the nearest side was scooped out. Through it I could make out the upper half of a reclining figure, red-shirted back propped against a chair, legs clothed in beige tartan slacks resting on a marble shelf. It was unclear at first, even though the alcove was brightly lit, because of the surrounding darkness.

I walked around the alcove, through another arch, and was suddenly brought up to find myself in a bedroom. The bed lay in a pit and in the bed, tangled in the white sheets, was a light-skinned girl lying fast asleep. I paused and looked back into the alcove. The figure was regarding me with sombre eyes. The hair was wet and its damp straggles were now being combed by the first guy. The face was very dark and its bones were fine, even delicate, but under the bright bulb it seemed shrunken and pinched. The eyes were huge, like bush baby's orbs, almost impoverishing the rest of his features, and they just stared and stared. It was a full 30 seconds before I realised I was looking at Miles Davis.

"Huh?" he croaked, so low I could barely hear him.

Miles' voice is a phenomenon. It's a hoarse whisper, strained through his larynx like a sieve. He dredges it up slowly through the whole of his body, but it barely leaves his lips. It just hangs a vague sibilance in the air, like the effort of a dying man. At first it's both incomprehensible and comic. Instinctively you cock your head to one side to catch what he's saying. But gradually you adjust to its level, as you would twiddle the dials on a radio to get its tuning.

"Hi," I blurted. He just kept on staring slowly around him, as if it was painful to speak. I shifted awkwardly. There were bottles and lotions on the shelf. The air was heavy with the smell of something. It was quiet, a thick, carpeted silence, except for the gentle swish of the comb and the occasional click of the scissors wielded by his barber-cum-personal assistant.

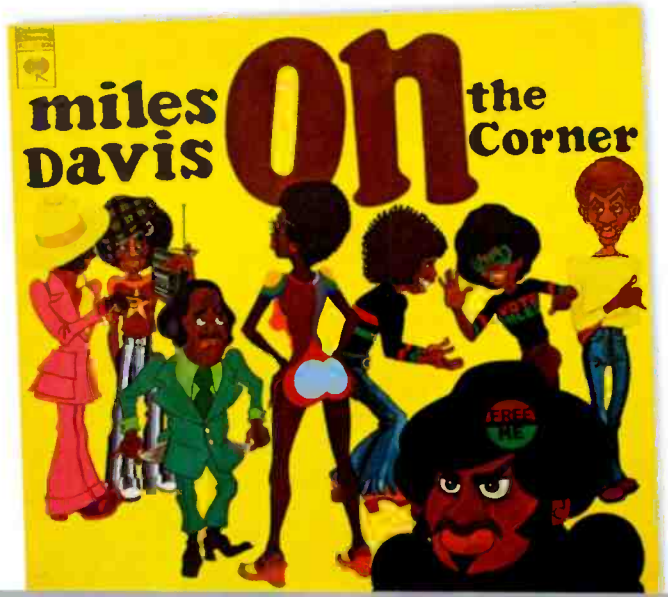
Nothing was said. Until: "How long was you waiting to press that bell?" he enquired at last in that peculiar whisper. "Ten, maybe 15 seconds," I replied in a somewhat hushed voice. In that atmosphere a hush seemed appropriate. "We was having a bet," he explained slowly. "Yeah, see, you owe me five bucks," said his assistant quite loudly. To me: "We were betting how long it'd take you to ring."

Miles waved his hand loosely. "Take a look around downstairs, if you want to," he said, but I didn't hear him at first. "What?" He repeated it. I went down to the first floor. Past the vestry there was a fur rug on the slabbed floor. It opened out into an airy room with a couch, and beyond more arches was a wide glass window from floor to ceiling. Against one wall was a chromium-gleaming porterised bed. A reminder of his accident of two months ago when he crashed his Lamborghini and broke both ankles. I climbed the stairs again.

He was still there, though for some reason I hadn't expected him to be. The silence was pregnant with possibilities. But after a few minutes he eased himself out of his chair and came slowly towards me. I realised suddenly that although apparently recovered his legs still pained him.

He pushed me over to the dark section of the room, which was elevated from the rest, found a Sony cassette machine and inserted a small tape. He motioned to the floor. "Siddown, siddown," he breathed heavily, and then leaned over and literally jammed these headphones over my ears. "My new album," he muttered, and pressed the button.

What I heard was obviously unfinished but undeniably exciting. Fiercely percussive – there were three drummers – it consisted of a circular rhythm, almost a loop that was the nearest thing to a soul groove that I've yet heard from him. Horns were kicking along with the rhythm and he was playing electric piano. It sounded like the next step on from his *On The Corner* album, which in turn has an affinity with Sly Stone's music.




Miles disappeared into the bedroom and I looked around me. In the half-light rested a large, semi-circular sofa made of some hide, in front of which was a table that held a wire sculpture which bobbed and weaved when you touched it. Miles the boxer, I thought, obliquely. Packed tight behind this was a piano, jammed almost up against a shelf containing four-track cartridges.

On a low table rested a gold-plated Bell telephone, one of those early-style instruments which have become voguish in the past two years and on top of the piano a gold record for *Bitches Brew*. More golds lined the walls. An unopened bottle of

valpolicella stood forgotten on a shelf. And over all this was that indefinable musk.

The master returned, only to beckon me into the bedroom. I was beginning to think he was house proud, in his way. Also, I was starting to wonder when he'd loosen up enough to talk. "I ain't been to sleep for three days," he croaked at me, as if by way of explanation. "Been making this music." Then: "Go on, have a look in there." He was pointing to the bathroom. I did as I was told.

**IN THE BEDROOM** he was looking through a long rack of clothes. The chick still lay coiled in the same position. Two colour televisions flickered noiselessly on each side of the bed. The house appeared without much life or cheer. But there was the animation of his presence, dark and unassuming. "Be right with you," his face flashed at me. I went back and sat on the sofa to wait. I calculated that in the past half-hour since I'd entered the place he'd said maybe half a dozen sentences. I pushed the wire sculpture and half-consciously sparred with it, then glanced at a car brochure for a Duster Valiant Barracuda. It was a well-founded reputation, I thought.

He was around 15 more minutes. In that time two white musicians arrived and one began to play the electric organ downstairs; the other had a sax. Also in the meantime his assistant went into the bedroom with his scissors and what seemed to be a stretch bandage. At one time I heard a hoarse scream followed by a "F——" that was clearly audible. And then he came out. He'd put on shoes, his red shirt was buttoned up, and his hair, receding a little at the sides, was all prettified. It was as if he had to face the world on his terms.

He sat right up close to me and rasped in a voice like a thin file, "Whadda ya wanna know? Whadda ya wanna know?" The organ was playing distantly, ethereally. Very unreal.

I asked him who was playing on his new album. Well, it seemed like as good an opening as any.

"I'm not gonna tell you," he whispered from about nine inches away. "Nobody's ever heard of 'em. New guys. One's a statistician; he's an Indian. I don't wanna tell their names, y'know, because critics..."

"Miles!" The chick's voice came from within the bedroom, and then she appeared at the entrance, wrapped in a towel or something.

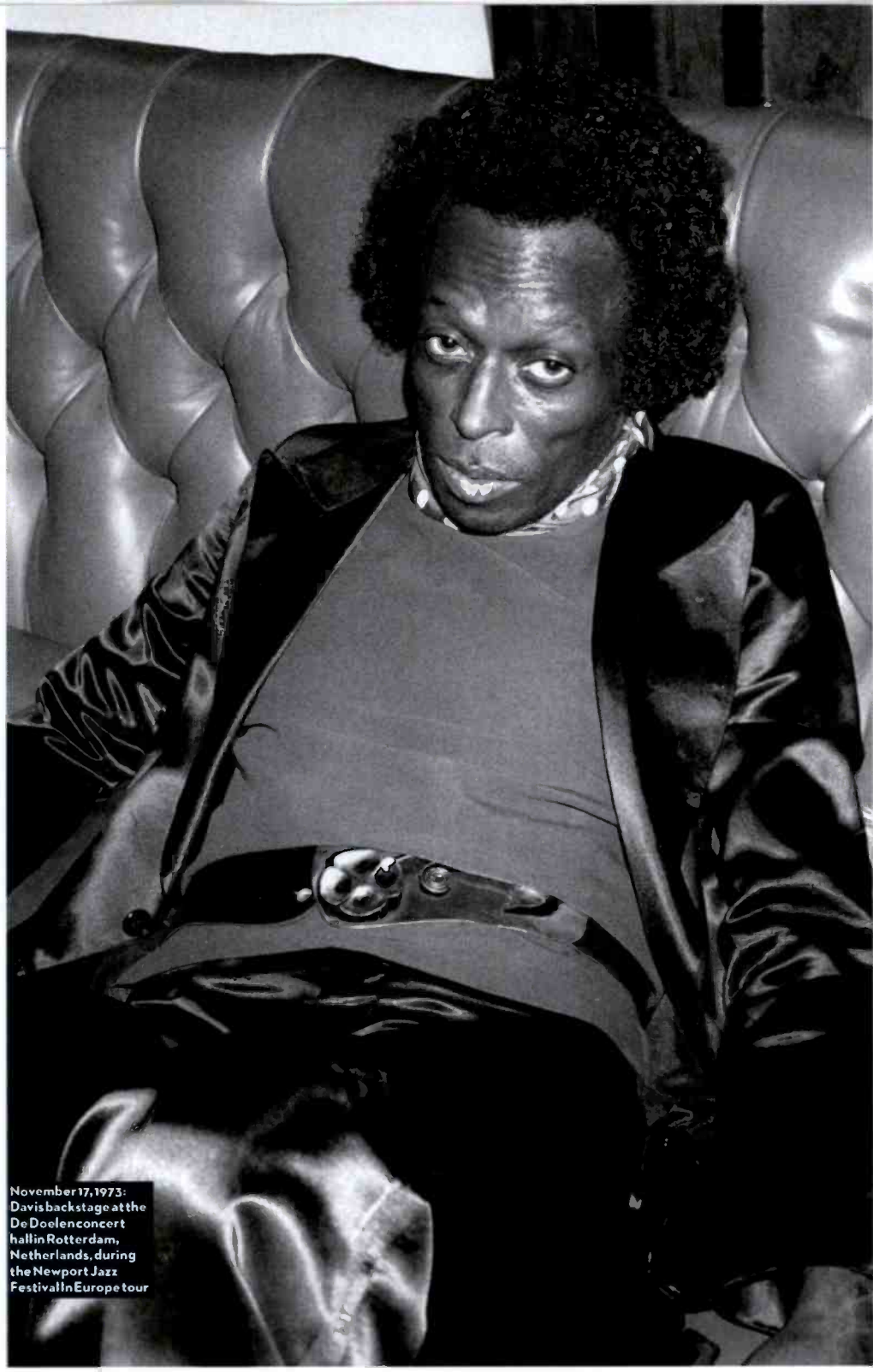
"Yes, babe," he said. She looked at the two of us and disappeared. He looked at me, frowning at the question he'd forgotten.

The critics? He settled slowly into an answer. "Yeah, I don't put any names or instrumentation on it, and then the critics'll have to listen. I'm gonna tell you what's on it, man. Whatever you think is on it. You know, I get tired of people... critics. They don't do anything in this business. Without a musician's record what's a disc jockey – nothing."

But...

"There's no but, there's no but," he rapped sharply. "There's no critic in the world that knows as much of my music as I do. There's no but, period."

Did that go for black and white critics? He stared hard. "It goes for critics even if they're green! Sheee-it! All black musicians don't have rhythm, you know." He looked at his hands. "But I didn't put those names on *On The Corner* especially for that reason, so now the critics have to say, 'What's that instrument, and what's this?' I told them not to put any instrumentation on, but they did. I'm not even gonna put my picture on albums any more. Pictures are dead, man. You close your eyes and you're there."



November 17, 1973: Davis backstage at the De Doelen concert hall in Rotterdam, Netherlands, during the Newport Jazz Festival In Europe tour

> "Every time Quincy Jones comes to town he comes here. I dunno why!"

I asked what he was going to put on future covers, then. He nodded to a stack of portfolios in a corner which were full of cartoons. "Things like that, man." He gave me a weary look. "You see, if I explain things they use it in London. My advice is expensive. You have to watch that. People pick your brains. Every time Quincy Jones comes to town he comes here – and I dunno why! He just sits up here. If you don't have it in you there's nothing... you know." The notion of the critics struck him again. "They'll see your name," he said simply, "and say, 'Oh, I know how he plays...'"

He picked up an acoustic guitar and ran his right hand aimlessly over the strings. "If you're »

PHOTOSHOT


The Miles Davis nonet in March 1973, including (l-r) Reggie Lucas, Lonnie Liston Smith, Dave Liebman, Pete Cosey, Michael Henderson, Al Foster and Miles Davis

a musician," he muttered "you should always keep something in your hand." He plucked softly, and then gave the strings a savage slash. "Oh shit…"

I mentioned that particular guitar. "Oh, Gil [Evans] gave it to me when we made *Sketches Of Spain*," he replied, then broke off. "I gotta have one of your cigarettes." He picked up the cigarettes and started undoing the already-opened pack from the wrong end. I had to help him.

"I've been up for three days," he explained again, "writing this f---ing music!" His accent was vituperative. "And Columbia ain't gonna sell it, anyway. They sell all the pretty little faggot-looking white boys, that's their thing. I just got an offer from Motown for this new album.

"You know, I will make $500,000 in a year, but I will do it for five dollars if my music would get to the black people, and Columbia couldn't get albums into Harlem." He played a loud discord. "That's what I'm told by the vice-president. He don't talk to me on the phone or nothing."

(After this interview I spoke to Bob Altshuler, director of information services for Columbia, who pointed out amiably, as if he'd heard it all before, that there was no way Miles could leave the record company. He was under contract. "This is his way of pressuring Columbia," he said. "We talk to him every day. He needs reassurance.")

Miles was talking to his assistant, who was leaving, about some clothes. In a few days' time he was about to play two nights at the Village East, the old Fillmore. "They should have a Stirling Cooper over here," he muttered, and got up and walked to the bedroom to speak to the girl.

When he came back the white sax player was sitting down. He was bald on top with long hair down the sides and back, and wearing a pair of horn rims. "This is Dave Liebman," Miles croaked. "He's on the album." The guy nodded silently. He sat listening without saying a word.

I reminded Miles he'd been accusing Columbia of not pushing his records in Harlem. "I'm not white and Jewish, man," he replied. But did he think more whites than blacks bought his records?

"I don't care who buys the records as long as they get to the black people, so I will be remembered when I die." He said the last sentence softly. "I'm not playing for any white people, man. I wanna hear a black guy say, 'Yeah, I dig Miles Davis. I'd like to play like that.' I'm not prejudiced, you know. But I lean towards that. It would knock me out if a little kid… Y'know, the closest thing that happened to me was that the doctor brought his son over to the hotel and his son was asking him why don't he have a house like mine." He laughed for the first time.

"Aw shit. But you know they sell a guy's ass down. Engelbert Humperdinck" – the name came haltingly off his tongue – "I never had any o' this. You know, whatchamacallit came by here, what's his name? A Rolling Stone."

Mick Jagger?

"Yeah, so Al [Aronowitz, the writer] said, 'Lemme in, it's Mick Jagger'. I said, 'Man, sheeit! F---- Mick Jagger.' I was f----d, man, why should I let him in? Maybe if it had been Ray Robinson." He paused and threaded his fingers across the guitar strings.

I mentioned to him that Jagger had gone to see Chick Corea, his former alumnus, down in the village, and that Chick had done pretty well when he played Ronnie Scott's in London a couple of months back.

He turned and looked at me. "He did pretty well? You mean England did good." There was no answer to that.

I asked him when was the last time he'd played any clubs. He stopped plucking and tried to think. "I don't know. I can't remember." Then: "Denver, in October. Then, when I came home, I was driving and broke both of my ankles. I was cruising, you know, but I was still up from that gig in Denver. I musta hypnotised myself, 'cos I went right up fast."

A wet road? "Yeah, I was only doing about 30 miles an hour. I ran up on an island. I was just tired." Pluck, pluck. "I f----d the car up, but it wasn't a mess. I got a new one. A Ferrari. I'd already noticed a toy Ferrari lying on the table in front of us. Cars and horns – his two passions. And women.

"Y'know," he said after a while, "I'd rather play trumpet than f---, because you really get a thrill when you do somethin' with a group. I mean, it's something. Anybody can f---. I think making love is a little bit, well…" He dissolved into deep, gruff mirth, like a wheeze.

I said, talking about trumpets, he didn't seem to be playing quite as much these days. There was less emphasis on notes and phrases.

"That's a matter of opinion, he answered abruptly. "When I was with Bird, Fats Navarro used to say I played too fast all the time, but I couldn't swing with Max Roach 'cos he couldn't swing. I mean, because you have technique you don't have to use it. You use it when you feel like it. I mean,

GETTY

you can run, but if you can walk you walk, right? You do what you gotta do. It's called good taste. I play whatever comes into my black head, man."

The critics, of whom he had been so contemptuous, had also claimed he'd been influenced the past couple of years by Sly Stone. I left the insinuation hanging in the conversation.

He drew his breath in. I wondered what he was going to say.

"You ever hear Sly Stone play like *On The Corner*?" he replied at last. It was one of those questions that wouldn't brook an answer.

A certain rhythmic... I began to say.

"We're both black!" he snorted. "I tell you something, man, it makes me so f——g mad, when people say, 'This is influenced by this, this is influenced by that'."

He pointed to Liebman, silent and intent in the corner. "He doesn't play like Coltrane, but the critics will say so! How the f—— am I gonna play like Sly Stone? Sly wants me to produce him! They have a nice group but they don't have any intelligence, man!" The last part of his sentence rose in a crescendo, as if any collaboration was somehow unthinkable. But he listened? "Sure, I listen to everybody." He stopped. "I don't listen to those white groups." He fumbled for another cigarette in my pack. The remnants of three others he'd lit lay in an ashtray. Hardly smoked, they were three short columns of grey ash, smouldering. He rested the fourth cigarette in the tray and the fragile columns crumbled.

> "Sure, I listen to everybody. I don't listen to those white groups"

But, I persisted, how about Carlos Santana, say?

"Why should I play with him? No, I'd only be in his way. I just tell you this. They don't have the musical knowledge that Dave has." He pointed again. "Or me. Or Chick Corea. And neither did Jimi Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix could swing, but not with Mitch, with Buddy Miles. Boy, that album was outasight! Buddy gets so he sounds like a hillbilly, man." He chuckled, "I mean, there's places to go. Jimi – he couldn't change. He hadda be brought up, he had to study. I started when I was 12."

A lack of musical education? Was that it?

"That's what it is, yeah. But you don't have to read. It's not necessary."

I asked how he found his musicians.

"I pick 'em up just like you pick up a girl." Laughter. "I don't go anywhere much, y'know. A lot of 'em come to me but I don't hire 'em. There's a lotta reasons. A guy might have too much ego and can't play with a group and be a good player."

But he seemed to have had a good working relationship with John McLaughlin?

"Yeah, he played different when he played with us. He gets it on. I got John set up, ain't that a bitch?" He was looking across at Liebman, who just smiled faintly and said nothing. It amused Miles. "I got him set up! I sent him to Nat Weiss. See, I know these people. When I make a record and it sounds good they say, 'Well, that's Miles.' Y'know, it's supposed to sound good. That's why I'm leaving Columbia, man. I'm not gonna give 'em this latest album. I'm gonna give it nobody." There was a slightly gleeful look in his face.

But he'd release it sometime, surely?

"I'll erase it," he replied bluntly. "I told Clive [Davis, head of CBS]. I sent a telegram. I told him he should get a black... he should use his sources all over the country and get a black man who thinks black to sell the music to black people, 'cos the white people seem to know about it. But everybody is scared to go into the black neighbourhood. Nobody gets up town, you know. And a lot of white musicians, they have friends up town. Shit, your record'll never get up there.

"See. I'm on the Columbia mailing list. I get a list and it's all white guys with long hair." He ran his hands down the side of his face – "and pretty faces, trying to show their muscles and their pricks and stuff. I mean what the f—— is that? I'm afraid to play the album, you know what I mean? I mean, it's great for white boys to say I'd like to look like that when I grow up, but what's the black boy gonna say?"

He leaned back against the sofa, as if he'd made up his mind on something. "No, no, I'm not getting into a discussion of white and black. I'm just saying that a Chinaman knows how to sell it, knows where it should go, but not me." He passed a hand wearily across his high forehead.

Did he feel exploited, then? "I've been exploited for 10 years, man." But he could still make 500,000 dollars at the end of every 12 months. "I don't even need it, man." He sounded very tired. "If I sweep your porch I'd get 15 dollars, but if I play trumpet on your porch it's a different thing." Silence.

Did this help to explain why when he was playing concerts, which usually have more whites than blacks, he turned his back on the audience?

"No, no, it has nothing to do with it." He stared very hard. Remember, his face was only a few inches from mine.

"What do you mean by turning my back on the audience?" His tone was very tart. "What should I do? Smile at 'em?" he asked witheringly.

"I just do what I feel like doing. I have the product. I can dance and all that shit, and box, but I do it when I feel like it. Listen, man, listen" – impatient – "when I step out on that stage I don't even see those people, I don't care where it is. I can't be looking at those people and thinking about what they think of me, here or any place else."

But it all contributed to his image.

"There is no image, man." He said the word as if he'd never heard of it before. "If I don't concentrate on what I'm doing and listen, I can't play the shit, and then they won't get anything. I mean, I can't be looking at some bitch, man, smiling and goin' on, even in my mind. If I did I'd take my horn down and go out and do that. Takes a lotta energy to play an instrument. I lose about four pounds." He laid the guitar aside and took out another of my cigarettes.

I decided to ask him again about his album. A young black guy, a dancer I later found out, was now in the room, listening to the Sony on the phones and now and then giving out a whoop. I mentioned to Miles his electric piano playing. He was hunched over the guitar again.

"Well, I only play to get the idea how it's supposed to go," he said slowly, "but it always turns out that my piano playing – I hate that word 'better' but... it brings out the band, and doesn't clutter up too much, either. When I play piano in my band they swing. When my piano player plays they swing sometimes, but they don't swing all the time. I don't worry about anything 'cos I have Reggie [Lucas, guitarist in Miles' electric band], y'know, the rhythm swings, but you have to watch a musician and anticipate it."

I could hear the percussion sound on the tape, a hard, chunky pulse. Out of the blue I asked him if he'd ever heard of the Japanese percussionist Stomu Yamashta. I told him he used about 40 percussion instruments on stage. He gave me that intimidating stare of his.

"What you askin' me for? He should be in a circus." The idea amused him. "Let him play on Christmas, and maybe Jesus'll come down."

Well, I had to laugh at that. Black humour is really, but really, the description for Miles.

I didn't get to hear any more of it. He'd decided the interview was finished. He had to go downstairs and rehearse with Liebman. He went into the bedroom and came out with a brown poncho; very slowly he pulled it over his head and buckled a belt around his middle. The dancer asked incredulously if he was going out. Miles said nothing. Just walked painfully down those stairs. Never said goodbye.

I put on my coat and talked to the dancer for a few minutes, took a last look around the dream home, and descended those stairs.

Miles hadn't left. He was standing against one to those Moroccan arches, a phone in his hand – one of those phones where the dial is set into the receiver. The fingers of his other hand were revolving the dial. He didn't look up as I spoke to him.

"Goodbye, it was good meeting you," I said.

He continued dialling. "Why?" he replied shortly.

I mumbled something, and, held out my hand. He grasped it in his. "I don't mean to be rude," he said tiredly. "It's just... I haven't slept for three days."

He still hadn't taken his eyes off the phone. *Michael Watts* •

# 1973

JANUARY–MARCH

A year after playing The *Dark Side Of The Moon* to selected journalists at London's Rainbow theatre, Pink Floyd are ready to unveil the recorded version

# Enormous... overwhelmingly impressive

**MM MAR 10** Pink Floyd premiere *The Dark Side Of The Moon* at London's Planetarium, although the band are present only in cardboard cut-out form.

**BEFORE THIS LITTLE** episode begins, may I just say that the finest album ever made was *Ummagumma*. To better it would be like attempting to redesign sunrise. Thank you.

On Tuesday morning I read my stars in the *Daily Mirror*, which for the third consecutive day told of travel to unusual places. Little did I know that it would be *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. The cabby seemed interested when we asked for the London Planetarium. Why, I don't know. It seemed an honest request for 8.30 at night.

"The stars are better there," I told him. "They ain't too bad above Oxford Street either," said cabbie. Shrewd bugger. The invitation to the reception at the Planetarium read:

8–8.40pm – reception, cocktails in the Arcade.

8.45–9.30 – The World Premiere of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, Pink Floyd album, beneath the stars of The Planetarium.

9.35–11pm – Dinner, hot buffet and amusements in The Arcade.

There were old boys with relics of World War I on their faces. They were wonderfully tolerant and cheerful as hordes of the London Freakery began to arrive. Coats were duly hung and we wandered in. It's virtually the same building as Madame Tussauds, so one met with signs like "Battle Of Trafalgar, turn right". But we turned left, and saw the hall packed with London reception goers, all drinking and nattering.

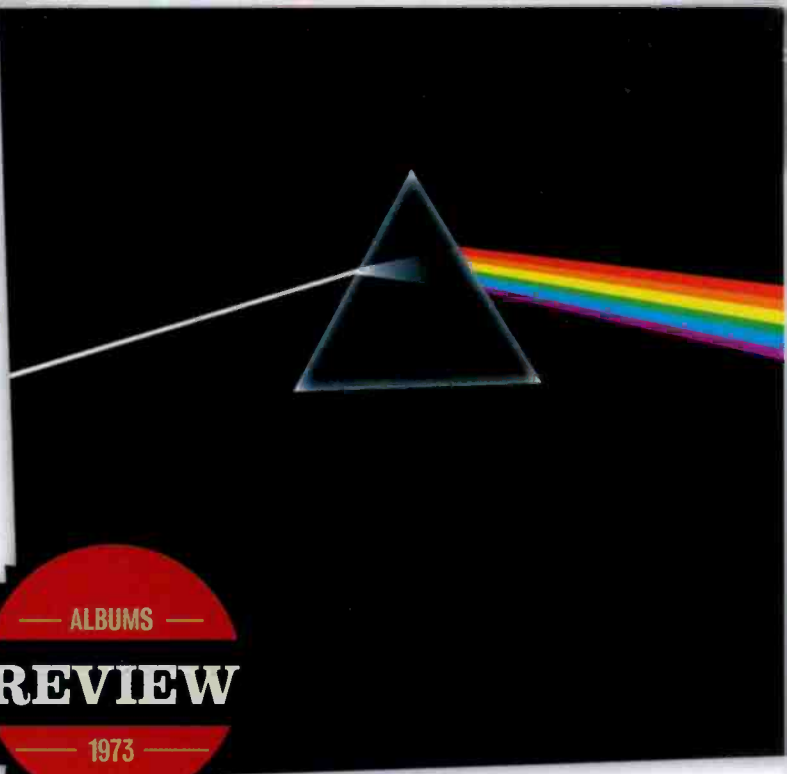
"Hello lovey, how you doin'?" "Fine, great. Did you see Johnny Maraccas last night? Wasn't he great?"... That sort of thing, for ages.

> **"It's like standing on the inside of a hollowed-out concrete egg"**

I'd noticed, before entering the Arcade, a large desk, and sat behind that large desk were life-sized cardboard cut-outs of Pink Floyd. "Nice to see the lads are here," I remarked.

It was rather surreal. There they sat, motionless, a normal habit with cardboard.

"Hi, haven't seen you for light years"... so went the conversation as people got into the Mother Earth/Starship Earth/Cosmic conversation pieces. Light ales later, we slouched upstairs past photos of Venus in springtime and total



ALBUMS REVIEW 1973

eclipses of Patrick Moore. Then the air became colder, and we walked into the chilly Planetarium.

It's rather like standing on the inside of a hollowed-out concrete egg. In the middle is this obscene sci-fi instrument, rather like a robot. It is this that creates the stars and their motions. Set about the circular room were vast speakers designed to give quadrophonic. They crackled.

The egg filled, and the lights dimmed. Laughter from one quarter. A bum pinched, no doubt.

And then it began. And it was indeed weird. *The Dark Side Of The Moon* – Pink Floyd. Nine months in the making.

**THE THICK THUMP,** the staggered bumping of a heartbeat filled the blackness, gaining in volume and intensity until it packed against your whole body. Such a glorious feeling.

That feeling of being immersed in music that is so very sacred to Floyd. The heartbeats faded to blend into a gushing stream of noise, and colour that split the room open, Imperial Floyd.

Black bag darkness gave way to the warmth of starlight as the Planetarium sky winked and twinkled into life.

"'Ere look, there's the Plough... And... and... there's the Bear," we were all quite moved. I was moved enough to fumble in the darkness for a light ale, smuggled in. It fell over.

Now as I say – it was all very moving, being slumped back in a chair surrounded by stars and heavy, dribbling, gurgling, rushing music... climaxes, and quiet periods, and fiddly bits.

There were a lot of fiddly bits, and as they fiddled onwards, they fiddled into nothing. Oh dear.

Yes, 10 minutes from blast-off the music became so utterly confused with itself that it was virtually impossible to follow. It wasn't just a case of that either.

It was becoming less and less attractive, and after 15 minutes diabolically uninteresting. This was a dreadfully disappointing moment, and only coloured by the fact that shooting stars appeared, and shot out of the room into Baker Street.

Over Notting Hill a squad of stars so intense with white light baffled winos lying in the gutters. And then, from the west in magnificent procession, came Patrick Moore, clothed in gold followed by a host of angels in white samite and Marks & Spencers tights. Patrick picked up a star-shaped guitar and jammed in the sky.

To the left, near the Post Office Tower skyline, 40 meteors sped across the sky. The sight was indeed amazing, but less amazing as the projectors showed the same movement eight times over – and Floyd fell into a jungle of nothing.

Quite a few people were beginning to chatter, and light cigarettes. A naughty thing to do.

You see, when you light a cigarette in the Planetarium a blinding light fills the hall when the match is struck – thus ruining every pattern in the sky.

A dozen fags were lit within seconds – and for a moment we were given insight into what 40 Heinkels could do over London. Flash... flash... flash... It was the Blitz.

And then, as people found more fun in being funny, the shape of a bunny rabbit appeared on one wall. This was done by holding a lighted match behind a hand and performing tricks with the fingers.

Later, after several other attempts at rabbits, I witnessed a swan in strangled flight, and a brace of doves. Then some enterprising fellow scooped the impromptu magic-lantern show with an enormous portrayal of a naughty thing.

**"One song in particular was extremely Sydbarrettsian"**

With Capricorn rising and hearts falling, the first side plunged to a halt. Oh, what a waste of wonderful talent. I mean, the heartbeat thing was just magnificent. Thought I was really going to witness another *Ummagumma* – something so incredible that you couldn't move or think of anything else while it was playing.

Mild applause greeted the completion of the first side, and the houselights were turned on to reveal a horde of faces. They looked slightly bored. They had every right to be. Cosmic Ripples and Spaceship Icebergs on sticks failed to arrive.

**THE LIGHTS DIMMED** again, and the sound of coins entering a cashbox, or telephone money box, pierced the air in rhythmic ways. Sonata for the cash-box, something like that, and it was good. It became more intense, clashy, and clangy, and spirited by God – as did the whole of Side Two. It was fabulous.

Although the Planetarium sky became increasingly boring – the music lifted, as did my head and heart. The songs, the sounds, the rhythms were solid and sound. Saxophone hit the air, and the band rocked and rolled, and then gushed, and tripped away into the night.

One song in particular was extremely Sydbarrettsian to the point of being a straight lift from any of The Lost Hero's songs.

Yes, Sydbarrettsian. A well-spoken lank voice, well echoed, and sad, with wonderfully obvious rhyming to the lyrics. Barrett still exists, you know, and it was pleasing that the best track on this album is 80 per cent-plus influenced by him. And I'll back that up in argument with anybody.

This track and what followed presented Floyd as Floyd should be, enormous, and massive, and overwhelmingly impressive. It was here that quadrophonic finally hit upon me. Here it became valid, and not some expensive toy.

I can assure you that, in stereo, Side Two is equally fabulous. The title track faded into the heartbeat, and the music left the room. I remember sitting, laying back, and breathing out. Nice one.

But whatever happened to Side One? Nine months in the making... And only one good side? But draw your own conclusions when you buy this album. Which you should do, 'cos like the Stones and The Beatles, the Floyd were also what was – and hopefully still is – all right.

*Roy Hollingworth*

# THE DARK SIDE OF THE FLOYD

**In which ROY HOLLINGWORTH gets a star-studded preview of Pink Floyd's new**

BEFORE this little episode begins, may I just say that the finest album ever made was "Ummagumma." To better it would be like attempting to re-design sun-

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A dozen fags were lit within seconds — and for a moment we were given

behind a hand, and performing tricks with the fingers.

Later, after several other attempts at rabbits, I witnessed a swan in strangled flight, and brace of doves. Then some enterprising fellow scooped the impromptu magic lantern show with an enormous portrayal of a naughty thing.

With Capricorn rising

**BOB DYLAN lands a part in Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*. In the Mexican desert and the skies above it, *MM* observes the process, and ultimately meets the man himself. "I would hope he would do his own film," says Rudy Wurlitzer. "Because he's an artist and he can't help it..."**

# "He's completely authentic"

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 3 —

**UNDER ANY OTHER** circumstances the remark wouldn't have been unusual. But today, riding this plane 20,000 feet above the Mexican desert, with these people, wow, the normality of it struck a freaky note.

The little guy with the pale, wispy beard and the worn black stovepipe hat, who had not spoken much to anybody these past few weeks, had sidled cautiously down the aisle of the aircraft and nudged me abruptly on the shoulder. The distant view of the mesas, like red, swollen welts, lying thousands of feet below, switched suddenly to a close-up of blue, almost translucent eyes.

"You with *Melody Maker*?" he demanded. Surprised nod. "Is Max Jones still working there?"

Max Jones? Yes, sure he was but... you remember!

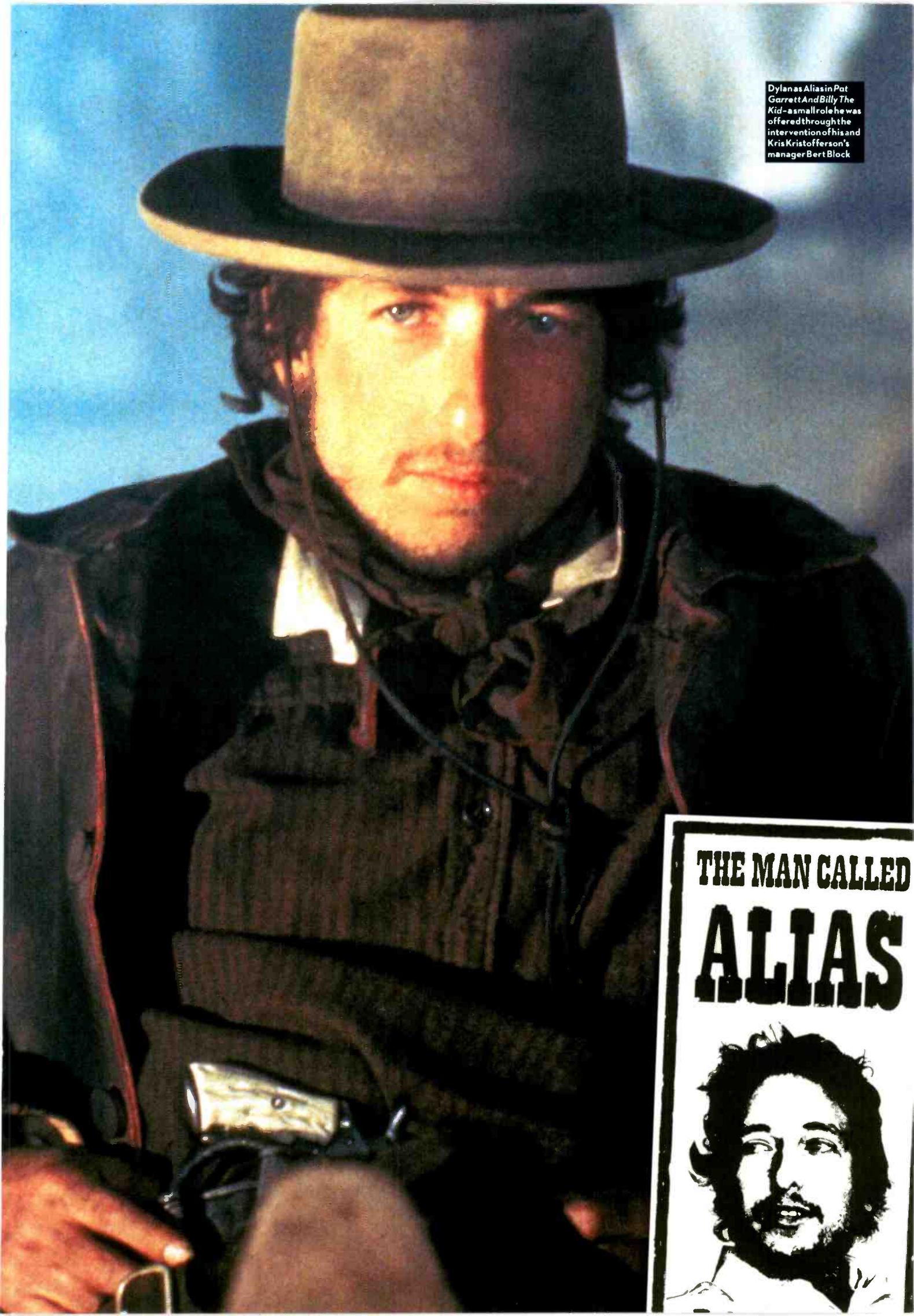
A slight, unsmiling inclination of the fuzzy, black-topped head leaning over the seat. It stretched back all of 10 years now to the time when this young folkie played the Royal Festival Hall. He was only a kid then, but he'd stayed at the swanky Mayfair Hotel. He drank beaujolais, wore jeans, boots and a leather jacket. He told everyone he wrote "finger-pointing" songs. He told Max Jones.

As a matter of fact, it had been the first time Bob Dylan was ever interviewed in Britain.

**RODOLFO THE GLASSES** knew all about Durango. He had carried my bags to the room on the fourth floor of the Camino Real Hotel, the most space-age in Mexico City, where the porters wore black capes printed with gold lozenges. Rodolfo was fussing with the curtains while waiting for his tip.

"Durango? Si, si." He pushed his dark glasses further back on his nose, a short, stocky Mexican, eager to please as always the Americanos. "Very, very hot, very dry." His hands moved like butterflies. "Make lots of films there." A pause. He brightens. "You go for film?" »

MGM / KOBAL




Dylan as Alias in *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid* – a small role he was offered through the intervention of his and Kris Kristofferson's manager Bert Block

Director Sam Peckinpah gives Dylan direction on set in Durango, Mexico

REX FEATURES

Sam Peckinpah, I muttered. "Sam Peckinpah!" he burst out. "Sam, he my friend!" It was as if the name of his own father had been invoked. "He stay here. Great man – he drinks, drinks mucho." He put one hand to his lips and tilted back an imaginary glass, then shook his head in pure delight. I slipped the coins into his free hand.

"Thank you, señor. Muchas gracias." He moved away. "Tell him, when you see him," he said, closing the door, "you saw Rodolfo." He pointed to his eyes. "He remember the glasses." I could hear the faint chuckle as he disappeared down the corridor.

Sam Peckinpah! The terrible, if no longer the enfant, of Hollywood, the apostle of ultra-violence, even before Kubrick, the director of *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*, the boozer, the wildman, the misogynist – that devil. In these times of spoof Westerns, Westerns à la Warhol, neo-realism Westerns, anything-to-be-different Westerns, Peckinpah remained a hardliner in his attitudes towards how cowboy movies should be made. He believed in physicality and hardcore action, adhering to the myth of the Western but intent at the same time to dirty it up, to show some of the scabby underbelly. His pictures were made for men, just as surely as he was a man's man, and his tough outlook on both life and movies had spun a cult around him that had not been achieved without mishaps along the way.

After his first two pictures, *The Deadly Companions* and *Ride The High Country*, he had made *Major Dundee* in 1964 with Charlton Heston, but the producer, Jerry Wexler (of Atlantic Records fame), had it re-edited.

He then went through a period of disillusionment. The producer of *The Cincinnati Kid*, Martin Ransohoff, sacked him, he lost a lot of dough, went in for hard drinking, and had wife trouble (he's twice married and divorced his Mexican wife, Begonia, and wedded the middle of last year a 29-year-old blonde, English secretary, Joie, whom he met in Twickenham while in England for the shooting of *Straw Dogs*).

Then, after a period in television, he made *The Wild Bunch* with William Holden, which capitalised in a tremendously successful fashion on the atmosphere of acceptable violence that was permeating motion pictures.

It turned around his ailing reputation at the same time that his slow-motion depiction of carnage made him the controversial eye of a critical whirlpool surrounding his bloody permissiveness. "I want to rub their noses in violence," he told *Time* magazine. "I regard all men as violent, including myself." He had gone on to direct *Dogs* with Dustin Hoffman and Junior Bonner and *The Getaway* with Steve McQueen, all of which delineated further his buckets-of-blood approach to movie-making.

But now! No film of his had whipped up so much pre-release speculation as the present one, *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*, not so much because of him this time or his celluloid theories, but because of a certain "actor". I mean, James Coburn had done scores of films, like *The Magnificent Seven*, and Jason Robards Jr was in Peckinpah's *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*, and Kris Kristofferson might be a famous folksinger but he'd also acted already in two movies, *Cisco Pike* and *Blume In Love* (with George Segal: to be released in May).

But Bob Dylan! Bob Dylan and Sam Peckinpah! At first glance it was old America meeting the new, the traditionalist values of the West encountering the pop surrealism of the East. It was a symbolic meeting of two vastly different generations, of two attitudes to life. It was all this, but more. Beneath the skin depth lay other meanings.

**FOR PECKINPAH, THE** inclusion in his movie of Dylan, and to a lesser extent Kristofferson (whose lifestyle may be rock but who has much of the traditional about him), represents a mellowed acceptance of the youth culture and its totems, a phenomenon to which he has been totally deaf in his past work.

Doubtless he has been somewhat persuaded by their box-office appeal to the rock generation, which MGM studios, his financiers, will have pointed out.

But to Dylan the role is of much more momentous importance. He is the ageing and long-appointed prophet, who has grown old and increasingly distant in a role which for years has held for him no relevance yet which seems effectively to have constrained his talents.

It is more than two years since he made his last album, *New Morning*, and there are apparently no plans for another solo venture; his contract with Columbia Records has run out, although he can't deliver an album to another company unless he wishes to forego huge royalties CBS are holding. He has constantly intimated to friends that he is tired of the music business, that he has no desire to play live any more, and he takes little active part in it, except on a casual basis when he appears on the albums of friends like Doug Sahm and Steve Goodman.

Moreover, he has been away too long now to return to the heart of the action with the same pertinence as before, even if he wished to. And, as Grossman astutely realised, his past performances were so often uneven, anyway, as to necessitate them being infrequent.

He is Bob Dylan. But who is Bob Dylan? As the myth of the musician and the generational symbol rises like creeping fog, he casts about for some direction, for a new purpose in it all.

He sees other pre-eminent musicians, like Lennon and Jagger, involved in movies. An old mentor is Andy Warhol. While down in Mexico a newer friend, Kris Kristofferson, is making a film. About Billy The Kid.

Billy The Kid! Whatever the nature of fact, Billy The Kid is part of American legend. As was John Wesley Hardin (g), and him he knows about, from the past, from an idea he once used. Down in Durango, Mexico, visiting Kristofferson on the set, he writes this song about Billy and plays it to the cast. It only follows that he should get a role in his first full feature film.

He got the part, in fact, through a combination of circumstances precipitated by Bert Block, Kristofferson's manager. Block, an old music pro who at one time managed Billie Holiday, was the guy who looked after the arrangements when he played the Isle Of Wight. He's the nearest thing Dylan has had to a business manager since he let his contract to Grossman expire (Grossman and Block were partners for a while, indeed, and handled Janis Joplin together).

Block mentioned to Dylan that Kristofferson was in a movie and suggested it to him, as well. He also spoke to Gordon Carroll, the producer, who was delighted at the proposition. Dylan had talks with Rudy Wurlitzer, the screenplay writer, and went to a private screening of *The Wild Bunch*. He was sceptical of the project at first. He only intended to see one reel. But then it stretched to three, to four... Dylan came out of MGM's theatre with a celluloid monkey riding on his back.

He was fascinated with the idea of a movie part as much as he was daunted by his feeling of inadequacy towards doing it. Before, there had only been documentaries. And Peckinpah was a frightening genius!

But he went down with Bert to Mexico to exorcise his doubts. The first night, they dined at Peckinpah's house on a meal of roast goat. Then he was shown around the set. He was particularly captivated by the wardrobe of Western clothes, trying on the hats and costumes like a kid dressing for a fancy-dress party.

He looked around for a while, and then, on that second day, quietly picked up a guitar and sang to Kris and Coburn and Peckinpah this song he'd made up called "Billy The Kid." Peckinpah offered him a part there and then. It's a small part as one of Billy's sidekicks, but it would have been expanded any time he wished. The fact that he hasn't asked illustrates his tentativeness. He plays, with the most fitting of poetic justices, the part of Alias.

In the public life of the musician, he is the man of uncertain identity. In the movies he is the man with no name. He continues to play the game of "famiousity", as he once called it. But he may well have found that new direction which has been eluding him. People on the film say he would like to continue the part of Alias in succeeding movies, jokily preserving that anonymity.

In a sense Dylan is like Brando. The one is to the '60s what the other was to the '50s: a representation of their style and mood. In the late '60s, however, the charisma of both of them began to erode a little. They began to go out of fashion and the criticisms increased about their performances, the one in films, the other in records.

The difference is that Brando has recently sought, and successfully achieved, his rejuvenation, with *The Godfather* and now *Last Tango In Paris*. Dylan is still in the process. This movie is an enormous step in switching media to test the viability of his talent, not necessarily in transforming him into an actor but more in enabling him to ascertain for himself his filmic sense. It's a training ground for a possible directorial debut.

When I arrived in Durango, he had been there for three months since November 23. He had with him his wife, Sara, five kids and Rover the dog. She had taken the children to Yucatan, a neighbouring state whose inhabitants, direct descendants of the Maya Indians, like to think of themselves as a separate entity from the rest of Mexico. They have a daughter, Maria, aged 11, and their eldest son is Jesse Byron, who's seven and reputedly something of a wild kid.

Maggie Netter, an MGM publicist, said she went riding with the boy on Sundays. "He's so intelligent! They all are. But they let them run wild, they don't look after them especially. They just let them do what they want. If they're going home they tell someone to bring the kids back with them, so they're always around people."

Wandering around Durango, in fact, and finding myself in one of the many banks, I came upon a Texan schoolmaster who was teaching at an American school there. Jesse was one of his pupils for a month. This Texan was large-boned, wore a red, V-necked sweater and horn rims, and had an accent like the twang of a plucked bow-string.

"You must've taken the wrong turning somewhere," he smiled pleasantly after the introductions and waved his hand generally at the town. The movie was mentioned. "I s'pose you're out here then for Bob Die-lan," he twanged, and then remarked about teaching Dylan's kid. The way he said it reminded me of 10 years ago when no one in England seemed to know how to pronounce the name correctly.

I asked about the kid. He just gave a slow, Texan smile and muttered something inconsequential. Then I changed the subject and asked how people amused themselves in this place at night. Dull wasn't a strong enough word for my initial impression of Durango.

He looked at his companion, another schoolteacher, a Mexican woman in glasses, and said, "How do we amuse ourselves, Juanita?" and she shrugged her shoulders and smiled, and he smiled again. I couldn't guess what there was to smile about so much in this one-boss city.

> Dylan was trying on hats and costumes like a kid dressing up

**DURANGO IS, INDEED,** a city, the capital of the state of Durango. It has the highest homicide rate in Mexico. A hundred and sixty thousand people live there, digging out gold, silver or iron (particularly) from the mines, or else working in the numerous small stores that serve the community.

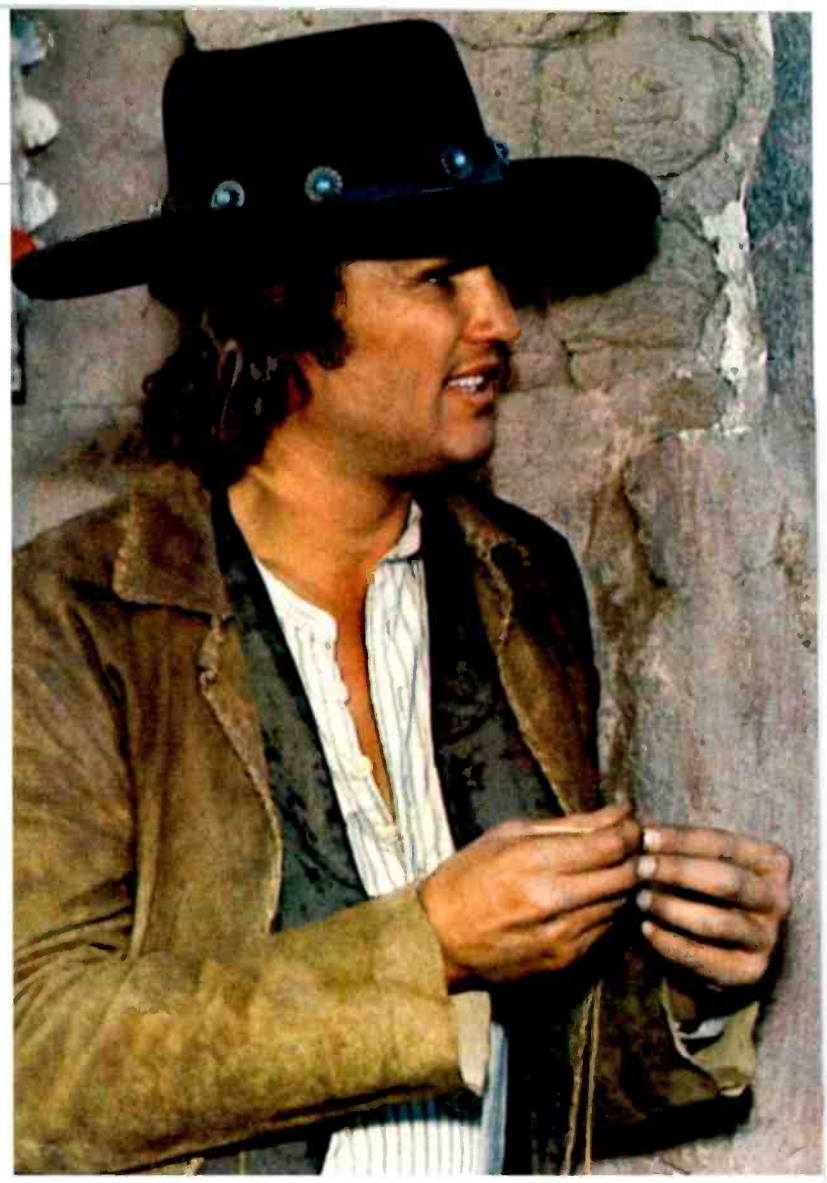
It seems incredible that there can be so many human beings cast out into this arid wilderness, 600 miles nor' nor' west of Mexico City, fringed by the Sierra Madre range that from the only plane flying daily from the capital, the 6.45am, is like a series of grey-red hummocks under a thin blanket of mist.

But beautiful, yes. You step out onto the tarmac from the plane, which is always full, and the pale red stripes of dawn have now dissolved into the horizon, and the spicy January air is like a cold douche, and you become suddenly aware of all these people, these kids, with eyes that are eating up this huge metal thing which has dropped once again out of the skies, and you know it's a cliche but you find yourself wondering about their thoughts. What's it like out there, beyond the mountains?

An odd feeling for the traveller, because if you believe the books, something like this happened long before, aeons ago, when the gods descended from spaceships among the Mayas and the other primitive Indian tribes and told them to build pyramids and roads, to be the cradle of civilisation, and... hell, if God was an astronaut and felt as bleary as me this January morning he'd get his blue ass back onto that thing and light out for Los Angeles, a thousand miles north, because in the year of our Lord 1973 there seemed precious little here to do.

The city of Durango is a wide, two-lane highway, shimmering metallically in a haze of heat and dust as the sun winches upwards, with numerous smaller roads intersecting off it. It is pale, stucco churches, and banks, and a huge square flanked by finely clipped yews. It is the Old World and it is the New. The little shoe-shine boy at the pavement's edge puts spirit on the toecap of his customer's shoe and lights a match, pausing an instant while the flame spurts before applying his rag.

While next door, almost, there is a massive supermarket, the Soriana, larger than any I've seen in the States, which could supply the whole populace. The wire shopping trolleys outside the window are serried ranks, poised to trundle into action. »



But most of all it is Hollywood – it is the myth of the Western movie made flesh there amid the vista of cacti, scrub, old lava stones and brown, rolling plains. Today in these parts God is not an astronaut, he is a cowboy, who rides into town on that plane for a couple of months and shoots his motion pitcher, for which you're paid so many pesos a day as an extra.

In the office of the best hotel in town, the Campo Mexico, one of the three there, which consists of a number of one-storey rooms slung together in a wide semi-circle, are hung signed portraits of the stars who've made movies in this area: "Hasta la vista – Glenn Ford"; "Many thanks – Kirk Douglas"; "Best Wishes – John Wayne". Wayne, he even has his own spread outside of town where he makes films. In fact, he'd only just left. It would have made a great picture for that wall, him and Sam, and Jim Coburn, and Kris, and... Bobby Dylan.

Dylan and the other leading figures in the movie have their own houses close to each other in Durango. Maggie tells me this as we drive out this Saturday morning for the location site, El Sauz, which is about 20 to 30 minutes from the Campo Mexico. She also informs me that Dylan is "very strange" and if I'm looking to speak to him... she smiles very prettily but adamantly. It seems there are strict instructions that his privacy be not so much as tampered with.

Expressly no cameras, except for the stills photographer and John Bryson, a former *Life* picture editor and old friend of Sam's, who was given a chunky role in *The Getaway*.

Maggie says Dylan talks to no one, unless he wishes to. Like, he's a big friend of Kristofferson, they share a trailer together on the site, but some days he won't speak to him at all. He's the same with everyone. "It's not just that he's picking on you, but he's..." she searches for the right adjective. "He's just rude." Ah! The mucho misterioso quality.

They all tell me the same – "Dylan? Forget it? He won't talk." Casually mention his name in a conversation and a veil of protectiveness descends. He's like an ever-present wisp of ectoplasm floating in the consciousness of all these assembled people, a thing intangible which needs to be preserved from the prying outside in case it blows away.

But it's not simply that no one wants to be the person to reveal anything. No one is sure if they have anything to reveal! They're uncertain about their own reactions to him, and even more, what their reactions should be. One minute he's the breathless myth, set down exotically in the land of Quetzalcoatl, the next he's just a guy, working on a movie like the rest of us, isn't he? Isn't he? About the only thing they are sure of is they're not gonna say too much, just in case.

**IT WAS EERIE,** those first few moments of arriving on set. The car pulls into a large open space in front of the preserves of a big, crumbling stone building, which was constructed as a cavalry fort some hundred years ago and now renamed Fort Sumner.

Dotted around are a few smaller ruins – walls, mostly, that have long since ceased to support houses. The skull of a dead cow shines bone-white by a gate. And a Mexican is propping up a long pole with a red flag hanging stiffly at its mast and a white one trailing in the dirt. Red meant shooting was in progress.

It was extraordinary the effect this pole had on people. As soon as that red rag poked up into the cloudless sky everyone's conversation fell to a dead whisper, mouths were in suction with ears, and footsteps were as timid as if the slightest noise would precipitate a wrathful earthquake – which it would, as we shall see.

There must have been 200 or more people – actors, Mexican extras, film people, men, women and kids – wrapped up in these mute, stony poses, or else gliding in concentrated slow-motion in and around the old lumps of stone that once rang to the sounds of army life.

A silent frieze, while the birds twittered, horses snuffled in the pens inside the fort, and a couple of vultures wheeled obscenely in the sky. Here was the true conspiracy of the silence. It was broken by the only man who held the right. In one of the fort buildings, its blank windows shielded in black backdrops, Peckinpah was shooting and rehearsing his actors. He was out of sight, but the authority in the voice left no doubt as to its identity.

Coburn appeared, a lean, handsome face with greying hair. He was wearing a Mexican coat in coloured patterns over a black vest and pants, and a black hat was perched on his head. He walked out the door three times, on each occasion using the same movements and talking behind his shoulder as he did so. "Right, like this, you say. Like this?"

And then Kristofferson. His face orange-brown with makeup and, minus his beard, looking about 10 years younger. He was rangy in his dark, faded pin-stripes with the gun hanging off his hip. Sheriff Pat Garrett and Billy The Kid. Meet the stars of the show.

And finally Sam Peckinpah came out. Not as tall or as big as you might have expected, but fierce, like an old, bristling lion, with a thick, white moustache and hair of the same colour wrapped round at the forehead with a green bandana.

He was the ferocious Anglo-Indian major of all those Kipling stories, leading his men over the Khyber Pass, sword in hand and a curse on his lips. It was easy to see why he scares the shit out of all and sundry.

He walked out the door and spat dramatically in the dirt. There was a loud phut! as the spittle hit and settled.

Later, when the scene was over and the white flag was up, I met Rudy Wurlitzer. He was the 36-year-old author of three novels, one of which, *Nog*, has achieved cult status in England and America. He was also the writer of the screenplay for the James Taylor vehicle, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, never shown in Britain.

And now this movie. Wurlitzer was involved in this one as an actor, as well. He played another of Billy's gang. To this end his tall body was


ALLSTAR/MGM

Kris Kristofferson as outlaw Billy The Kid and Bob Dylan as his sidekick Alias in *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*

dressed in cruddy clothes and leather chaps, he had makeup like Clearasil smeared all over his face, and a battered top hat sat on his head. In his hand he twirled a Colt. He looked a real mean dude.

In reality he wasn't too happy, I learned, as weren't a good many on this film. It was two weeks overdue and a million dollars over budget, largely through technical problems; almost a fortnight's filming had been spoiled because the cameras were found to be out of focus.

Peckinpah was always in a huddle with the producer, Gordon Carroll, a tall, thin, snappy-looking man with light glasses. They were worried. The studios had sent down three executives already from Culver City to investigate the reasons for the late schedule. Peckinpah hated the studios with as much venom but more realistic cause than was contained in that gob of spit. He felt betrayed by them.

And then, as if that wasn't enough, there was always Durango. Godddddddd. Durango! The soullessness of the place, the boredom! The frustration of nothing to do, nothing to occupy the mind beyond memorising lines and that day's shooting, lay like an implacable, heavy hand over the set.

"Durango... it's a strange, dark place to make a film," Wurlitzer said. "Everyone gets so exposed." He whispered the last sentence.

We were sitting in one of the outhouses, which had been roughly converted into a canteen for the crew. Outside they were shooting again. The voices came softly on the afternoon breeze.

This and *Two-Lane Blacktop*, he muttered morosely, were both horrible movies to work on, but in different ways. At the memory of the one he shook his head.

"James Taylor wasn't given a chance, no chance at all. He got no direction from Monte Hellman [the director] at all, which was what he desperately needed. *Two-Lane Blacktop* was a better movie than people thought, but it forgot about two essentials: the road and speed. Monte didn't have too much strength to get it on. The original script was a little too original in a way.

"There's no doubt this is a better film, even if it turns out to be one of Sam's worst, because it has energy. What Sam does to language, for instance... he makes it more theatrical because he's innately theatrical. It's like he's almost old-fashioned in what is the most effective. He imposed three scenes in the beginning on my script so that it works better from a film point of view. In my version, Pat and Billy never meet until the end. Here they do so at the beginning and the end."

To him, he explained, Pat and Billy were two gunmen who essentially felt a kinship but had chosen two diametrically opposed roles in life, the former as a sheriff, the latter as an outlaw. Thus they were symbols of a changing America in the last century: the one a roving free spirit, symbolising the pioneer nature of the Old West; the other selling out to the establishment for a steady job and security, representing, therefore, the solidifying respectability of the new America.

And Dylan?

"Dylan is great," Wurlitzer whispered without any hesitation. "He's come down here to learn, he's turning in stuff, and it's been really impressive. I think he's completely authentic. No, I don't know what he really wants to do, but I would hope he would do his own film because he's an artist and he can't help it. He's just finding out about films."

Dylan and Peckinpah? He cocked an eye at me. "That's the really interesting thing," he replied thoughtfully, "what's going on between Peckinpah and Dylan. Sam is really Western, like an outlaw, looking to the wide-open spaces, and he didn't know about Dylan before. Dylan, you could say, was Eastern. He brings a different point of view, especially to a Western. The part is small but it's important in a funny sort of way. Do the two of them have any common ground to meet on – that's the big question."

Dylan, I'd been told, played the part with a stutter. "Yes, but it will have to be taken out. It becomes too much of a big thing if you only have a small part, and..."

> "It's a strange, dark place to make a film. Everyone gets so exposed"

Outside, where there had been almost total silence except for faint, inaudible words, there now came a sudden, angry bark and a command like a grating snarl.

"Get outta that truck," it rapped with terrifying evenness. And then higher. "Get out! All of you!! Over there, behind the wall!" There was a pause and then the rapid sound of many feet, and then quiet again.

A crew member tip-toed into the canteen with a ferocious grin on his face.

"He's the only person that can clear all the people outta one country just to make a fucking pitcher," he breathed gleefully. There had been too much noise for Peckinpah.

They love Sam and they hate him. "He's always gentle with his actors. He only bawls out one or two who know him well and have worked a lot with him before."

We were talking on the nightly plane from Durango back to Mexico City. He and all the other leading actors and members of his band were flying out for the rest of the weekend. It was Saturday evening. The final of the American World Series football championship was being televised on Sunday afternoon – there were no televisions in Durango. And Dylan was going to record with Kris' band that night at Columbia's studios in Mexico City.

I sat across the aisle from Kristofferson and we cradled a bottle of Jameson's between us. On his other side was Rita Coolidge, who plays one of Billy's ladies in the film, as in real life. Her black hair was still pulled back into twin braids and she wore the rough, grey-patterned wool coat that costumes had given her, while Kristofferson was still in his movie duds; everyone had had to make a dash for the plane. Leaning across the gangway, shouting above the noise of the engines, I was close enough to observe his pale blue eyes, which seem oddly sightless, swim a little with the effect of the whisky.

And there, in the seat right behind him, was a little guy from Minnesota named Bob Dylan. I had seen him fleetingly on the set that day. He had been wearing a serape and an old grey top hat, but as he wasn't filming »

he flitted occasionally around the outskirts of the location, saying a few words to the odd people he knew well enough but generally mute-faced and unsmiling.

He looked skittery and ill-at-ease, and people seemed to avoid confronting him, as if the moment might be too charged with electricity. But it was so obviously him! That face the colour of sour milk, and the full sensuous nose, and the whole appearance of him that was nondescript at the same time that it was illuminated with the magnitude of him and our experiences of him.

He was a whole era of youth coiled into one man and now slowly winding down into the years past 30, and the consciousness of this had escaped no one, least of all him, with his eyes set straight and stonily to the front lest he be forced to pick up those curious sidelong glances, as a magnet does iron filings.

Even on this plane his inviolacy was to be preserved to the full. He'd boarded with James Coburn and as they walked down the aisle together a seated passenger had asked for an autograph... from Coburn.

He hadn't been recognised in his rimless glasses, baggy beige parka and straw hat. But then, as the plane was taking off and I began to speak to Kristofferson, he got up jumpily from his seat and went to sit at the back.

We had begun to climb as he reluctantly dumped himself down again behind Kristofferson and next to Wurlitzer. He pulled his hat down right over the front of his face, which was odd because his body was rigidly upright in the seat, cocked and attentive.

We were touching down into Mexico City, with the Irish stuff two-thirds gone, and had had all the stories about his last English tour, his old landlady in Oxford, and his ups and downs with Rita at the time, when Kristofferson's head came halfway across the gangway again and motioned behind him. He had just offered the bottle to Dylan, who had waved it away.

"Listen," he said, "this guy can do anything. In the script he has to throw a knife. It's real difficult. After 10 minutes or so he could do it perfect."

He leaned over further. "Listen, he does things you never thought was in him. He can play Spanish-style, bossa nova, flamenco... One night he was playing flamenco and his old lady, Sara, had never known him do it at all before."

I looked back at the crown of the straw hat in uncompromising full-frontal. I said I was scared to talk to the man right now.

"Sheeeeit, man!" Kristofferson roared. "You're scared. I'm scared, and I'm making a pitcher with him!"

I began to feel more than ever like the lead in "Ballad Of A Thin Man".

**THEY RECORDED UNTIL** 7am the following morning on Dylan's "Billy The Kid" and some other stuff he'd written down there in Durango. Nobody knew if the material would be the basis of the movie soundtrack, or if Kristofferson's own song, "Pat Garrett," would be included, but a good deal of it was instrumental and it featured some local trumpet men to give a Mexican flavour.

Yet Jesus! It was so awkward with all those people in there, all those Mexican studio men come to see Bob Dylan play and sing. It began to be apparent that the stuff would have to be redone, maybe in LA after the movie.

The following day, though, it was Sunday, and in the afternoon practically everybody went over to the Fiesta Palace Hotel, where a suite had been booked, to see the Miami Dolphins beat up the Washington Redskins.

The Sheraton Hotel, where they were all staying, hadn't got television, either. The hotel was always full of Americans and they never usually wanted to see Mexican television, which was filled out with the starch of Yankee series, like *The FBI* and *McCloud*, only in Spanish and soccer. Soccer, for God's sake!

In room 734 Dylan slept deeply. He was still asleep when the maid came to the door and said it was 10 o'clock. Ten o'clock! No, it couldn't be! He'd missed that plane back to Durango, and it was his big scene today, where he got to throw the knife he'd been practising with!

He slung all his stuff in a carpet bag and flung himself down to the lobby, his eyes still popping like a camera shutter, just adjusting to being awake, to all these people down at reception, to the actual time it was! And then they tell him it's OK anyway, and it's really 10 at night, and he needn't have worried at all. He shook his head in relief.

There was no problem in making that plane the next Monday morning. He passed through Gate Four, the exit for Durango, and again nobody showed any sign of recognition. At least, they didn't ask for his autograph. But then, nobody wanted to talk too much at 6.30am, except, it seemed, Coburn and Wurlitzer, who were deep in conversation about the former's part.

Kristofferson was looking a little groggy. He'd been ill over the weekend. Probably that damned Irish whiskey. He'd been smashed when he left the airport that Saturday evening. Hadn't stayed for the whole session, either.

Bobby got on the plane when they called the flight and sat towards the back where there were a few empty seats around him. Kris and Rita were right down the other end on the very front row.

About three-quarters of an hour out from Mexico City he saw the newspaper guy get up out of his seat, walk down to Kristofferson and crouch down to him, talking. This is part of what Kristofferson was saying. "...I was just disgusted with him. He'd start a song and then just keep changing it around. He had horn players, trumpets, and they didn't know a damn thing what they had to do 'cos he couldn't make up his mind. I left about three." He said this very tiredly, then answered the question he'd been asked. "No, we haven't spoken today."

Dylan saw all this, he saw the guy go back to his seat, and then he spoke to Bert Block about the newspaper he worked for. That was when he spoke to me; I guess you could say I was startled.

**DYLAN TALKS IN** this light, soft voice with a husk to it, and he has this disconcerting habit of forcing you to lead the conversation. He takes another person's sentence, chops it up in his mind, tosses it into the air and examines it when it falls, all before replying, so there are often a long couple of seconds before the answer comes; it's an unnatural limbo. It's not that he's unfriendly, but he's guarded and watchful to the point where conversation with strangers

Alias plays guitar to a group of Mexican children just before defending Billy The Kid with some handy knifework

ALLSTAR/MGM


appears onerous for him. He is also terribly shy, which he largely masks by an air of alienation he throws around him, like an enveloping cloak with a built-in burglar alarm. It's because, beneath all the layers of the onion, there lurks a deep vulnerability; people instinctively feel protective towards him and are inspired to unsolicited loyalty, as if to say anything out of turn would not only betray a confidence, however unspoken, but would be bruising for him.

He doesn't smile too much and publicly he laughs more rarely. His public persona never falters. Even those who could be considered friends are not privileged to many intimacies. He may be the loneliest man in the world or he may be the happiest. There is no way of telling.

Those who have known him since his early New York folk days say he has mellowed, but in so becoming he now holds the world at a distance and interacts with it from a detached position on his terms. All that may fairly be said is that those who count themselves among his friends, or even good acquaintances, prize their situation dearly.

Dylan talked to *Playboy* about his desire for anonymity back in 1966.

"People have one great blessing," he said, "obscurity, and not really too many people are thankful for it. You can't take everything you don't like as a personal insult. I guess you should go where your wants are bare, where you're invisible and not needed."

Considering all this attitudinising, our conversation was prosaic enough. He did say, most interestingly, that he had been in England quite recently for a few days ("The clothes are different since last time"). We spoke for five minutes. Then I glanced out the window briefly, turned back, and he was gone.

But disembarking from the plane, while everyone waited at tiny Durango airport for their baggage to be taken off, I found him at the bar, sipping a cup of coffee and engrossed with a camera belonging to CBS records executive Michael O'Mahoney, asking normal stuff like what lens it had. This was almost eight in the morning.

It's not happening in London, I said, apropos a remark I made on the plane. New York's the place...

"That's what John Lennon says." Focusing the lens.

I saw *Eat The Document* there at the Whitney.

Pauses, returns the camera to O'Mahoney, and looks directly at me.

"Do you know Howard [Alk, who co-edited the film with Dylan]?"

No. Was it originally like *Don't Look Back* before it was re-edited?

"No, it couldn't be. We didn't have enough good footage. There was 40 hours of it, but the camera was jumping around all the time. That was the only stuff we could salvage."

Would you go back and play in England ever?

Silence. He turned three-quarters and carefully placed his cup on the counter. There was no answer. Instead, taking off at a sudden tangent, "Did you see [Yoko Ono film] *Fly*?"

You mean the one about the fly crawling up the wall for half an hour? No. All three of us laughed, the first time I'd seen him do so.

"Did you see *Hard On*?" he asked suddenly.

Huh?

"*Hard On*?"

No, but I saw *Rape*. You know, the one with that girl being chased.

He nodded.

Andy Warhol was making movies like that years ago. *Empire*, all those shadows. I prefer the stuff with Morrissey, actually, I said. I was trying not to sound smug.

He nodded again, then: "Did you see *Lonesome Cowboys*?"

No, but I saw *Heat*. It was getting to be quite funny. Every time he asked me he looked so intense. Sylvia Miles.

"Yeah." Silence once more.

Tell me, how can you stand it down here?

"It's not too bad because I'm making a film. If I wasn't..." The sentence was chopped off because the producer, who was fidgeting all this time like an old hen over her chick, had come up and told him he could get into the car.

The next time I saw Dylan was on the set later that day, and he was locked tight once more behind his stoniness.

> "Listen, he can play Spanish-style, bossa nova, flamenco..."

**I WENT OUT TO** El Sauz around one that afternoon, when the sun was cutting through the thinness of the desert air and the horizons were as sharp and concentrated as if focused through a lens.

This time nerves on the set were so jagged you could run a finger along their psychic edge. There was the same pregnant hush as two days ago, but it was even more intensified; as if everyone were holding in their breath in some giant expectation. It was the fascination of peering through a microscope, of seeing Dylan put through his paces in a crucial scene.

The shooting was out in the open, with six huge silver reflectors tilted on high above the scene. Peckinpah sat in his canvas director's chair by the camera. Emilio Fernandez, the famous Mexican director, was an onlooker. Before each take there was an abrupt cry of "*Silenzio*!" repeated twice to cut dead any lingering conversation.

As the scene was shot again and again the tension was alternately cranked and then relaxed momentarily, so that with each successive time it became tighter and increasingly insufferable. I wanted to snap it violently, like severing a taut string, to let out all that constricted breath in a great explosion of air.

As the cameras rolled, Dylan was sitting on a chair surrounded by half a dozen ragged Mexican kids. He was strumming an acoustic, wearing a brown shirt, black pants and a grey top hat. On the far right of the scene, a cowboy was leaning on his horse. Billy The Kid and half a dozen of his gang were around a campfire on the left, nearest camera.

One of this gang, Harry D Stanton, dressed in black with an old, greasy hat of the same colour, sat on a fence and shouted out, "Hey Chita, bring some beans, soup and tortillas, and be quick about it," and out from left comes this young Mexican serving wench carrying the chow, accompanied by Rita as another peasant chick. There's a lot of laughing and tomfoolery, with Kristofferson's voice striking a resonant bass note.

It's then that Dylan rises. He's playing nervously with a knife, turning it round in his hand. The jitters seem genuine. He walks a dozen paces towards the campfire as the cowboy on the horse shouts after him, "Hey, boy, what's your name?" like he was a piece of dirt, and then he stops and faces round with the knife in his hand.

"Alias," he replies shortly. His body twitches a little. The knife taps against his leg.

"Alias what?" barks the horseman, the second word like the snake of a whiplash.

"Alias anything you please," comes the rejoinder. Tough punk stuff. The gang laughs.

"They just call him Alias," says the one. His interrogator grunts.

There's the sound of muttering – and then suddenly, in a flash-point that takes you by surprise, Dylan's right arm arcs back with the knife, and not the horseman but a seated outlaw gargles in the back of his throat and is knocked on his side with the force of the knife supposedly sticking through his neck. The moment still seems unexpected even after the sixth take.

"Cut," says Peckinpah.

"Aaaaaaaah!" goes all that escaping air, in relief. "Print it," grins Bert Block. The tableau of watchers and watched dissolves for another five minutes.

Print it! This is Bob Dylan, throwing a knife in a Sam Peckinpah movie, would you believe! It's ironic. He leaves society at large as some kind of generational leader, a musical messiah, and returns years later as an actor playing a small role in a movie – yet already the film, before it's been finished even, sets us agog with speculation.

The questions mount. Will Dylan really turn away from music to concentrate more on films? Will he start making records again on a more regular basis now he's been drawn once more into a kind of public performance? Could he ever return to doing concerts? The only answer that is really ascertainable is his acting ability, which will be on the line when this movie comes out some time after May. But even then there will be arguments about his performance, about its meaning.

He's unwavering, however, in his refusal to relinquish any part of his private self to his public, and this seems destined to continue. You ask who is Bob Dylan? He is Alias, Alias whatever you want. *Michael Watts* •

# "I get happier all the time"

**CAPTAIN BEEFHEART wrote his new album in two hours, driving between Harvard and Yale. Could *Clear Spot* finally be his commercial breakthrough? "It's my love album," he confides. "It's for all women." But what will Beefheart say to George Best?**

— NME MARCH 17 —

WHEN IN ALL seriousness, Captain Beefheart describes Muhammad Ali as his favourite percussionist and talks of him being "probably one of the greatest living musicians", he isn't referring to some previously unpublicised facet of the man's life. This is your Captain speaking specifically about Ali's pugilistic artistry in the ring. But then, the Beefheart view of the world has always differed somewhat from that of us mere mortals – because he then goes on to add the name of Vincent Van Gogh to his personal Hall Of Fame. He explains this bizarre coupling thus: "Everything these gentlemen ever did was done with a great flair for rhythm. You see, one doesn't really have to play an instrument to be a musician... just a musical grace in the creative use of timing and rhythm. And this is a quality that both these men possess."

In Britain it was Mick Jagger, who distributed hundreds of albums, seeking those who would listen, and John Peel, via his innovative *Perfumed Garden* programme on Radio London, who first exposed the music of Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band to impressionable ears.

Indeed, amid the heady aroma of incense and dope and the wall-to-wall jangle of beads and bells, the *Safe As Milk* sound was the only new positive energy not transmitting from Pepperland that made sense and made you want to dance in the psychedelic smashed summit of '67. And that, as they say, is owning up.


GETTY

Yet in spite of Beefheart's stature as the underground cult hero of Antonioni's "Swingin' London" (etc) and the endorsement of just about anyone whom word was worthy of respect, the band seemed unable to get off and running stateside. Along with Wild Man Fischer, the GTOs and Alice Cooper, the talent of the amiable Captain was misinterpreted as being nothing more than yet another musical clown in Uncle Frank Zappa's nasty little freak show.

When I last paid my respects to the good Captain – almost a year to the day – he impressed upon me: "I've had my fun... now I'm going to make myself far more accessible to the public." »

"There are times when I wonder what I was doing before": Don Van Vliet, AKA Captain Beefheart, poses for a portrait in Eureka, California, 1973

Not that Beefheart intentionally schemed to aim his music over the heads of his audience. But, like most innovators – and make no mistake about it, Beefheart is an innovator – public acceptance can take an awful long time a-coming: "Some people think I'm surreal. Others that I'm a dadaist. Well, I think not. My art is abstract and therefor people have just got to realise that I'm just who I am."

Finally, however, the American public may be coming around to the Captain's way. "They're beginning to dig me at last," he says with a bellow, "but it sure is late for them. They've always been much more hip in Europe. Over here, they still have to rely on their mothers to tell 'em what to like." And, for once, he wasn't talking about Zappa.

Looking back over the last 12 months, he lets out another laugh and continues: "With the *Clear Spot* album, I went completely in reverse didn't I? Funnily enough, I don't know why I did it." He quickly adds: "Though, of course, I'm glad I did. As everyone knows, I've never been influenced by what record company people term 'the market'.

"*Clear Spot* wasn't supposed to be a commercial endeavour on my part, though people say it was. My opinion is that anything that sells is commercial. And the only thing commercial about *Clear Spot* is that it's selling more than any of the others."

Beefheart, in fact, is willing to accept a large responsibility for his years of hardship. The fact is, annual visits to Europe aside, the Captain has never hit the road in the States. Only now is he beginning to pack his bags for a coast-to-coast tour of his homeland.

"Sure, we've played a few gigs in this country," he explains. "But we haven't undertaken a tour like this before now simply because I didn't think that anyone really wanted to see us.

"In Europe, audiences knew what to expect when we don't know what to expect because they had n't heard us. Thankfully, once we've played for them, they seem to enjoy it and embrace the group."

*Clear Spot* – which the composer affectionately refers to as "my love album", but didn't think it was an appropriate title to have embossed on the clear PVC sleeve – has proved to be the artistic clincher in terms of mass Beefheart acceptance. "In one sentence, what do you most like about *Clear Spot*?" the Captain suddenly springs on me.

It's full of total energy and happiness, I reply off the top of my head.

"You said the magic words, Roy," the maestro says with a laugh. "You see, I'm a lot happier these days, 'cos I've been married to my wife Jan for three years and I just get happier and happier all the time. And it's because of this that my music has gotten even more spontaneous.

"Did you know?" his voice takes on a tone of confidence, "that I wrote all the material for *Clear Spot* in just two-and-a-half hours." He turns and calls out to Jan, who's in another room. "I know it was when we were driving between two college dates, but can you remember where I wrote *Clear Spot*?" There's no reply. "Jan," he bellows. "Where did I write *Clear Spot*?" "Between Harvard and Yale," answers a voice.

"Of course, now I remember. We were driving to Yale in the station wagon when I wrote the songs. So, as you can see, it's a pretty spontaneous little album, perhaps even more than any of the others.

"Like just about everything I do – writing, painting or making music – I like things to be spontaneous. So when I feel that it's time for me to do a new album I always put the material together as quickly as possible, and get it in the stores so as it's reflective of what I'm doing at that point in my career.

"At the moment, I'm putting a new album together – trouble is, I've got at least 50 things I would like to use, but there's just no way I can fit them on one album. I guess I just don't get to do enough albums. When I get inspired I tend to work very quickly, and when I get into the studio I'm one of the least expensive acts to record. So I guess that's some kind of compensation."

You may well ask from what fount of knowledge the amazing Captain derives such inspiration. I ask and I am informed: "Animals. I think I've gotten all my inspiration from watching animals, though I have to admit that the inspiration for *Clear Spot* came from women. I suppose you could say that album is really for all women.

"I thought that women were getting neglected," he elaborates. "I guess up until that album I'd been kinda selfish. You have to understand that before I got married I didn't realise I wasn't the complete artist I thought I was.

"I never was with women." He corrects himself: "I mean, I was with women, but there was never that close relationship, and that makes the big difference. For a man needs a friend to run through life with him. Indeed, there are times when I wonder what I was doing before... you've heard all that stuff that I did."

He laughs and concludes: "What I'm doing now is much nicer."

"I've now realised that the real test of an artist is to make his work accessible to everyone, and that's what I'm now attempting to do. And because of this, I think my band will help a lot of people, and if I make some money, a lot of animals.

"I want to open up an animal park where no one can get in, and let the animals get on with it all by themselves. I think it would be a terrible world if kids grew up without ever seeing an animal in its natural environment."

It's an exacting task to keep up with the Captain. He's prone to redirect his conversation without prior warning. "I'm amused by this new Flash Gordon makeup cult that's suddenly sprung up. I did that over seven years ago in London, when I appeared at the Middle Earth Club wearing blue lipstick and red nail polish."

Well, we all have skeletons in our closets.

"Seems that I've always been ahead of the times," he muses, "but it's only now that the public and I are catching up with each other. But I'm glad I got out of that thing when I did. Today, I'm being realistic in my role as a human being without having to contend with all that bullshit."

As with most conversations with the Captain, he offers an old Beefism: "Remember, it's not worth getting into the bullshit to find out what the bull ate." Ah, but what about the big-eyed beans from Venus? *Roy Carr*

## — MELODY MAKER APRIL 14 —

**THE BOOGIE SHUDDERS** to a halt, and is applauded. The big man in the leather jacket says something into his microphone, something about how they're going to play an old number called "Electricity".

Three guitarists jive through the intro, kicked along by a fat bass player and a drummer who looks like something out of one of Erich von Stroheim's Prussian fantasies, with monocle and pigtails. The big man starts to sing, but nothing comes out. He mouths the first line, points accusingly at the small monitor speaker in front of him, gestures to the heavens, gives the microphone a couple of sharp, painful left jabs, and stalks off. The band lurches on.

"There was one time," says Captain Beefheart, "when I broke 500 dollars' worth of microphones in a single night. Didn't I, Jan? Didn't I really?

"Oh yeah," says the big man's wife, absent-mindedly. Beefheart mimes how he snapped off the stalks of the microphones. Like Frankenstein pulling up daisies, with a child's frustration.

Beefheart hopes that you'll know when his Magic Band are playing badly, on their current British tour. "Let me tell you," he says, "we get the best applause when we play the worst. That's absolutely true. Anyway, it's getting to where groups aren't really playing. The theatre is more important than music."

April 17, 1973: Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band at London's Rainbow theatre – (l–r) Rockette Morton, CB, Alex St Clair (background), Zoot Horn Rollo, Ed Marimba and Roy Estrada

GETTY

He's a bit scornful about 'theatre rock'. "Remember," he says, "the cover of *Trout Mask Replica*?" He and Antennae Jimmy Semens and Rockette Morton and the rest of the kids were dressed in the most outlandish apparel, much of it feminine. Remember their gig at Middle Earth? When was it – 1966? Alex St Clair Snouffer wore a long nightgown and a Clara Bow hat with a hawk leather attached, plus a string of pearls.

"But I wasn't doing that to put down women," says Beefheart. "I always knew that no matter how hard I tried, I'd never have tits. I'd never try to outrace a woman at her natural speed."

True to his words, Beefheart would now not even rate a second glance from the chairman of the Monday Club. Medium-length hair – though he'd like to get it cut because he gets oil paint in it – ordinary black leather jacket, red polo-neck with a picture of himself on the front.

It's livened up only by a beautiful belt fashioned from leather, silver and turquoise by Navajo Indians, and several rings from the same source. Not even a funny hat.

The longer you know him, the easier it becomes to talk. The seemingly impenetrable word games cease, brought out only when there's no other way of illustrating a point.

The sharpness and clarity of his mind becomes apparent, as does his Achilles heel: a tendency to put people down for what others might view as minor peccadilloes. Some critics, probably those who enjoyed the unfettered experimentation of the *Trout Mask* and *Decals* albums, have expressed disappointment with the straightforwardness of his latest LP, *Clear Spot*.

> "We get the best applause when we play worst"

"I appreciate writers," he says. "I'm one myself. But if they think that, they're kidding themselves. I don't plot these things. I wrote the whole album, words and music, in two-and-a-half hours on the coach between English college gigs. I think it's direct, and I'm glad I'm not so hip that I put my back out."

He draws a parallel between *Clear Spot* and the inclusion of a soft, soulful ballad called "I'm Glad" on his first album, *Safe As Milk*. "'I'm Glad'," he explains, was saying the same thing as 'Electricity' and all the other tracks on that album which people called 'far out'.

"I've always wanted to do an album like this one. I wanted to get that group together... and, man, they were really together on that record. More of the emphasis was on feeling, as opposed to how many notes you could get through. Not that the musicians didn't put the feeling into all those notes before – but now, they can put more feeling into one note.

"Anyway," he ruminates rhetorically, "I wonder if there's anything as far out as '*I don't have too much time to be without love*'?"

This trip, The Magic Band welcomes back into its ranks none other than the aforementioned A St C Snouffer, a star of their early works who's spent recent years working, unbelievably in Las Vegas, playing popular standards and requests for "Happy Birthday To You". He's back because Beefheart called him up and said, "It's time to play again."

Otherwise, it's the same band that came here a year ago: Zoot Horn Rollo ("Bill' to his mates) on guitar, Rockette Morton on guitar and bass, Orejon (otherwise Roy Estrada, ex-Mothers and Little Feat) on bass, and Ed Marimba (formerly Arthur Dyer Tripp III) on drums.

Talking to Beefheart, you get the impression that it's the only band in the world. "Rockette and that fellow Rollo are definitely amazing players," he says. "I think Rollo is the only person doing anything on guitar that really interests me now. I hate to say things like that, but I really mean it. Don't you think so, Jan? I mean, really seriously?"

"Ohhhh... yeah."

To illustrate the point, he refers to John McLaughlin and The Mahavishnu Orchestra, with whom they recently played in America. "They're doing nothing. Really boring. A lot of people walked out after we had played, before him. Didn't they, Jan? ("Oh... yeah"). Well they did. I don't know where that's at."

He's not best pleased with the way his records have been promoted – he firmly believes, for instance, that the recent "Too Much Time" should have been a hit single – so pretty soon he'll be setting up his own label, God's Golf Ball Records. He also has two books, one called *Old Fart At Play* and a volume of poetry titled *Singing Ink*, which he wants published soon, and he'd like to get his paintings exhibited in London. There's no doubt that he's trying to get through to a wider audience. He won't be playing any of his usual instruments on this tour, and there's a reason: just before they left, Jan hid his saxophones and bass clarinet. She's notice that whenever he plays them, people walk out. "I have a beautiful tenor saxophone," he says wistfully. "I think it's probably the best in the world. One time I played it for 18 hours straight, non-stop. Didn't I, Jan?"

There's a cheer as Zoot Horn Rollo slides on stage at Manchester's Free Trade Hall. The first notes of The Magic Band's 1973 British tour come from his Fender. Tall and stringy, in a loose check ensemble with matching conical straw hat, he wouldn't be out of place in *Andy Pandy*. But Jesus, does he rock. Like a man sandpapering paint off a piece of wood, he rubs the strings to produce fast, jerky chords. Within seconds Rockette bounds on stage in an electric-blue suit, straps on a bass (from a selection of guitars propped against his amp) and joins in with riveting double- and triple-stops.

Ed Marimba, Orejon, and Alex St CS slope on, hitch up their trousers, and plunge into some wild, unearthly dance music which is every bit as brilliantly unorthodox as you might expect. Rockette switches to a double-necked six- and 12-string machine, and the whole noise is as complex and effortless as an Alfa Romeo gearbox. The first impression is amazement that they aren't actually hovering two feet above the stage as they play, for their music doesn't seem to be bound to the Earth in any way. Rhythmically, they're as sophisticated as Lifetime used to be, swinging in a way which is wholly unlike anyone else.

Watching Artie Tripp for an hour, I tried to figure out just what he was doing behind that see-thru Fibes kit; but beyond noting that he, like Billy Cobham, plays rhythm on the hi-hat with his left hand and snare accents with his right, I honestly couldn't figure it out.

It was the same when they played "Peon", an instrumental off the *Decals* album which features Rockette and Zoot Horn playing a Moorish line which is sometimes unison, sometimes counterpoint, and sometimes in canon form, but which never seems to repeat itself. Earlier, I asked Beefheart how it was written and – even more important – how they could possibly memorise its tortuous, winding contours. Beyond saying that when he was working it out on piano he was "going for the shape of it", he couldn't explain it either.

Anyway, "Peon" and another shattering full-band instrumental were the highlights, because Beefheart was the victim of a very duff PA and even worse acoustics. Only in the upper reaches of his seven-and-a-half-octave vocal range was he really audible, and those subterranean basso profundo growls were virtually lost.

He was obviously unhappy, leaving the stage on several occasions, but still I enjoyed "I'm Gonna Booglarise You Baby" and a very long, low-down "King Bee", when the band came on like they were born in a blues bar on the South Side of Chicago. Real low yo-yo stuff. Some of the things the guitarist got up were amazing, particularly when they all played with the aid of "steel appendages" – bottlenecks to you. On "King Bee" they all adopted different but complementary roles, with Snouffer (using a capo) chopping out subtle chorded triplets all across the beat.

Zoot Horn is a monstrous soloist, seemingly erratic but fantastically inventive, with a very beautiful amplified tone. And there's Rockette, who was left along on stage for a bass solo in which he thundered out four-string chords until the hall seemed ready to levitate.

The poor vocal amplification forced Beefheart to play more harmonica than usual, which was fine because he wails with real guts and a harsh, down-home whine. In that mood, and with the PA dirtying up the harp's sound, he'd have given even Lazy Lester a run for his money.

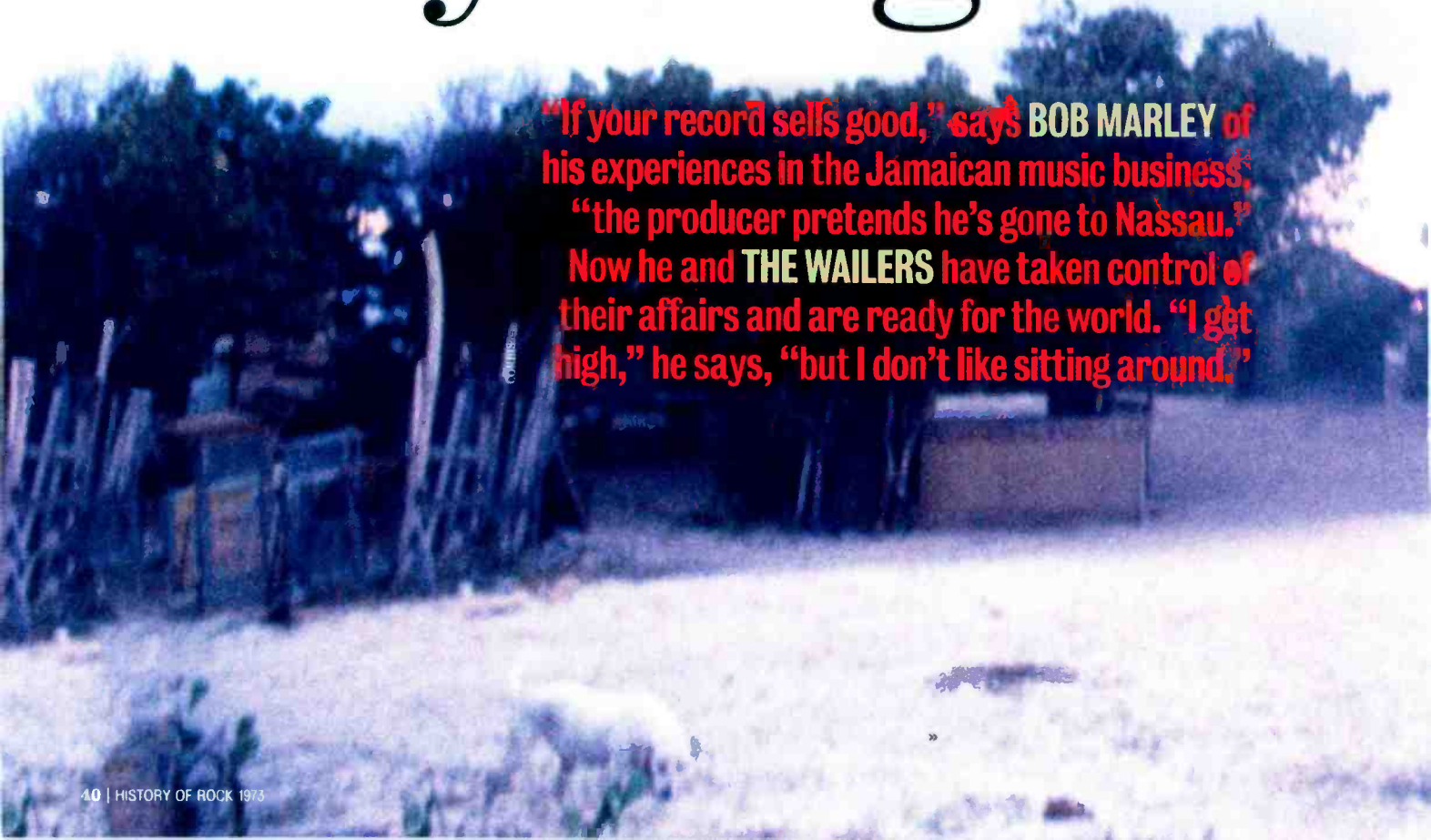
It wasn't a completely satisfactory concert, but Manchester loved it and called them back for an encore on the epic "Big-Eyed Beans From Venus" ("*There's a limited supply*") – Mr Zoot Horn Rollo hit that long, wheezing note, let it flow, did it again, and we all went home.

But not quite. Later that night, in a Manchester nightclub that was all chicken-in-a-basket and go-go girls, Beefheart was talking animatedly and chewing an entrecote. Suddenly he looked over a journalist's shoulder and exclaimed: "Hey, there's whatisname... that great soccer player. I've seen him on *Wide World Of Sport*. Oh, he's great."

Leaving the club, Beefheart walked over to George Best, who was dining with a small, expensive-looking blonde, and said how much pleasure Best's playing had given him. George smiled, and mumbled, "Thank you."

"Muhammad Ali," says Captain Beefheart, "is the world's greatest percussionist. And he beat Ken Norton." Sure he did. *Richard Williams* •

# "In Jamaica, you use your machete or your gun"



"If your record sells good," says BOB MARLEY of his experiences in the Jamaican music business, "the producer pretends he's gone to Nassau." Now he and THE WAILERS have taken control of their affairs and are ready for the world. "I get high," he says, "but I don't like sitting around."

Bob Marley on Hellshire Beach in Jamaica, 1973

## — MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 24 —

**BOB MARLEY, SLIGHTLY** built and quiet to the point of diffidence, is a leader. He's the master of reggae, the man who's about to give it that big shove out of its normal cultural confinement and into the rest of the world. The consequences of this action may be drastic for the health of the music. It could be the making of reggae, or could sap its vitality beyond repair. But that won't affect Marley, because for the past seven years he's been making the best music to be heard in Jamaica, and his potential is limitless.

He and his group, The Wailers, have an album called *Catch A Fire* out here next week, on Island's Blue Mountain label. It seems to me that this may be the most important reggae record ever made – it's equivalent of Sly's *Dance To The Music* or Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*.

It has that kind of potential: revitalising the style from which it springs, and introducing it to an entirely new audience. A few years will need to have passed before we'll know for sure, but Marley may even be a genius.

Like many great musicians, he's a different man inside the recording studio. The shyness is stripped away, and he becomes totally as one with the music, controlling it and swaying in sympathy with the extraordinary rhythm patterns he draws from his bassist, Aston "Family Man" Barrett, and his drummer, Family Man's brother Carlton.

Marley's musical assurance comes from a considerable depth of experience. At 28, he's been burned and hassled as badly as most of his Jamaican contemporaries, but unlike a lot of them he's putting the knowledge he's gained to good use.

He can see why and how he got burned, and he's going to make sure it doesn't happen again. What's happened to him already, though, gives him just as much right to sing the blues as Robert Johnson ever had.

He was born in Kingston, Jamaica, the son of a white British Army captain from Liverpool – "I only remember seeing him twice, when I was small" and a black Jamaican who wrote spirituals and sang in the local Apostolic Church.

Unlike some people with mixed parentage, who violently take one side or another, it's given him an unusually open view of race: "I don't really check people's colour," he says.

Bob sang in church, too, but he didn't care for it. "I preferred dancing music. I listened to Ricky Nelson, Elvis, Fats Domino... that kind of thing was popular with Jamaican kids in the '50s. The only English-speaking radio station we heard was from Miami, but we got a lot of Latin stations, mostly from Cuba, before and after Castro."

He began to learn welding as a trade. "But I loved to sing, so I thought I might as well take the chance. Welding was too hard! So I went down to Leslie Kong at Beverley's Records in '64, and made a record on a single-track machine. Jimmy Cliff took me there – he was Beverley's number-one man."

> "Johnny Nash isn't really our idol. That's Otis or Brown or Pickett"

The record was called "One Cup Of Coffee", and the world ignored it. But Marley, undaunted, went back to the woodshed. "My greatest influence at the time was The Drifters – 'Magic Moment', 'Please Stay', those things. So I figured I should get a group together."

He assembled four other kids: Peter McIntosh (vocals, piano, organ, guitar) and Bunny Livingston (vocals, congas, congos), who're still with him today, plus a boy named Junior and a girl, Beverley Kelso. He wrote a song called "Simmer Down". They rehearsed it, and went to see producer Coxsone Dodd, who liked and recorded it, putting it out on his Coxsone label.

GETTY

Bob Marley & The Wailers in London, 1973: (l-r) Peter "Tosh" McIntosh, Aston "Family Man" Barrett, Bob Marley, Earl "Wire" Lindo, Carlton "Carlie" Barrett and Neville "Bunny" Livingston

"It went off like a bullet," says Bob. "But they didn't tell me how much to sell... that's supposed to be the private business of the producer. I don't remember how much I was paid for 'Simmer Down', because when they give you money, they don't tell you what it's for.

"After we left Coxsone in '69, we got no more royalties – and the songs we did for him are selling ever since. We made 30 or 40 records for him, and most of them sold good."

Among them was the brilliant "Put It On", a shimmering ska classic which surfaced in Britain on Island in 1966, and the gorgeous "Sunday Morning" (on a par with the best of Curtis Mayfield), the B-side to "Love Won't Be Mine" in the same year. If you look hard, you can probably still find them on the secondhand stalls – and if you do, you'll be congratulating yourself for ever.

"We weren't making enough money to share between five, so two of the group left. Junior went to live in America, and Beverley... well, she was kinda slow-like. She didn't have good timing."

After they left Coxsone Dodd, Bob and his mother left Jamaica for a while.

"It was hard in Kingston, so we went to live in America, in Wilmington, Delaware. I rehearsed by myself in our basement, where it was nice and quiet, but after a few months I went back to Jamaica, and I thought I might as well continue with The Wailers."

He got Peter and Bunny back together, and they decided to form their own record label. "That's a big move, in Jamaica. Prince Buster was the first to start the revolution by leaving the producers and doing it himself. Then myself, then Lee Perry... and you can't count the rest.

"It's better to know for yourself if your record is a flop than have someone else tell you. And if your record sells good, the producer pretends he's gone to Nassau when you come by the office. In Jamaica, you're expected to use your knife, or your machete, or your gun."

That first label was called Wailin' Soul, but it got off to a bad start when Bunny was jailed for almost a year on a ganja rap – and those who've seen *The Harder They Come* may understand the Machiavellian implications of frame-up behind that. At that point around '68, American singer Johnny Nash and his manager, Danny Simms, came on the scene. They were looking for talent, saw Bob singing on Jamaican TV, and signed him up.

Bob recorded an album for their JAD label, but from it only one single – "Bend Down Low" – ever saw the light of day, in the States. However, they took Bob's song "Stir It Up", recorded already by The Wailers on Coxsone, and turned it into a worldwide smash for Nash, who also used other Marley songs ("Guava Jelly", "Belly Rub") on his *I Can See Clearly Now* album.

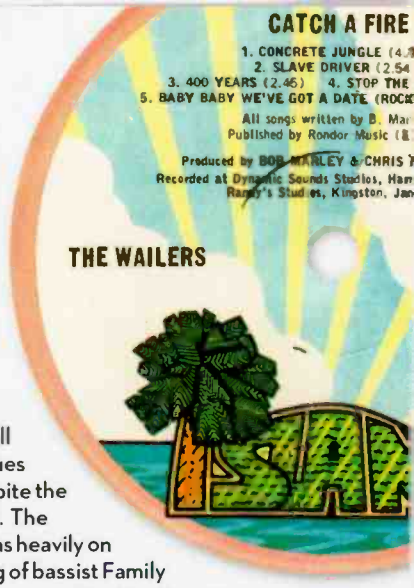
They even took Marley to Sweden for three months, to help write the music for a film starring Nash which has yet to be released, and over in England they got a single by him out on CBS – "Reggae On Broadway", with which he's far from satisfied because Nash had too much influence on the production.

"He's a hard worker, but he didn't know my music. I don't want to put him down, but reggae isn't really his bag. We knew of Johnny Nash in Jamaica before he arrived, but we didn't love him that much; we appreciated him singing the kind of music he does – he was the first US artist to do reggae – but he isn't really our idol. That's Otis or James Brown or Pickett, the people who work it more hard."

Going to Sweden did Bob's business no good: "When I came back, it was all mash [ruined]. I'm the only one who takes a real interest in it. Jamaica's a place where you sit around and get high. I'm not gonna do that; I get high, but I don't like sitting around too much." »

# An inner gravity

**MM MARCH 17** The first reggae album to be marketed as a rock record.




**The Wailers Catch A Fire** ISLAND

The problem; how to communicate the excitement of this album to people who are already prejudiced against what it represents? I'm taking for granted that most readers of this paper still believe that reggae is a crude form of musical expression, with a complete lack of creative potential, and I can understand that stance because there's been a lot of rubbish put about in the name of Jamaican music. But ever since last autumn, I've been waiting for this album more eagerly than for almost anything within memory, and I'd like to turn you on as well.

This is, for a start, the first reggae-rooted album to be packaged and marketed as if it were by a "name" white rock group; it has a tastefully conceived, expensively produced sleeve, and it's being promoted heavily, particularly in America, where West Indian music is now the object of much curiosity. In keeping with its image, the album's music gives evidence that Bob Marley, The Wailers' leader, is broadening his scope; you'll hear slide guitars and electric keyboards, both sometimes modified by synthesizer, and most of the tracks come in at around four minutes. I don't believe, though, that Marley has compromised the integrity of the music by dressing it up in this way. He retains that lopsided, falling-over-itself rhythm feel, and his songs, both words and music, are simple and direct. The core, in fact, is there, just as Sly Stone is still making blues music despite the trimmings. The album leans heavily on the playing of bassist Family Man and drummer Carlton Barrett, both of whom are utterly brilliant, constantly shifting and blending their rhythms with a natural-born sophistication. There's more than enough subtlety to feed the ears, and you can always, always dance to what they play. Unfortunately the sleeves don't mention that the beautiful melodic guitar solos are played by Wayne Perkins from Muscle Shoals, and that the synthesizer work is done by Rabbit Bundrick. Keyboards are shared by Rabbit, Marley and Winston Riley.

Marley sings most of the lead, and he's the equal of any black American. His tone is light and airy but has an inner gravity and his phrasing is endlessly fascinating. The back-up chorales are endlessly fascinating: on this new version of "Stir It Up" they sound like soul Beach Boys (to borrow Nick Jones' old phrase), while the care that went into the spiritual-like arrangement of "No More Trouble" is self-evident. Singers Bunny Livingston and Peter McIntosh are never stooges: like the Pips with Gladys Knight, they participate fully in the emotional content of each song.

And what songs. "Stir It Up" is slowed right down until it becomes a melting, sensual love song, its synthesizer lines following like cream around Marley's cool, pliable lead. "Slave Driver" is mournful and evocative. "Concrete Jungle" has guitars and "Superstition"-like electric piano poured around it. "Kinky Reggae" is hilariously funny. McIntosh, too, provides one of the best songs, "400 Years", which like much of the album's content refers to the plight of Kingston's ghetto people. In fact, nothing here is less than exceptional and Marley is helped by injecting frequent variations of pace, which should ensure that charges of monotony are redundant. And if you're not moved by "Stir It Up", you must be made of stone. A fabulous and important album. *Richard Williams*

May 1, 1973: The Wailers perform Marley's 1967 song "Stir It Up" – a hit for Johnny Nash in 1972 – on BBC TV's *The Old Grey Whistle Test*

So on his return, in 1970, he started a new label, Tuff Gong, and also a record shop, The Soul Shack on King Street in Kingston. The shop is mostly devoted to selling records by The Wailers and Rita & The Soulettes. Rita Marley is known as Bob's wife, but they aren't actually married – it was just an idea to get some publicity for one of her records. They stock the old Wailers records on Coxsone, their six 45s on Wailin' Soul, and the dozen-or-so they've released on Tuff Gong, including their biggest hit to date – the fantastic "Trenchtown Rock", which sold about 25,000 and was Jamaica's Number One for three weeks around Christmas 1971, and the recent mind-destroying "Satisfy My Soul (Jah Jah)".

The problem for a small label is getting airplay: "You have to be big friends with the radio disc jockeys, take them out and treat them like family. They make up the radio station charts, and people only buy what's in the charts." Bob is not unduly optimistic about the business side of the Jamaican music scene. "We've hurt the big guys by starting our own labels, because all they've got left is the studios and the pressing plants. But the business will only change when younger guys appear, who'll deal fairly with the artists. The older guys will never get better."

It was Island's Chris Blackwell who gave Bob the chance to use a lot of time and a fair amount of money to make the *Catch A Fire* album. Advances to Jamaican artists are unknown – but Blackwell saw the potential in Marley, and the two men tacitly decided to trust each other.

The result is the first example of Marley's music which hasn't been hampered by absurdly low budgets. The album has several quite long tracks, maybe the first extended reggae songs, but Bob says, "They're always like that in the studio, and then they get cut down to three minutes or something. Jamaica is a place where the musicians are restricted, going into the studio and just playing the same old thing because they're afraid that anything different might not sell."

"What we need here is people who're not concerned with holding the artists down. But I don't think it'll happen for a long time."

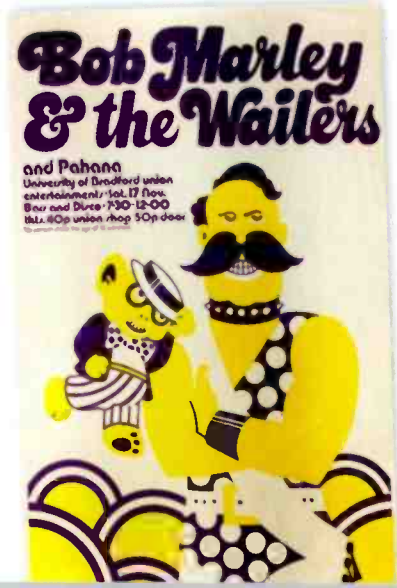
Make no mistake – Marley is potentially a giant figure. *Richard Williams*

## MELODY MAKER JUNE 23

**THE ROLLING STONES** are upstairs in Studio 1, where they've been for the past five weeks. Jagger strolls around the foyer, looking for something to do, all neat in white blouson jacket and fawn velvet jeans. But that, you may be surprised to hear, is not where the real action is at this night in Island Studios, Notting Hill.

Not, at any rate, if you're a Wailers fan. On this occasion, even the Stones' long-delayed newie comes second to Bob Marley and his brothers from the shanty towns of Kingston, Jamaica.

The Wailers have been in Britain for some weeks now, playing various kinds of gigs, and generally doing very well. There have been problems: Bunny Livingston never wanted to come in the first place. He's happy being poor in Jamaica, he says, and he'd rather not witness the fleshy delights of a European metropolis. The temptation might be too great. Nevertheless, he's here.




There's a problem, too, with food. Being Rastafarians, they don't eat meat at all, or fish with scales. So cartons of vegetables and plaice have been delivered most days to their communal house on the Kings Road, and on the road they've eaten mostly out of fish'n'chip shops.

"Huh," says Bunny, stuffing most of a battered plaice-and-six into his face, "London's national dish." No salt, though – that's also forbidden by the Rasta creed.

In general, they're delighted with the response they've received over here. Only one thing puzzles Marley: when they've played at black clubs, the audiences don't applaud. But the white college

REX FEATURES

audiences have applauded each number loudly. "Before they came here," confides an Island person, "they'd never heard of doing encores. So the first night, when they left the stage and the audience carried on cheering, they thought maybe something was wrong. We had to persuade them that it was actually good, and push them back on stage."

Tonight, anyway, The Wailers are in Studio 2, the smaller one, working on their follow-up to the brilliant *Catch A Fire* album. They laid the rhythm tracks down at Harry J's studio in Kingston, as is their custom, and have already overdubbed voice parts plus extra guitars and keyboards. Island boss Chris Blackwell is back from a millionaire-style excursion down the Colorado river, on a 20-foot rubber raft, to supervise the mixing process. He picked up The Wailers for Island in the first place, and is closely involved in their success for various reasons. It's he who decided that *Catch A Fire* should be packaged as if it were a major rock album, and projected at a whole new market.

> "Before they came here, they'd never heard of doing encores"

Amusingly enough, someone is showing round the original copies of two 1966 Wailers records, "Put it On" and "He Who Feels It Knows It", which came out here on Island. It's ironical because they were, to all intents and purposes, "pirate" records. Bunny sniffs when he sees them, and goes into a long discussion on the iniquities of the Jamaican record scene.

The session starts with a quick run-through of the rough mixes, which Blackwell is hearing for the first time. As the eight or nine songs glide by, his expression remains on the brighter side of contentment. The raw material is – how shall we put it? – magnificent.

The mixing proper begins with a Marley song called "I Shot The Sheriff", a sort of humorous musical version of the plot from *The Harder They Come* (which you should have seen by now, or heaven help you). Marley's role as lead singer is similar to that of the outlaw character, Ivan, played by Jimmy Cliff in the movie. The high falsetto chorus, delivered by uncharacteristically strained voices, adds to the comic quality.

However, it's the music that carries this track. Listening to Blackwell and his engineer bringing separate instrument tracks up and down, hearing either the bass or the drums in isolation, one begins to grasp the mastery of these men.

There are, for example, two rhythm guitars here, chopping through and around each other as if by telepathy. Beneath them runs the suavest, lithest, most inventive bassline, courtesy of Aston "Family Man" Barrett, meshing in perfect sympathy with his brother Carlie's drumming.

Ah, the drumming. Had you noticed that these guys play the bass drum on 2 and 4, the offbeats? Maybe you remember the fuss when Jo Jones transferred the beat-carrying role from the bass drum to the hi-hat, with Count Basie's band in the '30s. Isn't there just a chance that what the reggae drummers are doing is equally revolutionary, and might have a similar effect? If that were all they did, it would be noteworthy enough, but when the musicologists start taking this stuff seriously (in, say, ten years' time), they're going to find enough material to last them through years of research and analysis.

It's a bit early in the session to get involved with a masterpiece, but that's what comes up next. Whatever you thought was the best track on *Catch A Fire*, its equivalent on the new album will be a thing called "Duppy Conqueror". The song will be familiar to most stone reggae fans because Bob wrote and cut it a couple of years ago.

The song is reminiscent of both "Put It On" and "Stir It Up" in that it's built on the familiar "La Bamba" pyramid chord changes, and it resembles "Stir It Up" most of all because the rhythm is a swaying slow-medium.

Mostly it's call-and-response between Bob and the other voices, his nasal asides and interjections growing out of the chorus.

*"Yes, me friend (me good friend), they say we free again... / The bars could not hold me (whoo-hoo), force could not control me now / They try to put me down, but Jah put I around now / I been accused (whoo-hoo) and wrongly abused now..."*

The engineer silences all the tracks except the voices, and suddenly the truly sublime quality of The Wailers' harmonies is brought home with a vengeance. Have they ever recorded anything a cappella, without instruments? No, says Peter Tosh. You should, says Blackwell. They should indeed.

Music like this is Bob Marley's forte: soft, supremely sensual, and making its point through understatement. It doesn't shout at you; rather it insinuates, suffusing the brain like a heady wine. Unfortunately, some otherwise intelligent people have missed the point, and expect him to come on like Toots Hibbert or Desmond Dekker, shouting and bashing. That attitude is so patronising as to be beneath contempt. Does Wilson Pickett invalidate Smokey Robinson? Of course not.

At this point, Jagger walks in. "You've met Bob?" says Blackwell. "Uh... hi," says Mick, extending a hand.

The album the Stones are mixing was, of course, recorded in Jamaica, where Jagger met many reggae musicians until, he says, he got a bit bored with it. He must be getting pretty bored with his own album, too; it's months since they began it, although he maintains that only seven weeks' hard work have been put in so far.

Jagger has come to enlist Blackwell's aid. It seems that Keith Richards' old lady, Anita, has been staying in Kingston with a Rasta band which Keith plans to produce. Their house was raided, Anita was busted, and she can't get bail. Blackwell, being rich and of Jamaican descent, might have some pull.

"I don't really have any," he says, and asks Tosh, "What are the police like with Rastas now? Are they specially hard on them?"

"Depends," Tosh replies. "Depends on the Rasta, and depends on if he knows the right policeman."

"Duppy Conqueror" goes round and round, played at least two dozen times, and it could go on for ever. Nobody here would mind. Make a 40-minute tape loop of it, someone suggests, and there's your album.

But, of course, there are other songs. "Get Up, Stand Up", "Reincarnated Soul" (out on the B-side of the new single, "Concrete Jungle"), the fabulous "Rastafarian Chant", Bunny's "Oppressor Song", and a beauty from Marley called "Burnin' And Lootin", with another incredible lyric: *"Give me the food and let me grow / Let the roots-man take a blow now? / All them drugs gon' make you slow now / It's not the music of the ghetto..."*

The "roots-man" is the man who boils plant roots, distilling a drinkable substance of allegedly spiritual properties. It also makes you high. Nothing one hears suggests that this will be anything less than a worthy successor to the last album, and in "Duppy Conqueror" it will contain a true classic. *Richard Williams* •

# In the studio with The Wailers

**RICHARD WILLIAMS reports as**

The Wailers have been in Britain for some weeks now, playing various kinds of gigs, and generally doing very well. There have been problems: Bunny Livingston never wanted to come in the first place. He's happy being poor in Jamaica, he says, and he'd rather not witness the fleshy delights of a European metropolis. The temptation

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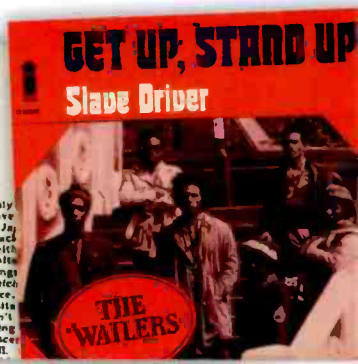


# "I'm not very hard-working"

**The ROLLING STONES arrive in Australia, and MICK JAGGER gossips with the press. No, he is not the subject of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain". And he didn't tell Paul not to marry Linda. "Although," he adds, "I wouldn't have my old lady playing keyboards..."**

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 24 —

**IT DOESN'T RAIN** too often in sunny Brisbane, but when it does it pours – and just as well. Because what do you do in Brisbane when you're a Rolling Stone and your concert has been cancelled because of the weather and you're bored stiff? You give a press conference.

That's how Mick Jagger, who has been friendly but elusive to the press, came to be sweeping into a room crammed with reporters with an entrance that would have done Nureyev proud and a cheery "Hello darlings" that was just a tiny portent of the chatty things to come.

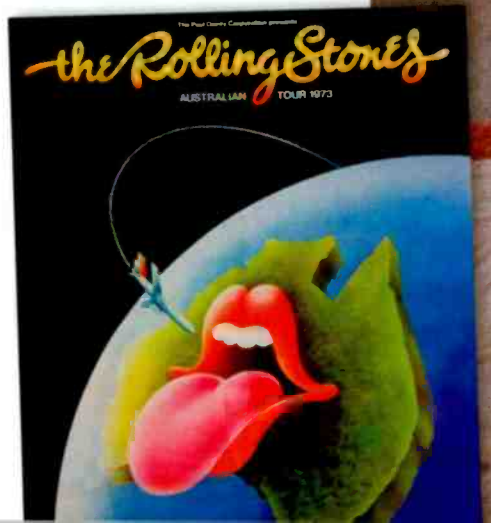
To be quite honest, we five there to cover what would have been the first date of the Stones' Australian tour were all grumpily convinced the communal 10 minutes or so we would get with this rock royal would scarcely be enough for one reporter to get his questions in, let alone five.

As it happens, Mick was as talkative as a county matron at a vicarage tea. How did he feel about the concert being cancelled? "It's a bit of a drag, isn't it?" he said, hitching up his bright apple-green pants and adjusting his sky-blue suede battle jacket. "Me and Charlie went down to have a look. 'Come down and see how bad it is,' they said."

He explained that the rain was drizzling right into the stage, rather than straight down, and that there was the distinct danger of shocks for the musicians.

So what do you do in Brisbane on a rainy night? I asked, knowing full well, it's one of those towns that tend to shut down by eight. Would the Stones, for instance, faced with the rainy-night blues, throw one of those famous parties that the people on the hotel floor below them invariably claim last till eight in the morning? Mick said he thought he'd do some work on some songs. »

ANWAR HUSSEIN/GETTY



Mick Jagger in October 1973: stout defender of *Their Satanic Majesties Request*; scourge of Australia's immigration policies

This enabled a small, pert blonde to ask about the progress of the Jamaican album. There are apparently still some brass parts and vocals to be added, but when Mick said they had already cut 17 things he sounded inordinately pleased with himself.

You might as well know now he's as vain about hard work well done as any of us. Maybe that's why I asked the next rather silly question: Is "You're So Vain" about you?

"No," he said, and – very reluctantly and only "he said" because he was convinced we all knew anyway – revealed it was about Warren Beatty. Wouldn't he have liked it to have been about him?

"No," he screeched indignantly. "It's a horrible put-down."

But hadn't he sung on those Carly Simon sessions? asked the pretty blonde who wanted us to know she knew a lot about Mick Jagger.

"Yeah I was in them and Bobby and Jim did some work on them, and (*ever so slight change of voice here*) Paul and Linda."

I was about to pursue the implications of that altered timbre. Mick has this way of saying things that make them sound wholly outrageous live while remaining wholly innocuous and polite in print. To tell you the truth, he can camp it up with the best of them.

But a serious young reporter with the face of a young Bob Dylan had his question ready: Do you feel your talent is slowing down? Now it wasn't a very polite question to ask at what was more a desultory rainy afternoon chat than a press grilling, but it put Mick on the defensive in a way you would never expect.

His reply wasn't angry or even hurt, but he did go to incredible pains to explain that he now wrote more songs than ever, that the Stones were doing more albums than ever, and certainly more than The Who or Dylan were doing at the moment, and besides, weren't two albums a year more than enough?

Mmm. Why the compulsion to do new albums when he could, say, do some films? Mick said he'd never do more than a film a year and that a film was much more exhausting than an album or tour. "I must admit I'm not very hard-working," he added with that very engaging grin he usually saves for people he wants to disarm.

He went on to explain that with a film you're not in control the way you are when you're a singer; that even if you ask a director, "Can I do it my way?" he'll still use the scene where you did it his way, so that an actor always ends up being a reflection of the director.

"At least on stage you can improvise," he muttered. His talk is full of muttered asides and mumbled throwaways.

We talked a lot about *Performance*, which has never been shown in Australia, and which only some of the people in the room had seen. Did he ever see the finished version? He smiled wickedly. "Which finished version? There's a finished version for every country."

Earlier that day there had been a huge hoo-ha because a package of "grass-like substance" had been found hidden in the body of the plane that carried the Stones' sound equipment. This had been followed up with a report that the Stones were not only not into drugs of any kind but also definitely on a healthy living kick. Yes, Mr Jagger? No.

"I only wish we were," said Mick regretfully. "I do run a bit and I did ride a bike in Los Angeles. We're always indoors in studios and motels."

**BACK TO THE** music, Mick really was marvellously obliging. No, he didn't regard the mix of "Tumbling Dice" as messy. "Maybe that's how we liked it," he said. Yes, he did see a new direction in the Stones' music "but the others don't always agree with me". Yes, he would like to do another experimental album (a lot, actually) and yes, he does play on a lot of other people's albums but rarely uses his name. He's been talking an hour now but although he may occasionally nibble at his sunglasses and fidget with the waistband of his green pants, and though his jacket is now open to reveal a red T-shirt, he seems likely to go on forever.

Now it's every question you ever wanted to ask Mick Jagger but were afraid to ask time...

He may not still be a Stone in 10 years' time, but he expects to still be writing songs then.

He doesn't think he has the willpower and strength to be a film director but he really wants to be one and admits he became an actor so he would know how to direct. He concedes he himself is not easy to direct, not easy to push around. Television? A bastard medium, he screams suddenly.

Next place for a Jagger cool-out? India, where he has a lot of friends if he ever gets enough time off all at once. Country life? No. Charlie lives in a beautiful place miles away from anyone, and he sits around twiddling his thumbs, and drinking wine. But that's Charlie. Mick needs action – but not New York. He can't stand that more than two weeks at a time. New York is out of hand.

Andy Warhol? "We work well together." They've thought of doing a film of Gide's *Caves Of The Vatican*. They've done some stage designs, especially some from Tokyo. Things have to be very simple for the stage. There's a musical, too, that they think about.

Which Warhol films does Mick like best? "*Trash*," he says.

What about the reports, I ask, that Mrs Jagger will do a film for Warhol?

"When girls get together," says Mick with great slyness and an evil smirk, "there's always talk but they never get anything done."

One of the reporters thinks he's heard wrong and asks Mick to repeat that. If it's going to that sort of talk, I decide I might as well ask about a recent article in Hugh Hefner's *Oui* magazine that lists the brands and colours of all makeup Jagger used on his last US tour.

"Completely made up" he says, unconscious of his pun.

They say every step you take on stage is orchestrated, says the young reporter who thinks Mick's talent is waning.

"I make it up as I go along," says Mick sullenly. "Maybe I ought to have it orchestrated. Then it wouldn't be such a mess" – he is sulking and pouting so hard and so heart-rendingly one can only assume he really believes he moves badly.

Does a band lose its tightness when it hasn't played for a while? Yes, but sometimes, Mick explains, it's nice to be loose. Halfway through the US tour, apparently, they were playing with a machine-like precision that made him nervous. When he answers questions he likes, and inexplicably he likes that one, his eyes crinkle at the corners into laugh-lines and his cheeks dimple. He seems less pleased with a question about "American Pie" – what does he think of the lyrics? Didn't take any notice of it, he says indifferently, not even the bits about himself.

At an airport press conference in Sydney, he was quick to scotch questions about his wife's absence. "You wouldn't take your wife to the

"I make it up as I go along": Jagger, seen here with Keith Richards in 1973, comes clean on his stage moves

GETTY

office with you, would you?" he said. Now he explains: "I've never taken any old lady on tour. What woman wants to be dragged around Australia?" Bianca, he says, is with friends in Jamaica.

I like the way the talk bobs back and forth from idle gossip to serious attempts at musical discussion. Quite early in the conversation he makes it clear he finds it almost impossible (a helpless shrug here) to talk about music. But he had a real sneaking fondness for the *Satanic Majesties* album, a father's love for the least appreciated child. He really digs that album.

"It wasn't so bad," he says, "and what came after it I think was so much better than what came before. But it didn't sell well and the album that came before it, which was really bad, sold very well indeed."

So now we're back to gossip and a question about the McCartneys. Did Mick really phone Paul McCartney the night before his wedding and tell him not to do it?

"I would never tell anyone not to marry someone. I approve of them... A beautiful couple... A lovely couple. He couldn't sound nicer, but he can't resist the tagline. "All the same," he mutters, hoping we won't really hear him. "I wouldn't let my old lady play the piano."

> "I have no regrets... Yes, I went out on a limb to give them visas"

In much the same reckless mood he explains he cut his hair because "I began to feel like an old tart with long hair".

True to the pattern I mentioned earlier, we now ricochet back to music. Is there someone he'd like to produce? Yes: Stevie Wonder, Billy Preston and Dylan (he didn't have time to discuss it with Bob at Mick's birthday party).

Would he produce an album for John Lennon? "I would if he asked me, but he can do his own work." Mick is less happy with what Phil Spector did for The Beatles, even if he did like George Harrison's first album.

What about the album Mick produced for Chris Farlowe? "Never got paid for it," he says, but there is no shortness there.

What does he think of Slade? (I'd like to mention here that Slade have just finished a very successful tour of Australia and that in some circles there they're more popular than The Beatles, the Stones and Jesus all rolled in one). "They make good singles," said Mick. "Even if they do all sound the same. They're a pretty good band on stage."

Elton John? "I like Elton John, but it's still not my favourite music."

Marc Bolan? "He's all right, I suppose." All sorts of comic mumbles and mutters accompany that statement.

"You know," he says, "all these people have been around for ages. Slade. Rod Stewart. Bolan and Bowie. Rod was overlooked in the old days because he was a solo singer when bands were in. Slade made it when people needed another rocky band."

What about Bowie? Would Mick ever consider engaging in erotic tussles with, say, Bill Wyman or Keith Richards? "I tried," he said, deadpan. "They wouldn't take any notice. They wouldn't take any notice if I took their truss off." *Michael Watts*

## — NME FEBRUARY 24 —

**THE ROLLING STONES** have become almost Australia's Prodigal Sons. Banned, reviled and cursed by the Australian communications media in the past, the Stones have latterly become something of the nation's darlings, although meetings with the press haven't been Jumping Jack Flash all the way.

One newspaperman who might well have asked "Would you let your daughter marry a Stone?" two months or so ago, reassured his reader parents: "Mick Jagger today is as controversial as the local vicar."

But I can assure him that this reaction is purely because Michael Philip refuses to be drawn, bullied into an exhibition of aggressive repartee by the loaded questions of television interviewers – who have taken over in the seven years since the Stones last played the Antipodes.

Why, the man who repealed the previous McMahon government ban on the Stones, Minister Of Immigration Mr "Little Al" Grassby, even went as far as to invite the five-plus-three band (Messrs Jim Price, Nicky Hopkins and Bobby Keys) to a 10-minute martini-time drink "to explain how the original confusion arose".

The 10 minutes developed into an hour and a half, eight large brandies and Little Al discussing with Jagger the wish for Australia to become a focal and vocal factor in South-East Asia.

To this political motivation, Jagger replies that if one wished to understand South-East Asia then perhaps admitting some Asians might not be a bad idea. And he developed the conversation into a side issue of the Australian "white" policy of immigration.

Mr Grassby, known for his extrovert clothes style, said: "The Stones are an excellent example to Australian youth. They tell me they appreciated being able to come to Australia – and I told them that they could give a lot of pleasure to a lot of young Australians. Mick, who is on his third visit here, thought he might never be allowed back into the country.

"I told them I was putting my faith in them, and hoped they would do the right thing. The Stones made it clear they wanted to entertain and perform. I have no regrets that I let them in – yes, I went out on a limb to give them visas... To give a man a bad name and hang him is immoral and un-Australian."

Rumours that the Stones used drugs in the past could not be taken into account, the minister told them: "A man is the sum total of his life," he said. "If you take all his past things into account you might as well remove half the saints on the calendar."

Not even with the most avid aficionado are the Stones likely to get into that calendar, though one paper, in two-inch-high front-page headlines did call them HOLY STONES. *Les Perrin*

## — NME MARCH 1 —

"**AUSTRALIA DOES NOT** have a record of violence – it's another Commonwealth country." Mick Jagger was answering questions about fears of major incidents during the Stones' current tour of the Antipodes.

Jagger, however, had not taken into account the attitudes of certain heady Adelaide characters – thousands of them, without tickets, who rioted outside the Memorial Park, which had a packed capacity of 8,000.

They fought police and tore down fencing – causing thousands of dollars' worth of damage. But as Ralph Gurnett, a director of promoter Paul Dainty's organisation and in charge of security, pointed out: "The Stones were already off the stage – and peace was restored with the Dainty security men helping the local police force."

Local and international journalists covering the concert put the rioting crowd as high as four to 5,000... Ralph Gurnett thought a more viable figure was 2,000. There were also varying opinions as to who caused the riot. Some locals said it was anarchists; others that it was the Adelaide Free Music Society – a group who believe you should be able to hear anything you want without paying.

A second concert was hurriedly arranged in Adelaide and was again a packer. Throughout the tour – promoted by 26-year-old ex-Downside public school boy Paul Dainty – the security has been impeccable. To get backstage, you have to possess an "STP" (Stones Touring Party) badge – with your living-likeness sealed under a clear plastic sheet and duly signed by the Stones' "tour commander" Peter Rudge. Entry to the Bank Of England or Fort Knox is easier to come by.

So far it's been a tour and a half – despite foul, torrential rain in Brisbane causing the postponement of the concert at the local Milton Tennis Club, where they play the Davis Cup games. It was a love match, with the weather clerk winning – the chances of electrocution of the Stones being a very live (or the opposite) possibility.

Jagger decided that come rain, shine or Britain's snow, the show went on the next evening. It did – to another tropical downpour. But not one ticket was returned. Hundreds without them turned up and the crowd gave a cloudburst of emotional approval. The cheers rained down on the Stones; the audience stood and screamed, with water dripping over their heads. Melbourne's treble concerts were memorable – unlike Brisbane, the weather stayed good for the first matinee show at 2.30 in the afternoon.

This week came the double concerts at Sydney's Randwick Royal Racecourse. *Sydney Daily Mirror* writer Jim Oram, who has followed the tour around Australia, remarked to me over a drink in the bar: "Mick has something in common with only one other man in the world – that they both filled Randwick Racecourse. Even all the owners, trainers, jockeys and horses couldn't do that." I asked him who shared the honour with Jagger, and Oram smiled as he said: "The Pope." *Les Perrin* •

# "You've got to do it properly"

**Five years ago, STATUS QUO were psychedelic two-hit wonders. Now, their piledriving boogie rock has found a place among Slade and T. Rex. It's more for the fans than the critics, admits Francis Rossi: "We play basic, simple kind of things."**

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 17 —

CHATHAM, FRIDAY: "THEY were so bleedin' young. So bleedin' young. I mean, we went on stage, and they were nibblin' at yer feet" – Francis Rossi, Status Quo.

Hardly a poetic little phrase, but Mr Rossi has never been one to, how you say, mince with his words. Or with his music, come to that. The last time I saw the band was 18 months ago, on Friday night. We travelled on the tube that night, out in the Red Lion, Leytonstone, and willingly paid 40p to enter and came away with a drunken head and earache. Status Quo, loud, and rough, and thrilling.

This time, we arrived at Chatham Town Hall in a limousine. Rossi and mates were to be found in a dressing room designed by Harold Pinter (one of his less famous efforts). All that was lacking was a dumb waiter, but the communication breakdown was rife.

"Would you like a drink?"

Yes, a wine, please.

"How long?"

Just a glass.

"Is it true about ...?"

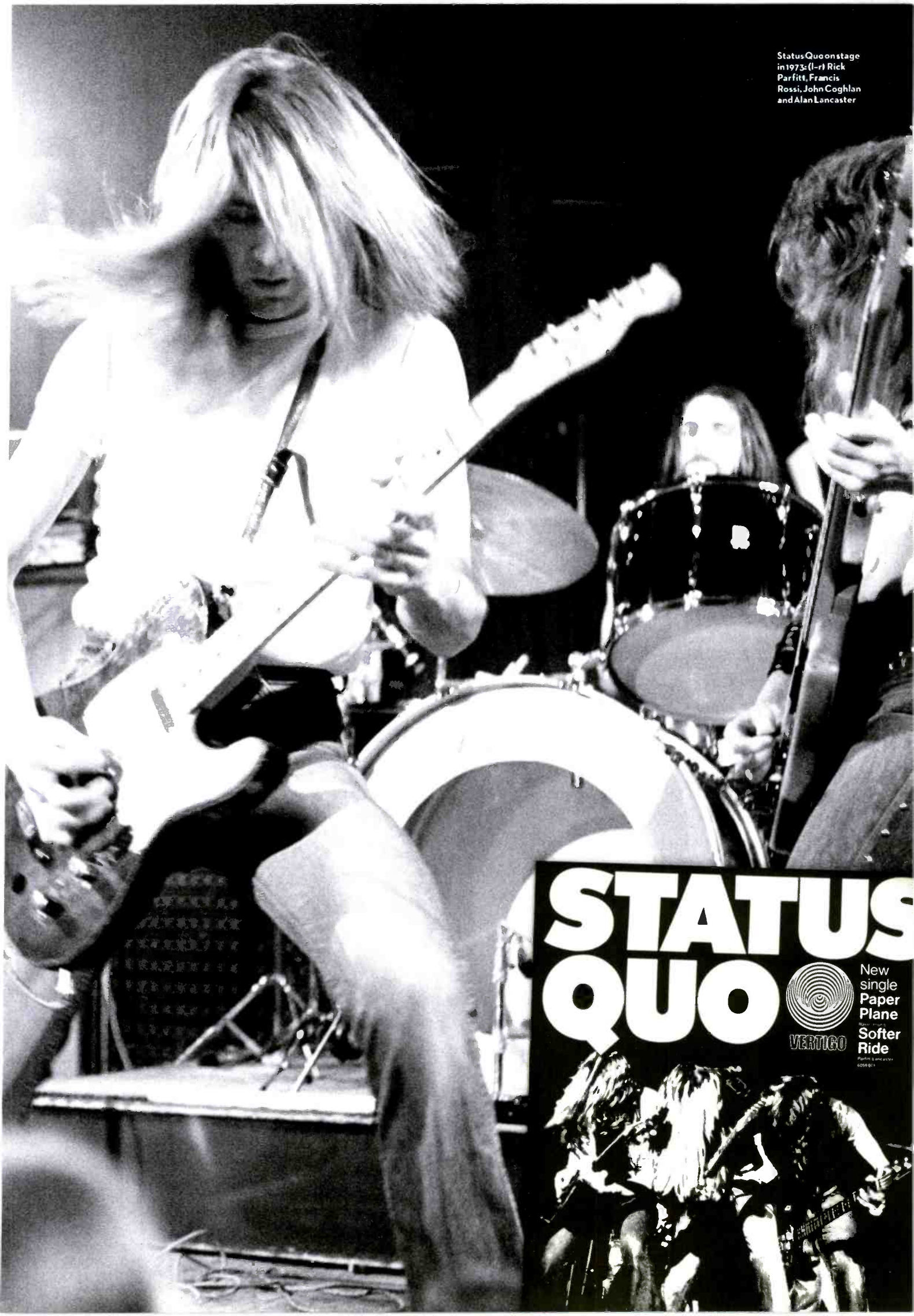
Just a glass, please.

"Owaryathen... This ain't bleedin' Chatham, it's 'Chahham'. Where were you bleedin' well brung up? Sorry, I've got sunburn."

Rossi legged about the room, cocksure, and two fingers up at everything – except honesty.

"'Scuse the brashness, but when you've reached Number 11 in the charts you're there, like. Cam orn, 'ave a drink. Number 11, ah tell yer. You know," said Rossi, "somebody said that guitar break in 'Paper Plane' »

GETTY




Status Quo on stage in 1973: (l-r) Rick Parfitt, Francis Rossi, John Coghlan and Alan Lancaster

was 'amazing'. Oh, what – it's just cheegugeejung, cheegugeejung, and then up one. Amazin'? Ha!"

The hall was dimmed and rude with people who were on the verge of something. The first four rows consisted of kiddies under the age of 15, with clean denim over bellies not yet to be fouled with alcohol. And sweet little women with sweet faces. After that came four rows of people under the age of 17, who have started heavy petting, and have a more serious glow in their eyes.

And after them, in the middle of the auditorium, the remnants of the teenage freak. A few gasps at a weeney and it's all down to a serious, lined face. Further back, the real heavies, clothed in sackcloth and afghan, hair lank and lonely. Faces pinched with trouble. Upstairs, way, way back, mild intellectuals. A strange array of folk.

Quo did little to prepare for stage, except drink, and joke, and gel together in normal states.

Decided to sit between the kiddies and the embryo students. Here I felt safe, until the stern usher demanded to know what was in my glass. He had no answer to that, and sulked back to the cigarette smokers, who are easy prey in a dark room.

Oh sweet noise, sweet feedback, sweet "r" unguarded and cracked out, and crushed in drums, and 12-bars loud as a Concorde in your lavatory. And a voice, full power, lips kissing the mic caught the song high.

Rossi there, see-sawing with Rick Parfitt, up, and down, hair straggled and then caught in a light, and thrown back. That "bar" formed with the forefinger, with the little finger of the same hand vamping away on boogie. Each and every song was virtually the same, but each one was better, because it got louder, and louder, and considerably more frantic.

No boring solos – I say with all ink to *their* pens that they aren't technically capable of delivering one. Instead they play as a group – not a band, but a group. An electric rock band. Oh, the fun of just an amplifier, and an electric guitar, and a drummer, and a bassist, and a voice.

The reaction was divine. From the very first note played, the front four rows rushed from their seats and smothered the front of the stage: hands out and already begging.

"They're going mad," I thought. And why not indeed?

Row by row, the audience began to move, until even the mild intellectuals were peering with interest toward the stage. Now a powerhouse, just a blur of jeans and hair and guitar heads, met with their gaze. And the music – well, if you grew up with the Stones, you just can't damn well help but love Quo. No change – virtually the same chords for every song – licked off, shouted harmonies, basic, oh-so-basic guitar, and a general feeling of kick, and spit.

I was forced to move to the very back as the set gushed onwards. With the dancing and sheer force of the music, the heat in the centre of the hall was sickening. Rossi and Parfitt, scrubbing away on some diabolical but lovely melody of rashness, and brashness. They played for ages, but it seemed like 30 minutes – such was its intensity, and lack of tempo, or change, away from rushed 12s and boogies.

A couple of frantically screamed encores were delivered with another turn-up of volume.

"'Ow could anybody damned well say I play an amazin' guitar break? Now come on, you know what it's all about; it's just damned well playin', innit? That's all, less of all this crap."

I think they ended with "Route 66" – and now they really will be my favourites.

"But they were all so bleedin' young. Did you see 'ow young they were. Jeez. It's frightening."

But there were some older people there, Francis. "Amazin', bleedin' amazin'."

*Roy Hollingworth*

## NME APRIL 17

IT JUST TURNED half past six, well over an hour to go before the doors open, and a queue is already beginning to form outside St Albans City Hall. Out front, too, the presence of the band's maroon Austin Princess signifies that Status Quo are also present, going through a tuning-up ritual that has been known to turn into a three-hour stint. Why the crowd has arrived so early, it's difficult to tell. Maybe they don't believe the 'Sold Out' signs, and are waiting on the off-chance of exchanging their £1s for a ticket.

Tonight's St Albans gig is just one of a string of British dates which have consolidated Status Quo as one of the country's top live rock acts. Every date except one has sold out, and audience reactions are amazing, verging on riot-like proportions.

But is hasn't always been so easy for Quo, who at 10 years old must be one of rock's longest-surviving acts. They first came to attention with an exercise in lightweight psychedelia called "Pictures Of Matchstick Men". When "Ice In The Sun" followed, it looked like Quo had established themselves, at least as a singles band. But little was heard of them until some years later they emerged as a boogie band, accepted latterly by the heavies and boppers alike

"I don't think 'Matchstick Men' was a bopper record," says a healthy-looking Francis Rossi. "It was a record. When we made it, we didn't say, 'Right, there are teenyboppers, there are this and there are that.' We didn't even think it was going to be a hit. In fact," adds Quo's other guitarist, Rick Parfitt, "it was originally intended as a B-side."

There's still no doubt that Quo attract a young audience. At the tour's opening gig in Chatham, the average age of the audience couldn't have been much more than 12. At St Albans, I'd say it was nearer 15/16.

"There's nothing wrong with young kids," says Rossi. "We had someone come in the dressing room the other night saying what's all these boppers doing here, as though there was something wrong with them. It doesn't matter to us what age they are, as long as they dig it."

Parfitt takes up the theme: "I mean, we dig it. We can hear it and we can feel it. I'm sure other people would too, if they took time rather than just put the record on and say, 'Oh yeah, its Status Quo so it's got to be ballsy. It's got to be like rock and boogie and it's got to be moving fine. Oh yeah, take it on the face of it.' They don't try to get into it."

Over those 10 years, say Rossi and Parfitt, the thought of splitting never entered their minds. Even when they weren't exactly pulling in the crowds. "We had a dangerous spell in '69 when there was nothing happening. We were just doing working clubs, and there were hardly any people coming to see us. But it just built again from there, without records or albums," says Rossi. "We never thought of splitting."

Parfitt: "We've been together a long time, and everybody gets confidence in one another. Perhaps we would have thought about splitting if we'd have realised our predicament. But we didn't realise how down we were."

One of the refreshing things about Status Quo is their naturalness – success hasn't gone to their heads. The fact that they've remained the four cockney lads they've always been has undoubtedly had something to do with their appeal.

"We don't feel any different now 'cos we're big," says Rossi. "The only difference is the number of people we see out there. We've made it to a certain extent, but there's always a long way to go and there's a lot more in us." Not that the Quo's progress hasn't been accompanied by a goodly share of knockers. One reviewer described the band as "musically atrocious". While this doesn't bring the band down, it does annoy them.

"Before the success of the band, people that used to write about us were mainly people who liked us. Now there seem to be those who write about the band who don't necessarily want to. It's just a job to them.

"Even if the reviewer doesn't like it, he should at least say the kids dug it," says Rossi.

And as for "musically atrocious", says Rossi: "They're talking a load of crap, 'cos most people don't know anyway. Music is a thing that comes from the heart. It's about feeling. I know that sounds corny, but it's true.

"Someone once said that most of the great pieces of music have been diabolically simple and musically atrocious. We play basic, simple kind of things, but that doesn't mean we're musically atrocious."

Partfitt: "If we tried to be musically more technical, we'd lose the feel that we get."

And that's really what Status Quo are all about. Like Parfitt says, the music kicks you in the back.

From the minute the band steps on stage, the audience surges forward as though someone was throwing £1 notes from the stage. And once they're

> "If we tried to be more technical, we'd lose the feel we get"


up on their feet, they don't sit down again until they leave the gig. A Quo audience puts as much into a gig as the band themselves, and that's a hell of a lot.

From the balcony of the City Hall, the audience is like a seething mass of tentacles. Beneath, the Quo just pound out a relentless boogie. Rossi stalks the stage like he owns it, squeezing the last note out of his guitar and then, with a quick upward thrust, flicking his hair back to return to his original position. Between numbers, he achieves a cunning rapport with the audience.

"Has anybody got the *Dog* [*Of Two Head*] album?" he shouts. The audience responds automatically. "I want yer all to dance up and down and wiggle yer arses."

Audience reaction is already causing promoters grief, as Rossi points out later: "We've had a lot of trouble with heavies. They think we're taunting the audience. There's all sorts of messages come up from the side of the stage telling them to sit down, but it's pointless trying to tell them.

"Once an audience is up, you can't tell them to sit down again. At Leeds, all of a sudden, the audience just surged. I've never seen anything like it... At one gig this guy got up on stage with us and the heavies dragged him off by his hair and just slung him out into the street. That's terrible. He came up to me afterwards and said, 'Sign this for me, man. I was the one who got thrown out!' You knew which one he was because he was bald."

At St Albans, Quo encore with The Doors' "Roadhouse Blues" and "Johnny Be Goode". Only the house lights save the band from another encore. As I make my way backstage, Quo freaks are already milling round the dressing-room area. There's a kind of embarrassment about the fans, mostly female, as they shyly ask for posters, programmes and anything else which can be autographed. One young lady is even flourishing a No 6 cigarette coupon for signature.

Some nights, the band will have another blow in their dressing room after the gig. But tonight it's just a case of unwinding, before joining their wives for the drive home in the maroon limo. You just know that Status Quo have earned every inch of chrome on that car. *Steve Clarke*

## — NME OCTOBER 6 —

"I DON'T CARE WHO you are..." A hand struck me across the face. "You're not comin' in 'ere." Faced with a vision of jobsworthiness as menacing as I'd seen for a long time, I countered with a burst of impolite advice on where my assailant should make love and exited for a further assault.

Security seems to be at premium at Status Quo gigs, it would appear. Certainly it was at this one. There were jobsworths, as far as the eye could see. Fortunately the capacity crowd outnumbered them... thousands of Status Quo freaks, easily recognisable because, apart from the obvious giveaways like a *Hello!* album under left arm and pint of bitter in the right, they usually walk around with heads bowed so that their faces are covered by mountains of hair.

Backstage it's noisy. Rick Parfitt is tuning his guitar; Alan Lancaster tries to rectify the situation by talking loudly and being friendly. Francis Rossi sits and says yeah, he'll "be ready to talk in a minute".

We repair to the next-door room, where we can still hear Parfitt tuning, but a certain amount of sanity is retained. Rossi doesn't particularly like interviews. Well, he likes talking, sure, but he doesn't always reckon on the way they turn out. He's developed an almost paranoid state over the music papers and their treatment of the band.

"Yeah, well before Status Quo made it again (*laughs*), the cats who were writing about us were people who were interested in writing about us. They thought, 'Yeah, nice little band – I'll have a write on that.' They were into the band – whereas now a lot of them have to write about us because it's their job. So they figure they'll slag us off and see what happens. That's the way it reads anyway, and the way it feels.

"Any criticism hurts, because they are slagging something you live with and something you believe in. If there's a riff to the music, they think that's something terrible. Oh dear me, a riff – can't have that. But if we are into it, it doesn't really matter. Like the whole Reading thing – we're supposed to have died a death there and been the worst band in the world. But go out and ask the people – see what they thought. They were there – we saw 'em, everybody else saw 'em. Critics say our music isn't original, but what is? It's all been done before, everything."

> "We got in a bit of debt – we were earning very little money"

It's been more than five years since Rossi wrote "Pictures Of Matchstick Men" and the band joined the teenybopper ranks. He looks back on it with mild amusement. "The fans had seen us on the box, and they'd come to gigs to have a scream, touch you up and all that, mess about, and pull your hair..."

He looks serious for a moment and adds, "And the place was dead – they weren't getting any buzz off what we were doing."

It's only in the past few months, since the release of *Piledriver*, that Quo have made any significant impression on the music business. For five years they were virtually ignored. So it's significant that the four members of the band have stuck it out together all this time.

Says Rossi: "No point in breaking up, really. If I'd left we'd either have had to go back to work, which none of us wanted anyway, or we'd have gone in another band and started again.

"So it was sensible to stay together. We didn't actually think, 'We've got to stay together and make it', but on reflection that's how it was. I don't think we realised how down we were, because we always managed to maintain our self-respect and confidence."

Financially, the band were in dead schmuck.

"We got in a bit of debt – we were earning very little money. In fact, I don't know how we did it. Sometimes we came out with £5. We supported T. Rex just before they had 'Ride A White Swan' – things like that – and just £5 was all you'd get for it. Funny though – even now it's costing us a hell of a lot to keep going. Ten times as much as it did a couple of years back."

Rossi describes their way of getting back on their feet again as "going in the back door". So from supporting T. Rex they then went on tour with Slade, playing as many gigs as humanly possible. "Everything helped us – yeah, the Slade tour helped."

The yardstick of a band's success is when their old record company re-release their old material. So just when Quo had *Piledriver* (Vertigo) selling and in the album charts, good old Pye started putting old products on the market. Rossi was not unnaturally annoyed.

"It's all right for most of the cats who want to get hold of it, but it does seem a bit of a con. They just sling product out and see what happens."

The band's new album, *Hello!*, is the second they've released with Phonogram. Says Rossi: "It's a gradual progression from *Piledriver*. Everything we do is steady, ploddy. We plod on. Everybody says, 'Yeah, that's a load of bullshit and it's a bit of this and it's very riffy and it's all very simple', but they don't really understand. We don't consciously sit down and say, 'Let's be simple.' I mean, music is feel. The greatest musicians play from inside.

"Really, we'd like some respect. Chuck Berry has respect, and he can be rough – he's just a feel merchant. I don't think people really listen to where we are at – they aren't being honest about it."

So conversation turns full circle. We're back on Rossi's paranoia about the music papers again: "Yeah, they think, 'I'll have a go at that.' Sells papers anyway, don't it."

Bar John Coghlan, every member of Quo contributes to the writing side. And "fifth member" Bob Young, who has been known to join the band on stage, co-writes material as well.

"John's got a couple of things coming along, but it's very difficult for him. You can't really write a song on the drums. He can't sit at his kit and say, 'Yeah, that sounds nice.'

Bob? Good boy, he is... Doesn't really like being on stage, because he feels silly. But he writes songs and looks after the band. He's mother. We write all the time – the main problem is gross lack of time. But we're always plonking around."

While the band's publicist would have it that Quo are setting America alight, Rossi is not so exuberant. Again he uses his phrase "getting in the back door". And he adds: "I know America is supposed to be important. They say 'you've got to do it out there'. But I don't really like America, and I don't like the thought of going back. But we'll go back, go in the back door, not headlining. You've got to do it properly." *Julie Webb* •

# Readers' letters

**MM/NME JAN–MAR** Lou Reed rules, RIP the Cavern, Floyd's fripperies and more.

## Unhappy camper

"Bolan isn't camp – he's prissy and fey, and engrossed in his own image." David Bowie – Quotes Of The Year.

Has David Bowie's music been lost behind the facade of his stage image? Having just seen Bowie live, I must say he was lousy. His act illustrated something that I and many others have long suspected; there is not enough weight or guts behind his music and lyrics. Instead he relies heavily on production effects. Those same effects ruined what good there was on Lou Reed's latest LP, *Transformer*.

Why have Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground been suppressed for so long? Long ago they should have had some of the adulation that Bowie has seen, above all, from many critics.

As for the fans, when we were rooting what music there was from the ruins of flower power, we should have been listening to the Velvets. Why didn't we? Perhaps it's something to do with Reed's culture. New York is reared on hard drugs, pop (Warhol) and camp. Alarmingly, New York's present is our future.

Reed's music is wicked ("Lady Godiva's Operation"); Reed's music is sad, coming as a cry from the stifled heathen atmosphere of New York. Reed's struggle, I think, is appropriate to the time. His image is nothing to do with glitter. He's plain black leather camp, yet very, very sad. He is, as Richard Williams so charmingly put it, like "an ageing whore".

I suppose Reed is reality as Bowie is fantasy. Escapism is what the kiddies want. They'll grow out of it. Bowie the charmer is the queen for them. He's distant, sweeter and softer and easier to accept than the closer, harsher, luring music of the older queen.

Both have something to say but how is it offered? Live, at least you get the feeling that Reed, "the chauvinistic pig", is human and not plastic.

**ROBERT HARDY, Radcliffe Park Road, Salford 6, Lancs (*MM* Jan 13)**

## Farewell to the Cavern

*An obituary notice by Bob Wooler, Cavern Club resident DJ/compere, 1961–1966:* Liverpool's famous Cavern Club, the backstreet warehouse basement where Beatlemania was born, is due to be bulldozed this week to make way for a city-centre underground railway line.

The Cavern opened 16 years ago as a Ronnie Scott's-type club with a Left Bank bohemian atmosphere, featuring trad, big bands and cool combos. Many artists of international repute, from Acker Bilk to Josh White, rang the musical changes in the stony cellar, ranging from ragtime to reggae and skiffle to soul.

The Beatles' Cavern debut was at a lunchtime session in February 1961. Their subsequent worldwide fame rubbed off on the Cavern and it became a top tourist attraction, much ballyhooed by press, radio and television. All together the Fab Four played there 292 times, bowing out in August 1963.

In February 1966 the club closed down with the decline of the Mersey Beat scene, signalling the end of Liverpool's rock renaissance. Eventually the premises were altered and the club reopened as a rhythm-and-booze venue. Now, on the 10th anniversary of The Beatles' first Number One hit – "Please Please Me" – the Home Of The Beatles will ironically cease to exist.

**BOB WOOLER, West Derby Road, Liverpool 6 (*NME* Feb 27)**

## Who next?

After listening to "Pinball Wizard" by The New Seekers on the radio, I would like to say how disgusted I was to hear them bring out such a bad reproduction. The Who are one of my favourite bands and it's heartbreaking to hear another group ruin one of their masterpieces. Also on this single is another snatch of The Who's pop opera. I just hope that it's not going to be as commercial as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, as *Tommy* MUST be in a category of its own.

**SUE, Paisley, Scotland (*NME* Mar 24)**

## Dark side of the sleeve

I have just bought Pink Floyd's new album *Dark Side Of The Moon*. I was astonished at the price – £2.50 for less than 45 minutes of music. This is ridiculous. Packed with the album, in a double sleeve incidentally, were two useless posters and two equally useless stickers. Without these and the double sleeve, I reckon that the album could have retailed at around £2.10 and everyone would have been happy.

Why should we pay for this trash when after all we want to listen to the music and not look at the sleeve? Record companies should instil a feeling of goodwill rather than an "I've been conned", as I have.

**GP KELSEY, Brough, Yorks (*NME* March 24)**

## Shirley some mistake

I have discovered a great new girl ballad singer. Her name? Yoko Ono. I discovered her by chance. I put the B-side of John Lennon's "Instant Karma" single on at 33rpm, and Yoko's previously screeching and screaming voice took on a new dimension. Watch out, Shirley Bassey, Yoko's coming.

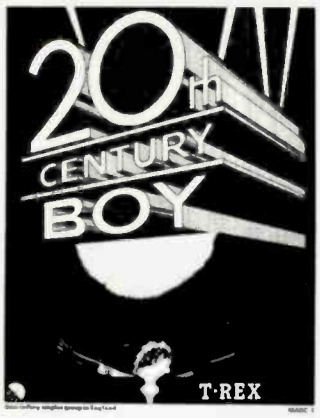
**CRAIG BROWN, Tullecombe, Rogate, Sussex (*MM* Jan 13)**

## Spot the beef

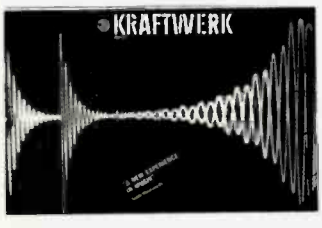
On six consecutive albums Captain Beefheart has approached the playing of rock music in a unique way. So if he decides to explore certain possibilities in the world of easy listening, who are we to criticise his decision, or to say that he ceases to be progressive? (Does anyone still use that term?) Can we assume he has sold out?

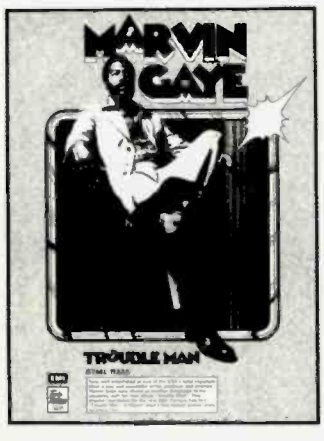
All the reviews I read warned me that as a Beefheart fan I would be disappointed by *Clear Spot*. However, when I heard it, it made me smile. Having heard the Captain be wild and frantic on many occasions, it made an interesting change to hear him relaxed and jovial. And listening to the much-slated "Too Much Time", I wondered how many writers in a sentimental ballad of this type allude to love being as deep as the ocean as well as to eating a can of stale beans and a can of sardines?

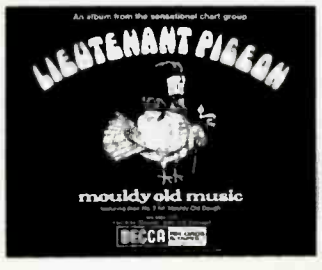
**ANDREW, Elborough St, Southfields, London SW18 (*MM* Jan 27)**








GETTY


# 1973

## APRIL – JUNE

## BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, LED ZEPPELIN, ROXY MUSIC AND MORE

March 10, 1973: Rod Stewart and Ronnie Lane of the Faces in concert for the *Popgala* show on Dutch TV

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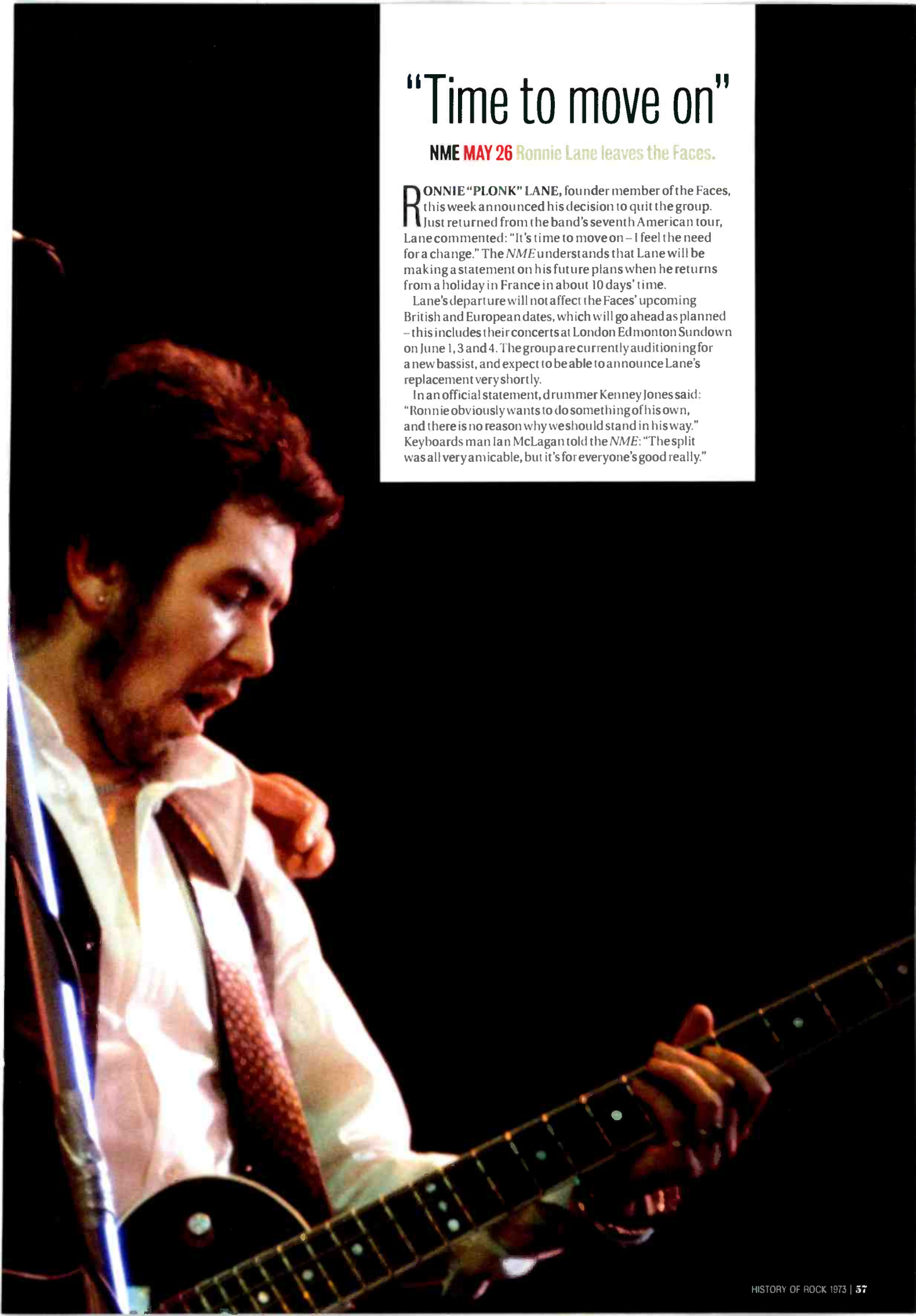


# "Time to move on"

## NME MAY 26 Ronnie Lane leaves the Faces.

**RONNIE "PLONK" LANE,** founder member of the Faces, this week announced his decision to quit the group. Just returned from the band's seventh American tour, Lane commented: "It's time to move on – I feel the need for a change." The *NME* understands that Lane will be making a statement on his future plans when he returns from a holiday in France in about 10 days' time.

Lane's departure will not affect the Faces' upcoming British and European dates, which will go ahead as planned – this includes their concerts at London Edmonton Sundown on June 1, 3 and 4. The group are currently auditioning for a new bassist, and expect to be able to announce Lane's replacement very shortly.

In an official statement, drummer Kenney Jones said: "Ronnie obviously wants to do something of his own, and there is no reason why we should stand in his way." Keyboards man Ian McLagan told the *NME*: "The split was all very amicable, but it's for everyone's good really."

10cc perform their third single "Rubber Bullets" on *Top Of The Pops*: (l-r) Lol Creme, Graham Gouldman, Kevin Godley and Eric Stewart

# "There seems to be a certain naivete there..."

**MM JUNE 23 How 10cc (formerly Hotlegs) sneaked "Rubber Bullets" and racier numbers past the BBC censors and into the charts. "Try it in your Mitzi Gaynor voice," advises drummer Kevin Godley.**

**UNTIL A YEAR** ago, Graham Gouldman was going through what he calls his "why not?" period. "Any time someone asked me to do something, I always asked myself, 'Why not?' and went ahead and did it. I really never considered whether it would be the best thing for me at that particular time – I hadn't a clue what I wanted to do."

Gouldman is stretched out in the white sitting room of his new mock-Georgian house on the outskirts of Rochdale. It's three in the morning and he's exhausted, having just been driven back from a recording session at Stockport's Strawberry Studios. Tired, but happy. The "why not" time is over, banished by the success of 10cc, which has been a victory for good pop music over geography, snobbery and the British broadcasting system.

While Bette Midler – his wife's favourite – croons "Am I Blue" in the background, Gouldman talks of the past few years, of the hit songs that ensured his comfortable income, and of the effort to find something more worthwhile than just being a cog in a song factory.

"When I worked for Kasenetz-Katz in New York, I'd sit in an office all day and maybe write two songs. Then, just as I was leaving at the end of the day, one of them would come up and say, 'Look, gimme one more song. I'm hungry – just one more.' So I'd go and sit on the bog or something and write another one. Then they'd say, 'Now I'm really hungry... gimme just one more.'"

For the past three weeks, though, the 10cc experience has been not unlike those days. With "Rubber Bullets" firing up the chart, UK Records wanted an album from them to capitalise on the hit. The difficulty there is that, in the past, whenever they've tried to write songs for an album, they've always turned out to be singles. This time, though, the heat was on, and they had to have it finished by last weekend, in time for drummer Kev Godley to get married and jet off to Barbados.

So, one night last week, when they were stuck for a couple of tracks, Graham and Eric Stewart went into one room, and Kev and Lol Creme sat in another. Time elapsed until – Eureka! – they suddenly had two more songs – which both turned out to be as good as anything else on the


GETTY (2)

Gouldman played in various Manchester-based bands in the '60s and penned hits such as "For Your Love" for The Yardbirds and "Bus Stop" for The Hollies

album. I won't tell you which they are, but it sure proves that song factories can work, when they're run on fun.

The great success of "Rubber Bullets" amuses them no end, because it arrived with no assistance from the BBC – which took a look at the title, decided it was about Northern Ireland, and promptly buried it in the wastebin.

"We really don't know how it became a hit," says Graham. "I suppose it was in the discotheques – that, and maybe word-of-mouth, too." The chemistry of a hit single therefore remains a mystery to them – "Donna" was a sleeper, too, and would "Johnny Don't Do It" have been a hit if they'd left it for another few weeks? Whatever, they've proved again that the godalmighty BBC can't always stop good records from making the chart.

"It's extremely funny," Graham continues. "As soon as it got into the charts, five or six BBC producers rang Chris Denning at UK Records and said, 'Can we have another copy of the single, please? We seem to have misplaced the one you sent us originally.'

"Before that, in fact, Chris had got a few shortened copies pressed for BBC play, because he thought maybe it was a bit long, but when the producers came through again he told them he hadn't got any shortened ones left and they had to play the full version."

The song, of course, contains references to "*balls and brains*" and "*balling in the street*", which worried the group. But again, the Beeb doesn't seem to have noticed. "They really don't seem to listen to more than the first 10 seconds," Graham muses. "I mean, look at 'Walk On The Wild Side' – all that stuff about oral sex and so on. There seems to be a certain naivete there..."

10cc's secret seems to be that they pack a lot of content into their songs, each one being a mini-cantata with characters and some sort of a plot. Their careful exploitation of the resources available at Strawberry Studios (part-owned by Gouldman and Stewart) is also noticeable, adding distinction to the songs.

"We're lucky that we've got four singers, four potential lead voices," says Lol. "One voice throughout an album can get wearying, sometimes." And they use the contrasting voices brilliantly, imbuing the various song-characters with wit and point.

**"We're lucky that we've got four singers, four potential voices"**

There's "Headline Hustler", for example, written by Graham and Eric. Clattering along like a near relative of "Rubber Bullets", it uses topical themes: the Lambton Affair and the BBC, the CIA and Watergate. "Sand In My Face" is about a man who takes a Charles Atlas Dynamic Tension course, and would be a perfect single.

The there's "The Dean And I" which, were it a movie, would star Doris Day and Rock Hudson, and which captures exactly that ice-cream-soda world of graduation days and reluctant virgins. "That one," says Kevin, "was written by Godley and Creme and Rodgers and Hammerstein."

There's "Ships Don't Disappear In The Night (Do They?)" – a tribute to Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff, who figure prominently in the chorus, with another refrain which runs: "*You gotta be nice... to Vincent Price.*"

Eric and Graham wrote that one, and Kevin pleads: "When you've heard them all, will you tell us who's the silliest?"

"Fresh Air For My Momma", written by Kev and Lol, doesn't sound silly at all. It's a ballad of the Pet Sounds variety with a strong lead vocal and immense harmonies, beautifully voiced – but it's subtitled "The American Way Of Dying" and bears a strong thematic resemblance to Evelyn Waugh's novel *The Loved One*, reeking of funeral parlours and coffins sliding into the flames.

All these songs demonstrate their collective fixation with American customs and lifestyles, and they're among the few Britons who've captured the atmosphere so perfectly. To them, the distance seems to lend perspective as well as enchantment, and they're just as clever at it as Bryan Ferry, perhaps even more so.

"Speed Kills", by Eric, began in the days when he, Lol and Kevin were Hotlegs: "We first tried it when someone suggested that we do another drum-based thing to follow up 'Neanderthal Man' about 18 months ago. There are 14 guitar parts on it – it's supposed to be a kind of concerto, my contribution to the classics!"

It rattles along like a V-8 Ford (the mingled guitars sounding like Eric Clapton and Duane Allman in a hall of mirrors, while the thick vocal harmonies play a backing role to Eric's virtuosity; in fact the whole album is spattered with his brilliant guitar, particularly noticeable in the case of his accompanying slide riffs and occasional solos). It may remind you a little of Manfred Mann's Manikin cigars TV ad, speeded up and minus Vivien Neves.

The album will also include the three A-sides they've released to date and – perhaps silliest of all – a Godley/Creme selection entitled "The Hospital Song". "It's really a shame that Jimmy Clitheroe died," says Kevin. "He would have sung this one perfectly."

It's the tale of a demented patient who sings to his anaesthetist: "*I get off on what you give me, darlin'.*" Lol, dubbing on the lead vocal, performs it in a furious, impotent, Woody Allen-ish half-suppressed scream. "Lol," says Kev, "can you try it in your Mitzi Gaynor voice?"

"Try to sound pathetic," adds Graham. "Even more pathetic than you sound now."

The great thing about 10cc – and living in Manchester has a lot to do with this – is that they're so fresh. Anything but slaves to the trends and stultifying hipness which afflict the London music business, they have a new and exciting angle. After all, how many other groups would write a very funny song about bed-wetting? *Richard Williams*

# 1973

APRIL – JUNE

"He's artistically out of this world": Mike Oldfield at work on *Tubular Bells* at Richard Branson's Manor Studios


# "We're only just starting"

**NME MAY 12** Richard Branson, the man behind the Virgin record shops, starts a label. First release: *Tubular Bells*.

"**JUST WHAT THE** world needs," said Frank Zappa, sardonically introducing his short-lived Bizarre label four years ago. "Another record company." As it happened, the 11 albums released while Bizarre was operational were of an artistic standard rarely achieved by the blanket output of the larger recording combines, because (and I make this statement whilst fully aware of the cynical sneers it will elicit from the rock business at large) the criteria of the label were aesthetic rather than commercial/pragmatic.

OK, so it didn't last (and neither did John Peel's equally altruistic Dandelion label), and possibly the time when an Island Records could get off the ground in the face of such giants as CBS, EMI, Decca and the Kinney Corporation are long gone. But right now a renewed attempt at combining artistic integrity with financial viability is to be launched by an independent company. And this time it looks as if it might just work.

The company involved is Virgin Records, known so far only as Britain's most successful (in terms of rapidity of growth) privately owned and operated chain of record stores. The key factors indicating that their projected label could accomplish what Dandelion and Bizarre failed to do are that the organisation not only possesses its own studio (the famous Manor in Oxfordshire), but it also has a substantial control of the distribution of its product through its countrywide network of shops.

**"Every company, apart from us, turned Mike down"**

The Virgin label is the culmination of two-and-a-half years of hard work and slow evolution on the part of a determined group of people led by Richard Branson, one-time editor of *Student* magazine. "We started in 1971," explains Branson, "as a mail order service based in our Oxford Street branch. We used the abolition of Retail Price Maintenance, which was brought in around that time, to enable our stock to be sold at anything up to 25 per cent less than the recommended price.

"Because no other shops were willing to cut profits as a long-term investment, we found ourselves cornering the market, particularly in imports, and we expanded very quickly over the first six months. Now we have 14 shops in most of the major cities, and we plan to open several new ones within the year."

Eventually Branson plans to run the label on a kind of split level. The premier label will concern itself with signed artists and normal systems of advances against royalties for full use of Manor studio time; the second one will run on a more limited but artistically even more adventurous schedule.

Via this last outlet, acts will be able to record in limited time and with a special contract, producing albums pressed in smaller quantity and distributed entirely through the company's own shops.

The first string of groups, who will be exclusively signed to the label and a projected

PHOTOSHOT

# Alternative Virgin

Virgin management agency, will have their records distributed and pressed by Island (who, in turn, are handled by EMI), although Virgin will retain control of musical content, sleeve design and promotion. "The secondary label," says Branson, "could take over where Dandelion left off, if it works out.

As for the main one, we won't be signing a hell of a lot of acts at first, although 12 albums are scheduled for 1973 because we want to restrict our signings to things we all believe in artistically. And, besides, we're only just starting. We don't want to jump the gun."

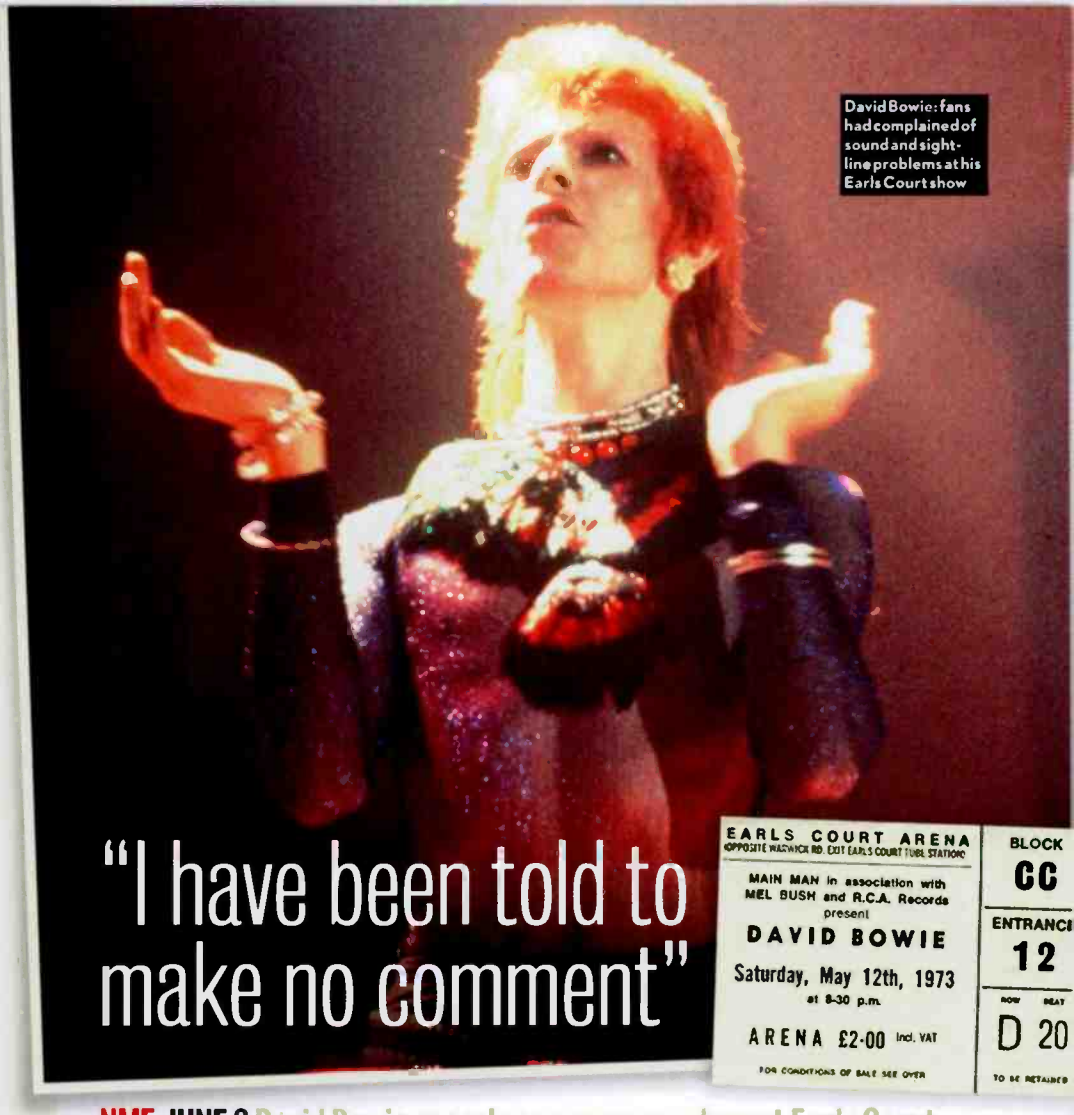
The first releases on the Virgin label are *Tubular Bells* by ex-Kevin Ayers multi-instrumentalist Mike Oldfield; *Radio Gnome Invisible* by Anglo-French group Gong: and *Manor Live*, an album of collaborations by a large number of different artists under the name Steve York's Camelo Pardalis. Featured on *Manor Live* are, amongst others, Elkie Brooks, Jim Mullen, Ollie Halsall, Mike Patto, Tim Hinkley, Rob Tait, Lol Coxhill, Boz, Graham Bond, Diane Stewart, Marc Charig, Mick Moody, Steve York and Pete Gage, many of whom appear by permission of Island Records.

The Gong album is the result of a deal between Virgin and the French label BYG, and is the first of a four-part sequence, this one entitled *Flying Teapot*.

For this album the band's lineup was expanded to include – apart from ex-Soft Machine guitarist and leader Daevid Allen and his wife Gilli Smyth – Christian Fritsch (guitar, bass), Steve Hillage (guitar), Tim Blake (synthesizer, trumpet and vocals), Francis Moze (ex-Magma, bass), Didier Malherbe (saxes) and Laurie Allen (drums).

Mike Oldfield's record features him on overdubbed guitars, mandolin, bass, chimes, percussion, keyboards synthesizer and vocals, and has caused so much excitement at Virgin that they are planning a promotional concert at the Festival Hall in June, which will include Stevie Winwood and Robert Wyatt as additional musicians.

"Every company, apart from us, turned him down," says Branson. "Which is unbelievable, after you've heard the album. He's artistically out of this world, and we can see no reason why *Tubular Bells* shouldn't be a commercial success too." *Ian Macdonald*

David Bowie: fans had complained of sound and sight-line problems at his Earls Court show

## NME JUNE 2 David Bowie cancels an enormous show at Earls Court.

**DAVID BOWIE'S PROJECTED** return concert at London's Earls Court stadium on June 30 – which was to have been the final date in his current massive tour schedule – has been cancelled. The decision to scrap this show was taken by his manager, Tony Defries, who said: "Neither David nor myself will make any further comment on the matter."

The 18,000-capacity arena was the starting point for the Bowie tour on May 12, and his concert on that date was subjected to widespread criticism from sections of the audience who could neither see nor hear him. Visual and acoustic improvements were promised for his June 30 return. In the absence of any official explanation, it seems likely that the gig was cancelled in case these new standards could not be achieved.

Commented Defries: "It appears that the box office has been opened before the appointed date without my knowledge or permission, and that a very large quantity of mail has been received from prospective ticket-buyers. I will do my ut most to ensure that all of this is sorted and money returned as soon as possible."

Promoter Mel Bush told the *NME*: "I have been told to make no comment on the Bowie cancellation. But I would emphasise that my Slade concert at Earls Court the following day (July 1) is definitely still on."

Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* album is now in the charts in six different countries – Britain, the United States, Italy, Holland, Sweden and Norway. It is also on release in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland and Austria – and is about to be issued in Australia, South Africa and Japan. At press time, the LP was approaching £500,000 gross in British sales alone.

# "Absolutely untrue"

## NME JUNE 9 Keith Richards will not be leaving the Rolling Stones.

**RUMOURS CIRCULATING THIS** week, suggesting that Keith Richards is leaving the Rolling Stones, were vehemently denied by Mick Jagger. The story seems to have emanated in Los Angeles, where Nicky Hopkins – who has worked with the Stones on many occasions – reportedly told a US rock writer that Richards had been ousted by Jagger, who was seeking Ronnie Wood of the Faces as a replacement. The rumour was strengthened last week when two sources in Britain claimed to have heard from Richards himself that he was leaving the Stones.

Richards was out of town and unavailable for comment, but Mick Jagger told the *NME*: "The report has no basis in fact whatsoever – it's absolutely untrue." Ronnie Wood also denied that any approach had been made to him by the Stones.

ALPHA


Gram Parsons at a party in a park in Los Angeles, June 1973, while recording sessions for his second album, *Grievous Angel* (inset)

# "I don't know what country rock is"

**NME MAY 12 "Contemporary country artist" Gram Parson on the Stones, The Flying Burrito Brothers and why he had to leave The Byrds.**

NOWADAYS IT'S THE done thing for your heavy friends to drop by the studio and lay down some choice licks on your album for kicks and maybe expenses. And when those friends are pianist Glen D Hardin, drummer Ronnie Tutt and that much-emulated guitar hero James Burton - the mainstays of paunchy Presley's back-up band - then you're really well in. Well, they were all there when Gram Parsons decided to cut his long-overdue solo album.

And Lord knows, it's not that these cats need the money.

"They can command any fee they want," says Parsons. "The fact is, they were really keen to do the album, and beyond that, a lotta times they came along for free."

What Parsons doesn't say, but you can read between the lines, is that these musicians needed an alternative to churning out "Lord, You Gave Me A Mountain", "My Way" and hurried facsimiles of the Hillbilly Cat's past glories amidst the Las Vegas facade. "Actually... Glen, Ronnie and James are pals from a long way back," drawls the mellow country gentleman, "so I guess it was relatively easy for me to get them down to my sessions."

Without any trace of egotism, Parsons continues: "You gotta understand that cutting this album was entirely different from playing on some plastic group's record. Now that may not sound like a lot to you, but for these guys it was incredible."

And so are some of the recorded results. It's certainly true that Gram Parsons has garnered a fine reputation since the mid-'60s, when he hauled his patched-denim ass out of the East and settled in LA to re-pioneer the musical heritage of the Old West. Parsons was the man who instigated the much-abused cosmic cowboy movement with The International Submarine Band, got The Byrds to record their *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* masterpiece, and helped form the sun-kissed Flying Burrito Brothers.

So even LA's hordes of paranoid poseurs reacted with almost unprecedented enthusiasm to the news that Gram Parsons was finally taking a band out on the one-night ulcer trail. Even the jaded ladies of the canyons were far more interested in getting into the group than actually getting into the group. And there's a subtle difference.

There he was going out on the road, resplendent in his Mr Nudie "dude ranch Wild West" suit, a dashing, elegant figure. But even a good ole kicker like Gram Parsons has to contend with avoiding images such as being called a country rocker.

As laid-back as a field of corn having been thoroughly worked over by a bulldozer, Parsons reclines in the back of his Greyhound touring bus, parked out front of his rustic Coldwater Canyon ranch-style house, and softly mumbles: "Man, I still don't know what country rock is!"

He gazes at this beer can, takes a throat full, and gurgles: "I would say I'm a contemporary country music artist with an electric rock'n'roll band."

Again he pauses, nods and concludes: "Yep... I guess that's exactly what I am."

Though to a large extent responsible for the spate of cosmic-cowboy bands that have sprung up almost as regularly as spaghetti Westerns, Parsons' opinion is less than favourable towards such outfits.

"Sure, they're fun to watch," he concedes, "but in no ways are they country bands. Most of them are just San Francisco drinking bands as opposed to the regular San Francisco acid bands. The only guy among that lot who has any taste is Jerry Garcia, but apart from what he does, most of the music that these bands call country rock just doesn't turn me on."

Although country music is the largest single market in America, there's still this misconception held by the heavy-metal kids that country folk are nothing but rednecks, beer drinkers and blue-rinsed blonde honky tonk queens. And country types reckon their

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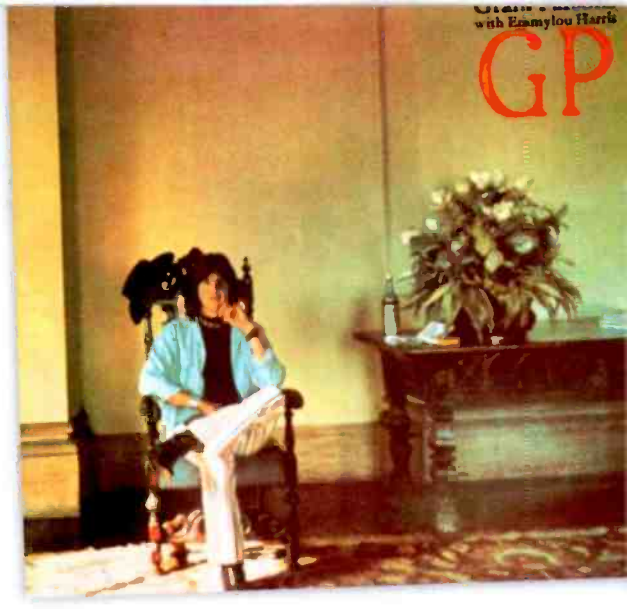

# Parsons the country preacher

detractors are just decadent, long-haired hippies. In short: the Easy Rider is still in search of America. To try to rectify these injustices, Gram Parsons joined The Byrds and persuaded Roger McGuinn to record *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*.

"When I first joined The Byrds I was quite pleased with the result, simply because it had been so damn hard for me to get a real country thing going," Parsons recollects. "But the more I played with The Byrds, the more I wished I could get them to do real country songs like 'That's All It Took' instead of some of their more familiar songs, which I felt were a waste of time. At this point, we were working to really big audiences but weren't getting the response we could have gotten had we pursued the direction of the *Rodeo* album."

Though there were no major clashes over musical policy, Parsons was to split from The Byrds on a matter of principle – he refused to perform before segregated audiences in South Africa.

He tells me: "I was raised in the South by some wonderful black people and what common sense I have I owe to them. Listen, man," and for once his voice rises above its mellow monotone, "I couldn't play before segregated audience. That's something no person should ever do."

The subject gets his adrenalin working overtime, and he cites a number of cases illustrating the evils of apartheid. He spits: "I think the South African government are nothing but a bunch of skunks and really behind the rest of the civilised world."

Calming himself, he takes a retrospective look at his days as a Flying Burrito Brother.

"I loved the Burritos," he drawls, "but I got tired of it all after a while. Again, it was a question of trying to get the right kind of people to form a real country band. I can remember some really inspired moments when we recorded *Gilded Palace Of Sin*, but soon after that everything just bored me. If you really wanna know, I was going to leave when Chris Etheridge left, but I stayed on to front the band until they found a suitable replacement. The trouble was they took so long that finally I had to wish them all the best and quit."

This was to bring Parsons back to Britain and to re-establish his friendship with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, who had dedicated "Wild Horses" to him. It was to be a fruitful collaboration, and it could be that his presence influenced the more country-esque cuts on *Exile On Main St.*

Parsons says: "I think it was a logical step for the Stones to get into country music, because they've always been well into the old blues since they first began. Whether it was subconscious or not, they were trying to get into an old country-blues type thing, which is part of the Rolling Stones sound.

"I suppose it was a coincidence that I happened to come along with The Byrds, and Mick and Keith liked a few of my songs, coupled to the fact that we gotta lotta kicks outta just sitting around playing together.

"By this time, I'd had it with LA, the Burritos and the rush. So I had to do a solo album, but at that time there was just no way to do it. I couldn't get the right musicians or a record company. So I called Keith and said that I wanted to come over to London and hang out, play some country music, because he wanted to produce me.

**"Country music is sincere in the same way as R&B and BB King"**

"Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, including Keith's prior commitments and the lack of suitable musicians in Britain, all I did was sing and pick with the Stones and sing on 'Lovin' Cup' and 'Sweet Virginia'."

Returning to LA, Parsons once again set about getting together his band The Fallen Angels. And his prize acquisition was singer Emmylou Harris.

"She's so important to this band," he insists. "You see, there aren't many country tenor singers around except for those straight session Nashville cats."

Parsons is confident that The Fallen Angels will succeed where others failed to establish a common denominator for both rock and country music fans.

"At the moment I'm still having trouble in figuring a lot of country folk out," he began, curiously. "I've found out that they're not prejudiced just as long as you come to their city and spend your money in their recording studios. I can remember when they were prejudiced no matter what."

Parsons believes his Fallen Angels will help people who've only listened to the likes of Doc Watson and Flatt & Scruggs to enjoy a more contemporary approach, while rock fans will then become exposed to artists like Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard, George Jones and Tammy Wynette.

He sums up: "Today, people wanna hear about the dealer on the street, 'Superfly', and anything that goes against the accepted establishment, and because of this I think they wanna hear country music.

"Country music isn't bubblegum and it isn't geared to sell like bubblegum. It's sincere in the same way as R&B and BB King. Now, if that can appeal to younger people, I see no reason why country music can't have the same appeal."

*Roy Carr*

"I was going to leave when Chris Etheridge left": The Flying Burrito Brothers – (l-r) "Sneaky Pete" Kleinow, Chris Hillman, Bernie Leadon, Michael Clarke, Gram Parsons

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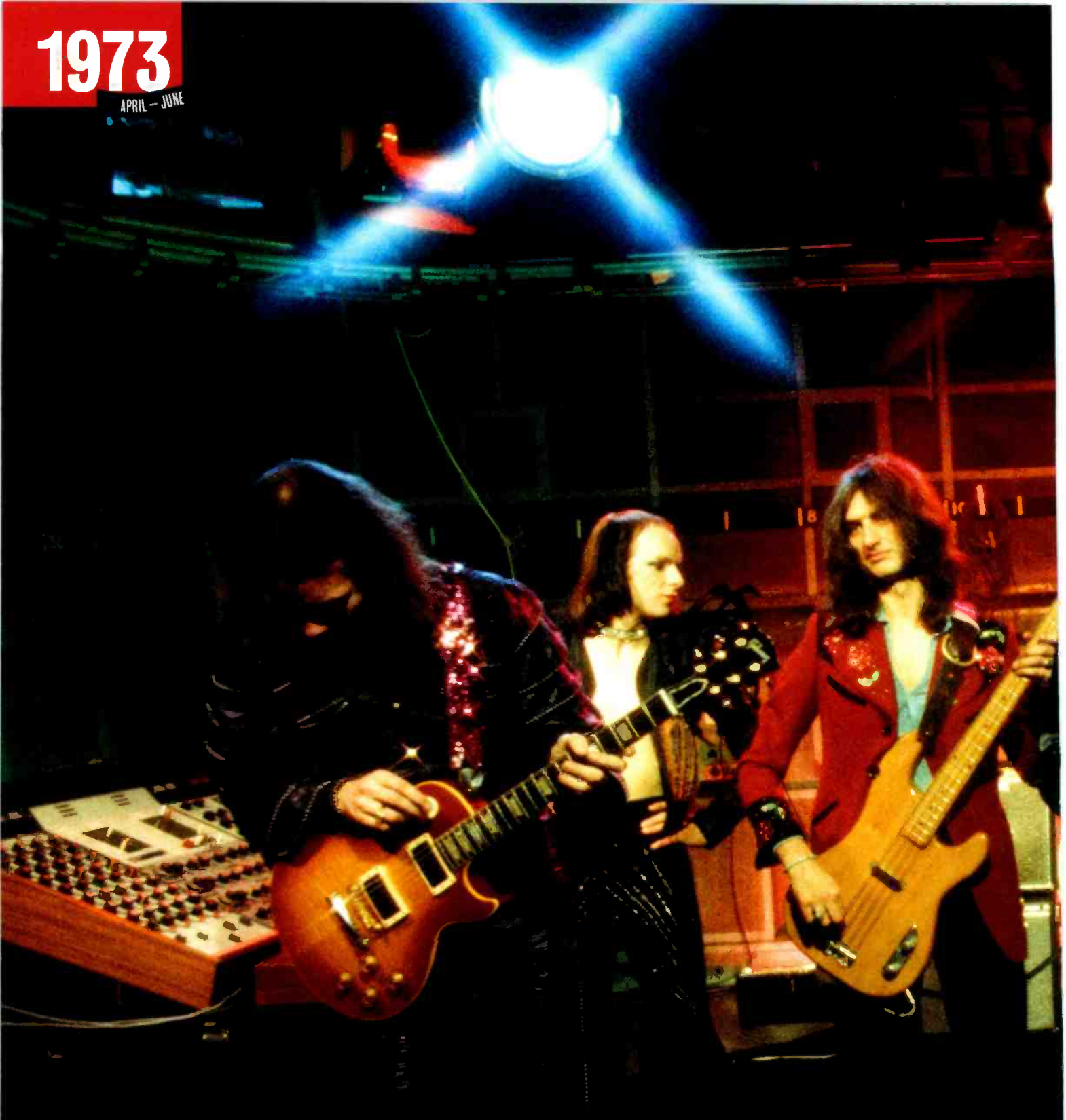
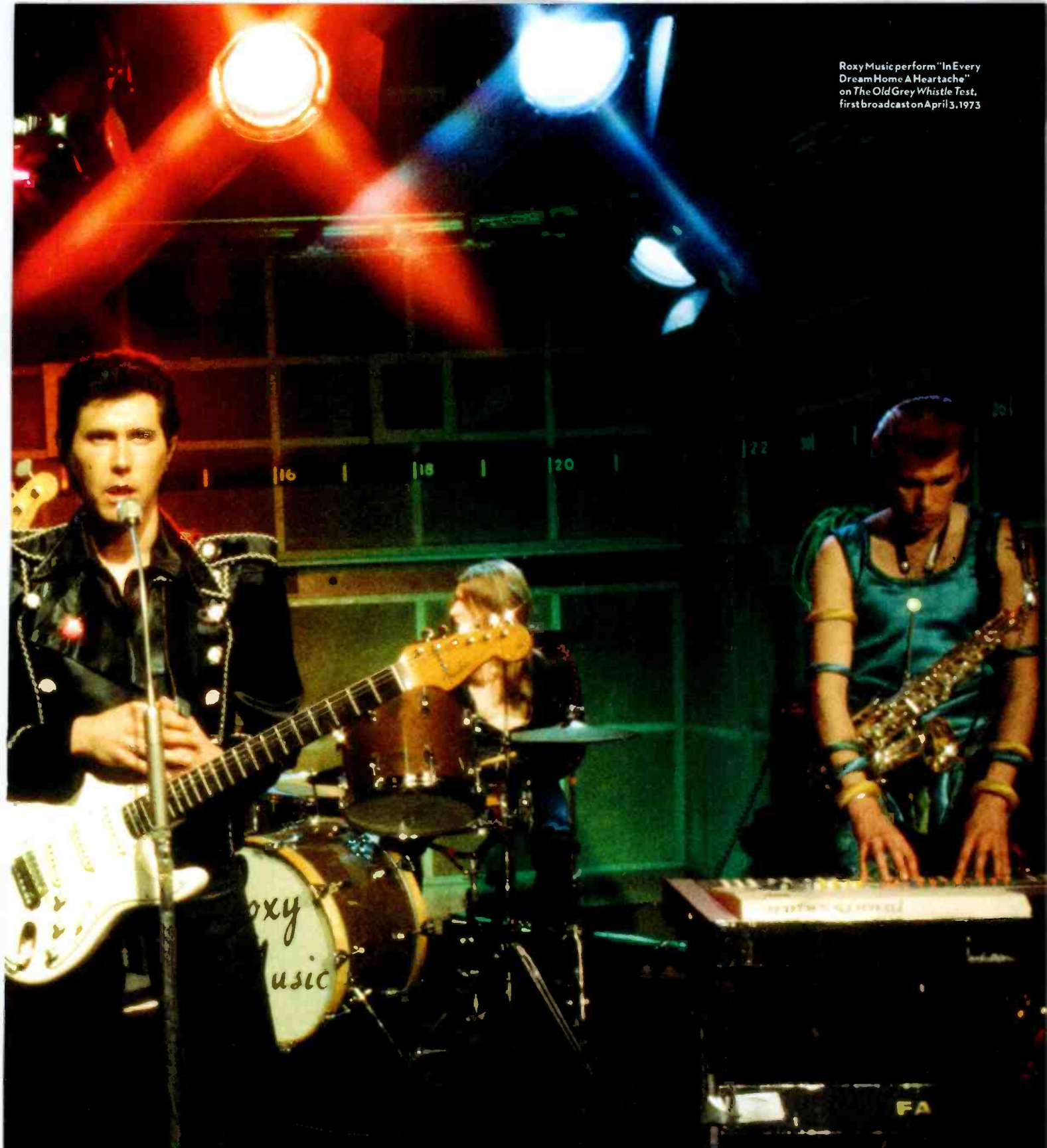


# "The spice of life"

**In the spring, ROXY MUSIC enter their imperial phase. A great new album. The best hotels. Late-night Parisian bacchanals. "It wasn't a case of showing what we could do," says Bryan Ferry, "but showing how we could do it."**



Roxy Music perform "In Every Dream Home A Heartache" on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, first broadcast on April 3, 1973

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 17 —

"THERE'S A NEW sensation. *A fabulous creation. A danceable solution. To teenage revolution*". Well, what is it?

"*Tired of the tango? Fed up with fandango?*" Most certainly, but have you got anything better, Mr Bryan Ferry?

What is this new sensation? "*Do the Strand, love. When you feel love. It's the new way. That's what we say: Do the Strand*". The Strand? "*The Sphinx and Mona Lisa, Lolita and Guernica. Did the Strand*".

Well, in that case, so will I, and so will you – and before you know it, the whole country will be Stranding like buggery. It's new, it's great, and it's The Strand.

"I don't quite know what the Strand is," said Bryan Ferry, smoking yet another of my Marlboros (but they're nice to share). "It's sort of..."

He shimmied a leg, rolled his eyes, and made a locomotion movement with one arm. "You can do anything you like to it really. We were going to get Lionel Blair to work out some dance routines for it... but The Strand is everything."

It is. And so is Roxy Music's new album, *For Your Pleasure*. Which Bryan was turning up full volume. We'd met in the Markham Arms, Kings Road. I was expecting to meet some very serious, over-bored, over-aware fellow, with a liking for arty things and nostalgia. Funny what the mind conjures up.

Instead, Ferry is loveable, nervous, witty in the nicest places and as open as a barn door. I found him extraordinary looking, even though he was dressed plainly in black and a bit of leather. He has a face and forehead that would do justice to a role in *Star Trek*. He looks to all intents and purposes like one of us, Captain, but I beg to tell you that he has two hearts and three brains, said Spock. That sort of thing, if you can see what I mean. »

DEZO HOFFMAN / MIRROR

We shared a glass, raved over ELO's "Roll Over Beethoven" gushed out by the juke – "I love Jeff Lynne's singing, but Roy Wood's better. When I was a DJ, I had a habit of playing 'Fire Brigade' every night."

Now, there's a little insight into Ferry for you.

We crossed Kings Road, full of flurry and fur, and flash, and within minutes were settled into a cushy office, speakers pounding out rock'n'roll, and the lyrics urged one to do the Strand – opening track to this new Roxy. And what a fabulous new Roxy this is! Ferry openly admits that it's way better than the first album.

"A year on the road has seen to that. We spent ages over the first album, weeks and weeks and weeks, but got this together in just over 12 days. Our playing is far superior, everything is far superior."

I asked Bryan to comment on the tracks individually, but once the tape had started, neither of us was particularly anxious to talk. Instead we just listened – Ferry gazing on to the Kings Road; me gazing into a space between the two speakers.

Side One – **"Do the Strand"**: There is absolutely no doubt that when you hear this, you'll put it right back on again, and then again. It's so bloody attractive. Well plonked eights on the piano, coupled with snorty/wailing/screaming sax. Apart from the lyrics being a total gas – that's not the first thing that catches you. Instead it's the urge to get up and dance. "Purely a dancer," said Bryan later. "I think it's nice to write a dancer, don't you?"

It's a single, it's got to be a single, I told him. "But that would be cheating kids, putting a single out from an album. That's cheating," said Bryan. He's so nice. We played the track three times in all… it's that sort of thing. An honest rocker – and pleasingly bizarre, too.

**"Beauty Queen"**: As Bryan so aptly put it: "This one has a distinct Northern working men's club feel to it." On this slow, droopy ballad, Ferry sounds like a mutated cross between Gene Pitney and Engelbert (whoops). Some feverish but soft guitar nurses the vocal line. *"Ooo the way you look makes my starry eyes shiver"*. It creeps, and groans a little… groaning so much after a minute that you want to laugh.

A smile crept across Ferry's face too; that was just before the curdling finished and the band stops for a split second and reappears, gashing and fighting, loud and straight snappy rock. They certainly rock like nobody's business on this album. "Most things were done on the first take, too. You might say we're together," said Ferry. After the frantic jamming, the number returns to slink and slop.

**"Strictly Confidential"**: Hell, now I know what happened to [Canadian actor] Edmund Hockridge – he lost six stone and joined Roxy. The opening in this most certainly has a *Housewives' Choice* ballad feel to it, plus the fact that Ferry's voice hits the soapy languor for which Edmund is so rightly famous.

A grower, it lulls one into listening to the lyrics, while the music rolls slowly, rising and turning. It builds to a nightmarish, confused ending of nasty noise. It leaves one feeling quite emotionally wasted. Most enjoyable.

**"Editions of You"**. "Ever noticed how much Roxy steal?" someone asked me. "Yes," I replied. "But they steal well."

Two lovely examples of masterful thieving occur on this delicious track. For a start the electric piano intro is straight from the opening chords of "Brown Sugar". It don't sound the same – but it is. Then the actual meat on this rocker is guitar à la "Fortune Teller". It's about time that guitar phrasing was used again anyhow, and used to beautiful effect, too. Like "Strand", this strikes you as an instant single such is the force, appeal and clean precision.

"Play that one again" – so we did. Oh, what a magnificent guitar break that doesn't sound anything like any other guitar break you've ever heard. No mean achievement these days. This showcases the fabulous bass offerings of John Porter – consistent and tremendous throughout.

Ferry's lyrics are again remarkable: *"Too much cheesecake too soon / Old money's better than new / No mention in the latest* Tribune */ And don't let this happen to you"*. No messing, no wastage – a beginning, a middle, quantity, quality, and an ending.

**"In Every Dream Home A Heartache"**: Ferry's personal favourite. "It was twice as long when I first wrote it… but with it being a recitation, rather than a song, I had to cut it quite a bit." It is a recitation of an extremely terrifying poem. Personal experiences, Bryan? "Um, I'll wait a couple of weeks before I answer that."

Monotonous half-singing. *"I bought you mail order / My plain wrapper baby / Your skin is like vinyl / The perfect companion… / Inflatable doll / My role is to serve you / Disposable darling"*.

One of those questioning pieces that throws one into a state of doomed confusion. It works on the emotions like a Cohen drama. One's spine is removed – temporarily, to allow for total relaxation, allowing the mind to work freely with the lyrics. And then it explodes, into a heavy, dripping, electric ending. Most stunning, and most certainly the finest lyrics I've seen in a year or two. There's silence, and the track reappears in a phased swishy form, courtesy of Eno. Rather like the little tit-bits that appeared on Family's first album, *Doll's House*. Side One is instant, quick and immediately colourful. You could play every track – maybe with the exception of the last – before breakfast, and relish them.

Side Two, however, offers the deeper side of Roxy. It sees them delving into a mass of technicalities / dream sequences / electrical tripping / psychedelia. Yes, it's psychedelic. One shouldn't be afraid to use that word these days, especially as it really does fit the situation. You'll play Side One anytime, but you'll only play Side Two in the company of oneself, or a few close friends. And late at night. And preferably on cans.

It consists of three "lengths" rather than "tracks" – "The Bogus Man", "Grey Lagoons" and "For Your Pleasure". The most pleasing (again, on an instant level) is **"The Bogus Man"**.

This pumps and crumps in at a fierce, funking rate. Drums first, and then guitar, and naughty noises from Eno. Slightly reminiscent of "Sat'd'y Night Barfly" from Family. The reason I say that is because of the feeling one gets of late-night New York, taxi ridden, and heaving, hot with electricity. And uptown funk. Ferry's voice is actually so screamed and distorted that you'll immediately think of Roger Chapman – it ain't too dissimilar at all. It also has a bizarre burlesque feel in places, too.

"Funky chicken guitar is supplied by John Porter," said Bryan. Again, this man must be complimented for his technique, and rocks-off feel. Metallic, quickly swept guitar throughout. There's so much going on.

Despite the length, lyrical content is short – but aggressive as hell. *"The bogus man is at your heels / Now clutching at your coat / You must be quick now… HURRY up / He's SCRATCHING at your THROAT"*. Shiver.

Next, **"Grey Lagoons"** with a dashing tempo, and Mellotron giving the impression of a stoned Welsh choir hovering throughout. The snazzy sax sound from Andy Mackay also adds a Jnr Walker edge. Don't know whether to dance or deliver one's mind to this one.

Ferry adds an outrageous harmonica solo, before the track screws itself into your head in what might be called an "alarming" fashion.

"It's amazing what things we got into on the second side. It wasn't a case of showing what we could do but showing how we could do it. And I'm extremely pleased with the *way* we did it," said Bryan, flicking yet another cigarette.

With the teasing, and phasing, and dreaming on Side Two, you'll be shown a whole new side of the band. There exists some incredible playing through "Bogus Man" and "Grey Lagoons" and the real canyons-of-your-mind stuff – **"For Your Pleasure"**. But again, this is music for the mind.


Bryan Ferry in 1973: "We got *For Your Pleasure* together in just over 12 days"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA


When Side Two had driven itself to a crazed halt, I could do no more than ask for "Strand" again. I love new crazes, and this one is especially loveable.

"Me?" said Bryan. "Well, I like 'em all. I feel we have more aggressive material to offer now. There's certainly aggression on this album."

And so much variety too, Bryan. "Well, that's the spice of life, isn't it?" he said. *Roy Hollingworth*

## — MELODY MAKER MAY 12 —

STAYING AT THE George V is one of life's great experiences, at least to a traveller who savours his changing environments.

In each bathroom is a monogrammed bathrobe (many have been known to disappear, and it is said that the hotel employees discreetly search each guest's baggage before departure, simply removing any contraband without a word to the offender).

Its halls are hung with Louis XIV tapestries, and the onlooker is forced to wonder if the Renoir which hangs casually in a glass case in the foyer is, in fact, absolutely genuine. The hotel's cellars secrete bottles of calvados distilled during the Napoleonic Wars, more than a century and a half ago. It is, in a word, expensive. Not, you would think, the place for a young British rock group, still fighting on the up-curve.

The logistics and economics of rock tours are curious indeed. Roxy Music will make no profit at all from this tour, just as they made no profit from the highly successful British tour which preceded it. "They insisted on staying in the best hotels," one of their attendants sighs.

Roxy Music, on tour, are sybarites devoted to the higher levels of pleasure. There are no ludicrous banalities like an antique Persian rug for the bass-player's feet, but still their enjoyment doesn't come cheap. It's got to the point, you see, where tours don't make money by themselves. A manager, or a record company, sinks about £30,000 into the first two years of a new band's life, paying for equipment and subsidising tours and recording. If all goes well, the third and fourth years will see the investment recouped – and more. The big money comes, eventually, from record sales, and tours are strictly about promoting these sales.

In Paris, Roxy are surrounded by record men from Island in Britain and Phonogram in France – all guarding their investment, sniffing and poking it like a farmer with his new pig.

Their stay begins well. Amanda Lear, who appeared with cheetah and pillbox hat on the cover of *For Your Pleasure*, has arranged for them a meeting with her friend Salvador Dali. They meet the great surrealist at his permanent apartment in the Hotel Maurice.

Dali – who, after his recent encounter with Alice Cooper, is obviously continuing his lifelong process of rejuvenation – by contact – has invited a TV producer with his camera and crew, but they don't show. Never mind: while the group take tea in a curious paper-walled circular enclave, the old artist jockeys a couple of photographers, posing the musicians around him. It's noticeable that, every time a shutter clicks, Dali's eyebrows arch into that familiar bug-eyed look with which, to the outside world, he's permanently endowed. After all these years, the reflex is positively Pavlovian. "A master self-publicist," says Bryan Ferry, not uncharitably. Takes one to know one, honey...

> "I feel we have more aggressive material to offer now"

Another member of the group impishly expresses the desire to cut off one of Dali's curling waxed moustaches, as a piece of conceptual art. Photos taken, tea drained, the group take their leave and return to the hotel. The first to leave, an hour later, is Lloyd Watson, the *MM* contest-winning singer and slide guitarist, who is now Roxy's preferred concert-opener.

In a smart brown slim-line suit, Lloyd taxis into the stage entrance of the Olympia, the great old music hall on the Blvd Des Capucines, where the ghost of Piaf haunts the decaying backstage area. The dressing rooms and artists' bar at the Olympia appear joyless, with peeling paint and rusty pipes and piles of debris, but the place has a life of its own, bequeathed by decades of famous performers.

Tonight's audience is already seated, and Lloyd straps on his Gibson to face them. There's a mix-up and he isn't announced, but taking his life in his hands, he leaps on stage and bops into "Jumpin' Jack Flash", his guitar revving with the powerful ease of a Laverda 750. Lloyd is the ideal warm-up act. He presents no threat to the bill-toppers, but his personality and the extrovert strength and ability of his playing carry him through the toughest situations. Tonight is tough. An Olympia audience always contains a large element of what Alf Ramsey would call animals, and they're out to crucify Lloyd.

He gets cheers at the end of songs (particularly after his imaginative version of Lou Reed's "I'm Waiting For The Man"), but during "It Takes A Lot To Laugh" the boos and whistles rise, filled with inelegant Gallic contempt. Lloyd steams on, though, and despite random outbreaks of thunder from the PA he wins in the end. Where others would have fled in despair, he demonstrates the virtue of honest perseverance.

In the wings, Roxy await their entry. Several of Ferry's elaborate stage suits were stolen during their British tour, so tonight he's wearing a flared gold brocade D'Artagnan coat hired from a theatrical costumier. There's no longer much to say about their act. It's exactly the same as we saw in Britain, and that's their policy. Nothing in the profile of the set is left to chance, only the audiences change. Either they like it or they don't.

It's the detail that keeps them interesting, fourth or fifth time around. On "Do The Strand", for instance, they slip in a couple of bars of 3/4 time behind the line "*Weary of the waltz?*", while Eno's treatment of the guitar and alto sax sound is always novel, often by accident. During "Editions Of You", when his synthesizer conks out during the solos, he merely smiles.

Paul Thompson hasn't had enough credit yet: he's as strong and driving as you could wish, but few listeners have yet commented on his inventiveness, which is considerable. The range and variety of his fills and punctuation are crucial to the band, and – with John Porter's bass – he holds them together superbly.

Ferry, of, course, is now the master of stagecraft, and destroys this crowd though his command of charisma-inducing devices. His only fault is a tendency to sing uncomfortably sharp during the loud passages (the final section of "In Every Dream Home A Heartache" is a good example). But his vocal control on "Beauty Queen", is stunning: "*Deep into the night, plying very strange cargo, our soul ships pass by...*" He takes obvious delight in the aptness of "*Louis Seize 'ee prayfair... laissez-faire le Strand!*"

After the gig, a meal has been arranged at an old-fashioned brasserie. Roughly 40 people turn up, stuffing themselves with veal and snails and bruised strawberries and vin rouge. Eno discovers an ancient barrel-organ affair which produces a din of unparalleled anarchy, and then encourages Lloyd to get drunk. Lloyd, the extrovert of the party, makes speeches, climbs up the walls, throws knives, and finally appals the tail-coated waiters by climbing out of one window, along a ledge on the outside wall and back in through another window. "It's all part of the act, brothers," yells Lloyd, as he disappears backwards out of the, window, simultaneously juggling with a half-full wineglass. He returns, to a chorus of cheers, while the waiters swiftly put up the shutters, and strengthen them with wooden crossbars.

Meantime, Bryan Ferry confides that he's still planning his solo album, which he'll record between the end of this tour and their next visit to America in the autumn. It's still going to be a "my favourite things" affair, and so far he's picked Cole Porter's "Ev'rytime We Say Goodbye" from 1944, and songs from Marvin Gaye, Erma Franklin, Smokey Robinson and others. "The trouble with doing something like 'Tracks Of My Tears'," he says, "is that the original was so brilliant and it's hard to touch it. I might put nine or 10 songs on each side, if I can."

Led by a couple of French girls who might be go-go dancers, the party leaves the restaurant – to the undisguised relief of the waiters – and heads for a small discotheque. Five years ago, Paris had the world's best discos, reverberating to the walls of Aretha Franklin and James Brown. The shock tonight, though, is that people here are dancing to stuff like Crimson's "Schizoid Man". A swift raid on the disc-jockey's box, spearheaded by Phil Manzanera, yields a bunch of "progressive" albums and not one single in sight. Eventually, the DJ is bludgeoned into playing Bill Withers and Dr John. "It's funny," he says, bemused, "all the groups want to 'ear the funky musique." So he spins "Bogus Man" while Ferry parodies his own stage movements on the dancefloor, partnered by Ava Gardner's double in a strapless frock. Next day, as the party prepares to move off, the George V counts its bathrobes and sighs. *Richard Williams* •

# An asset to any chic home

ALBUMS REVIEW 1973

**NME/MM APRIL** The inkies listen to Bowie's latest, *Aladdin Sane*, and come to very different conclusions.

**David Bowie** Aladdin Sane
RCA VICTOR

Bye-bye, Ziggy. It was nice seeing you, and I hope you'll keep in touch. Hello, Aladdin Sane, make yourself at home. David Bowie's new album is just about ready for you, and with it comes a whole new set of hypotheses, poses, masks, games, glimpses, put-ons, take-offs and explored possibilities. More prosaically: one new record, nine David Bowie compositions (two slightly used) and a mildly outrageous reworking of "Let's Spend The Night Together". Three months ago, I sat on the floor in the mixing room at Trident Studios in the company of David Bowie, Mick Ronson, Ken Scott and sundry others and heard the bulk of this album hot off the tapes. Since then I've carried the memory of it around with me, waiting to hear it again and see how accurately I'd remembered it. Even with that preparation, it's still quite a brainful to assimilate at one hurried mental gulp. So, for the better or for worse, here are a few snap impressions on my first day with *Aladdin Sane*.

Firstly, the cover, which will be a definite asset to any chic home. You'll see it strewn on Axminster carpets in expensive colour supplement stereo ads, and carried with token attempts at unobtrusiveness under the arms of the fashionable.

On the front is a head-and-shoulders shot of David with blush-pink makeup and a startling red-and-blue lightning bolt painted across his face and a small pool of liquid behind one collar-bone. Inside, with more lightning bolts, is David nude, but with a silver-grey solarisation that hides the naughty bits. Somewhere in the process he's lost his feet, which was hopefully not too painful. So you play the record.

Immediately Mick Ronson's guitar roars out of the speakers, and you're sucked straight into "Watch That Man", a nightmare party sequence straight out of Dylan's "Ballad Of A Thin Man", where "*There was an old-fashioned band of married men/ Looking up to me for encouragement - it was so-so.*" It's a nice, tough opener. With the title song, Bowie sets to in earnest. Its full title is "Aladdin Sane (1913/1939/197?)". It will be noted that the first two dates marked the prelude of two world wars, and the third - well, have you checked the papers lately? It's the first real outing for pianist Mike Garson, who spans time and place like most pianists span octaves. Imagine Cecil Taylor playing in a '30s nightclub the day after the atomic catastrophe, and you may have some idea of what Garson lays down. Aladdin, it appears, is going off to fight: "*Passionate bright young things take him away to war,*" sings David with a kind of deadpan melancholy, as Ronson's guitar howls like a wolf with its foot caught in a trap and Garson's ornately menacing piano tinkles like the very fabric of existence itself slowly shattering into icy splinters. Would you believe the most unusual anti-war song of all time? Well, that's only track two. As Garson hammers his final chord, we're straight into "Drive-In Saturday", with which you're probably already familiar. So let's rush headlong into "Panic In Detroit", which recalls the Stones just a little bit, and The Yardbirds are in there as well, courtesy of Mick Ronson's Beckish guitar. It's a faintly impressionistic tale of a revolutionary group wiped out by the police, and it may refer to the Ann Arbor White Panthers and John Sinclair. The title is endlessly reiterated.

Finally for the first side, "Cracked Actor", which is about an elderly movie star who picks up a young girl, thinking that she wants him for his fame and not realising that she thinks he's her smack connection. The spirit of Lou Reed hangs over this track as David sings: "*Crack, baby, crack, show me you're real/Smack, baby, smack, is all that you feel/Suck, baby, suck, give me your head/Before you start professing that you're knocking me dead.*"

The first track on side two is "Time", intellectually the heaviest thing on the album. Like "Aladdin" itself, it features Garson up front. If *Ziggy Stardust* was David's *Clockwork Orange* album, this is his *Cabaret*, and the '30s vamp behind the voice makes the lyrics even more sinister than they might otherwise seem. Only David Bowie could sing the words "*We should be on by now*" and make them imply that somehow mankind has taken a wrong turning. Not making way for the Homo Superior, perhaps? "The Prettiest Star" was written three years ago and issued as the follow-up single to "Space Oddity" on Mercury, but it was deleted and never issued on an album. Here, it's been re-recorded. It's a light little song dedicated to Angie, and serves as a wind-down period after the intensity of "Time". Hot on its heels is David's own reading of Mick 'n' Keith's "Let's Spend The Night Together", as premiered at the Rainbow, with Garson playing the riff in augmented chords and David doing an Eno on Moog. It rips and snorts just like it ought to, and then we're into "Jean Genie Revisited" before the closer

GETTY

"Lady Grinning Soul", which shows that even when David's sentimental, he's doing it in style.

The above notes are first impressions. The album's changed slightly since I first heard the tapes in that the recut "John I'm Only Dancing" has been replaced by "Let's Spend The Night Together", originally intended as the B-side of "Drive-In Saturday", and a then-incomplete track called "Zion" has been replaced by "Lady Grinning Soul". After some more concentrated listening, some different things might emerge, and in that event I'll take some space later to discuss them. Meanwhile, how does it stack up against its predecessors? I don't know. David Bowie's last three albums have become so deeply embedded in my head that it takes considerable effort to integrate a successor into that patch of braincells that store his music. One thing I know is that "Aladdin Sane" is probably the album of the year, and a worthy contribution to the most important body of musical work produced in this decade.

*Charles Shaar Murray, NME April 14*

**David Bowie** Aladdin Sane RCA VICTOR

Homo superior or The Man Who Fooled The World? I'm beginning to wonder.

Oh, he's good all right. Image-wise, he carries it all off with a dazzling, effortless sense of style that makes every other band in the glam/glitter/outrage/theatre-rock field look like something out of a Camping For Beginners. And musically, he and Mick Ronson and Mick Woodmansey and Trevor Bolder and the rest are light years ahead in their cruel precision.

But how deep does it go? Is David Bowie really saying anything much at all? As Ziggy Stardust, rock'n'roller, he gets it on, no doubt about it. But judged against the standards of the astral image he and his followers have nurtured – the whole Starman, *Stranger In A Strange Land* aura – his achievements have been disappointing. This was brought home forcibly the other week by Bowie's appearance on the Russell Harty TV show. While he was singing he was perfect: the whole scintillating bisexual image, guaranteed to throw the entire population of straight Britain into panic. And musically, he and the band were machine-tooled perfection. But as soon as he sat down to talk, the whole image dissolved like runny mascara. What he had to say was in no way futuristic, or profound, or controversial. He was as The Prettiest Starlet.

It's not that I expect profundity from a rock star. But when your songs deal in cosmic concepts you are inviting judgement at a pretty high level. And the sad truth is that five minutes of a film like *2001* or one chapter of Asimov or Clarke says more about what Man can or will become than the entire body of Bowie's "futuristic" songs.

It's the same story with this latest album, which is superficially stunning and ultimately frustrating. The title is a pun, of course, and a deadly accurate one: the lyrics are more intense, more strung-out than anything he's done before: splintered nightmare images of a journey across America. At times the lyrics reach that level of obscurity which it is fashionable to describe as "oblique", but which sound to me merely confused and hastily thrown together.

**Ronson's guitar howls like a wolf with its foot caught in a trap**

Musically, the songs are executed with a brutal panache that puts this album closer to satanic "The Man Who Sold The World" than "Hunky Dory" or "Ziggy Stardust." Melodically the songs have Bowie's usual flair – "The Jean Genie" and "Drive-In Saturday" have already proved themselves as singles and most of the others here are just as catchy, especially "The Prettiest Star," a very poppy reworking of an old song from "Space Oddity" days. "Watch That Man" and "Panic In Detroit" are stormers with a strong Rolling Stones feel – although Bowie's version of "Let's Spend The Night Together" is very un-Stonesy, precise and asexual. "Cracked Actor" is probably the most successful cut: a vividly powerful tale of Hollywood, heroin and sexual cruelty. But the two key works here, I suppose, are the title track and "Time." Both have a strained, alienated feel, heightened by the fractured jagged piano of new man Mike Garson, but the lyrics promise far more than they actually deliver – which is the way I feel about the whole album.

There is much to dazzle the eye and ear, but little to move the mind or heart. It is clever, but icy cold, and I have a feeling that the songs here will not be long remembered. But maybe that's the way Mr Bowie wants it, as he makes his plans to go into movies and talks about farewell tours. Perhaps, as his spiritual leader Andy Warhol once said, everybody should be famous for just 15 minutes.

*Chris Welch, MM April 21*



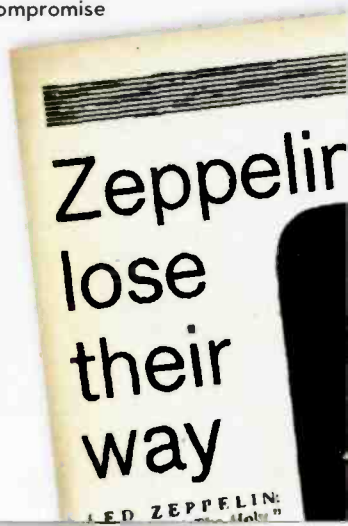
**Led Zeppelin**
Houses Of The Holy
ATLANTIC

When Zeppelin are roaring on stage, there is hardly another band in the world to beat them. Jimmy Page is one of the all-time greats of rock guitar, the Bonham-Jones rhythm section is a byword for power and invincible drive, while Robert Plant is a singer whose sheer presence and involvement in a song seems larger than life.

Thus it grieves me very much when they allow their own tremendously high standards to slip, when the vital spark that made their first albums timeless seems to flicker, uncertainly. It was with no small pleasure that I approached their fifth album. The unusual dreamlike cover design seemed to indicate that much fresh thinking was afoot and surprises were in store. But after the initial drive of "The Song Remains The Same", when it seemed Zeppelin were about to lift off with renewed brilliance, a malaise began to creep in, reaching a nadir in the sadly indulgent "D'yer Mak'er", a cool pop tune which is not worthy of them. It is intended as a fun track, not intended to be rated overseriously, but after some frankly dull material like "The Rain Song", and listless James Brown style riffs like "The Crunge", the joke wears thin. The overall effect is that they seem afraid to play what they do best, which is the blues, gut rock. Even Robert's tremendously distinctive voice is twisted and bent by studio techniques, and although they lay back on the beat in firm fashion on "The Ocean", there is not one tune, with the exception of "Song Remains The Same", that has any buzz of excitement.

As they have taken a year to produce this, it would perhaps be a better idea if they were rushed into a studio, told to keep the costs down and get the album out in a week, or else! Nobody expects Zep to be tied to "Communication Breakdown" forever, and they must be free to progress. But the lack of firm direction is all too apparent. The writing seems to be a compromise between more spaced-out ideas and heavy riffs without ever getting to grips with either. Having gone so high, it's the hardest job in the world to stay on top. Perhaps a cool appraisal of this album will spur them on to greater efforts. They have it in their power to stun us all.

*Chris Welch, MM March 31*



# "Barbarians. I can't deny it"

**Savage off stage and on it, LED ZEPPELIN are having their biggest summer yet. People don't like *Houses Of The Holy*? So what? "Rock'n'roll," says Jimmy Page, "is in all four of us."**

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 7 —

"I'M BACK ON me fab farm like, and I sit there and I think what the hell am I doing? I think what the bloody hell is a singer if he's not singing?" says Robert Plant.

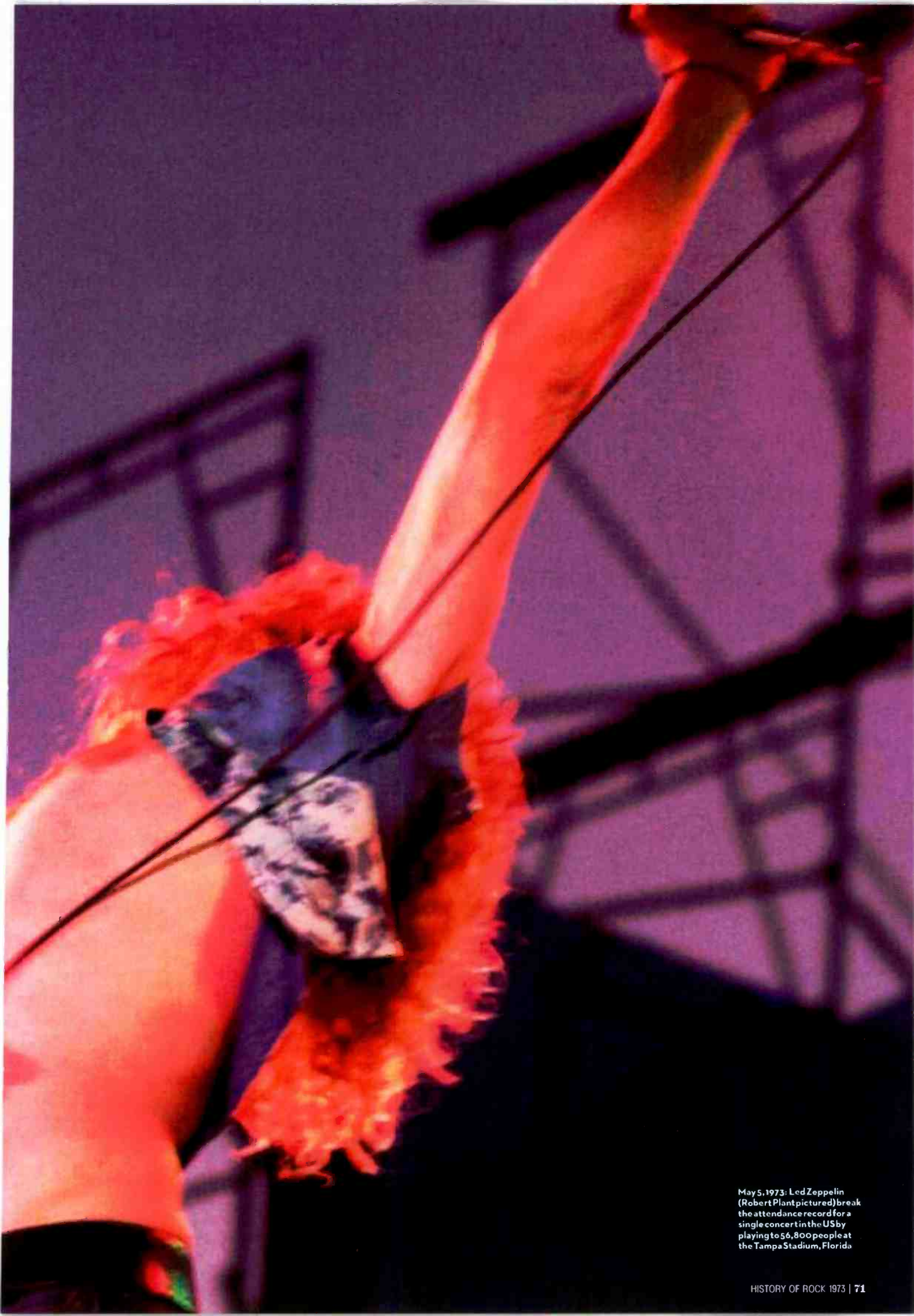
We're surrounded by last night's champagne corks, wall-to-wall tapestries and sweaty socks. We're here at the George V hotel, lavish as you like, where everything from your pillow to the toilet seat bears the hotel's legendary monogram. Plant lies sprawled across my bed bleating endlessly about the finesse of Wolverhampton Wanderers and Led Zeppelin – something he believes in like nobody has ever believed in anything ever before.

It rains chats and chiens outside, mid-morning, dark and windy. The clouds are full of menace – as were Zeppelin last night. They kicked a great hole in the night, splitting it all open down at the city's massive Palais Des Sportes stadium where they finished their European tour.

And the Frenchies wet themselves with frightening passion. It was all very astonishing.

"So there's some buggers as don't like the album. Well, God bless them. I like it and there are a few thousand other buggers like it too. I know I'm bragging like buggery, but we're playing better than we've ever played before." »

GETTY



May 5, 1973: Led Zeppelin (Robert Plant pictured) break the attendance record for a single concert in the US by playing to 56,800 people at the Tampa Stadium, Florida

Plant lit a cigarette, threw the match on the carpet and carried on.

"It's working that does it. The British tour, three weeks off, and then a solid blow over here. It's so easy to get stale, you know. There's a lot of bands doing it. You know they reach a peak and think that that's it. The old country house bit. A year off and all that. Well, it doesn't work that way. There's only one way a band can function and that's on the bloody stage. I think we're going to play more dates this year than we've ever played in our lives. Why? Well, because we damn well want to."

He's a cheery old Midlander, is Percy Plant. Basic as you like; a good old lad, you might say.

"I remember a few weeks back, sat on me farm. Well, it came to me, I thought, 'Planty, what's a good lad like you doing sat here contemplating the day like an old goat? I thought why the fuck ain't I out singing? I got so worked up about it that I picked up a spade and dug the whole bloody garden. I have to work, we all have to."

Despite this chirpiness, Plant is like all of Zeppelin – ultra-sensitive. When it comes down to criticising them, you might as well forget it. It's rather like telling the Pope that there ain't no God, if you see what I mean.

We were a little dubious as to what kind of reception Zeppelin would give the old *MM* in Paris – I mean, old Chris Welchy had put the new album down. He was a worried man. "Was I wrong?" he asked.

No. It's rather a lame bit of plastic in places, I told Chris. I also told him that he should go to Paris, saying: "I don't see why I should risk my neck for something you wrote!"

> "Sat there on me farm, I thought why the fuck ain't I out singing?"

You see, Zeppelin can be a heavy bunch of lads at times, but we won't go into that. At Heathrow, we sat waiting for the Paris flight complete with *Sunday Mirrors* and early-morning sickness. The rest of England prepared itself for Sunday lunches and wireless messages from BFPO in Bahrain ("Hello Jean").

We decided to drink brandy. It was at the Heathrow bar that we met Fat Fred and Patsy, who between them offer a good 30 stones of cockney muscle. Now Fat Fred and Patsy are professional heavies. They are hired as bodyguards by rock groups. It's no show of amateur dramatics, for Patsy was sporting a good 12 stitches in his chest following a Zeppelin gig in Northern Europe.

They'd flown back to England for a rest and after non-stop frontline actions with Zeppelin throughout this tour. They'd left the band in Southern France after a ridiculous night which saw most of the group and road crew end up in the local jail.

"But the fuzz was petrified of us," said Patsy. "We was so wild that they decided to let us go before we dismantled the prison. Give us a mention, I mean the lads who look after David Cassidy are bleeding superstars now."

And so over the Channel. It's across this stretch of water that a remarkable physical and mental change comes over the English. As the plane leaves the Blighty coast, mild-mannered Britons change instantly into tantalising fiery beasts of manhood. When one arrives in France it is, like the saying goes, like arriving in a conquered land.

Well, Zeppelin conquered again last night. They turned an audience that resembled dumb figures at the start into a terrifying mass of hysteria. The roar of approval from 10,000 kids was enough to pump the adrenalin through a nun, let alone a rock'n'roller. There's Bonzo Bonham, this Desperate Dan of a character thrashing and splatting his way into the night, and Pagey darting across the stage, snitching chords clean, quick and loud. It's all so urgent.

"When I hear that roar I just roar back. I can't describe how high we get off people," said Planty. They played very well, did Zeppelin. Solid slogging work that has now brought about total live perfection. I've said it before – their ability to reach an impeccable high and sustain it for three hours is an astonishing feat.

"Yeah, we have reached a high," said Plant, "and we ain't going to lose it. And no bad album review is gonna change a thing." *Roy Hollingworth*


"I've been experimenting with chords a lot more", Jimmy Page in 1973

MICHAEL PUTLAND/PHOTOSHOT

## NME APRIL 21

**JIMMY PAGE'S SLIGHTLY** timid, mild-mannered exterior is, of course, deceptive. There's no need to explain how Led Zeppelin come across on stage, while in-between concerts – on the road – they've long been renowned for a little loose living, as hotel managers across the world will surely testify.

"Barbarians are how we were once described," says Page, a slight gleam in his eyes. "I can't really deny it."

Those excesses aside, Zeppelin have always been the ultimate in anti-stars, relentlessly avoiding publicity or anything that could divert them from simply laying down their music. Little has changed, except in a small way with a set of lights and new stage set-up prepared in readiness for their forthcoming American tour. But even this, as Jimmy Page explains with only mild interest spreading across his almost schoolboyish face, is hardly a revolutionary step.

"It's nothing phenomenal. It's just that we've never really had any light before, so we thought it might be fun and add a little extra atmosphere. Everybody else has been doing it for years, but before we've always let the music speak for itself."

It's also well known that Page's opinion of rock journalists isn't too high, which perhaps helps to explain why last week he appeared so cool and reserved, picking his words as carefully as a guitar line. At present, perhaps he has more reason to be more antagonistic towards the press after recent heavy

March 16, 1973: Plant relaxes before a show at the Wiener Stadthalle in Vienna, Austria

criticism of Zeppelin's new album, *Houses Of The Holy*. But if Page was on the defensive it didn't show. Bad reviews don't worry him.

"I don't really care. It doesn't really make any difference. I'm deaf to the album now because we made it such a long time ago, but I know there's some good stuff there. You can't dismiss something like 'No Quarter' or 'The Rain Song' out of hand. Maybe you could attack 'The Crunge' or 'D'yer Maker' for being a bit self-indulgent. But they're just a giggle. They're just two send-ups.

"If people can't even suss that out, on that superficial a level, then obviously you can't expect them to understand anything else on the album. It beats me, but I really don't give a damn."

Page feels that Zeppelin's raunchier hard-rock numbers like "Whole Lotta Love" represent only a small area of what the band have been doing on record.

"There's been a general maturity that was showing by the third album, which a lot of people haven't been able to come to terms with. For me, the third album was very, very good and still had more of an attack than anything before. But obviously, people have this preconceived notion of what to expect, and when a band is constantly in a state of change – and that doesn't mean lack of direction, but a natural change – then they can't come to terms with it because each album is different from the last.

"How they should approach our albums is to forget they ever heard of a band called Led Zeppelin, forget about what they expect to hear, and just listen to what's on that particular record. That's all we ask, but we don't get it."

Even so, it seems that it's the hard-rock side of Led Zeppelin that remains the most popular. Says Page: "The rock'n'roll is in all four of us, and on stage that's what comes through."

Yet somehow it's not represented much on the new album?

"In fact, we had two tracks, one called 'The Rover' and another unnamed that we were going to use, both of which were really hard rock. We'll probably use them next time, possible rewriting one of them, but still keeping the essence."

Clearly, as always with Led Zeppelin, there was no shortage of material when they came to record *Houses Of The Holy*.

"When we went into the studio, we had no set ideas on how we wanted the album to turn out. We just recorded the ideas we had at that particular time. We just got together and let it come out. There are never, ever any shortages or stagnant periods. I write a lot at home, and I'm fortunate as having a studio set up where I can try things out. Lately I've been experimenting with chords a lot more, and have tried a few unusual voicings. There are several ways material can come to the band, but it's always there."

Surprisingly perhaps, being a supremely capable musician in his own right outside the context of Led Zeppelin, Page doesn't find himself writing anything, maybe for his own satisfaction, that might never be used by the band.

"If I find a number coming that I know wouldn't be suitable, I scrap it," he says. "I stop working on it from that moment on."

And apart from the odd session he does "as a favour for friends", it seems that Page's energy is totally committed to Led Zeppelin. He can't see himself ever wanting to play in another band, or in another lineup.

"Nothing else would gel together so nicely," he states firmly. "I know it would be a mistake to break it up, because you see it happening to other bands. They split, and what comes after doesn't work nearly as well. The chemistry isn't there. And if it's there in the beginning, then it's criminal to break it up."

In many ways, Page has always been a 'one band man'. His only other band was The Yardbirds, which in a sense was the forerunner of Led Zeppelin anyway. He admits he wouldn't have missed those days in The Yardbirds, but chooses his words diplomatically when it comes to talking about the troubles the band suffered, especially between personnel.

Of Jeff Beck, with whom he played in The Yardbirds during the band's last year, he contents himself with the comment: "I used to get on very well with him at the time, and I admire him as a musician."

He continues. "Basically The Yardbirds are, for me, a mixture of good and bad memories. There were certainly some magic moments and it was a great time to be playing, with new material coming to the public's ears. It was great when we had two lead guitars with Jeff Beck, but there's little evidence of it left on record. There was 'Happenings Ten Years Time Ago', which I feel went over a lot of heads in Britain, although it perpetuated The Yardbirds' reputation in America. »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They were always into the more lyrical side of what we were doing. Also there was one horrible live album that was going to be released, which was recorded by a man who spent most of his time recording stuff like 'Manuel's Music Of The Mountains'. I remember he put just one microphone over the drums, and that was over the top as there was no bass drum at all, which showed how much he knew about it. Obviously the album had to be stopped. It was unfortunate, though, that no live stuff was ever recorded properly."

**PAGE, OF COURSE,** has always been best known for his work on electric guitar, which has perhaps overshadowed anything he's done on acoustic, even though he's featured acoustic playing on every Zeppelin album. He says he has to treat the two instruments differently. "Simply because of the mechanics of the guitars. I don't personally think the finger style works on an electric guitar. You just get overtones and harmonies coming out. It doesn't sound right at all.

"Then again, an electric guitar can work for you. It can start singing on its own through the electronics, which you can't engineer on an acoustic guitar. They're two totally different fields. Personally, I find them both equally as fascinating. Probably my greatest influence on acoustic guitar is Bert Jansch, who was a real dream weaver. He was incredibly original when he first appeared, and I wish now that he'd gone back to things like 'Jack Orion' once again. His first album had a great effect on me.

"Undoubtedly, my affection and fascination for the guitar is just as strong as it's ever been. After all, everyone's approach to the instrument is so totally different. There are so many styles of playing to listen to and to get off on. You can't help but be totally involved with it. I'm still coming to terms with the instrument even now." *James Johnson*

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## — NME MAY 19 —

**LED ZEPPELIN'S CURRENT** 33-city concert tour of America is breaking all box office records in the States, in terms of attendance and box office receipts. The high point was at Tampa Stadium in Florida, where they attracted 56,800 people and grossed $309,000. This beat the record for any single concert held anywhere in the United States, previously held by The Beatles' 1965 Shea Stadium concert, which drew a 55,000 crowd and grossed $301,000.

The previous evening, Zeppelin had played to 49,236 people at the Atlanta Braves Stadium ($246,000 gross), the largest crowd in the history of Georgia. At both venues, a closed-circuit TV system projected the band's performance on to giant screens for the benefit of distant spectators... and 200 doves were released at the end of each set.

The remainder of the tour is devoted to indoor venues because, says Robert Plant, "We miss the intimacy when we play outdoors." And a feature of the sell-out tour is that the group are playing for a solid two-and-a-half hours at every venue, without a support band. Zeppelin, who are touring the States in their own private Falcon jet, have already notched US gold for their new *Houses Of The Holy* album 10 days after its release there.

## — NME JUNE 23 —

**A HOT AND STICKY** Friday afternoon in LA. Nine stories over Sunset Boulevard, Robert Plant takes Roy Harper's *Lifemask* off the stereo in his hotel room and sprawls all over one of the beds. He's wearing a pair of leather jeans and little else, and he's sweating fairly profusely.

Why would a happy family man with a lovely wife, child and farm voluntarily rush all over the world putting himself through all the major and minor dramas of touring?

"This is a very close, tightly knit, sensitive group, one member to the next. We've got a very strong bond, and so working is a pleasure. What happened was that, after we made the third album, Jimmy and I were in Wales and we were fed up with going to America. We'd been going twice a year, and at that time America was really a trial, an effort.

"We've got a very strong bond": Plant in puff-sleeved man-blouse and Jimmy Page in poppy-embroidered jacket, on stage in 1973

"Anyway, we didn't work for a year, and we said, 'Look, this is terrible, let's get going, let's move.' So in the past year we've played every single market that a band in our position could possibly play."

In Plant's eyes, their musical strong point is the ability to be able to tackle something like "D'Yer Maker" – "Desmond Dekker meets Led Zeppelin" – and hold their credibility.

"This is the finest property we possess – without it; the group would be a bore. Not naming names, there are a lot of groups in England who still rely on riff after riff after riff. Some audiences can shake and bang their heads on the stage to riffs all night long, but subtlety is an art that must be mastered if you're to be remembered. In this band we're very lucky that everybody is more enthusiastic as time goes on.

"There is not fatigue or boredom musically at all. There's a bit of boredom when you're stuck in Mobile, Alabama, or places like that. A few lamp standards may fall out of the windows – things like that – but we move on and we keep playing that music.

"It's just this rapport that we've got between ourselves. It's a good buzz. Man, I mean, I've learned how to feel an audience now, and that's my success; I can feel them, they can feel me. If you can't you're not doing anything at all. There are a lot of groups who come over here and play very loud and very monotonously and get people off, but the other way, it's almost like putting your hands out and touching everybody. That's probably why we're coming back here in three weeks.

"You see, my little boy's just started to walk, and I haven't seen him bloomin' walk yet. Those are the things that upset you about being on the road. The very fact that you miss fantastic occasions like that. I mean, the kid just stands up and starts strolling around – and here I am in Tuscaloosa or whatever."

Is it not practical for you to take your family on the road?

"Oh, it'd be chaotic for a young kid. I don't like taking Maureen either really, as much as I love her. When you are on the road, you are nomads, you know. There was an album called *Rock'n'Roll Gypsies* and that's it – you've gotta travel on. Robert Johnson once said, '*Woke up this morning got the rain off my shoes / My woman left me / Got the walking blues*'. It's just great to move on and set up in another town and see the people there smiling.

"I think I've got one of the finest ladies in the world and it wouldn't do her any good, because she's not up there on that stage. So she'd get tired and want to know why we weren't doing this and that, and the very fact that I've just woken up and it's three o'clock in the afternoon and the shops shut at six, and there's no shopping to be done today and all that sort of thing... It isn't practical."

One of the most admirable things about Zeppelin in recent times has been the atmosphere of Celtic mysticism that has seeped into some of the songs. "Stairway To Heaven" is of course the classic example, with its allusions to various Cornish and Welsh myths.

"That was present really from the second album onwards," says Plant when drawn on the subject. "It was something that we did well, and was pointing in a specific direction. Then there was 'Ramble On', 'Thank You', 'Going To California', 'The Battle Of Evermore', 'The Rain Song' – on the new album too – even 'The Song Remains The Same'.

"Every time I sing that, I just picture the fact that I've been round and round the world, and at the root of it all there's a common denominator for everybody. The common denominator is what makes it good or bad, whether it's a Led Zeppelin or an Alice Cooper. The lyrics I'm proud of. Somebody pushed my pen for me, I think.

"There are a lot of catalysts which really bring out those sort of things: working with the group, living where I live, having the friends I've got, my children, the animals. There's also the fact that people have finally come to terms with the fact that, three years ago, we made a classic record with 'Whole Lotta Love', and they realise that it's just one colour in the rainbow of what we do and what we are intending to do in the future.

"I think we've got a lot of friends in England. I remember Bradford on the last tour, when the audience were superb. 'Stairway To Heaven' gets the best reaction of any number we do. But the raunchiness is in everybody; that below-the-belt surge that everybody gets at some time or another. Everybody gets their rocks off, I suppose, and we supply a little bit of music to that end."

In the last eight months Zeppelin have been working solid. "We were going back and forward to America, and then to Japan, Hong Kong and Bangkok. Jimmy and I did some recording in India with the Bombay Symphony Orchestra. It was an experiment, and we know what we want to do next time."

Hmm. Are they going to issue any of that material?

"Not those, no. We were just checking out, just sussing how easy it would be to transpose the ideas that we've got into the raga style, and into the Indian musicians' minds.

"It's very hard for them to cope with the Western approach to music with their counting of everything, their times and so on. Where we count four beats to the bar, their bars just carry on and on. They'll be counting up to 99 or 100, and on the 120th boomph you change, instead of on the 18th bar or something like that. But anyway, we found that what we want to play, we can do successfully in time to come.

"We moved on from there and played Switzerland, Scandinavia, Germany and France, which was absolutely chaotic. Promotion people are absolutely nuts over there, and the kids are more interested in using a concert as an excuse to be leery most of the time. I don't really like that; I don't consider that I've gained anything or given anybody anything when I see that there's a lot of fools fighting. The gig you saw last night was a magic one because the people were so relaxed. It was as if I'd known them years.

"The vibe that we give out could never advocate violence. A fight in there would have been totally contradictory to the whole vibe of the place, and everybody would have been totally disgusted."

I mention that at big gigs, particularly in New York, I'm always in mortal terror of an outbreak of violence.

"You've got to have a rapport for the people, and that rapport must eradicate any feelings like that. Alice Cooper's weirdness must really make the kids feel violent. These kids are like my sister, young people of 14 or so who've come to enjoy themselves. So you put things like that in front of them, and I don't think its right.

"My idea is that I should go out on stage and be completely normal, and it pays. It pays immensely because I get that vibe right back. That's the thesis really, that's the reason for our success here."

Zeppelin are one band who it's bad for your head to miss. What is it that does that? Is it the chemistry of the four people?

"Yeah, it's the desire to really want to lay something down for ever and ever and ever. I would like to create something now, and be a part of the creation of something now, that would be valid for years and years to come. Not so much in the way that Chuck Berry will be valid in 50 years' time, which he will, but something like a mammoth stairway which takes in a lot of the mood of the group.

"It's my ambition to write something really superb. I listen to people like Mendelssohn – 'Fingal's Cave' and that sort of thing – and it's absolutely superb. You can picture exactly where that guy was. You can picture the whole thing, and I'd like it to be the same way for us in time to come. I should think that we've got it under our belt to get something like that together. I mean, we've started.

"Last night, when all those lights were there, that was a spiritual allegiance. You walk out there and they're going, 'Yeah, we know you can do it' – and with that sort of thing tucked inside your belt you can only go from strength to strength. Somebody once described me as the original hippy, and that's because of the flowery lyrics, you know, and also because of the buzz we give out." *Charles Shaar Murray* •

> "I've learned how to feel an audience now, and that's my success"

# Robert Plant – and that below-the-belt surge

Welding band and audience into one unit of total joy: Zeppelin at Kezar Stadium, San Francisco, June 2, 1973

THE FORUM, LA & KEZAR STADIUM SAN FRANCISCO
LIVE!
MAY 31 & JUNE 2

CORBIS

# Good, traditional craftsmanship

## NME JUNE 16 Zep prove to be a revelation at two West Coast concerts.

"I DON'T EVEN like Led Zeppelin," the girl in the black velvet jacket and hotpants said petulantly as she bummed a cigarette off an acquaintance in the lobby of the Continental Hyatt House Hotel in LA. "I'm only staying here because my friends have a room. I think Zep are really tacky."

Methought the lady did protest too much. Why would three well-known LA groupies book a room at Zep's hotel if they didn't dig the band? Why would they spend most of their spare time either hanging out in the lobby or else trying to gatecrash the security on the ninth floor?

This particular lady's name was Sherry. Despite her olive skin and California tan, her face proudly bore the scars of pimples galore. Nice legs, though. Anyway, she and her friends had the signal honour of being personally evicted from Zep's floor by no less than Robert Plant himself. Plant has no patience with groupies these days.

Zeppelin's current tour has earned them more bread than any British group have taken home from the States since the halcyon days of The Beatles. So with no further ado, let us adjourn to the Forum in LA. It is May 31, and the time is eight o'clock on a Thursday night. The Forum holds approximately 20,000 humans. It's a good hall, acoustically fair for its size. This was to have been the second of two consecutive nights there for Zeppelin, and needless to say both nights were sold out, but the first night had to be cancelled because Jimmy Page sprained a finger while climbing a tree. During the gig, he winces with pain and occasionally dips his finger into a glass of cold water to keep the swelling down.

One of the first things one notices about Zeppelin's audiences is their calm and serenity. Two nights before, I'd seen Humble Pie play Madison Square Garden in New York, and for the first time in many years of concert going, I was glad to have a policemen standing next to me. The Pie crowd were so out of their collective mind on red wine and quaaludes that a nasty incident seemed imminent at any time.

Not so with the Zep crowd. They got their rocks off all right, and they shook and twitched till they were as sweaty and exhausted as the band, but not once did anybody give off a violent vibe. For all its enormous volume and energy, Zeppelin's music is inappropriate music to split skulls to.

So all is in readiness. Suddenly the lights explode, and there they are. John Paul Jones with shortish hair, moustache and five-string bass, looking almost as if he'd just left The Eagles, Page bare-chested in black velvets sparingly sequinned, carrying a businesslike Les Paul, Bonham settling in behind his kit to check it out, and leonine Robert Plant in flowered shirt and jeans. The opening number is "Rock And Roll".

Now, I always knew Zeppelin were good, but it had been three years since I'd last seen them and no way was I prepared for this. In an age when every second band to present itself for public consumption seems to be either too wasted to play or else bedevilled with a sound system more suited for announcing the winners in a vicarage raffle than transmitting rock'n'roll music, the pure, clean power of Zeppelin's performance and sound is even more extraordinary than it might otherwise appear. They just play the music, loud and proud.

Where Zeppelin score over all the bands who've come up in their wake and endeavoured to emulate them is that they keep all the bases covered. Everything that's part of the show is meticulously polished until it's as good as it can possibly get. Nothing sags, nothing is second-rate, nothing is skimped.

Every arrangement, every improvisation, the construction of every song or every solo – nothing is neglected. It's simply good, traditional British craftsmanship. The word "sloppy" is, for all practical purposes, not part of Led Zeppelin's collective vocabulary. On the other hand, its certainly no sterile, rehearsed-into-the-ground Yes trip, because

each gig has as much excitement and freshness and enthusiasm as if it was their first and last.

Generally, the length of a band's set gives you some idea of how much they enjoy playing together. Zeppelin play between two and three hours. Enough said.

The LA Forum gig was pretty damn good. It blew me out completely, but it was to be completely dwarfed in my memory by the San Francisco date they played two days later. So on with the show.

Backstage, the hangers-on have moved in and commenced to hang on. Fourteen-year-old girls in cheap gaudy threads are wandering about disconsolately muttering, "Where's Jimmy?", bumming dimes for the chewing-gum machine, surreptitiously flashing their photo spreads in *Star* magazine, and hectoring photographers into taking their pictures.

**Plant swings himelf up the scaffolding. "Do you feel it?" he says. "Feel that buzz!"**

Leee Childers from Mainman's LA office is there in a white suit, taking pictures of everything in sight.

"What's this," he asks, "in some of the English papers about me and Cherry getting fired? All that happened was that we went back home to look after our offices. Why do people print things they know aren't true?" He seems quite upset, as well as he might be.

In the corner, Robert Plant is leaning against a wall drinking beer. He's changed into a rhinestone Elvis T-shirt, and he is lavish in his praise of the audience. "What a beautiful buzz," he keeps saying. "If it wasn't for Jimmy's hand, we could've played all night for those people. Weren't they great?" he asks everybody within reach. Jump cut to the party scene. It's John Bonham's birthday, and the Forum audience had given him a hero's tribute for his drum marathon on "Moby Dick" earlier in the evening. "Twenty-one today," as Plant had announced from the stage.

"This party is probably going to get very silly," he announces. Why else would a man turn up to his birthday party wearing a T-shirt, plimsolls and a pair of swimming trunks? As things turn out, he was the most appropriately clad person present.

The party is at the luxurious Laurel Canyon home of a gentleman who runs a radio station, and to prove his importance he discreetly displays photographs of himself with such disparate notables as Sly Stone and Richard (the man from W.A.T.E.R.G.A.T.E.) Nixon.

A videotape machine is showing *Deep Throat* continuously while the stereo fills the house with Johnny Winter, the Stones, Humble Pie and Manassas. Roy Harper, one of the few people who Zep acknowledge as an influence, is there, as is Jimmy Karstein, who distinguished himself during the Clapton gig at the Rainbow, and BP Fallon, who's flown halfway round the world since this morning when the band phoned him at Michael Des Barres' place.

Having flown in from Louisiana that morning, your reporter disgraces himself by falling asleep in his chair at around 4.30am. A little later he is awakened by the very considerate Phil Carson from Atlantic and returned, more or less in one piece, to his hotel.

The following day he learns that virtually everyone present ended up in the pool after George Harrison clobbered Bonzo with his own birthday cake. Mr Fallon's exquisite antique velvet costume was totalled by his immersion, as was Rodney Bingenheimer's camera and a mink coat belonging to a lady named Vanessa.

Over the rest of the proceedings we will draw a slightly damp veil.

SATURDAY AND SAN Francisco: Jimmy Page is paranoid about flying in Zep's small private jet, so he and manager Peter Grant are travelling on a scheduled flight. That leaves Plant, Bonzo, JPJ, Beep, Peter Grant's deputy Richard Cole (who I first met some years ago in a Reading labour exchange) and sundry others to brave the elements in this tiny craft.

The chicken and champagne help to ease the terrors, except for one moment when the indefatigable Mr Bonham pilots the plane. Luckily, I don't find out about that until he's back in his seat. The gig is open-air, in a stadium at Golden Gate Park. Zep have been preceded by Lee Michaels, Roy Harper and a local group called Tunes. Harper is reported to have silenced hecklers by informing them that "Zeppelin haven't even left LA yet, so fuckin' shut up."

In the backstage area, Bill Graham is prowling around checking people out for passes. Bonham mutters something about having a hard time playing in the intense heat, but luckily it gets cooler later on. In the crowd, a black policeman is wearing an "Impeach Nixon" badge. San Francisco still has a lot of soul.

How can I tell you about that show? Led Zeppelin and 50,000 San Francisco people got together to provide one of the finest musical events I've ever had the privilege to attend. There may be bands who play better, and there may be bands who perform better, and there may be bands who write better songs, but when it comes to welding themselves and an audience together into one unit of total joy, Zeppelin yield to nobody.

Whether they're punching out the riffs of "Black Dog", or stealing people's heart from inside them with "Stairway To Heaven" (as far as I'm concerned Zeppelin's all-time masterpiece), or tripping the audience out with those unbelievable Plant-Page guitar/vocal call-and-response set pieces, they just transmit magic to anybody within hearing range.

Quite unselfconsciously, quite unobtrusively, any place they play becomes a House Of The Holy, a place to straighten tangled brain cells. Simultaneously, they take you right back to your rock'n'roll home, and send you to some new places that already feel like home when you arrive. A very spiritual occasion indeed, and also a very physical moment.

And despite all the disillusionment, the San Francisco dream is not over. It's just that nowadays people just don't talk about it. In that park, everything seemed cleaner, fresher and more immediate.

For me, one of the most amazing moments of the whole show was, strangely enough, the part I expected to enjoy least. All my musical life I've had a strong antipathy towards drum solos. Thus, it came as a shock to find myself really getting off on Bonzo's "Moby Dick".

Watching him from a few feet away, totally absorbed in what he was doing, it came back to the craftsmanship thing again. He didn't look, as so many endlessly soloing drummers do, as if they're playing to the gallery. He resembled nothing so much as a sculptor or a painter or anybody who's doing anything that involves concentration, effort and skill.

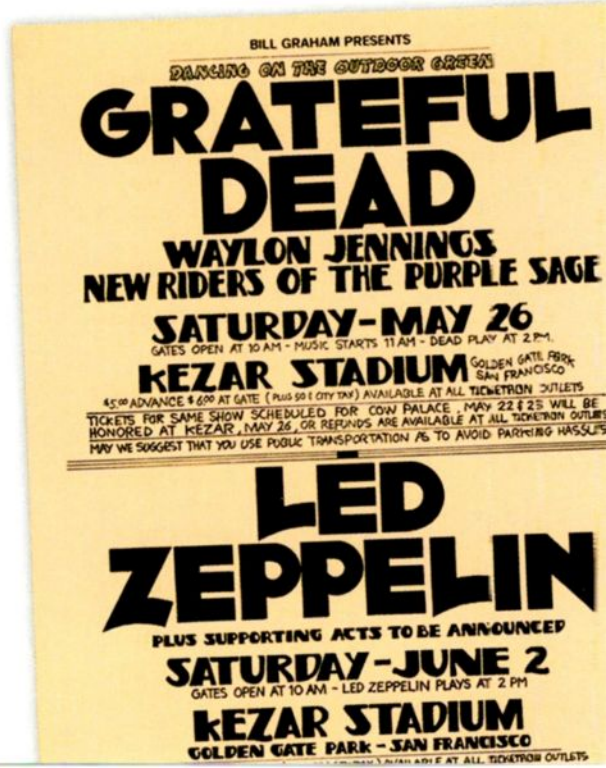
John Bonham was plying his trade, doing his gig, exercising his own particular skills, doing what any gifted and committed craftsman does. It's always nice to break through a prejudice and dig something that you couldn't dig before.

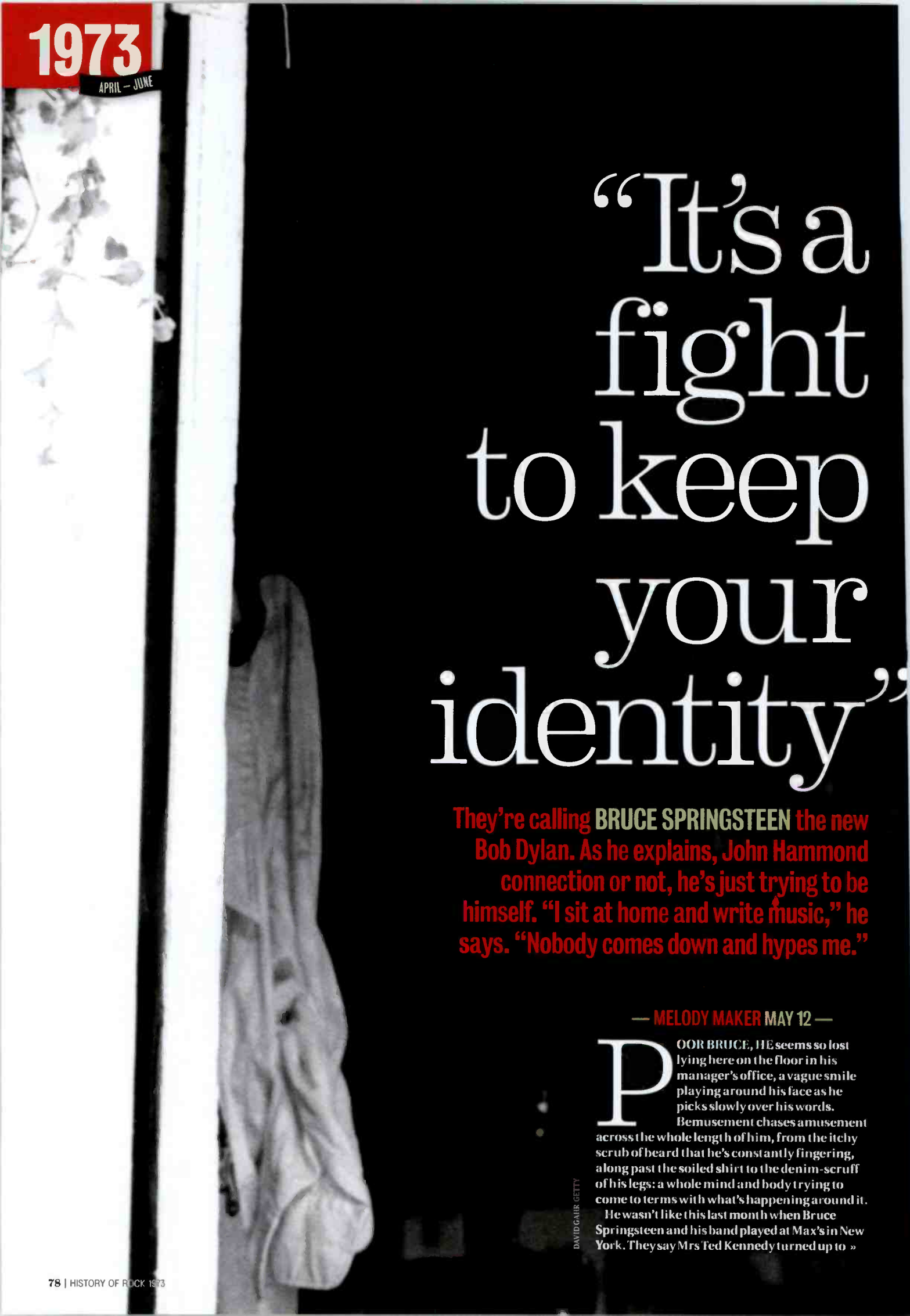
Altogether, a magical concert. I suppose legions of diehard Zep freaks have known this all along, but for me it was a revelation. Throughout the solo, Plant was pacing the side of the stage, occasionally swinging himself up the scaffolding to sit under the amps. "Do you feel it?" he said. "Feel that buzz!"

After "Communication Breakdown" a water fight broke out backstage, and about the only person who escaped unscathed was Bill Graham. Zep went back out to do a final encore of "The Ocean", and then made a dash for the limos.

All hail, Led Zep. Hosannas by the gram. If there's any excitement still left in this ego circus we call rock'n'roll, a sizeable portion of it derives from you. Be proud.

*Charles Shaar Murray*





# "It's a fight to keep your identity"

**They're calling BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN the new Bob Dylan. As he explains, John Hammond connection or not, he's just trying to be himself. "I sit at home and write music," he says. "Nobody comes down and hypes me."**

— MELODY MAKER MAY 12 —

POOR BRUCE, HE seems so lost lying here on the floor in his manager's office, a vague smile playing around his face as he picks slowly over his words. Bemusement chases amusement across the whole length of him, from the itchy scrub of beard that he's constantly fingering, along past the soiled shirt to the denim-scruff of his legs: a whole mind and body trying to come to terms with what's happening around it.

He wasn't like this last month when Bruce Springsteen and his band played at Max's in New York. They say Mrs Ted Kennedy turned up to »

DAVID GAHR GETTY

"I don't like to read too much": Bruce Springsteen poses for a portrait at Jersey Shore, New Jersey, August 1973

see him, to catch his playing on guitar and piano, his dramatic, intense presence, with the words rolling and spitting out... and those songs, stuffed and trussed with images that he slit open and spilled out. What was there to say afterwards?

"Interesting", heads nodded, "very interesting", but there was much puzzlement. He was hard to sum up. The band, particularly Clarence Clemons on sax, drove ferociously in the most relentless style, and he sounded at times like Van Morrison. Yet there remained this feeling of the poseur, not detrimental, but that an attitude was being struck; he was challenging but distant, and this was somehow unsettling. Later, one realised, Bruce Springsteen was truly a lone spirit.

He was born in Freehold, New Jersey, and since his schooldays he never did anything apart from play music: his only regular job was during summer vacation in high school, and that was as a gardener and odd-job man, tarring roofs and painting houses; he took the job to buy a guitar.

There was a college, of course – Ocean County Community, NJ, "studying draft evasion" – but it was unhappy. The students didn't like him: the psychiatrist there told him so. He recalls this, and the flash of amusement grows wider.

"I think it was my appearance. He thought I was disturbed, else I wouldn't have looked the way I did... which is pretty much the way I do now. But you gotta dig where it was at in '68; it wasn't cool to look like them. It was traumatic, and that's when I left. It seems funny now, but it was hard then."

And he throws his head back and laughs out loud. After that it was only music; the army didn't take him at his physical. Then it was a succession of bands, including a New Jersey group called Steel Mill which lasted two years. When he was 18 he played at the Fillmore West and then did an audition tape for Fillmore Records, but there was little recognised success. Until, last May, he went to another audition: at Columbia Records, and before John Hammond.

Twelve years ago, Hammond signed Dylan, maybe the most momentous deal in the history of Columbia, and now in walks this kid, 22 years old with his curly hair rough and thick on top, just like it was, and the same look, not hippy but beatnik, and he's singing this composition, his own, called "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City", and that, more than anything else, must have felt familiar.

So Springsteen was signed, and although it was undoubtedly done on his own merits, because who needs a facsimile, the publicity machine went to work, it gathered momentum as writers took heed and – suddenly! – here was a singer-songwriter making contemporaneous the Dylan of '65. Poor Bruce.

So Springsteen sits and ponders on the floor of this office: ramblings in mid-afternoon New York. And it's awful to admit, but the facial resemblance is striking, even down to the sensuous nose of seven or eight years ago. Dylan's shadow falls long across singers and writers of those years.

"Under a shadow? Sure I think I am. What happens is, once you start creating somethin', people magnify different aspects for different reasons. Record companies might do it to sell records. Every year somethin' comes along."

Some people have got him wrong, he says; his first album, *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ* (which is where he now lives), doesn't give a true picture of his artistic position: "The things on the record are pretty much what I did when I began writing; I had been playing in a band for nine years! I was essentially a guitar player! But these songs came out and I didn't have a band, so... they figured I was a singer-songwriter, and I figured I'd give it a try.

"It was almost produced to lean towards that – more towards the lyrics than the music, which was just 'bam, bam, bam'. Originally they just wanted me and a guitar. I said 'forget it'. That's why I want to do more music on my next record. On the records a lot of emphasis was put on what was being said, which was not the point, but people listened and interpreted what it was.

"You see, it depends how seriously you take yourself. It's really hard for me to talk about the words, 'cos I have no particular things to say. I mean, I never read poetry 'cos I don't like to read too much; I never read anything to the degree of remembering. Y'know, as

# An outlaw word-slinger

## MM MARCH 31 The debut long-player from a major new talent.

**Bruce Springsteen** Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ CBS

It could be 10 summers ago, a sunny truant afternoon up in Susie's room, cooking baked beans and transfixed by *Freewheelin'*, marvelling that this guy named Dylan could articulate so brilliantly the most secret emotions. But it's not. It's 1973, and we've all been through a lot, and here I am with an album by a totally unfamiliar fellow called Springsteen, and I'm getting exactly the same feelings. Even now that I know most of the words, and can sing along with the record, the adrenalin rushes so hard that its headiness makes writing difficult, and I just want to listen to the record again. And again.

Bruce Springsteen? He's from New Jersey, 23 years old, and leads a band for which he sings, plays guitar and writes songs. He has no track record to speak of, and I first heard of him a couple of weeks ago in an American magazine which printed some of his lyrics. Just reading some of his verses was a buzz: taking their cue from the image-splitting Dylan of "Subterranean Homesick Blues", they leapt off the printed page with a vivid attack which was wholly contemporary. And now this album. Well, the accompanying article said he sounded good too, but it didn't really indicate that he was this good.

In brief, Springsteen is an outlaw word-slinger with a familiar half-sneer in his voice and a taut, lean little band through which he refracts dazzling verbal images. Like Dylan, he's a rock 'n' roll poet who fills both roles perfectly, like the two forms were born for each other. The comparisons with Dylan will be inevitable, may even hurt him, and there's no denying the influence – but Springsteen is to Dylan as is the 1973 Ferrari Berlinetta 250 GT. One is simply a development of the other, using all the knowledge and techniques accumulated in the interim. Bruce uses a lot of what Bob laid down, mostly around the time of *Bringing It All Back Home*, but his tunes and tales have a validity of their own. Remember, too, that "Subterranean Homesick Blues" wouldn't have existed without Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business", and Springsteen's "Blinded By The Light", with its similar accelerating build-up of rapid-fire phrases seemingly plucked ad-lib out of the air, is simply a continuation of the tradition.

In a voice like a wasted, debauched Jackson Browne, over a band that swings as surely as Van Morrison's but with more cold blue steel and clipped fire, he tells stories from his own personal Desolation Row. Get this, from a painful song called "Growin' Up": "*The flag of piracy flew from my mast, my sails were set wing to wing/I had a jukebox graduate for first mate, she couldn't sail but she sure could sing/I pushed B-52s and bombed 'em with the blues with my gear sat stubborn on standing/I broke all the rules, strafed my old high school, never once gave thought to landing.*" Recognise the feeling?

Or the escapism of "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City": "*I had skin like leather and the diamond-hard look of a cobra/I was born blue and weathered, but I burst just like a supernova/I could walk like Brando right into the sun, then dance just like a Casanova*". Or the crystalline description in a biker ballad, "The Angel": "*The angel rides with hunchback children, poison oozing from his engine/ Wieldin' love as a lethal weapon, on his way to hubcap heaven...*"

There are some visible faults, and I'm told that he's much better now than when the album was cut. But they're only the faults of immaturity, and I hope he never loses that headlong madness which gives his work such an urgent excitement. For a debut, this is staggeringly good; and whatever happens next in music, I have a strong suspicion that Bruce Springsteen will be a big part of it. He may even be it. *Richard Williams*


ALBUMS REVIEW 1973

soon as someone says 'this guy is the next Bob Dylan' you're dead, and I can't believe they don't know that.

"Of course there are similarities! First thing I heard was on AM, 'Like A Rolling Stone', and I grew up with that. But the public always has this huge mouth, open wide and going, 'More, more!' Even if someone was dropping dead they'd still shout 'more!' They're brought up to do that, but it's a fight to keep your identity against people who want to cloud it over. Columbia, they didn't want that album cover [it's a picture postcard view of Asbury] and I had to fight that, and one of the reasons I wanted it was that that's me! That's where I'm from!"

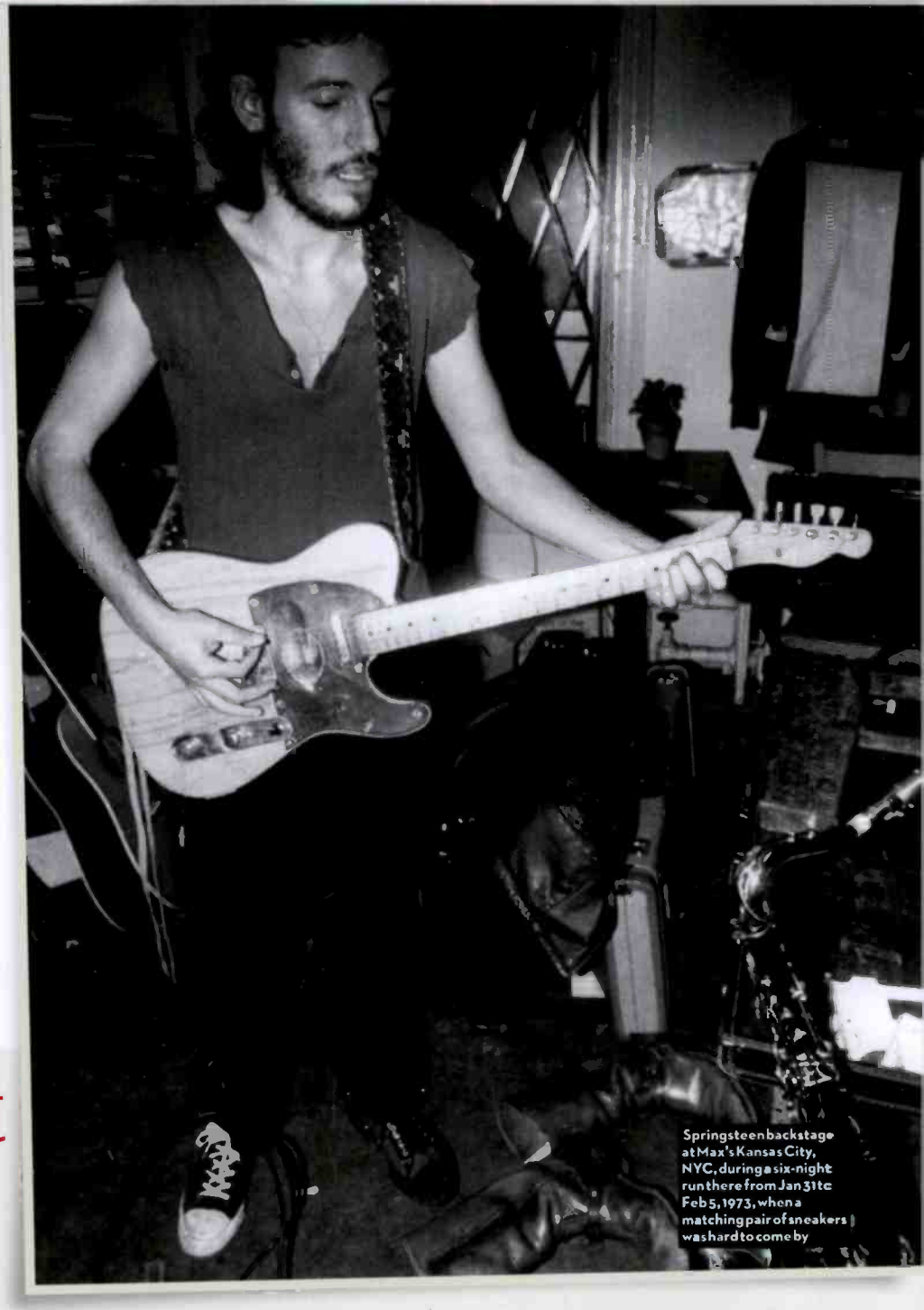
He stretches flat, laughs from his belly, and then hoiks himself on to his elbows. The fingers are in the beard; then they rub through his hair. There's a lot of US Marine insignia on the wall that becomes unaccountably noticeable. He looks absent and amused again.

"Despite all the hype," he begins, "I'm remaining pretty obscure, which just goes to show – oh, but we do get a good response from the audience." Silence.

"It's all done by people who mean well, I guess, who actually feel it's the right thing to do. The one straight guy is John [Hammond]. He looks at stuff and says it's either terrible or good."

Silence again. "The situation gets overwhelming. Really, I can't be bothered with what's goin' on here, at Columbia, and I don't much care. I sit at home and write music. Nobody comes down and hypes me."

Shadow lifts, ever so slightly. *Michael Watts* •



Springsteen backstage at Max's Kansas City, NYC, during a six-night run there from Jan 31 to Feb 5, 1973, when a matching pair of sneakers was hard to come by

CHUCK PULIN/CORBIS

# An arresting talent

## MM AUG 11 Bruce Springsteen plays NYC. Support band: The Wailers.

I'D LIKE TO say that The Wailers were a fantastic success at their opening set at Max's, but this wouldn't be strictly accurate; not because they weren't good, simply that reggae has not yet achieved any real momentum in America.

Generally, *The Harder They Come* has not made much impact in the States, and neither has its star, Jimmy Cliff. It's been the reggae orientation of Johnny Nash and the dabblings of such as Paul Simon and J Geils which have registered Jamaican music, but only to the point where the general public thinks of it as a novelty.

Thus, although The Wailers arrived fresh from an apparently triumphant residency in Boston, they found themselves playing to largely unconverted ears at Max's, and with virtually no exception, white ears. To compound matters, most of the audience was there for Columbia's new rising star, Bruce Springsteen, while the seated policy of the club was hardly conducive to a natural response to what's essentially dance music.


This is not to make too many apologies, however, for The Wailers, who were rather stiff for most of their set. In fact, Bob Marley sounded somewhat thin and unconvincing on lead vocals. In all truth, they didn't appear to be enjoying themselves, and this reserve held back their music.

There aren't many of us who aren't West Indians that have been exposed much to live reggae, so it's difficult to place The Wailers in a critical context. But, although it may be a little unfair to use them as a test case for a whole musical culture, they've made a lot of friends and alienated no one. It's a start.

Bruce Springsteen has not only started, he's fully emerged within the space of four months. His first album resembled the manic outpourings of an autistic child, but there's never any doubt in my mind that he's an original talent. Those who've dismissed him have simply never seen him.

He and his band – with more than a passing reference to the giant black tenorist, Clarence Clemons – are the most voluble and exciting club act to have appeared this year. Springsteen, with his half-smiling, befuddled air, still sounds like he's spent time in a mental institution, but that impression only heightens the desperate, tumbled intensity of his performance.

He plays spirited guitar on uptempo numbers, but he's more particularly effective on piano, where he employs his more reflective songs (there was an especially involving one about growing up in Asbury Park, NJ, where he lives).

His lyrics are invariably oblique – hardly narrative – and he would benefit only by not straining after effect and crowding image upon image. As an artist he still hasn't defined himself, but when he's learned to discipline the neurotic impulse that forces him into a kind of absurd speed writing without losing his fierce compulsiveness, he'll have something major to say.

As it is, he's an arresting talent who expresses himself best live, where this jarring note is passed over in the physicality of the music. He's a lot of fun, too. *Michael Watts*

Kevin Ayers in 1973: "My hero was Syd Barrett"

# "Sunny little songs"

**Meetings with two former members of Soft Machine. ROBERT WYATT contemplates the future after a serious accident. For KEVIN AYERS, meanwhile, the world is bananas. "The essence of what I do is to make fun of serious situations," he says. "Sometimes I get drunk."**

— MELODY MAKER MAY 26 —

WHAT IS THE fascination of the banana? It is a question that could reasonably be put to a man whose place in rock has never been easy to define – one Kevin Ayers. Bananas – yellow, curved, succulent and sensual – play a large part in his world.

They form the subject matter for short, humorous poems. He presented a revue called *The Banana Follies* at a Hampstead Theatre. His latest album is called *Bananamour*, which is also the title of his forthcoming concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall.

For Kevin, bananas represent the absurd, and the man slipping on its notoriously treacherous skin is dignity and authority deflated. Not that Ayers is particularly embattled against the establishment, but he sees the banana as an ally against the perils of seriousness.

In the past, Kevin has been one of that eccentric breed who teeter on the verge of greatness but never quite fulfil their promise. Men like Ron Geesin, Lol Coxhill, Viv Stanshall, who draw back rather than commit themselves as do lesser talents who invariably gain greater success.

Kevin is a rhythm guitarist, an obsolete profession in the hard environment of modern rock. He is also a singer, a writer and now a producer. And he had a lot to contribute that is entertaining and valuable to the rock scene, if it will but listen. He first gained attention with Soft Machine, and later went on to form The Whole World, an unsteady aggregation that did not survive long. After a considerable absence from the public eye, he has returned for a tour backed by the group 747, with his old comrade, bassist and singer Archie Legget.

There is a feeling afoot that Kevin's work is about to become more "accessible" to the public at large, and interest has been evinced in his recent single "Caribbean Moon", which represents a bow towards the requirements of hit-making. Is Kevin Ayers selling out? What is this obsession with the fruit of the herbaceous plant, with its long, seedless berry of edible pulp? And who does he think he is? It was to find answers to these pressing questions that I broke out of the dark, noisy and unpleasant cell that is the office of the *Melody Maker* this week, to track down Kevin in the sunlit uplands of Maida Vale.

He lives in a block of flats, erected in the days before the great architectural crisis, when aesthetic considerations, however slight, were still given priority. Kevin surprised me by being a large, untidy man, with a deep speaking voice, rich in resonance. He had just »

GETTY

woken as I arrived, and wore a huge and ridiculous night shirt that covered him from neck to toe. Given a fez, he could have performed a sand dance in Leicester Square for the benefit of cinema queues, with no questions asked by the buskers union.

From album covers I had expected perhaps a Rick Wakeman or David Bowie. Instead he was more like a cross between the eternally vague Peter Gabriel of Genesis, and Tommy Cooper. When he told me his greatest influence had been Syd Barrett – the man who freaked out of Pink Floyd – it was no surprise.

All these comparisons are useful, for Kevin has a unique character, not easy to define, least of all to himself. At first he seemed speechless from heavy sleep, and had to shuffle off to the bathroom to throw cold water over his face before any conversation could commence.

Frantic avant-garde piano music emitted from one room, while a querulous voice could be heard demanding: "Who's put soap in the washbasin? It's full of dirty dishes!"

Kevin's portion of the apartment was littered with old clothes and smelt strongly of overpowering incense, which vied with the smoke of Spanish cigarettes. A small banana was perched on the wall – a piece of organic art, supported by two brackets.

> "I spend too much time on my own... But I'm not bitter, thank God"

"GOOD MORNING!" SAID Kevin at length, settling down on the mattress, drawing up his knees, the nightshirt billowing up like a tent.

"That's Juanita Banana," he said catching my gaze, which had rested on a rubber doll on the mantelpiece. He thoughtfully gathered up an armful of white shoes that were littering the floor, and pushed them under a chair to make room for a pot of tea and ashtrays. We began to talk.

"We had a funny gig last night," he revealed. "We had been billed as having dancing cactus with us, and the social secretary was disappointed we didn't have them. They are giant cut-outs that are supposed to move around. But the stage was too small for them anyway."

Kevin seemed to be undergoing a renewed burst of activity.

"Yes, it's summer energy happening. It's quite a good time for energy. I've been spending some time in Jamaica, which has inspired me to write some sunny little songs. A lot of people are scared of making fools of themselves," mused Kevin. "I am too. It can be a part of you or it can be contrived. You can ridicule yourself for effect and make a fool of yourself instead of other people. The essence of what I do is to make fun of serious situations, but not through hard satire.

"I used to have a group called the Whole World which was neither one thing nor the other. It didn't make an equal contribution to the music and nor was it a backing band. It was a limbo of uncertainty and it had to break up. Now I'm backed by 747 and it's just about coming together. There are good musicians backing me – people I like. Archie Leggett, the renowned Scotsman and bass player, is working with me, and we did that thing called the *Banana Follies* at Hampstead Theatre.

"When I came back from the West Indies I got a group together and we spent three days in rehearsal. Archie knows my stuff and we did all the tracks off my new album. Have you heard Archie sing? He's got the sort of voice I like very much, but can't do myself.

"We used the Roy Young brass section on the album and hope to have them at our Queen Elizabeth Hall concert. It depends on their availability. These people are always working so much."

One of the tracks on Kevin's album is called "Interview", which he played me and seemed to relate quite strongly to our present conversation. The song went: *"I've been called a clown / Yes you may write that down / And for a little money I am extremely funny"*.

"The album is my first effort at production, and it proved very satisfactory. 'Interview' is about the universal interview – who are you, and what can you do? That's all anybody ever wants to know. The answer is I'm a performer, who sometimes tries to fly. Sometimes I get drunk – but that's just to overcome the initial fear of rejection by an audience. Alcohol is a very good energy food. It blurs your finer reception powers so you can cope with heckling, but it can make it difficult to put over sensitive music.

"Do I fear audiences? Yes, I do; I fear misunderstanding, which is the cause of most of our woes, and that is mostly because we don't know how to make ourselves understood. People say, 'I've got so much to say,' and don't know how to say it. I can be clearer writing lyrics than in conversation.

"My hero was Syd Barrett. He was an influence on me, and I've written a song for him. He wasn't a musical so much as a personal influence. On my previous albums, I used to write very esoteric lyrics, but now I'm trying to be more accessible. They're not just private jokes any more. It was apparent from the silence from the public that they were critical of them. The albums sold in very small quantities to a few people who were turned on by them. 'Caribbean Moon' is an attempt to get to more people.

"Am I selling out? I wouldn't know how. At the moment I'm interested in creating something I can still like that will appeal to a lot of people. I would like a Number One single, because it is an incredible challenge, without doing any awful bubblegum stuff.

"I'm beginning to get the feel of what makes a single and spend two whole days listening solidly to the radio. I like to know what's being listened to. I've noticed that the identification factor is most important and that all the songs have a sort of 'hook' phrase. They all have the same ingredients and you can dissect them, but you can't manufacture it.

"Suddenly, for no apparent reason, people will like a certain record. I'm not against the pop framework at all. It's just becoming pretty gigantic, and now you have long-haired businessmen running it, instead of short-haired businessmen. And there are a lot of cloth-eared, insensitive people among them, and we are just their pawns to be exploited.

"There is something slightly rotten in the pop state of Denmark. This is not necessarily a put-down. As in ordinary business, there is often an unnecessary demand created and the supply reaches saturation point.

"People's lives are becoming more and more cluttered with paraphernalia, and the awful thing is people are not getting any closer together. I regret most of all the passing of that initial joy of playing music as a simple celebration and a getting together.

"I'm very out of touch with how other musicians feel. It doesn't always come across in interviews. Perhaps people don't ask them the right questions. I have to be very careful about what I say; I always regret it later."

All well and good – but what about the bananas?

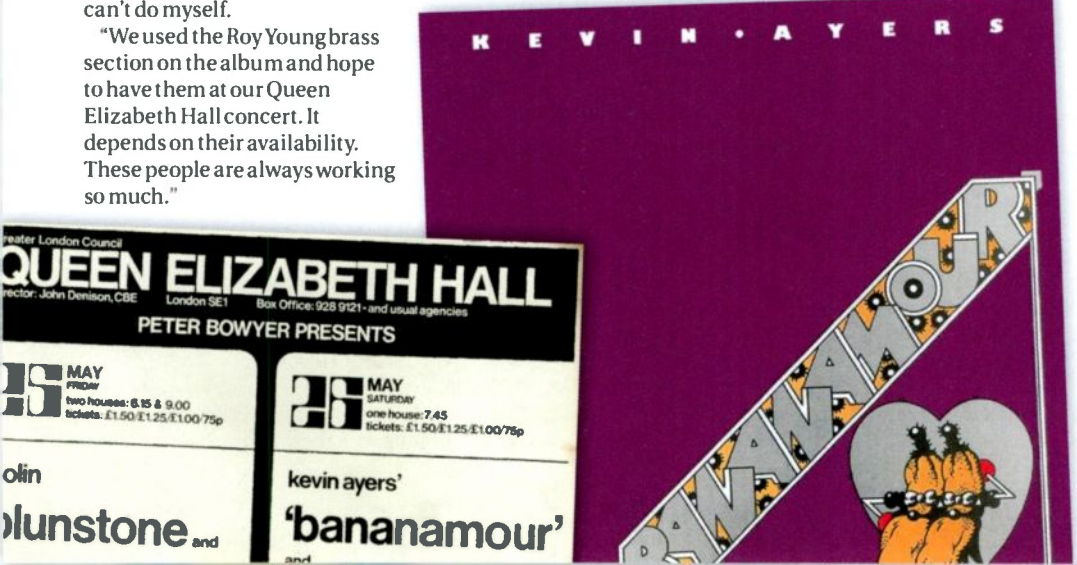
"Bananas – yes. They are kind of absurd. It's the world's oldest joke, about the man slipping on the banana skin. And there are obvious sexual connotations."

Kevin handed me a poem which he had recently jotted down, and which set out his views quite concisely on the whole subject.

"I'm going to go away after this tour to recover," said Kevin. "Then there is the possibility of a tour of America. This will be my first album released there. And then I might do a European tour. We'll have to wait and see how the records fare."

On what level would Kevin like to be accepted?

"That's a good question. Would you mind if I think about that?" There followed a long



Robert Wyatt in the Netherlands in 1972, before the accident on June 1, 1973 that paralysed him from the waist down

pause, while I lit another Spanish cigarette and Kevin stared at the floor.

"I'd like any audience really. It would help my development and help me understand more about myself. I was criticising advertising just now for subliminal suggestion. But I'm not even trying to sell them me; I find myself getting into poses sometimes and I'm pretty much an outsider.

"I don't relate to popular society and I find it hard to be with more than one person at a time, because then you just get bits of different people, which freaks me out. But I don't feel badly about playing society's games as long as I retain some control.

"You see, I started life by going to some weird schools. I was brought up in the Far East and didn't have any primary or secondary education – thank God. When I came to England I was sent to a ghastly cramming school, to become part of society.

"It was ludicrous at school. Nobody tried to find out where your real talents lay. I had lived in Malaya from the age of six to 12, and going to school in England was like a descent from heaven to hell. My memories of the East are still very vivid and I speak Malay fluently. I used to run around naked as a child and it was quite a change coming here. That's why I keep going away and trying to find simplicity again.

"But don't talk of 'childlike simplicity' – children are emotionally very complicated and they are very devious little people. In Western cities, everybody is rushing around trying to find out who they are. Where I came from, it wasn't like that. Now the silly buggers are trying to get into the Western way of life with cars and TV sets.

"I went to Jamaica to find all I had lost, and all I met were people who wanted to come here, or go to America. I stay here as little as possible. This is just somewhere to sleep and read. We all have an island in our heads where we will go and live happily ever after. You don't even need the place, that's just geography.

"I don't want to move away from people. I don't dislike people – only the aspects of them I see in myself. So I don't want to be considered a hermit, brothers and sisters – that would be disowning myself. I spend too much time on my own and becoming morose. But I'm not bitter – thank God. A wider public will give me more confidence and maybe it will stop me being so self-deprecating, and self-effacing. The outsider's role in society? It's all in the lyrics of my songs." *Chris Welch*

## — MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 10 —

**LAST WEEK, ROBERT** Wyatt and his lady Alfie had five pounds in the bank. Not a great reward for almost a decade in the music business, and the sort of situation bound to bring a little panic to any temporarily incapacitated musician.

And for Robert, of course, the prospect was particularly grim. Doubtless everyone knows by now that Robert broke his back in an accident at a party back in June, and now he's paralysed from the waist down.

The cold, hard facts are that Robert will not be able to walk or play drums again. For a lesser person that could be the absolute end of the line; nothing left to do but wallow in self-pity. Not Robert Wyatt, though. He's re-evaluating his position as a musician, and trying to find a way to return to playing as soon as possible.

I went down to Stoke Mandeville Hospital with Mike Ratledge and Soft Machine manager Sean Murphy last week to see Robert. Frankly, it was a confrontation that I just didn't feel I was emotionally equipped to deal with. What words could I possibly say to a personal musical hero, now confined to a wheelchair, that wouldn't sound like an obituary?

Some kids grew up with Gene Krupa, some with Jagger. Me, I grew up with the Soft Machine, went to more gigs than I can remember, and it was always an education to watch Robert.

It's not generally acknowledged yet, but Robert was a true innovator as far as drumming's concerned in the mid-'60s, single-handedly responsible, I think, for a lot of the cross-fertilisation that has occurred between rock and jazz. But my worries were unfounded.

As soon as I saw Robert now out of the wards and as comfortable as possible in a cosy hospital annexe called Ashendon House, I realised that he's capable of becoming an influential musician all over again.

One only has to look at his track record to understand the possibilities that are open to him. Generally speaking, if you deprive a drummer of his ability to drum, he doesn't usually have much to offer musically. Wyatt has always been more than just a drummer, however.

For two years he was the lead singer with a Canterbury band called The Wilde Flowers, and later, of course, he vocalised with the Soft Machine and Matching Mole, so he'll be singing more in future.

Then there's his keyboard playing, about which he's always been unnecessarily humble, because he's very original. As if that weren't enough, he's dabbled with electric guitar ("Memories" on Daevid Allen's *Banana Moon* album), and he once played trumpet in a trio which featured Daevid Allen on guitar and Terry Riley on boogie-woogie piano.

He has actually done some recording since his accident – proof that you can't keep a good man down. "I went on my first outing since the accident, last week," he says, "to the Manor. I was hanging around the studios while Hatfield [And The North] were recording, hoping to be asked to rattle a tambourine or something, 'cos I'm pretty good at that, and eventually Phil [Miller], getting embarrassed by my presence, gave me a piece of paper and said, 'Well, while you're here you might as well make yourself useful. Sing this.'

"It was a new song that he'd just written. I thought, 'Christ, I'll never be able to learn it. I'll make a fool of myself.' As it happened, though, it worked out all right."

The Pink Floyd/Soft Machine benefit concert came as a pleasant surprise. "I couldn't believe it at first; in fact I didn't believe it till I read it. But I'm knocked out because it means I can stop worrying about money for a bit, and that's a tremendous load off my mind."

Any future plans? Rumour has it that Robert has written a whole batch of hit singles from his hospital bed.

"That's not quite true. I'd written a lot of songs for what was going to be the third Matching Mole album with Bill [McCormick], Francis Monkman and Gary Winde. I thought I'd got them all sort of safely stored in my head, but what with one thing and another I've forgotten most of them. I've been working on some tape loops and things, though.

"By chance I've met a guy who's a friend of Ron Geesin's, and just happens to live across the road from here. He's got a piano, and some Revox machines, and Alfie's got me this little Japanese organ. We've made some funny old tapes. This guy doesn't know anything about me or Soft Machine or anything, but does know a lot about recording techniques."

And so, with more problems than most people could handle, he plans to slowly return to the fast-living rock'n'roll circuit. I'm a hundred per cent certain that he'll be strong enough to cope with the pressures. *Steve Lake* •

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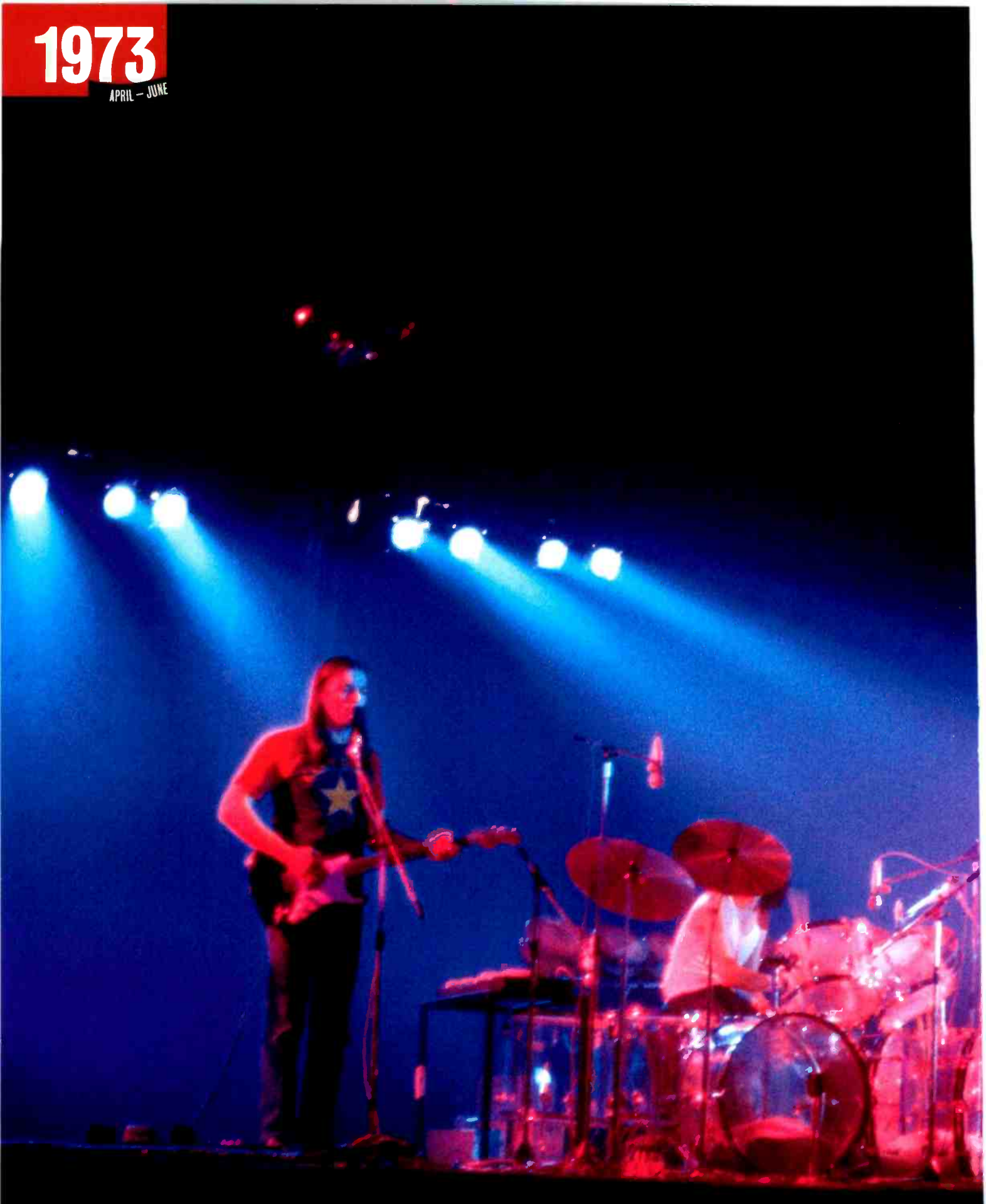
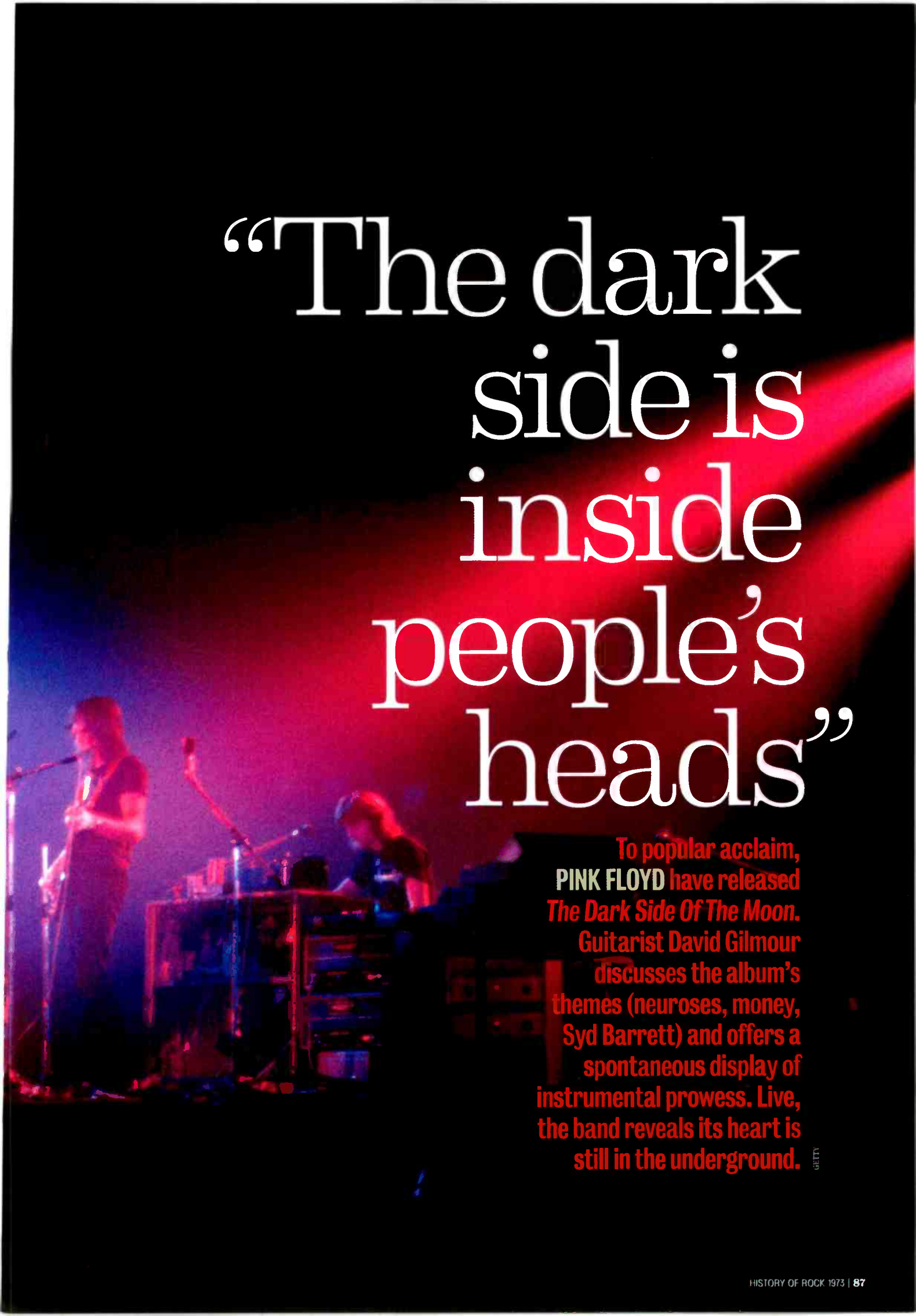


March 10, 1973: Pink Floyd at Kent State University, Ohio, during the first *Dark Side Of The Moon* tour of North America



# "The dark side is inside people's heads"

**To popular acclaim, PINK FLOYD have released *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Guitarist David Gilmour discusses the album's themes (neuroses, money, Syd Barrett) and offers a spontaneous display of instrumental prowess. Live, the band reveals its heart is still in the underground.**

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## — MELODY MAKER MAY 19 —

**O H FLOYD– WHEREFORE** art thou? What lies yonder– on the dark side of the moon? Madness they do say, and present death. In their seventh year together, paranoia and fear seem to haunt their music, despite, or perhaps because of, success. Much of the Pink Floyd's latest album (actually over a year old in terms of studio time) reflects the pressures and obsessions that afflict the itinerate rock musician. Without the lifestyle, there would not be music; and without the music, the lifestyle could not be supported.

Mad laughter and sane voices intermingle in the Floyd's measured, timeless compositions, and it would be easy to read into the characters of the men who make up one of the most original and fulfilling of groups, a kind of omniscience. Fans– and journalists– can and have been disappointed, or surprised to find that the Pink Floyd are but human. Their output is not prolific, they have been known to repeat material at concerts, they have yet to announce details of any plan to save the world, and what is more, they operate and enjoy taking part in a moderately successful football team.

Time wasted, the curse of money, ambitions unfulfilled, these are all matters that concern the Floyd, and form the basis of many of their musical ideas. They are not esoteric subjects and should be easily assimilated without recourse to mystical interpretation.

Yet even today, the Floyd occasionally feel misunderstood. But they can also feel a tremendous satisfaction in the knowledge that the band said to be "finished" when Syd Barrett left them all those years ago has reached a peak that is impressive even in this age of supergroups. Acceptance of the Floyd's poised and delicate music has never been greater. On their last American tour they casually sold out massive venues from coast to coast; *The Dark Side Of The Moon* has taken world charts in its stride, while their forthcoming London concerts at Earls Court – for charity – sold out as quickly as tickets could be passed over the counter.

The Floyd have doubtless earned an attractive penny in their time, but unlike many other successful artists, they do not wallow in riches. Roger Waters lives in a modest house in Islington, where his wife bakes pots in the garden shed. And while David Gilmour lives on a farm in the country, it is through his own efforts that the establishment has been made habitable. He might boast an ornamental pool in the garden, stocked with gaily coloured fish, but he dug it himself.

It was to this rural retreat that I drove one sunny day last week, wending through the fields of Hertfordshire, made fearful by juggernauts wallowing on S-bends and locals driving dented grey Cortinas at speed.

Arriving at the village at the appointed hour, a further 60 minutes were spent following the conflicting directions of rustics pushing bicycles. Still lost, I consulted a map that seemed to have been drawn up in 1932. Hurling this aside, my gaze perceived a fissure in the hedge opposite. It seemed scarcely possible I was parked outside the Gilmour estate and had passed it innumerable times in the last hour.

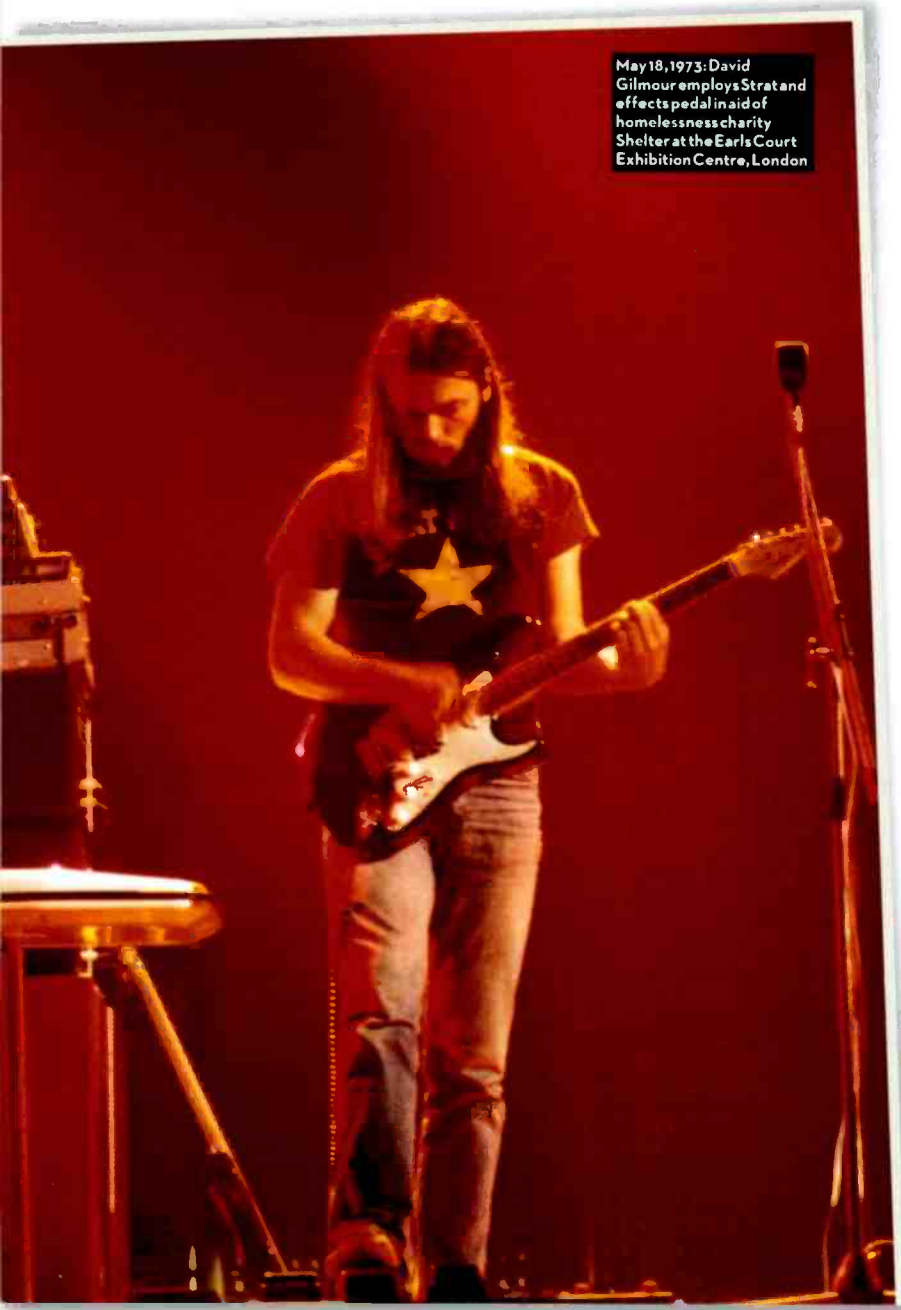
Such was the case. In a secluded courtyard an alsatian stood guard and a venerable old horse clomped about. A youth in faded blue jeans and straggly black hair appeared like Heathcliff at the cottage door. "Mr Gilmour's abode?"

"Yes indeed. Come in and have a cup of tea. It will calm you." My motorist's fury began to abate, as I drank in the ornate but tasteful decor. Low beams, a jukebox here, woodcarvings there – since taking over the abandoned Victorian farmhouse a couple of years ago, the guitarist had worked hard at improvements. When he moved in there was no electricity or heating, and he lived rough as he created an open-plan living area, constructed a music room, dug the aforementioned pool and cleaned out stables for Vim, his retired brewer's dray horse. He had even permitted himself the luxury of a swimming pool, following the satisfactory sale of many of the Pink Floyd's albums.

Then came Nemesis, not in the shape of a writer to Mailbag, but a man from the council, only minutes before my arrival. He had presented a copy of the council's plans to build a housing estate on the surrounding greenbelt land, and to compulsorily purchase great chunks of the Floydian paradise.

"We'll have to pack our bags and move," he said with hopeless resignation.

Our eyes turned to megalopolis creeping over the horizon, the threatening blocks of Harlow, poised ready to march. We toyed with ideas to build a wall of fire around the premises, to be touched off at the instant the bulldozers arrived, and I suggested sowing landmines in Vim's meadow. Eventually we decided it would be more cheering to speak of the Pink Floyd.



DAVE ELLIS/REDFERNS

May 18, 1973: David Gilmour employs Strat and effects pedal in aid of homelessness charity Shelter at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London

**FOR THE BENEFIT** of new reader George Loaf (12), it should be explained that the group was born in 1967 during the heady days of flower power and UFO. Mr Gilmour replaced the legendary Syd Barrett on guitar, who had written such chart hits as "See Emily Play". The Floyd went through a bleak period when they were written off, but quietly drew about them an army of fans and went about their creative work, wholly unmoved by the shifting fortunes and fashions that affect their contemporaries. They are a proud, pioneering and somewhat detached group who sometimes look upon the cavortings of some of their fellow groups with faint dismay, not out of sour grapes, but from purely aesthetic considerations.

But first, what had the Floyd been doing these last few months, and how long had it taken them to conceive *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, which I believed was their best yet?

"We did the American tour," said Dave. "We only ever do three-week tours now, but that one was 18 dates in 21 days, which is quite hard. We started recording the LP in May last year, and finished it around January. We didn't work at it all the time, of course. We hadn't had a holiday in three years and we were determined to take one. On the whole, the album has a good concept..."

"Our music is about neuroses": Pink Floyd in 1973 – (l-r) Nick Mason, David Gilmour, Roger Waters and Rick Wright

Isn't it their best yet? "I guess so. A lot of the material had already been performed when we recorded it, and usually we go into the studio and write and record at the same time. We started writing the basic idea ages ago, and it changed quite a lot. It was pretty rough to begin with. The songs are about being in rock'n'roll, and apply to being what we are on the road. Roger wrote 'Money' from the heart."

Money seemed to be a touchy subject for musicians and fans alike. Were the Floyd cynics? "Oh no – not really. I just think that money's the biggest single pressure on people. Even if you've got it, you have the pressure of not knowing whether you should have it, and you don't know the rights and wrongs of your situation. It can be a moral problem, but remember the Pink Floyd were broke for a pretty long time. We were in debt when I joined, and nine months afterwards I remember when we gave ourselves £30 a week, and for the first time we were earning more than the roadies."

> "Money can be a moral problem, but we were broke for a long time"

For a band that relies on creating moods, good sound was essential for the embryonic Floyd: "We hardly had any equipment of our own. We had a light show, but we had to scrap it for two years. We've had lights again for the last couple of years, but in the meantime we developed the basic idea of the Azimuth Co-ordinator. We did a concert at the Festival Hall with the new sound system, and none of us had any idea what we were doing. I remember sitting on the stage for two hours feeling totally embarrassed. But we developed the ideas, and it was purely down to setting moods and creating an atmosphere."

To digress, what did Dave think of Hawkwind, the newest prophets of the UFO tradition? "I don't ever listen to them, but they seem to be having jolly good fun," said Dave without the trace of a smile.

What about The Moody Blues? "I'm not too keen on The Moody Blues. I don't know why – I think it's all that talking that gets my goat. It's a bit like poets' corner." Dave did not want to be drawn on the subject of rivalry, but he did admit to hearing with pleasure that an expensive piece of equipment belonging to another group had collapsed. The group had recently tried to poach the Floyd's road crew.

Looking back over his six years or so with the group, what milestones did he see in their development? "There haven't been any particular milestones. It's all gone rather smoothly. We've always felt like we have led some sort of cult here, but in America it's been slow but sure. This year in the States it's been tremendous, but I can't say why – specifically. We have been able to sell out ten to 15,000-seaters every night on the tour – quite suddenly.

"We have always done well in Los Angeles or New York, but this was in places we had never been to before. Suddenly the LP was Number One there and they have always been in the forties and fifties before.

"No – success doesn't make much difference to us. It doesn't make any difference to our output, or general attitudes. There are four attitudes in the band that are quite different. But we all want to push forward and there are all sorts of things we'd like to do. For Roger Waters it is more important to do things that say something. Richard Wright is more into putting out good music, and I'm in the middle with Nick. I want to do it all, but sometimes I think Roger can feel the musical content is less important and can slide around it.

"Roger and Nick tend to make the tapes or effects like the heartbeat on the LP. At concerts we have quad tapes and four-track tape machines. So we can mix the sound and pan it around. The heartbeat alludes to the human condition and sets the mood for the music, which describes the emotions experienced during a lifetime. Amidst the chaos there is beauty and hope for mankind. The effects are purely to help the listener understand what the whole thing is about.

"It's amazing... at the final mixing stage we thought it was obvious what the album was about, but still a lot of people, including the engineers and the roadies, when we asked them, didn't know what the LP was about. They just couldn't say – and I was really surprised. They didn't see it was about the pressures that can drive a young chap mad.

"I really don't know if our things get through, but you have to carry on hoping. Our music is about neuroses, but that doesn't mean that we are neurotic. We are able to see it, and discuss it. *The Dark Side Of The Moon* »

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itself is an allusion to the moon and lunacy. The dark side is generally related to what goes on inside people's heads – the subconscious and the unknown.

"We changed the title. At one time, it was going to be called Eclipse, because Medicine Head did an album called *The Dark Side Of The Moon* but it didn't sell well, so what the hell. I was against Eclipse and we felt a bit annoyed because we had already thought of the *Dark* title before Medicine Head came out. Not annoyed at them, but because we wanted to use the title. There are a lot of songs with the same title. We did one called 'Fearless' and Family had a single called that."

Did the Floyd argue among themselves much? "A fair bit, I suppose, but not too traumatic. We're bound to argue because we are all very different. I'm sure our public image is of 100 per cent spaced-out drug addicts, out of our minds on acid. People do get strange ideas about us. In San Francisco we had a reputation from the Gay Liberation Front: 'I hear you guys are into Gay Lib'; I don't know how they could tell..."

As a guitarist, Dave had been somewhat overshadowed by the Floyd's strong corporate image. But his virile, cutting lines are one of their hallmarks and a vital human element. Did he ever fancy working out on a solo album, or forming a rock trio?

"I get all sorts of urges but really nothing strong. Put it down to excessive laziness. No, I don't do sessions. I don't get asked. Any frustrations I might have about just banging out some rock'n'roll are inevitable, but are not a destructive element to our band. I have a lot of scope in Pink Floyd to let things out. There are specially designated places where I can do that."

In the past the Floyd have been subject to criticism, not the least appearing in the *Melody Maker*. How do they react to that?

"React? Violently! People tend to say we play the same old stuff – that we do the same numbers for years. We don't. We are playing all new numbers now, except for 'Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun'. The Who are still playing 'My Generation' and nobody complains about that. We can take criticism when it's valid, but we are only human and we can only do so much. Sometimes it surprises me when we play really well, and spend some time on presenting a special show, like we did at Radio City in New York, and we get knocked.

"Some people dislike the basic premise of what we are all about. Then their criticism is a waste of time. For someone to criticise you who understands you, and can say where you have fallen down – that's valid. There are some people who come to our shows with no real interest in what we are doing, don't like the group, so don't like the concert. We put all the bad reviews into a little blue book."

> "There's humour in our music, but I don't know if it gets through"

This time Dave was smiling. (G Loaf, please note. Musician's joke: Gilmour does not really have a little blue book. He was speaking in fun.)

"I remember after Mick Watts did his piece on us, we all gave him a complete blank in an aeroplane. It wasn't deliberate. We just didn't recognise him. But he made some snide remark in the *MM*, so we sent him a box with a boxing glove inside on a spring. Nick got them specially

ALAMY

With *Dark Side* hitting the top of the *Billboard* LP chart on April 28, Floyd return for a second US tour in June 1973

made. But it wasn't taken in good humour. Syd Barrett would never have done a thing like that. All very childish really.

"We don't get uptight at constructive reviews, but when somebody isn't the smallish piece interested in what you are doing, then it's no help to them or to us. We did get uptight at what Mick Watts said – it was very savage. But you can't stay angry for long. We tried to turn the feud into a kind of joke with the boxing glove. You've got to have a sense of humour," said Dave scowling into his tea. "There's humour in our music, but I don't know if any of it gets through."

As a key member of a band with its gaze fixed firmly on the future, it seemed unlikely Dave would want to reminisce, yet he was happy enough to recall their origins: "Nick Mason had got a date sheet 10 yards long with all the gigs in red ink – every one since 1967. It's quite extraordinary when you look at the gigs we got through – four or five a week. We couldn't do that now, not when you think of the equipment we carry. The roadies have to be there by eight in the morning to start setting up. It's a very complicated business. Things still go wrong, but we virtually carry a whole recording studio around with us all the time.

"In 1967 no one realised that sound could get better. There was just noise, and that's how rock'n'roll was. As soon as you educate people to something better, then they want it better – permanently. PAs were terrible in those days – but we've got an amazing one now.

"Before we do a gig, we have a four-page rider in our contract with a whole stack of things that have to be got together by the promoter. We have to send people round two weeks beforehand to make sure they've got it right, otherwise they don't take any notice. There have to be two power systems, for the lights and PA. Otherwise the lighting will cause a buzz through the speakers. Usually a stage has to be built – to the right size. We've got 11 tons of equipment, and on our last American tour it had to be carried in an articulated truck. Oh yes, it's the death of rock'n'roll. Big bands are coming back.

"There was a long period of time when I was not really sure what I was around to do, and played sort of back-up guitar. Following someone like Syd Barrett into that band was a strange experience. At first I felt I had to change a lot and it was a paranoic experience. After all, Syd was a living legend, and I had started off playing basic rock music – Beach Boys, Bo Diddley and "The Midnight Hour". I wasn't in any groups worth talking about, although I had a three-piece with Ricky Wills, who's now with Peter Frampton's Camel.

"I knew Syd from Cambridge since I was 15, and my old band supported the Floyd on gigs. I knew them all well. They asked me if I wanted to join when Syd left, and not being completely mad, I said yes, and joined in Christmas '68.

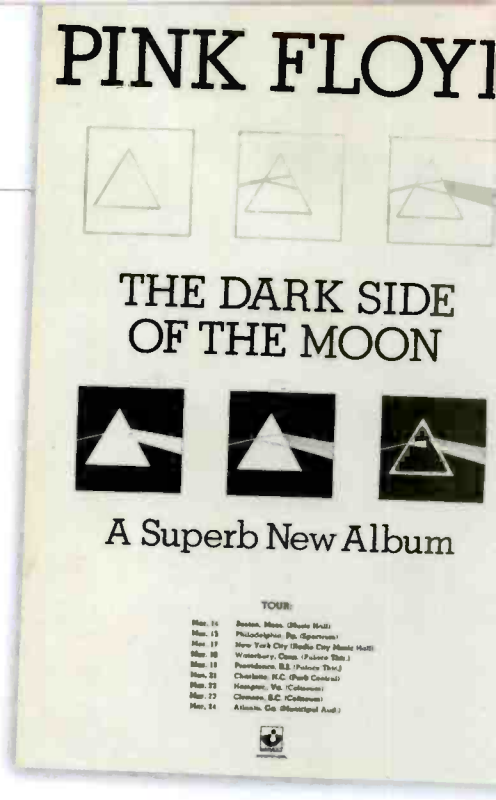
"I later did the two solo albums with Syd. God, what an experience. God knows what he was doing. Various people have tried to see him and get him together, and found it beyond their capabilities.

"I remember when the band was recording 'See Emily Play'. Syd rang me up and asked me along to the studio. When I got there he gave me a complete blank. He was one of the great rock'n'roll tragedies. He was one of the most talented people and could have given a fantastic amount. He really could write songs, and if he had stayed right, could have beaten Ray Davies at his own game.

"It took a long time for me to feel part of the band after Syd left. It was such a strange band, and very difficult for me to know what we were doing. People were very down on us after Syd left. Everyone thought Syd was all the group had, and dismissed us. They were hard times. Even our management, Blackhill, believed in Syd more than the band.

"It really didn't start coming back until *Saucerful Of Secrets* and the first Hyde Park free concert. The big kick was to play for our audiences at Middle Earth. I remember one terrible night when Syd came and stood in front of the stage. He stared at me all night long. Horrible!

"The free concerts were really a gas. The first one had 5,000 people and the second had 150,000. But the first was more fun. We tried to do two more singles around this time, but they didn't mean a thing. They're now on the *Relics* album."




Where lay the future for Floyd? "God knows, I'm not a prophet. We have lots of good ideas. It's a matter of trying to fulfil them. It's dangerous to talk about ideas, or you get it thrown at you when you don't do it. We have vague ideas for a much more theatrical thing, a very immobile thing we'd put on in one place. Also we want to buy a workshop and rehearsal place in London. We've been trying to get one for some time.

"No we don't want our own label – but we do have our own football team! We beat Quiver nine-one recently, and now there's talk of a music industries cup. Oh – and we played the North London Marxists. What a violent bunch. I bit my tongue – and had to have stitches."

So that's what lies on the dark side of the moon – a pair of goalposts. But the Floyd will be all right – as long as they keep their heads. *Chris Welch*

## — NME MAY 19 —

"**DON'T TAKE ANY** pictures of me outside the house", says David Gilmour, making a quick, impatient gesture like brushing away flies. "I can't stand the 'pop star in his country house' syndrome."

Sure David, but in the broadest sense you are a pop star. And when you're the guitarist for famous, best-selling Pink Floyd, and you've made as many decent albums as Pink Floyd have, and you've gone the whole route long ago, and you've still got your wits about you, and the money keeps rolling in, what else is there to spend the bread on?

And it has to be said that Dave Gilmour's spent his allotted share of the Floyd takings in a manner befitting one of the most tasteful bands of our time. His Essex mock-Tudor residence positively screams good taste – the real sort, not Ghastly Good Taste – and is conspicuous for its lack of middle-class accoutrements. All rooms are in that happy state of disarray that comes from a relaxed lifestyle, the world is fenced out by a high hedge and the BMW in the garage and the swimming pool out back give off identical expensive glints.

Gilmour, wearing a T-shirt that says "Didn't they do well" in sewn-on white letters, is lounging in a rocking-chair in front of a gorgeous, ornate, teak altar-screen that just radiates antiquity. This morning, though, despite the surrounding comforts and the presence of his lady at his side to succour him, the Floyd guitarist is in a somewhat fragile state, having visited the Marquee the previous evening (in the company of Roger Waters) to catch Roy Buchanan's set. He's a little tired and he may, or may not, have been a little inebriated the night before – he can't quite remember. Anyway, it isn't important because this is the first interview he's done for ages and neither of us can quite remember the procedure and there's a lot to get through before lunchtime ennui sets in.

First off, David, congratulations on finally attaining the exalted Number One spot in the States with *Dark Side of the Moon*.

A slow smile spreads across the Gilmour face. "Yes, it is nice, isn't it? We've never really been above 40th position before – but even so, we're still selling more albums there than we would in the English charts."

He's reluctant to be pinned down as to why this should suddenly happen, after five years of being a cult band in America – "I suppose we've always had this sort of underground image over there" – and he's even more reluctant to define what Floyd's appeal is in the States, or even what type of audiences the group attract. In fact, he doesn't seem particularly interested in anything, taking the whole process with a combination of »

The gong Roger Waters struck so enthusiastically in 1972's *Live At Pompeii* documentary gets a little added propane – Earls Court, May 18, 1973

affable ennui and the tiniest hint of indifference. "I don't think it'll make any change – I mean, we've never had any problem selling out even the largest halls and I don't really see how that can change. We can still sell out the Santa Monica Civic two nights in succession, and I'm not sure that the album will make any difference to that".

Nonetheless, one is aware that perhaps the success of *Dark Side* took the band a little by surprise, as no tour has been planned to actually coincide with the peaking of the album. Though they are off again in June. Anyway...

Tea arrives and conversation briefly returns to the Marquee, where Gilmour had been spotted a couple of weeks ago. He seems to be a regular denizen. "In fact, I was down there that night to see Quiver." Gilmour was, at one time, a member of a group which included one of the present Quiver lineup, and Gilmour takes an interest in the group's progress.

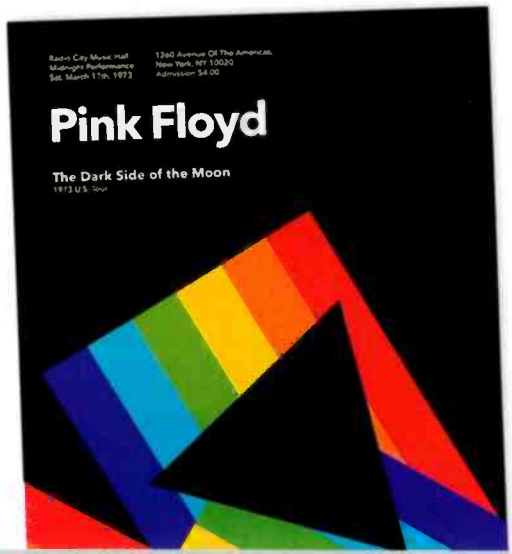
An interesting sidelight is his reference to Floyd as "this band; I've been five years in this band" – as if he expected Floyd to finish tomorrow. And then you realise that he's first and foremost a musician and the lead guitar chair in Pink Floyd is just another gig. Floyd may one day disappear, but Gilmour intends to keep right on playing...

Back to *Dark Side*, and I advance the hypothesis that the album shows a marked return to solid purpose that, for me, had been somewhat lacking in Floyd's last three or so albums, good though they've been individually. Gilmour ponders this.

"I suppose so. Certainly there's a sort of theme running through it, which we haven't really done for a long time. There's two opinions about this in the group – half of us wanted to play a thematic piece, the other half wanted to play a collection of songs."

Which half did he belong to? A reappearance of the slow smile. "I didn't object, anyway. It's basically Roger's idea. We'd all written songs beforehand, and then Roger got the theme and the words together."

> "There's a sort of theme... and two opinions about this"




I point out that, for the first time, the band have considered album lyrics important enough to print on the sleeve. "Yes, I generally don't like sleeve lyrics." End of subject.

The theme behind *Dark Side* is, of course, the various pressures that can drive one mad – "pressures directed at people like us, like 'Money', 'Travel', and so on". I remark that the piece has changed markedly since I saw it premiered at the Rainbow in 1972. Gilmour agrees, mentioning that the entire show had been on the road for about six months before the group took the project into the studio.

"Normally, we go into the studio, often without any concrete ideas, and allow the circumstances to dictate the music".

Sometimes, though, this results in filler tracks (for example, the jokey sides on *Ummagumma* and *Atom Heart Mother*) and besides, isn't it an expensive way to record? "No. We don't pay. EMI do."

Another marked feature of the album is Gilmour's own blossoming into a tough, bluesy player – especially on "Money", which features several verses of really hard, spectacular licks. Gilmour shrugs this off modestly, although Ginger, his lady, chimes in with her agreement that it represents Gilmour at his best. He thinks some of his playing on "Obscured By Clouds" is better, but concedes that "Money" was designed as a basically guitar track.

Other features from *Dark Side*'s live performance are also missing – noticeably the taped finale which uses extracts from the Collected Rantings of Malcolm Muggeridge. "Yes. Well, you didn't really expect we'd get his permission, did you?"

He confesses that he never really listens to Floyd albums, and he's reluctant to assess them in retrospect – but I detect a leaning towards *Obscured By Clouds*, which he has been known to direct into the garden on a summer's day. Others? Well, he likes some of the tracks on *Saucerful Of Secrets*, mainly the title track and "Set The Controls For The Heart

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Of The Sun". *Atom Heart Mother* he admits to have been an experiment, not a new direction, and he would record it completely differently now, had he the chance or the inclination.

"The trouble was, we recorded the group first and put the brass and the choir on afterwards. Now, I think I'd do the whole thing in one take. I feel that some of the rhythms don't work and some of the syncopations aren't quite right."

Another period which Floyd dabbled in, but which didn't really communicate itself to our ears via concrete Floyd music, was their flirtation with the French avant garde and with ballet. "In fact, we did that ballet for a whole week in France. Roland Petit choreographed it to some of our older material... but it's too restricting for us. I mean, I can't play and count bars at the same time. We had to have someone sitting on stage with a piece of paper telling us what bar we were playing...

"We also did the music for *More*. We hadn't done film scores before – but they offered us lots of money. We wrote the whole thing in eight days from start to finish.

"We did *Zabriskie Point* for Antonioni, and in fact we wrote much more than he eventually used. I feel, even now, that it would have been better if he'd used most of what we'd written."

I put it to Gilmour that these wanderings from the band's direct line of progression have been received by fans with disappointment. He gets a little heated.

"That's the trouble – you can't really break out of the progression-from-your-last-LP rut. People's minds are set to expect something and if you don't provide it, well..."

Many Floyd aficionados still feel that *Ummagumma* was the group's high point. Gilmour disagrees. "For me, it was just an experiment. I think it was badly recorded – the studio side could have been done better. We're thinking of doing it again."

But we don't have time to explore the meaning behind that because now it's time for Gilmour to show off his music room – and for the first time since this interview began, he comes to life.

Earlier, he'd told us that his opinion of the music press was that it was, well, irrelevant to Pink Floyd ("We don't really need the music press and they don't really need us"), and his attitude during the interview had been one of mild amusement coupled with disbelief at the workings of the journalistic mind. But when we cross the carpet and enter the little room full of electronic equipment, he becomes a New Man.

Most private music rooms I've seen have been sterile, formal places – not, in my opinion, suited vibewise to the creative process – but Gilmour's is lived in and it works. The usual tape recorders and eight-track stuff are there, but there's also a drum kit (Nick Mason's? "No, mine"), about 12 guitars, ranging from a Strat through a '59 Les Paul Custom to a Les Paul Junior hanging on the wall, a Les Paul-type electric guitar ("custom-made, naturally") and a beautiful classical guitar ("custom-made, naturally").

But pride of place goes to the newest toy, a special synthesizer made by EMS (who make the VCS3) which, Gilmour assures us, is not on the market and never will be. He plugs in the Strat and this device, rather like a plastic pulpit with pedals mounted underneath, gives off some of the most incredible sounds we've ever heard. And that includes every Pink Floyd album. There's a fader that lowers the note an octave, a whining fuzz device which couples into that, and most uncanny of all, a phase "Itchycoo Park"-type effect that resembles a Phantom doing a ground strike somewhere in South-East Asia. Believers, you're in for some hair-raising sounds when Gilmour gets this weapon on the road, as he says he intends to.

Looking at David Gilmour as he coaxes these apocalyptic noises from his guitar, one can see why he and the rest of Pink Floyd feel remote from the workings of the music business.

Gilmour in our interview never really came to life because he hasn't any stake in a successful musicbiz rapport with the press – but he's said more about Pink Floyd in 30 seconds of divebombing with the Strat and the Synthi HiFli than all the interviews in the world would ever do. And, really, isn't that what it's all about? *Tony Tyler* •

RAINBOW LONDON
LIVE!
NOVEMBER 4

# Deep, eternal, flashing...

**MM NOV 10 A surging Pink Floyd help out Soft Machine's ex-drummer.**

PINK FLOYD AND Soft Machine stunned fans with two sensational shows at London's Rainbow theatre on Sunday night. It was a splendid evening of rock co-operation, in which both groups gave their services in aid of disabled drummer Robert Wyatt.

Compere John Peel was pleased to announce that some £10,000 was raised. He said that Robert intended to carry on with a singing and recording career. The ex-Softs drummer was not present but was acknowledged by cheers from the audience.

As two complex shows were performed on the same night, there were lengthy delays between sets which resulted in a certain amount of banter between the road crews and crowd. When the Softs finally came on for the second house, they were still dogged by sound problems. From my position near the right-hand bank of speakers, only John Marshall's superb drumming could be heard with any clarity, although the combined keyboard riffs of Karl Jenkins and Mike Ratledge wove an insidious pattern of great power and menace.

The Softs employed a cataract of sound in which improvised solos seemed of less significance, perhaps, than the overall blitzkrieg, but John's drums employed a fascinating range of tones, and his attack was at times frightening.

There were no problems affecting the Floyd, however, and they presented one of the best concerts seen this year; certainly one of the most imaginative and cleverly executed. *Dark Side Of The Moon*, their last album, was the main basis of operations, and the Floyd faultlessly combined quadrophonic sound, prerecorded tapes, lights, smoke and theatrical effects into a kind of rock son et lumière. There were many shocks and surprises along the way, and I was frequently pinned back in my seat or ejected into the aisles, heart beating wildly.

Heartbeats, in fact, commenced proceedings, pulsating through the auditorium and stilling the more excitable elements in the crowd. Clocks ticked mysteriously and with perfect precision the Floydmen slotted their live instruments into the recorded sound.

The Floyd have a tremendous sense of pace. Occasionally they seem to overstate a theme or extract the last ounce from an idea, but the total effect is like coral growing on the seabed, establishing something deep, eternal and occasionally flashing with colour.

Overhead was suspended a huge white balloon to represent the moon, on which spotlights played, and not long after the performance began, searchlights began to pierce the gloom, and yellow warning lights began revolving in banks on the speaker cabinets. Meanwhile the music continued apace, Nick Mason excelling with his terse, economical drums, hammering home the heavy stuff where required, and tastefully bringing down the volume whenever a new tack or shift in course was signalled.

Dave Gilmour has one of the most difficult guitar jobs in rock, having to contain his own exuberance for the benefit of the greater whole, but making every note felt on his own inventive solos. Dave was particularly effective on the funky "Money", which should have been a single hit for t'lads.

Rick Wright's keyboards were immensely tasteful and melodic, gently spurred by Roger Waters' mighty basslines. The Floyd are a finely tuned mechanism that surges ahead like an armoured cruiser, oblivious to the smoke of battle.

Indeed the band were enveloped in smoke throughout, glowing red lights adding to the illusion of inferno and hellfire. A choir of ladies cooed like angels of mercy, and as a silver ball reflecting beams of light began to revolve and belch more smoke, the audience rose to give them an ovation. They deserved a Nobel prize or at least an Oscar. *Chris Welch*

# Floyd's finest hour

PINK Floyd and Soft Machine stunned fans with two sensational shows at London's Rainbow Theatre on Sunday

some time, I was pinned back in my ejected into the ais

# "Don't fight with the stewards"

**NME JUNE 9** As Slademania sweeps the nation, the band make a "demonic impact" in Glasgow. But trouble was lurking just around the corner...

**THE CITY NEWSPAPER** carried a SLADEMANIA banner headline across its front page. There was a noticeably heavy complement of police on the streets. The occasion was Slade's first concert since their tour of the States, and what's more, set to take place at Glasgow Green's Playhouse, now known to house the wildest crowd in the whole of the British Isles.

Obviously there had to be a riot; it was just inevitable. You may have heard about a certain degree of tame hysteria whipped up by bands like Nazareth and Geordie just lately, but a Slade crowd in full cry makes anything generated by those newcomers pale into insignificance. Slade are undisputedly still the guv'nors when it comes to rousing the masses.

Neither Slade nor manager Chas Chandler can be blamed for being almost arrogant about their position. On a Thursday lunchtime in London, always the almost larger-than-life-Geordie, Chas Chandler had laughed into his Carling Black Label. "Mick Jagger?" he chuckled. "He's just a has-been, isn't he?"

Later, up in Glasgow, Slade appeared to be in the best of health, despite the traumas of their recent American tour. They're living proof that bands are made of iron up Wolverhampton way. After all, they'd only flown back from the States three days before embarking on this, the first date of the British tour. "Towards the end, I must admit we were knackered," said Don Powell, talking of America. "We were all in a daze, y'know, like a dream. We nearly cancelled the last few dates, we were so tired.

"When we got back I spent a day in bed, and I'm fine now. I think maybe it was easier for us than a new band going over; I'm sure in that case it toughens them up. But we've been together for six years. We've already been through quite a lot, y'know."

So an hour before they were due to go on stage, Slade were in their dressing room loosening up on wine and beer, while out front the Alex Harvey Band knocked out some of their groin-grabbing tenement rock. They've improved greatly over the last six months, while Harvey himself has developed further into what one might describe as a character. At one point he tore up a towel, chewed it, and appeared to indulge in various James Cagney impersonations.

**Powell is a steady drummer, meshing well with Lea's thunderous bass**

Backstage, Chas Chandler was taking control, being amiably persuasive in some situations, heavy in others. He's Slade's number-one fan. "We recorded our new single in Los Angeles. It was strange not to record at Olympic. We walked in and everything seemed too big, too cool, but things turned out really easy. It's called 'Squeeze Me, Please Me'," he added, matter-of-factly.

Out in the auditorium, it was interval time and things were strangely quiet. The place was packed, of course, and the crowd was desperately young, few surely older than 15 and just momentarily biding their time. Suddenly it all happened. Slade walked out on stage and chaos reigned. With complete disregard for the fittings, the audience gleefully (as one) stood up on the backs of their seats, balancing precariously.

Noddy Holder, in red tails and tartan trousers, glanced quickly down, perhaps just to reassure himself he was back in Britain, and led the band into the most appropriate number possible, "Take Me Bak 'Ome", screaming and tugging out the vocals. "Move Over Baby" followed, shoved along by the thundering bass of Jim Lea, who is perhaps the most vital cog in the band.

Maybe the atmosphere added to the impression, but Slade were still playing better than on some of the dates before the stateside tour. They sounded tougher, more raunchy somehow, and tremendously tight. They came over with demonic impact. The second number saw the first major confrontation develop between the audience and bouncers ringing the stage.

As things progressed, the scene resembled a battlefield, with pushing bodies, open spaces developing and then being covered again. "C'mon, we want everybody to have a good time. Don't fight with the stewards," appealed

REX FEATURES

After a tiring US tour, Slade put on an exciting but familiar show back 'ome

GLASGOW GREEN PLAYHOUSE LIVE! MAY 31

Holder from the stage, sweat already streaming down his face.

They moved into John Sebastian's "Darling Be Home Soon", not exactly a tender version but with some heartfelt vocals from Holder. He's not the greatest vocalist ever, but his voice is so strong it nearly knocks your head off, and there's a little touch of soul now and again.

Dave Hill's guitar keeps things moving without grabbing too much attention, while Don Powell is a steady drummer, trying nothing too adventurous but meshing well with the thunderous bass of Lea. It was the expected formula – "Gudbye T'Jane" was followed by "You'll Never Walk Alone" from the audience, then "Cum On Feel The Noize" and so on. Before the first encore, the audience supplied a neat touch with "Nice One, Noddy". Altogether it was a spotless, masterful set. Perhaps the only quibble is that, song for song, it's almost the same set they've been playing for two years, which is rather overdoing it.

Nobody in Glasgow seemed to mind, but by the end of this tour it'll be imperative for the band to introduce some new material. As they're recording a new album in a couple of months' time, it should happen.

Thursday night in Glasgow, though, turned out just as everybody expected. The scenes of hysteria around the Playhouse must have seemed almost commonplace to Slade. The crowd in Glasgow was expected to give them a rousing welcome back 'ome. And so they did. *James Johnson*

# "It's a miracle we're here tonight"

**MM JULY 14** Not even a near-fatal car crash can halt the Slade bandwagon. Jim Lea's brother Frank, a plumber, is key to their fightback.

PALACE LIDO, DOUGLAS ISLE OF MAN LIVE! JULY 8

ISLE OF MAN, Sunday. As the strains of "Mama Weer All Crazee Now" died down, Slade manager Chas Chandler gazed into the air and whistled to himself. "If anybody had told me on Wednesday that this concert would come off, I'd have laughed at them." He confessed, "It's a miracle we're here tonight."

It was the climax to the most tempestuous week in Slade's career. After their gigantic show at Earls Court last weekend, tragedy struck during the week when drummer Don Powell was involved in a car crash. He was lucky to be alive, and even now has not regained consciousness fully. When news of the accident reached the Isle Of Man, thousands of fans who had bought tickets gathered around the Palace Lido at Douglas with faces as long as broomsticks. It looked certain that the concert would be cancelled.

**"On Wednesday I went to the hospital, and the doctors didn't give Don a chance"**

And while the fans gathered to hear the news, the three remaining members of Slade were having a conference with Chandler at Jim Lea's Wolverhampton flat. Also at the flat was Jim's 18-year old brother Frank, a plumber's mate by trade, who was fixing the piping to a dishwashing machine. Frank overheard the discussion, dropped his spanner and volunteered to act as deputy drummer for the Isle Of Man show.

On Friday he rehearsed with the group, on Saturday his picture appeared in the papers and on Sunday he was the hero of 4,000 fans who turned up to witness this historic gig. And curiously enough, I doubt whether anyone noticed the difference.

Frank Lea had been taking drumming lessons from Don Powell and travelled with the group on numerous occasions. What better man for the job? And what a reception the fans gave Frank when Noddy Holder introduced him; the cheers were almost as loud as the din that followed Holder's announcement that Don Powell was recovering and would be back behind his kit within three months.

Nothing, it seems, can keep Slade down.

"This weekend we're really going to enjoy ourselves," Dave Hill told me when I arrived on Saturday. "Now that we know Don is going to be all right, it's like a pressure valve being released.

"For two days we thought Don had had it, but when we heard that he was being taken off the critical list and put on the severe list we knew everything was going to be all right. And we know that Don would have wanted us to go on with the concert. We'd be letting down lots of fans who've bought tickets and lots of fans who have taken their holidays on the island to coincide with the concert."

The only fans who didn't make it were 2,000 from Ireland who cancelled their reservations on the ferry across when news of the car crash broke. "We're just seeing what happens about the future," said Chandler. "We're crossing every hurdle when we come to it.

"As it is, we've had to postpone our next American tour, which will probably take place in October now. But really it's a miracle that it's happening at all."

"On Wednesday I went up to Wolverhampton and the doctors at the hospital didn't give Don a chance. I was walking around in a daze, but when I heard he was going to pull through I was the happiest man in the world."

But Slade are one of those unflappable groups who can take everything in their stride. After only brief rehearsals they knew everything would run smoothly at the Isle Of Man. The show itself ran like all Slade shows – the only number they cut out was Janis Joplin's "Move Over Baby", which features plenty of tricky drum work. The rest of the Slade ingredients were all there: football chants, suggestive remarks, the responding crowd and the deafening noise of Holder's amazingly powerful voice.

When it was all over, the group celebrated in grand style – but as you read this spare a thought for Frank. On Tuesday morning he was due to return to plumbing again – at 7.30am. *Chris Charlesworth*

# Slade: alive and well.

by CHRIS CHARLESWORTH

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# 1973

JULY – SEPTEMBER

## THE ALLMAN BROTHERS, VAN MORRISON, BOWIE, PUB ROCK AND MORE

Just an "emotional outburst"? - Ray Davies on stage with The Kinks at White City Stadium, West London July 15, 1973

# "Ray hasn't been sleeping or eating"

**MM JULY 21** When his wife leaves, Ray Davies calls time on The Kinks.

**RAY DAVIES ANNOUNCED** he was quitting The Kinks from the stage at London's White City Stadium on Sunday – but sources close to the group considered his remarks an emotional outburst at a t time when the leader of the group was under considerable strain.

At the close of The Kinks' performance on Sunday, Davies told fans he was packing in the pop business and thanked them for their support.

On Monday, Kinks personal assistant Marion Rainford told the *MM*: "Ray's wife departed two-and-a-half weeks ago, taking the children with her, and Ray hasn't heard from her since. Ray hasn't been sleeping or eating and is very tired. He is saying touring and spells sway from home have caused the rift and he is going to quit.

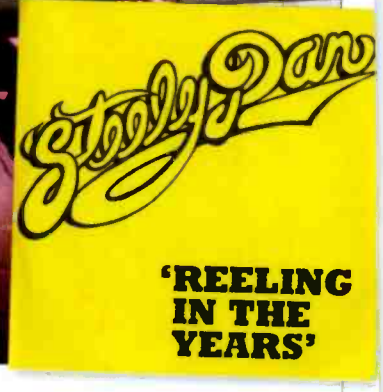
"But we think it was just an emotional outburst and that he will carry on for the fans' sake. We only hope his wife will get in touch with him soon."

GETTY

March 30, 1973: Steely Dan in concert at the Hollywood Palladium

# "We call it 'smart rock'"

**MM JULY 21** Introducing Steely Dan and a debut LP full of "little masterpieces".




"WE LIKE TO think of every song as a composition in itself, a composition in the more orthodox meaning. We also like to feel that it's exciting as a pop song and has something intellectual to offer; call it 'smart rock' if you like." Steely Dan are certainly smart, producing the chic-est pop music to be heard in a long time.

Their first album *Can't Buy A Thrill* has been certified gold in their home country, a monster hit following the success of two tasteful singles, "Do It Again" and "Reelin' In The Years". Steely Dan was formed to showcase the conceptual songs of two New Yorkers, Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, who settled in Los Angeles after trying times on the East Coast. It's to California that their music owes it's heartbeat.

Steely Dan's music conjures up sunshine and 20-foot-long air-conditioned automobiles and eight-lane freeways that stretch out of the smog into the endless miles of sun-bleached horizons. They've not happened here at all yet, except in musicians' circles.

Yet if "Do It Again" or "Reelin' In The Years" was released during a heatwave with temperatures in the 70s, they would have scored first time round. Nevertheless, their first album is a gem, standing out from the endless rubbish released by record companies every week.

*Can't Buy A Thrill* has so much to offer it's hard to know where to start describing it. The songs are little masterpieces, each in the pop tradition and yet never banal or cheap. And while each owes its excitement to the tight rhythm section – drums and clear, concise percussion overlaid with rock steady bass work – they all have a story to tell.

On the transatlantic phone line I spoke to both Walter and Donald, each an extension in hand. It was impossible to tell who was speaking – not that one needs to know anyway as their minds work so close together.

While they have excellent musicians like the cutting steel and straight guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, who played for a while in the short-lived but illustrious Ultimate Spinach, the metronomic drummer Jimmy Hodder, chunky rhythm guitarist Denny Dias, who doubles on electric sitar, and clear-voiced vocalist David Palmer, it is songs that make Steely Dan a class above the average. "The typical Steely Dan song," bass guitarist Becker and keyboard wizard/vocalist Donald Fagen told me over the phone, "would include a penetrating verse, a rousing chorus, an inspired bridge and, of course, a no-holds-barred instrumental of some sort. Pop songs with some kind of structure that's interesting and can be developed. We're actually pretty traditional in that way, but the chords are usually more interesting than most rock'n'roll, we think."

For me their songs evoke a total feeling; "Kings" and "Midnight Cruiser" do not need vocals to make their point. "A lot of the time," they tell me, "the songs we write, instead of making literal sense, we aim at creating an effect through the music and using the lyrics to lay it on the line. "Midnight Cruiser", yeah, I'd say that was a good example of a song that sets a mood without actually saying anything."

Their music has traces of their New York upbringing in it. There is cynicism in the lyrics. "Only A Fool Would Say That" mocks the optimist, but "Change Of The Guard" looks to a brighter future. They feel their music reflects a certain amount of New York attitudes, but also what they've picked up in Los Angeles since living in the town. Also, they point out, there just isn't that much happening in New York with groups; most have to leave to find creative satisfaction and the vast majority make for the West Coast: "Groups just don't seem to be able to get off the ground, although you'd think they would as they're in the hub of things. But it's a tough life in New York, when you're stepped on there you're done for good. We think about that a lot and find it really depressing."

Since success came to them they've had songs covered by other artists including Barbra Streisand. Herbie Mann has covered "Do It Again" and Birtha are planning to record "Dirty Work" – a song that was taken off the European copy of the LP because of its sexual content.

Since recording their first album while the group was being put together – David Palmer did not join them until the album was two-thirds complete – their sound has been changing. They've been touring the States, including a gig with Slade in San Francisco – "They're real hard rock, aren't they" – and through playing together for seven months their sound, they believe, has become more aggressive and harmonically improved: "I think what we're doing now is going to appeal to English listeners a lot more now." *Mark Plummer*

GETTY (4)

# "That's it. Period."

**NME JULY 14** David Bowie is retiring from pop to pursue other activities, he tells *NME*. "Those were the final gigs."

DAVID BOWIE'S CONCERTS at Hammersmith Odeon on Monday and Tuesday marked the end of his career as a live performer. He told *NME*'s Charles Shaar Murray this week: "Those were the final gigs. That's it. Period. I don't want to do any more gigs, and all the American dates have been cancelled. From now on, I'll be concentrating on various activities that have very little to do with rock and pop." After his hit with "Space Oddity" in 1969, Bowie retired from rock and ran an Arts Laboratory in Beckenham for 18 months, eventually returning at the insistence of Mercury – then his record company – to record *The Man Who Sold The World*. A year ago Bowie told *NME*: "I can't envisage stopping gigging for the next year at least, because I'm having such a good time doing it." This week he told Murray that he did not wish to say anything further at the moment, but added that he would reveal the full reasons for his shock decision later.

# "Don't move, I've got a gun"

**MM JUL 7** Keith Moon sits in for John Peel. "Princess Anne's refused the water..."

July 11, 1973: Keith Moon on air in a BBC radio studio at Broadcasting House, London

"ELLO MATES. IT'S me – Keith Moon of the 'Oo!" That chirpy cockney sparrow cry came through the speakers in Studio B6 at London's Broadcasting House this week, and introduced a startling new concept to radio humour. Keith Moon, the eternal raver, was hard at work, recording a new series of comedy shows that should set the nation laughing. Towards the end of this month.

Moon, following in the footsteps of *ITMA*, *Take It From Here* and *The Goon Show*, may seem unlikely, as his work as the semi-maniacal drummer with The Who gives the impression of a man devoted only to the art of percussion. Not so. Just as the other members of The Who have embarked on solo projects, Keith is happily, and successfully, developing his talent for comedy and mimicry. And the results will be unleashed on radio listeners in four weeks of what promises to be inspired lunacy. As yet the show is untitled. Keith and his producer and scriptwriter John Walters have been more concerned with getting their ideas down on tape.

**"John writes the script. I just make a few balls-ups"**

John Walters was at one time a trumpet player with Alan Price and gave up music to work in broadcasting. For some years he has worked closely with John Peel on *Top Gear*, and retains his musician's sense of humour, which is cynical but accurate in its observations. The more cringe-making aspects of the material world come under the Moon-Walters hammer, anything from the *Horse Of The Year Show* (which becomes the elephant of the year show), to the DJ who panders overmuch to sentiment.

When I arrived at the basement studio, Keith and John were already in fits of laughter at the playback of the elephant at the *Horse Of The Year Show*. A thunder of elephant's feet filled the air.

"That's me beating my chest," explained John, as the recorded voice of Keith gave a running commentary on a certain Princess Ann running up the jumps.

Said Keith: "Princess Anne is charging down the course now, and oh, she's refused the water. Don't blame her. Never touch the stuff myself."

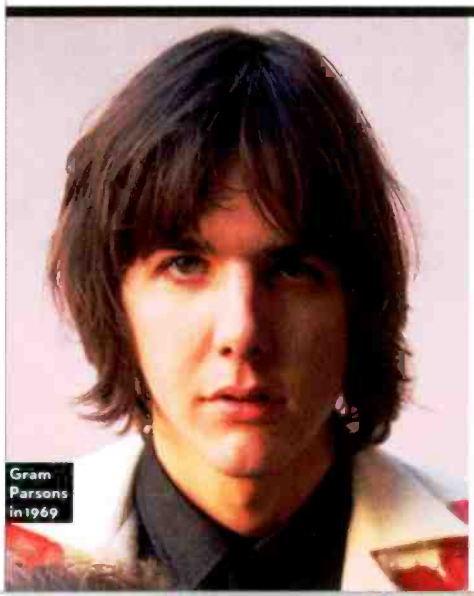
There were mistakes, of course. They broke a "gate" when the elephant was supposed to refuse, and another supply of plastic cups had to be summoned. But eventually, amidst much cheering and sighs of relief, the improvised sound effects were put down in the right order. "Listen to this one," said Keith, giving a Walt Disney-style documentary report, read in a flat-stupid voice. "Look at this little fellow – why it's a gopher. And look, there's a cougar coming along. Uh-oh, little fellow!"

"You've got to read it right," insisted John, "you've got to get that homespun philosophy in your voice." This time Keith put himself so much into the role, he even began to look like a gopher. "Can I have a spot more level in me cans?" said Keith. "This is not a pop music studio," said a BBC engineer primly. But quietly, all were agreeing in the studio that Keith was very good in his new role.

"Don't move, I've got a gun," he was saying into the microphone. "Come on, Keith, it's got to sound British B-picture threatening," said John in his complex jargon.

There are many more delights in store for the series, which will go out the last week in August and the first two in September. Keith will be playing his favourite records – "surf music and John Entwistle," – and linking them with various sketches. Particularly naughty was the DJ sketch in which Keith's voice is slightly speeded up until he sounds curiously like Jimmy Savile. There will be the "spot the noise" quiz, "Life With The Moons" and other odd episodes.

How long had Keith been working on the idea? "A few weeks. Really, John writes the script. I just make a few balls-ups." But he is obviously excited about the prospect of regular radio work, and it's the ideal medium for Keith's raucous brand of humour. *Chris Welch*



Gram Parsons in 1969

# Collapsed in a motel

**NME SEP 29** RIP, Gram Parsons and also Jim Croce.

GRAM PARSONS, EX-MEMBER of The Byrds and co-founder of the Flying Burritos died in California last Wednesday (19) aged 27. He collapsed in a motel and was rushed to hospital in Yucca Valley but was found to be dead on arrival. An initial post-mortem failed to reveal the cause of death and further tests were being made.

Jim Croce and his guitarist Maury Muehleisen were killed in Louisiana last Thursday when the small plane in which they were travelling crashed into a tree on take-off. The singer composer had recently returned for America after his second visit to Britain. He had four Top 10 singles in the US charts including the recent chart topper "Bad Bad Leroy Brown".

➤ Eno has left Roxy Musisc. The group's electronics wizard wants to become a vocalist and form a group called Loana & the Little Girls. Eddie Jobson, the violinist who this week left Curved Air, replaces Eno on violin, keyboards and synthesizer. Jobson is on Roxy vocalist Bryan Ferry's solo album. Next week the new Roxy go into the studios to record their third album. **NME JUL 21**

➤ Brian Eno is at present in hospital after collapsing in the recording studio and hurting his spine. He was cutting tracks for his debut solo album, and was found to be suffering from malnutrition, exhaustion and tension. On Tuesday he was said to be "coming along satisfactorily." **NME SEPT 29**

➤ Alan Smith, editor of *NME* since spearheading the paper's relaunch almost two years ago, is this week leaving *NME* to concentrate on overseas and other interests. He previously edited the former London section of the paper and had been associated with *NME* since 1962. The new editor will be Nick Logan, 26, who is at present assistant editor. He has been a member of the *NME* staff for five years and has been heavily involved in the recent design changes to the paper. **NME SEPT 29**

# "I feel the weight of the world on my shoulders."

**And it's not just the cut of his jacket. After taking Ziggy around the globe, DAVID BOWIE returns home. Pondering what to do next, he says: "I suppose I just want to be Ziggy." Two months later, his fans watch horrified as he announces his retirement.**

— MELODY MAKER MAY 12 —

CHARING CROSS STATION, London, 9.10pm. And when he arrived they screamed and they cried, and they rushed, and they gushed forth and beat their feverish feminine fists into the backs of the indeed brave coppers who shielded HIM. For he is indeed HIM.

One girl, her face bloated, and most ugly with tears and ruddy emotion, fell halfway 'twixt train and rail. A young copper dragged her to safety. Ten yards down the platform, HE was pretty close to injury, too.

Bowie, despite, all the fierce bodyguarding, was being kissed, and pinched, and touched, and ripped at. His hair now untidy; his eyes wild; his mouth open. A picture of terror. But his open mouth also bore the shadow of a crazed smile. They pushed him against a carriage door.

It took Spartan constabulary to lift this small squirrel-haired figure to safety; his face now very creased with every emotion a face could ever squeeze itself into. And they squeezed him into a car that was battered and clawed at. And that car squeezed its way to safety. And Mr Bowie was back in England.

And on Platform One, in a dirty wet huddle, lay two plumpish girlies, crying, and holding each other, and just crying. »

CAMERA PRESS / LYNN GOLDSMITH

"It's now we have to revolt. But sensibly... and with thought": Bowie in full late-Ziggy/ Aladdin Sane fig, 1973

Everyone had gone, except they. Their tights all ripped, their knickers showing. And they just lay there... crying.

That, my friends, is actually the end of the story. This arrival; this sweaty, shocking, swift and severe welcome home for Bowie, back from Japan, 7,000 miles by boat and train because... because he won't fly.

Via Trans-Siberian Express, he "Bowied" Moscow, travelling "soft" in first class. Second class is called "hard". "And indeed is hard," said Bowie.

Four-and-a-half months away from England. He travelled the world, and unlike the rest, saw its people. No in and out of a hotel and onto a plane. He saw the people. And now Mr Bowie is a very changed man. And PEOPLE are going to kill him with his concern for them. No amateur dramatics. Mr Bowie is concerned. So where does the story begin?

It begins in Terminal One lounge, Heathrow Airport, waiting, seeing heavy rain spatter the runway/delay on flight/bad weather/We have to find Bowie in Paris/had to be found/BEA departure to Paris/"Will passengers avoid treading heavily on the gangplank as it is waterlogged"/Captain Black in charge/Thunderstorm over Paris/Trident One hit by lightning three times/lands on a runway lit for a trawler. Now you see why Bowie doesn't fly? So where do we find him?

We find him at the George V Hotel – we don't see him, but we find him. A porter – out for a swift five francs – shows us to the Rouge Room where a Bowie reception was held. It was held. He lights a match. "Monsieur Bowie ees not 'ere." Nobody was there. The room was as black as a Guinness. We phone around.

I find – on the phone – Leee Black Childers. Now Leee was the *MM*'s photographer in New York, but when Bowie appeared in New York, he became Bowie's photographer. I was annoyed – but not deeply.

"Yeah, David's here/Russia wow/they loved him/geee they tried to take away my cameras/we've had such fun/why don't you see Cherry Vanilla?"

Now the last time I saw Cherry Vanilla was in a hotel room in New York where she preyed over a table like a vulture preys over the bones of fat explorers. An ex-film starlet and groupie with much body and much voice. Now Bowie's "press aid". She ordered a table of things for me. Mostly wine. Which was never drunk. At £7 a bottle that might annoy people.

"Bowie was arriving in New York, and I was a groupie. And I knew the press. Christ I was a groupie" (*she split her nightdress to reveal nothing underneath*). "And there I was, and Mr Bowie gave me a job."

What job did he give you, dear? "His press lady."

How is he? "Gee darling, I wish I knew."

I now know that it is in fact true that one can live in splendour doing not the slightest damned thing. Cherry Vanillaed on. And I left, and went to bed. £30 per night for a single room.

> "I think I know who's controlling this damned world"

**THE VERY NEXT** morning, Bowie was supposed to catch the 12.30 Paris-Victoria train. There's not even a twinkle from his room. Breakfast £3 and then a cab to Paris Nord Station. We don't know whether the lad is on the train or not. He hadn't left the hotel. I run the length of the train – 22 coaches in search of the squirrel-haired kid. Twenty-two coaches and he wasn't on it. Mission impossible.

So Barrie Wentzell and I wait, somewhat dazed, awfully broke, and listening to the chatter on the intercom. It's no different from Charing Cross, my dears, except that they announce trains for Lyons instead of Tunbridge Wells. And the porters smoke Gitanes in preference to No 6.

And then, as the sunlight split the smoke of several hundred smoking porters, there appeared in all innocence and in a neat suit of silver and purples, David Bowie, fresh from a limousine and with that delightful wife of his, Angie. "The most remarkable woman on Earth," says David. She might well be. "So we've missed the bleedin' train," says David looking at Platform 4 all empty, all empty like and trainless.

"Never mind, dear," says Angie. "There's another soon," and she wiggles her American bottom, and vanishes to the inquiry desk.

"Seven thousand miles," says David, smiling and very, very fresh. "And we miss the bleedin' train on the last lap. From Japan to Paris and we miss the train."

Well, we couldn't catch the next one, for that involved a flight to Gatwick. And the next one involved taking a hovercraft from Boulogne to Dover. "Can't do it," says Bowie. "If it flies, it's death."

But David, it only flies a few inches above sea level. "Then, for the first time in years I shall leave the land," says Bowie.

Later we board the train and he's talking away. About music? No, my people. About the fate of the world. He talked about the fate of the world for approximately two hours. Well, not just he, but we. "I have feelings that I know just what is going on; I have feelings."

The train rattles through Monsieur or somewhere like that. "I might put them into songs. You know, those feelings."

Bowie still chain smokes (almost everybody else's ciggies, not his own). Leee Childers lives behind his reflecting sun shades. Cherry Vanilla vanillas on. Angie Bowie smiles, and is indeed very lovely.

"You see, Roy," said Bowie softly, looking straight at me, dead-eyed, a can of beer acting as the microphone. "I've gone through a lot of changes. A whole lot of changes. It's all happened on my way back from Japan. You see, Roy, I've seen life, and I think I know who's controlling this damned world. And after what I've seen of the state of this world, I've never been so damned scared in my life."

Are you going to write about it? "If I did, it would be my last album ever."

You mean that? "It would have to be my last album ever."

Why? "Because I don't think I'd be around after recording it."

Are you ill? "I believe I am. I have a very strange pain in my right-hand side. I've had it for a year. It's a pain that now has to be taken to a specialist."

His eyes are full of menace now – mainly because his belly's full of beer, which we all constantly drink. We pass a field of French beef, and Bowie starts to cough, and cough, and he can't stop. "The cough, darling?" inquires Angie. Bowie answered her with this deep, frightening cough which for God's sake starts somewhere in his stomach!

"The (*cough*) changes I've seen, they have to be written about."

Then YOU write them, David! (I say). "Yes (*cough*), I suppose somebody must (*cough*). I feel the weight of the world on my shoulders."

Yes, he could actually carry the world on his shoulders. It's all down to the cut of the jacket. The shoulders are very big.

My memory goes back to the platform on Paris Nord. They're piping out the music to *Last Tango In Paris*. We were walking along, together, and talking about Lou Reed. "He's so damned fine," says Bowie. "And they throw up all this mystery around him, and all this bloody silliness. Can't they understand that he's just a New York cat, and that is JUST what he is. You know, it would be so nice if people would be able to see that beneath it all – we're all very easy people."

They'd never believe it, David. They wouldn't want to. "Maybe you're right. But we are easy people. And maybe in a lot of ways... very simple. IF only they could see. Oh God, this intellectual confusion that surrounds us all. Why, why... why?"

He carried his suitcase. "I know I'm sick of being Gulliver. You know, after America, Moscow, Siberia, Japan. I just want to bloody well go home to Beckenham, and watch the telly."

But back to the train. The talk of the state of the world continued, and became intense, and deep. We pooled our experiences. Shared thoughts, ideas. "You know," said David. "The rock revolution did happen. It really did. Trouble was, nobody realised when it happened. We have to realise now. Let me tell you, the 'underground' is alive and well – more alive than it has ever been."

The train rasped, and clanked to a halt at Boulogne. Leee Childers and most of the party thought it was Calais – but it didn't really matter.

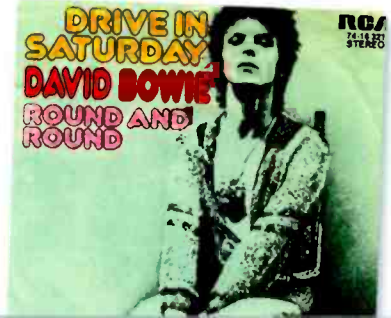
"Oh, the seaside, how very lovely. How nice," said Bowie, kicking his shoes into the sand that surrounds the hoverport. But then fear struck his face as he saw his next line of transport arrive.

The Channel was clear, and like (as they say) a millpond. The sun was strong, and clean, and then this thing roared into sight. It was like a sperm whale with propellers. And was very noisy. And most monstrous. "Oh no," said David.

"Oh yes," said Angie. "They don't hurt, David."

"But they fly." Only inches above the sea, David.

He sat, and hardly said a word during the "flight".




July 9, 1973: seen off by wife Angie at London's Victoria station, Bowie heads to Chateau d'Herouville, near Paris, to record *Pin Ups*


He was worried. But it was safe. At the hoverport he'd met a couple of girlies. Sweet little things on a day trip to France. And they'd seen Bowie. And he talked to them, and signed their fag packets. They pinched themselves to see if it was real.

Dover. The white cliffs now actually amber as the sun sets. His feet on English soil. A waiting room on Dover station. He had a cup of tea and a BR sausage roll. And then he talked, so nicely, to the girls on the platform.

"Roy, they're the salt of the earth, those girls. They don't sit each night and compare notes of groups, criticising lyrics, asking if it's valid. They just play the record... yeah, and maybe they dance. I love them. I love them dearly."

More beer cans emerge as the train (a slow one) leaves Dover. Miss Vanilla is asleep. So is Mrs Bowie. David reads a London *Evening Standard* – and gets back into British Things. He laughs and laughs. What a funny little country we are.

"I've got to work harder this year than I've ever worked in my life. You know that?" he'd said earlier 'twixt train and hovercraft. "We're going to do a 79-date tour of America this year in about as many days. I might die. But I have to do it.

"I mean, you know the Spiders have only played about 50 dates altogether. About time we started working, I feel."

Through lavish English countryside the train trundled on. David and myself retire to a less and crowded compartment. In fact... we're on our own. Alone, together.

Are you aware of what you're going back to on this train, David? "Er, not really. No. Four-and-a-half months away has put me out of touch with what you might call the English rock scene. I know that every little bag that we've been in up to now has been incredibly exciting. But now... well, we've reached this position and it doesn't leave one with a clear mind as to what to do next.

"But now I'm home, and after 10 minutes I'm starting to feel British again. When I'm away, I try to divorce myself from that. Don't ask me why, I just don't know. I suppose I just want to be Ziggy."

**DAVID, SINCE YOU'VE** been away, a word called "decadence" has crept into rock, and is now used by every rock writer. And David, you have been held to blame for this "decadence".

He smiles. "Yes... er, I can imagine that." He smiles. "What do you have to say about it, Roy? Am I responsible for it?" he inquires.

Well, I was in the States when YOU happened. I just read in *MM* that you had arrived, and it was decadent rock. I saw a picture of you and I thought, "What the...?"

Bowie laughs. "Yeah, it was *Melody Maker* that made me. It was that piece by Mick Watts. I became a performer after that. That's true. It was the first time I had talked to the press about wanting to come back on stage and be a performer rather than a writer. During the interview I really saw that I wanted to perform again."

And did you expect it to come this far? "No, never. I was a non-performing artist, excited about working on stage again and, well... it all exploded.

"We moved at such intensity, such speed. I wrote so quickly. It wasn't until months after that I realised what I'd been writing. When the last period finished, I sat back and went 'wow'. It took the wind totally out of my sails."

But you seem OK. I mean, I think you're very normal. "Oh, of course I am. I mean, this decadence is just a bloody joke. I'm very normal." (*Conversation is lost in a tunnel*)

"I mean, this so-called decadent thing happening in English rock. Is it really decadence? Is it what I would call decadence?"

How would you define decadence, David? "Not putting a white rose on a white table for fear of the thorn scratching the table."

I see, I did.

"I don't really feel that decadent rock has arrived... yet. It will do."

How do you feel about Roxy Music?

"Well, maybe they are the nearest thing to being decadent at the moment. And I love them. I really love them. I'm going to buy their new album tomorrow. That's the first thing I'm going to do."

What sort of person do you find yourself now. You talk of illness, and you want to work harder (at the Parisian cafe he told me he had NO death wish). But what are you now? "I am me and I have to carry on with what I've started. There is nothing else for me to do. I have been under a great strain, I have also become disillusioned with certain things." »

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Like what? "Well, it's very hard to say, but I never believed a hype could be made of an artist before that artist had got anywhere. That's what happened, you see. I didn't like it. But when I saw that our albums were really selling, I knew that period was over. The hype was over. Well, it wasn't, but at least we'd done something to be hyped about. Dig?"

Yes. "But that whole hype thing at the start was a monster to endure. It hurt me quite a lot. I had to go through a lot of crap. I mean, I never thought Ziggy would become the most talked about man in the world. I never thought it would become that unreal.

"I don't want to be studied as a boy-next-door type character... nor weird. I want to maintain a balance between both. The characters I have written about have indeed been the roles I have wished to portray. Ziggy – that dear creature, I loved him.

"I feel somewhat like a Dr Frankenstein. Although Ziggy follows David Bowie very closely, they are indeed two different people. What have I created?

"Ziggy hit the nail on the head. He just came at the rightest, ripest time," he added. He smiled at me. I like him.

"Dylan once said of writers that they just pluck things from the air, and put them down. Later you can look back on them and read into them. I pluck from the air... it's only later that I see what I've plucked.

"I know that I appear to write ahead of myself. I mean, let's take *Aladdin Sane*. What was written then was written quickly, and really, without much thought as to what it was about.

"But now I sit back and look at those lyrics and look at that album, and it's very valid, y'know. Sure I have concepts. I have storylines for the albums, but the actual thought, the actual inspiration, comes suddenly, and is written as it comes.

"What keeps me together, what shoulders those 'escapades' of mine, is this dear woman, Angie, who knows David Bowie... eh, she knows me better than I do."

Wherever we travelled, each station, each town, there were few spare minutes when he didn't hug, kiss and point at this lady, and say, loudly, "She's the greatest."

"He gets very evil after a few beers. I mean, Roy, look at his face now – he's Jean Genie, he's a little villain. But he's lovely," said Angie, looking after us all. One remarkable woman, to be sure.

"It's not a death wish that I have, Roy, although the very fact that I say that means that the thought enters my mind. But, y'know, we're all very normal. And it's about time we told people so. Otherwise, what those kids are aiming for – I mean the revolution – is going to melt away. It's now we have to revolt. But, Roy, sensibly... and with thought."

**DO YOU FEEL** you are a statesman – or a performer?

"I don't ever want to be a statesman, Roy. I am a performer and I leave space on that stage for theatre, too. But a statesman? No. I know only a thin line separates a songwriter from being an entertainer or making statements. I realise my responsibilities."

"With Ziggy, I became Ziggy on stage. I really was. That was my ego." (This statement followed the entrance and emergence of another tunnel.)

And what is your ego now? "Strong, and getting fiercer, but I don't think it's Ziggy any more. It's a more mature David Bowie."

You mean mature as being calmer? "Yes, more aware, more in control of myself. I think that's good. That will keep me alive.

"You see, I have no idea what I look like on stage. I have never seen a film. I just don't know what I look like when I become 'that thing'. I must see a film of myself. It is essential.

"I can't wait to see what we actually are. I know that visually the band is going to be reducing. I mean, everyone's wearing makeup, ain't they. Eh? I know that we are going to reduce on that level. It will still be David Bowie and The Spiders though."

"I know I have created a somewhat strange audience – but that audience is also full of little Noddy Holders, and little Iggy Pops. I know we used to attract a lot of 'queens' at one stage, but then other factions of people crept in. Now you can't tell any more. They're all there for some reason.

"And we get young people. Those lovely young people. And they have to be considered very seriously. They cannot be forgotten – as they might be. We cannot afford to lose them by continuing to make rock a cultural force.

"We must not leave the young behind. I repeat that. You see, I don't want to aim statements at them. Being a statesman is abhorrent to me."

And then the train stopped. We looked at each other. It was Charing Cross. He smiled. *Roy Hollingworth* •



Watch that man: Bowie's first bodyguard, Stuey George (right), keeps a close eye on his charge at Hammersmith Odeon

HAMMERSMITH ODEON LONDON
LIVE!
JULY 3

# A right little charmer

**MM JULY 13** Bowie pulls the plug on Ziggy – and a whole "wicked cult".

**THERE WAS NOTHING** sad about Bowie's farewell concert at London's Hammersmith Odeon. He was immensely enjoyable that night. A star. A genius. And his music was brilliant. Yet I'll shed no tear over his departure.

You see, Bowie has saved himself, and by doing that has hopefully saved the futures of his few million followers. They are already weird. Given time they would have gone mad. Bowie, whether he knew it or not, had created a monster. We were all ready to drink from the cup of decadence. Trouble is, few knew when to stop.

I'm stood in the foyer of the Hammersmith Odeon, and I'm looking at a dozen Bowie lookalikes, who stand opposite, sneering and posing. They sneer upon those who feel they don't look as good as they do.

This has always happened at rock concerts. I've seen them dress like Mick Jagger, Bolan and Slade. But the people who did that were fun. Here the vibe was pitiful.

It's horrible to see individuals stripped of their individuality to the extent that they believe every thing that HE sings about, or believe that HE is right.

Jagger was rebellion, and it's good to have rebels. But to follow someone like Bowie is following decadence. That ain't rebelling, it's giving in.


It's giving in to the extent that a kid should see *A Clockwork Orange* and then kick a tramp to death. It's giving in to the extent that one should read *1984* and do nothing but follow it. Those works were meant as a warning. Now did you take heed of David Bowie? Do you really think perversion is fun? Think about it. If what Bowie did on stage became reality on the street, it would not be very pleasant.

Already, as I stand here in this foyer, I see Bowie's stage expanded to contain most of the people here. In a way, it's evil. I feel SCARED. These fans have given Bowie everything, but forgotten themselves.

Is Bowie really being truthful when he says he's quitting? I really hope he is, but if someone offered Tony DeFries £1,000,000 to play America, would he refuse?

To be very famous one has to pull many tricks these days. And however lovely Bowie is in your eyes, don't ever think he won't pull tricks. To survive, he has to.

Bowie is a sight more clever than Bolan, who continued to believe he could win every match. It just doesn't work. On that level, Bowie's "quitting" is simply good business. But I'm gullible enough to believe he hasn't done it for that reason. I do believe he CARES.

But all of these thoughts have left my head as I sit down in the Odeon and hopefully wait to see and hear a unique artist. I try to ignore all the posers who sit alongside me. Despite the fact that I FEEL Bowie's music, I do not FEEL these people, except like a pillow over my face.

But you can't ignore what's going on around you. You can't help but notice a kid of 14 smoking a joint. Hell, I'm not soft, but that turned my gut. They put Bowie's pianist on first. His name's Mike Garson, he's dressed in a fairytale concert-pianist outfit, has a silly smile, and played sort of avant-garde Mantovani arrangments of David's hits. It's all very soapy, and we yawned.

But then it was real horrorshow (excuse the fashionable phrase) as David took the stage with the strobes and that glorious Ludwig Van. The adrenalin flows, and so does the audience, all over the seats. It's not because it's all too much, 'cos it isn't yet. All these kids are doing is acting out what you're supposed to do at a rock concert. Two blokes behind me shake their heads like dervishes. "Idiot dancing", indeed.

They are not really there for the music. During all Bowie's numbers there were constant conversations going on. The drama was forced. It was rather like pretending to make love, but not doing it properly because they didn't want to mess their hair.

**His movements, his style, his charisma, is not what you would call human**

Bowie himself, well you've had him described enough by now. Very frightening, and also very soft. His movements, his style, his charisma, is not what you would call human. He is, as DeFries once said, "a real star". Bowie could stand on stage and pick his nose, and he'd still be quite great.

He was very good, and I enjoyed him tremendously, even though his voice sounded tired and lost in places. I began to enjoy the show with "White Light White Heat". He was noticeably happier singing that, as he was when Jeff Beck joined him on stage. Beck looked really out of place. I mean, old Jeff was dreadfully dull in jeans and a casual top.

Mick Ronson is an avowed admirer of Beck. Indeed, he appeared to be in heat for the lad. I mean, on a couple of occasions he tried the old loose hand on Jeff, and even an attempt at a kiss. But Jeff, about as butch as meat pie, didn't really want to know about it.

Ronson did push Beck to the forefront during "The Jean Genie". Jeff obliged by playing guitar behind his head, and wiggling a bit. The sight of Beck wiggling against Bowie was rather like putting Sid James up with Marlene Dietrich. It just wasn't on, but Beck did indeed add some amazing guitar.

By this time the whole floor was up on its feet, and the joint was rocking. Bowie, in a see-through black top, bullet belt and plain black trousers, a pleasant change from his outrageous wedding-cake wardrobe, was grinning like a 12-year-old kid at the circus. He had good reason. The lad's worked his way from nowt to conceivably the most wondrous thing ever to appear in rock. It's a shame that the cult surrounding him grew to be so wicked, which Bowie isn't. He's a right little charmer, and a splendid actor.

Despite what you've read in daily papers, there wasn't all that much croaking as he announced that this was the final concert he'd do. A load of flushed girls dropped to the floor with shock... a flushed, fat bouncer sighed "Thank God!"... And a flushed Mick Ronson continued to pester a cool Jeff Beck. Bowie just looked cute. It was "Rock'n'Roll Suicide", befitting and quite dramatic, and "Oh, David don't" and "Please stay" could be heard amid applause and cheering. But don't worry. He'll be back, when everyone's calmed down, and levelled off. It's just tactics. Remember, just tactics. *Roy Hollingworth*

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# "If it feels right, I do it."

**After years in America, VAN MORRISON is back. At some small club dates, he pleases the crowds – but remains no one's idea of a crowd-pleaser. For him and his band it's about feel. "The times when we really cook," he explains, "are when there's absolutely nobody around."**

— NME JULY 28 —

VAN MORRISON CAN'T seriously accept the reverence of him in some quarters as half-myth, half-legend.

"The only reason journalists call me this," he says," is simply because they can't think of anything else to write. It's a convenient label."

But he still prefers anonymity.

"A name," he figures, "is a product. If the music is good it's really not all that important who's playing it. Names are secondary. I'm just a vehicle for the music to come through. I'd honestly prefer people just to call me a musician and leave it at that, without being portrayed. But you don't do that kinda thing in this business. Not if you wanna make a living."

As it transpires, Morrison isn't far short of being just another face in the crowd. Save for a few album covers and a couple of outdated press pics of him hugging his guitar, not too many people really know what the man looks like. This was vividly apparent at a press party for him I attended at the weekend in Amsterdam – which rapidly degenerated into a minor debacle when Morrison »

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May 19, 1973: Van Morrison and the Caledonian Soul Orchestra record part of the much-lauded live album *It's Too Late To Stop Now* at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in California


July 19, 1973: Van Morrison posed in Amsterdam, Holland

shuffled completely unrecognised through a room chock-full of journalists and record company heavies. He repeated this exercise, totally unknown, five minutes later.

This originally planned informal social gathering in fact turned into an intense confrontation between Morrison and an obnoxious bunch of ill-informed local scribes who displayed a total lack of schooling at their craft, or for that matter a modicum of common civility.

To his credit, Morrison tried extremely hard to be co-operative and informative. But he was on a total bummer with questions like: "What's your opinion of drugs?" "They're like hamburgers," quickly responded one of Morrison's musicians. Plus: "Are you into Irish music?"; "Why did you leave the band?" and "Are you going back to Ireland?" Added to this were a couple of extremely personal probes which he would have been in order to have replied to with a swift bunch of fives.

While this charade was being acted out to its logical conclusion, a lady wandered around boasting how she couldn't be bothered to ask questions when there was so much free drink and unaccompanied males for the offing. She'd left her tape machine running on the conference table, she said, and she would rip off the more printable quotes at her leisure.

"If he doesn't say anything sensational," said the lady, "I'll just rewrite the press handouts."

Morrison tried to salvage the fast-fading semblance of this confrontation but it was to no avail. His acute perplexity gave way to boredom and finally irritation. The band sprang to his defence, filtering off the questions. When it got too bizarre, someone blew a whistle. Morrison fled. It was a pity that this, Morrison's first press conference in over six years, should have been such a loser, and through no fault of his own. It can only serve to send the man back into his shell and to enhance the preconceived aura of sullen mystique that's grown up around this Irish expatriate.

"I'm just like everybody else," he was emphasising when we met privately later on. "There are some days when I'm happy, some days when I'm not. We've all got a number. People will always say an artist is a certain way. It doesn't matter to these people what the hell he does... they'll still choose to believe he's precisely what they say he is. Take anyone who's popular and you can guarantee it: they'll be systematically run down, one by one.

"When people get an image of you, they want to make a definite imprint. With me, a lot of people want to catch me on an off day. If they succeed, it goes along with the myth."

> "Take anyone who's popular – they'll be systematically run down"

**NOW, I'VE SEEN** Presley in Vegas, James Brown at the Apollo, and I guess what's generally considered to be the best of the rest. And last Thursday evening, I bore witness to what I can only describe as a most incredible non-performance from Van Morrison, at the Carré Theatre in Amsterdam, and he won hands down. It was no contest. But damn it, the man hardly moved on stage.

He stood in the shadow of a battery of dark-blue spotlights and, except for some finger-poppin' with his right hand, remained immobile. Yet the sheer magnetism of his presence came hurtling out of the gloom and was sufficient to transfix the assembled multitude. I have to own up – I've never seen anything quite like it before, or for that matter have I been so enthralled by such a premeditated lack of visual entertainment.

Up until the last few minutes there was nothing to look at except the diffused outline of a figure. You could mistake it for Rod Steiger

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–hunched up to the microphone in the half light. Even those fortunate souls entrenched in the front row would have had trouble fingering Morrison in a police identity parade after the show.

If it wasn't for that incredible familiar voice, in fact, one would have been forgiven for thinking the band was using a stand-in. Hence the lack of light. But it was the quality of timbre, and the interpretive finesse of both this singer and the New Caledonia Soul Orchestra that confirmed I was in the right place at the right time.

On this showing Van Morrison is without a doubt one of the all-time great soul chanters and his band is without peer. Take it on trust. Their records don't do them justice. And Morrison knows it. Together they exude an inflammable intensity, which, if you don't watch out, could scorch the clothes right offa yer back. There was no let-up. No conceived histrionics. Just damn fine music.

During the act I found Morrison doing precisely everything you could want him to but felt certain he wouldn't. Both he and his band constructed climax upon climax, one moment as smooth as satin, and in the same breath as raunchy as a sleazy roadhouse combo. Just when I thought things couldn't get any hotter – they loomed out of the darkness and delivered the KO.

On that most memorable of Amsterdam nights it was to be three killer lefts, briskly delivered in the form of "Wild Night" deliciously sandwiched between two phenomenal reworks of Them's greatest hits – "G-L-O-R-I-A" and "Here Comes The Night".

Only then did Morrison take everyone completely by surprise as he proceeded to stalk the stage like a man possessed, kicking his legs up in the air as he made the most triumphant exit since Muhammad Ali blitzed Sonny Liston. The response had to be seen to be believed. It took me a full hour to get over it.

On the car journey back to the Holiday Inn, Morrison was full of questions as to how the music scene had progressed in England. In particular he wanted to know if The Pretty Things were still roaming the countryside. When I said yes he seemed quite pleased: "David Bowie's only doing what Phil May used to do," he said. "He's just wearing different clothes."

After a time I cornered Morrison on the subject of unorthodox stage presentation.

"I only move about if the situation demands it," was his capsuled explanation. "If it feels right, I do it. And it felt just right this evening. The thing is, I'm not an entertainer. I'm an artist. A musician. And there's a great difference.

"As far as I'm concerned, entertainers have a canned show. They do exactly the same things each and every night... like they're into the whole showbusiness trip. We're not a rock band. We're a music band. But the unfortunate thing is that once you go out on the road, people have got this programmed thing of precisely what they expect to see and hear.

"The difference between being an artist and an entertainer is most rock'n'roll acts are primarily entertainers. The music is relegated to secondary importance. For the most part, the audience is only there for the whole visual thing. They paid their money for the stereotyped image they've constantly read about. They know what to expect. So nothing really comes as a surprise.

"I can tell you this: the times when we really cook are when there's absolutely nobody around. So as you can see, it's kinda hard to do, whatever you do, in a context of being locked into some particular thing."

As Morrison restricts himself to no more than a dozen or more live gigs per year and one album, the result is that either on stage or on wax, every move he makes is an event.

This is the way he means it. He told me: "I get a lot of enjoyment working with this band, and I feel that what we do is worthwhile. If we did a lot of gigs it'd be difficult for us to keep the kind of feel we've achieved."

He speaks quietly, his Northern Irish brogue spiced with a tinge of the USA, and he draws himself comparisons with those bands who pack giant arenas almost every night of the year.

"You know, and I know, that people love you to death if you've got a hit or somethin' – or if you know such and such a person. But if you play the big stadiums, like most bands feel compelled to, you put yourself in great danger of losing contact with a large percentage of the audience. I went to see a few groups last summer... and it was only those people who were right down the front who were giving off any positive energy.

"Those people in the audience who were round the perimeter couldn't have really cared less if a group was up there on the stage or not. They were either too stoned or they'd just come along because somebody told them it was the hip thing to do.

"Like there was 25,000 people who turned up for one event I went to and well over half of them didn't see or hear a thing that was going on. If that's what you're into, then you do that kinda gig. I prefer a much more intimate surrounding. To tell you the truth, I wish I could just work clubs. But with a band of this size, it's not economical. I wouldn't even break even.

"Even though we don't do a lot of gigs, we're still a harder-working band than most. We're aiming for perfection all the time, so we work harder at it when putting our music together. We just do it when we feel the time is right. If it's not, we don't push it. We all do something else.

"Personally, I get enough buzz out of working this way. And that's the way I'd like to keep it." *Roy Carr*

## — MELODY MAKER JULY 28 —

"**IT'S SHOWTIME, LADIES** and gentlemen! And here's the one you've been waiting for – the Caledonia Soul Orchestra with ... VAN MORRISON!"

Birmingham Town Hall, jammed solid, bursts into relieved applause as the small, slightly tubby figure slides between the members of the rhythm section and places himself between the saxophonist and the string quartet.

"*The photographer smiles/Take a break for a while/Take a rest, do your very best/Take five, honey*". As he sings, against a second wave of applause, he jams on a pair of shades, and then pushes them back onto his forehead. Time to take care of business.

So why has it taken the Belfast Cowboy seven years to come back and play to the British?

"There were a lot of complications before... the business trip an' all that. Now seemed like the right time."

Any special reason why now?

"No. Everything just came together."

"Blue Money" gives way to his new single, "Warm Love". Bill Atwood and Jack Shroer play a piquant muted-trumpet/alto-sax line as he sings the lyric, with that "*when push comes to shove*" line so reminiscent of Smokey Robinson. Between songs, Van stands immobile – left hand on the mic, right hand halfway down the stand, rocking it gently back and forth. He's poised, prepared, riding the growing mood, unwilling to let the tension drop.

He doesn't seem to have done much playing in the past few years. Why not?

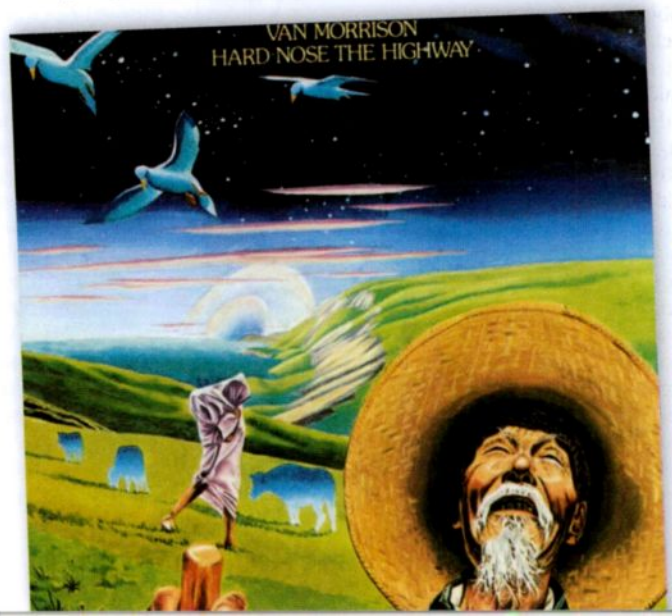
"That's not true. We gig all the time. It's just not publicised because they're not big gigs."

Where does he best like to play?

"Clubs and small halls... dance halls, but there are very few of those around any more. People are getting so lazy. It used to be like at the old Fillmore when everybody was up, but now they all lie on the floor."

A slappy backbeat from Dave Shaar's drum introduces Bobby »

> "I'm not an entertainer. I'm an artist. There's a great difference"



Bland's "Ain't Nothing You Can Do", given a solid bar-blues treatment with big trumpet-led riffs. Jeff Labes switches from grand piano to Hammond organ for a solo which brings back a whiff of the Flamingo days. This music is meant to communicate feelings.

"I like clubs because you can get into the more intimate details of a song. When you're singing about certain things, everybody can hear the words and what you're saying."

He doesn't object to waiters circulating and glasses clinking?

"No, because usually they put their drinks down when they get into it."

> "You can get into the more intimate details of a song in a club"

For the first time, the strings – two violins viola, and cello – pick up their bows for "Into The Mystic". They supply a perfect commentary to the line "*I want rock your gypsy soul*", and as Van sings, "*When that foghorn blows*", Shroer's baritone answers him with a deep, booming blare. The sound, over-resonant at first from the high ceiling, is clearing up now. During the songs, the audience is silently respectful; at the end of the each, their enjoyment is plain.

How has he kept more or less the same band together for such a long time? He doesn't answer, but his guitarist John Platania explains that they don't all live near each other. Platania and some of the others live on the East Coast, while Van and the strings and horns are in California. That "big silver bird" brings them together for the gigs.

Jeff Labes' rhapsodic blues piano, rippling against the strings, introduces Ray Charles' "I Believe To My Soul", one of the musical high points of the entire concert. The stop-time breaks, leaving space for Van's vocals, are incredibly precise and dramatic. While the trumpeter takes a showy solo, Van stands at the rear, hands on hips. They play "These Dreams Of You" exactly as they did at the Fillmore East in 1970, complete with Shroer's raucous alto solo He looks just too damn young to play in such a mature, old-time style. The ghosts of a hundred Harlem jump altoists rise and applaud – and the angelically pretty blonde cellist smiles wide.

How did he put the band together?

"I met John in Woodstock, around '69." Platania had previously been with a group on the same label as Van, Bert Berns' Bang Records. "I met Jack there, too; he and Jeff were with the Colwell-Winfield Blues Band."

Is he specially important to the band? "Well, everybody's important."

Bassist David Hayes is from California and was formerly with Jesse Colin Young's group during and after The Youngbloods' split. Is it hard for him to find the right musicians to play his music?

"Yeah. It's more difficult when you don't know what you're looking for. This is not a singer with a band or a band with a singer – it's a whole thing."

Platania adds: "Most musicians are only into one thing, be it jazz or rock or whatever, and they aren't sensitive or open enough to know that he covers it all."

"I Just Wanna Make Love To You" is slow, oozy, menacing funk, and Platania steps out of his normal role as provider of 1001 Unforgettable Fill-Ins to take a stinging solo. Each time he gets to Willie Dixon's title line, Van leaves it open for the audience to join in. At first there's silence, but by the third time of asking they've cottoned on and roar lustily. "Sweet Thing", from *Astral Weeks*, is a fleet 6/8 swinger, the strings building soaring climaxes with the aid of Shaar's quicksilver drums, while Van plays tricky rhythmic games against them. Once again, Platania plays the feelings of the song rather than merely the notes, and for the coda they all slide gracefully into a cool 4/4. It's perfect – but what a surprise when he follows it with an old Them song, the lovely "Friday's Child". The treatment is full-bodied and satisfying, but somehow properly reticent – nobody in this band wants to be a solo star. Van leaves and somebody announces that there'll be an interval while the musicians take a drink.

Jeff Labes does the string arrangements these days, and he's got the classical training for it. Does Van find them at all restricting?

"Oh no. They can ad-lib too. Sometimes, for the record, they've been written after the vocal has been recorded, written around it."

Platania adds: "When it comes to improvising, sometimes they're a little inhibited because of the discipline that they've been subjected to. But they're starting to get into it."

All four string-players, it turns out, are from the Oakland Symphony Orchestra – and their leader is the orchestra's master violionist, Nate Rubin. Do they understand Van's music?

"Yeah, and they can feel it too," he says.

During the interval the grand piano is tinkered with, and – surprise – Van's mic is moved down to the floor, in front of the stage and on the same level as the audience. Apparently he thinks that the stage is too high, hampering communication. Now, about eight feet above him, the band roars into "Here Comes The Night", another Them favourite. It's a strange sight, indeed: the blue spotlight picks up the singer and the first row of the audience, and

"A most incredible non-performance": Van Morrison on stage at Amsterdam's Carré Theatre, July 19, 1973

GETTY


unfortunately he's invisible to the people in the side balconies and behind the stage. But there seems to be a stronger bond between the performer and the listeners, and he certainly looks more nonchalant, gripping the mic stand in the same pose, a cigarette casually dribbling smoke from his fingers.

Does each of his albums have a specifically designed concept and character of its own?

"Yeah... but usually the concept doesn't come around until you start listening to the playbacks."

But each album seems, to this listener, to accentuate some particular facet of his music. Is that conscious?

"Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't. It depends on what you're working for, and whether you do it all at once or in pieces... or if you're overdrawn at the bank that day, or if your car breaks down, or... That's life."

At last, the audience starts getting up and clapping along, which is what he wants (although he's not about to ask for it). It happens first on "I've Been Workin'", which is wonderfully fat-sounding, featuring another jagged alto solo shot through with sunshine, and a screaming coda, Van yelling his head off above the band. "Listen To The Lion" brings the mood right down, misty and floating, the trumpet and tenor sax meshing prettily with the strings.

He's made some classic hit singles in the past, both with Them and as a soloist. "I like making them. It's fun. I think I'm getting away from that, though. I'd like to be able to release triple and quadruple albums, but sometimes it's really hard to do. A while ago the record company was asking me for singles, so I made some – like "Domino", which was actually longer but got cut down. Then when I started giving them singles, they asked for albums. I don't mind. As long as they cooperate with me, I'll cooperate with them."

His next release will be a live double album, culled from tapes made at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, the Troubadour in LA and hopefully the two Rainbow gigs this week. And the next studio album?

"A Christmas album, probably. We tried to do it last year, but we were under too much pressure. You have to start making a Christmas album on January 1, if you want to get it out. We'll probably do a few original songs and some of the old things like "White Christmas" and that thing, "*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire...*" All that stuff. Romantic."

He moves back to the stage again for "Green", which turns out to be the frog's song from *Sesame Street*. For the first time this night, he does something I noticed three years ago: when the audience slips in its applause of song-recognition after the first few bars, he inserts a spoken "Thank you", sliding it into the second line of the tune with all the professionalism of a hardened cabaret entertainer. And then it's "G-L-O-R-I-A", with a strutting feeling more akin to Roy Head's "Treat Her Right" than to the original Them record. Near the end, he lets the band burn alone until most of the audience is on its feet, bellowing the chorus.

Much has been made, lately, of the jazz tinge which has always been present in his music. What are his specific influences?

"I like it all. Yeah, that 1940s blues stuff, and everything from King Pleasure and Count Basie to... Oh, I dig it all."

Does he still play tenor sax, as he did with Them sometimes?

"Yeah, but not on concerts. Whenever I get the opportunity I play, but I don't often get the chance to work on it, unless I take off to the woods and... uh, woodshed for a while. It's a... business in itself."

Were those reports from New York four years ago true, that you played gigs with Albert Ayler?

"Oh yeah? Maybe I did, and I didn't know about it. Strange things happen in New York."

Suddenly the concert is rushing ahead on pure adrenalin. After the relatively sober precision of the first half, the hall is ablaze with joy. Platania whips the band into a gale-force "Domino", and many people sing along with "Brown Eyed Girl", which features a startling acceleration into the second verse. Then, assuming a new stance as the master of stagecraft, Van cools it right down for Sam Cooke's "Bring It On Home To Me" – and, wonder of wonders, moves from his rigid pose into a series of snappy histrionics, including back bends and foolery with the mic stand.

> "Everything from King Pleasure and Count Basie to... I dig it all"

The band stay right with him, adding to his gestures. "Moondance" passes in a finger-snapping blur, and it's noticeable that his voice is beginning to crack. Not surprising – the concert is now 90 minutes old.

Why did he move from Woodstock to North California two years ago?

"Woodstock was getting to be such a heavy number. When I first went, people were moving there to get away from the scene – and then Woodstock itself started being the scene. They made a movie called *Woodstock*, and it wasn't even in Woodstock. It was 60 miles away. Another myth, you know. Everybody and his uncle started showing up at the bus station, and that was the complete opposite of what it was supposed to be.

Why California?

"Well, I heard they had good oranges there. Actually, I'd been sidetracked: I'd planned to go there a long time before, but I detoured."

Does it suit you?

"At this stage of the game, I'd say yeah."

Isn't it too laid back?

"No, that's not really where it's at. That's another newspaper number."

Why did he decide to build his own studio there?

"I figured I'd be doing a lot of recording, and it eliminates all the stuff of booking time somewhere and getting 45 engineers."

As he goes into "Caravan", the atmosphere feels like it's wired direct to a nuclear power station: "*Turn off your electric light/Then we can get down to what is really wrong/Reely-rong rillyrong*".

The world's best white blues singer? Maybe – but he's definitely the world's best Van Morrison. The strings make a surprise entrance, with an ethereal four-part invention of great purity and logic. The rhythm section lays out, the strings take it down to pianissimo, and Van smiles knowingly. He waits, waits, waits, and then... "TURN IT UP!" and he's slippin' and sliding' across the stage, bending and kicking. It all hangs out. The audience have given him help, and now he reciprocates in full measure. It's the last song, and he pulls the band to a halt before disappearing.

Has this tour scared you away from doing any more like it? "No, it's made me want to do it again, as often as is physically and mentally possible."

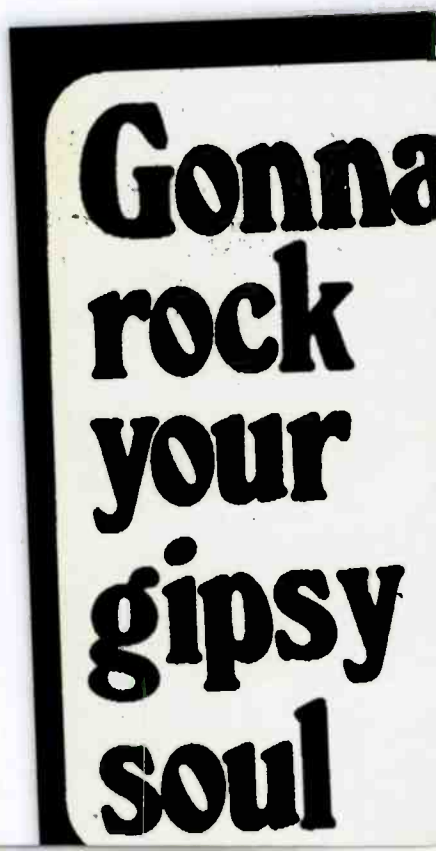
How often is that? "Well, sometimes I feel like gigging at four in the morning, but nobody's around."

Whipped on by the roadies, the crowd demands more. Before long they're all back, the string section settling down and switching on the reading lights attached to their individual desks. They choose "Cyprus Avenue", and it's a long way from the tortured, desperate performance he gave the song at the Fillmore three years ago. Then, the line about "*My tongue is t-t-t-tied*" gave a sense of tragedy, of impeding personal disaster for the singer. Now, he turns it into a joke. But when he cuts the band off, and waits for silence to fall, the nerves are still stretched taut.

"Once again, he holds the audience like a puppet master, delaying until we're ready to snap before unleashing that final command: "IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW!"

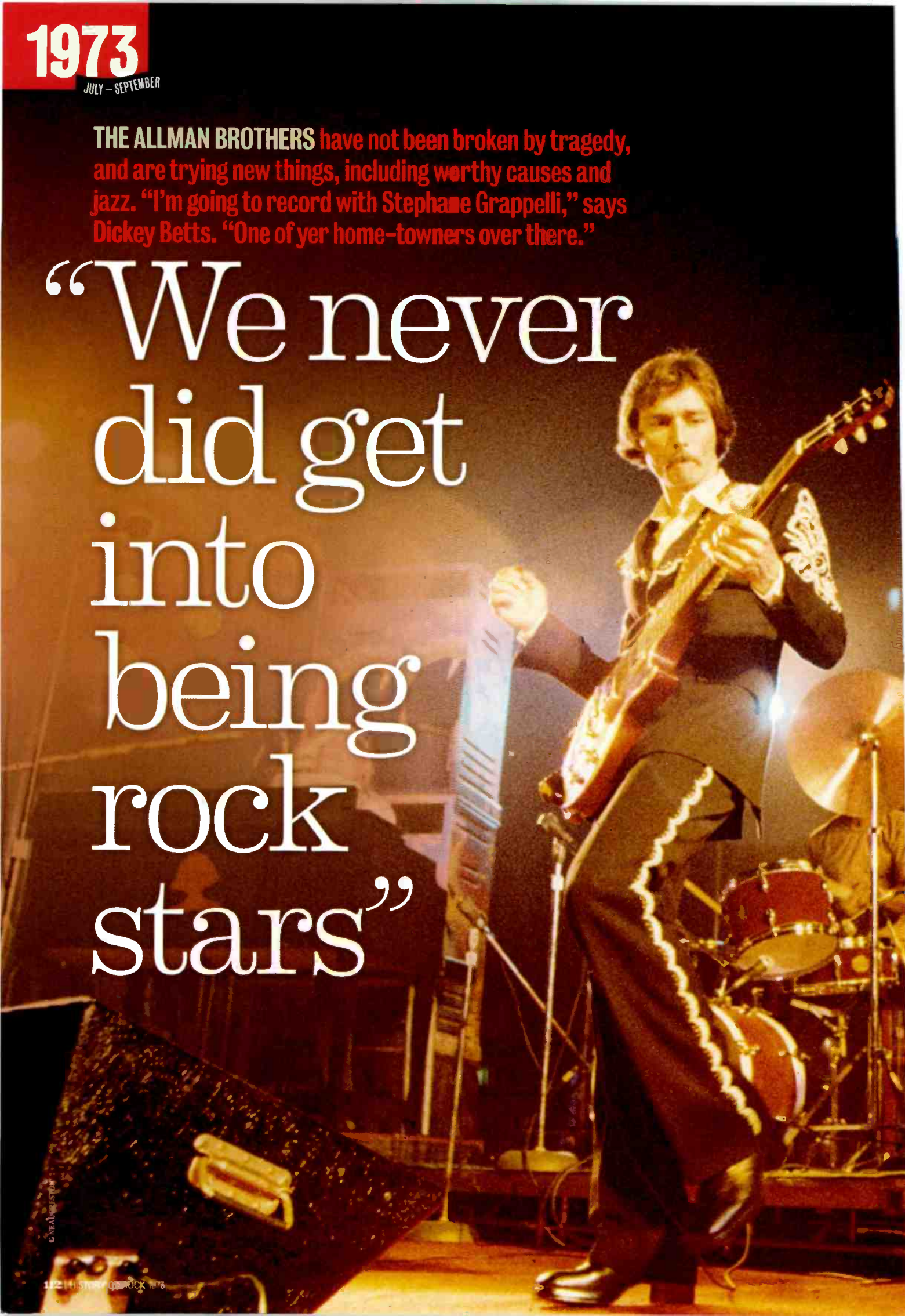
The band crashes, he spins on his heel, and stalks off. It was all you could ever have wanted.

*Richard Williams* •



**THE ALLMAN BROTHERS** have not been broken by tragedy, and are trying new things, including worthy causes and jazz. "I'm going to record with Stephane Grappelli," says Dickey Betts. "One of yer home-towners over there."

# "We never did get into being rock stars"



September 19, 1973: The Allman Brothers Band at the Forum in LA, with (l-r) Gregg Allman (behind keyboard), Dickey Betts, Jai Johanny Johanson and Butch Trucks

## — MELODY MAKER AUGUST 25 —

**NOBODY TALKS AT** all about the deaths. Gregg seems too spacey, anyway, detached and oblivious behind his shades; maybe a few brief nods of acknowledgement to well-wishers as he leaves the stage, that's all. It happened, and that was it, Duane's dead, and Berry's gone, but The Allman Brothers are 1973, riding high on the public's love. Yes, love!

The Allmans are to America now what the Dead were in '67. But it is not the peace and good vibes of San Francisco, exactly; these people are from William Faulkner's Deep South. They are close-knit and wary of outsiders; they observe a detached courtesy; they detest the process of image-building; they are anti-stars; purporting to be working-class boys from Macon, Georgia.

So be it. The Allman Brothers and their entourage, all those people down at Capricorn Records in Macon, the city where Otis and Little Richard Penniman grew up, is family. It's always been that way, from the spring of '69 when they all began rehearsing together. Duane and Gregg, Dickey Betts and Butch Trucks from Florida, black Jai Johanny Johanson on drums and congas, and bassist Berry Oakley, who was to collide fatally with a Macon city bus just one year and 13 days after Duane's motorcycle death.

The Allman Brothers Band went to New York, to Atlantic Studios. They played the Fillmore and cut their first gold album, *At Fillmore East*. They toured for three years across the country, and all the time they stressed the absence of the rock-star trip.

They began recording *Eat A Peach*. Three tracks were finished at Criteria down in Miami. Then, for the first time in two-and-a-half years, they went off the road, only Duane did it for real. On October 29, 1971, he was dead at the age of 24. A death in the family.

And when it happened again, this was not just a band trekking across America, a people's trip, this was a slice of pop history out there playing to the full houses, nourished by posthumous mystique, despite all the adamant denials of stardom.

And so in July this year The Allman Brothers Band plays to 600,000 people in upstate New York – an event numerically larger than Woodstock even – and they're up there with the Dead and The Band. They've made the aristocracy. Listeners to a New York radio station vote them the most popular band ever after The Beatles. *Guitar* magazine votes Dickey Betts the second-best guitarist in the world, next to Clapton. There is not only gold record, there is platinum. All this, and now the Indians!

**THEY GOT THE** idea for the foundation just after the Indian uprising in February at Wounded Knee in South Dakota: paying in money from certain of their performances to a North American Indian foundation which will use it as they wish. A board of seven directors, all of them Indians. The Allmans just supply the money.

The Indians have had a bellyful of do-gooders in their time, so the reasoning goes. Already they have raised $21,500. This will be spent in sending delegates from all across America to the annual Indian Ecumenical Conference in Morley, Canada, just north-west of Calgary in Alberta province.

And eventually there will be involved not merely the Brothers, but a whole host of rock artists, playing for the Indians' right to retain their traditions and way of life, helping America to pay its debt to the nation's real landlord.

This is the dream. The Allman Brothers & Sisters, the family growing to encompass them all. Don McLean has already said he'll do it, and Alice Cooper and Leon Russell and Poco and The Beach Boys might be persuaded. And then there's the Dead, of course, with whom the Allmans have been regularly gigging for the past few months. "Rock Scully, he wants to do somethin'. They're interested, but you know the Dead – they're very careful about anything they step into after all the crap they've been through. So they're not promising anything. But they're watching to see what we're gonna do. And Jerry, well, he'll say, 'That's something to think about, you know,' in that way he has. It's funny how many artists really wanna do somethin' for the Indian people."

Dickey Betts is the prime mover. Dickey from Florida, with his drooping marshall's moustache and hard, bony face whose skin seems to have been stretched tight as on a rack. These days he is not just lead guitarist, he is chairman of the North American Indian Foundation. He is Richard, rather than Dickey Betts. Sitting in the gloomy, candlelit bar of the posh Navarro hotel on New York's Central Park South.

Dickey's wife is Sandy, a highly attractive full-blood from Canada, with straight, black hair streaming down her back. As a kid she used to be discriminated against, but not as badly as the Indians from the reserves. They would come into town, and the white folks would make fun of them because they weren't properly dressed. They had no water on the reserves and they were dirty. There were no toilets. In school, Sandy was called Squaw.

And Dickey gets to remembering the last time they were in Canada. An Indian woman had been found murdered on some country road. She had been picked up in a bar by some guys, carried out in the road and, well... Dickey pauses; his sense of Southern niceties leaves the sentence hanging in the air. Nothing was ever done about it. It was all just covered up. A few people got curious, but that was all. Dickey was one of them. "I imagine that Wounded Knee kinda stirred up the hornet's nest," he says.

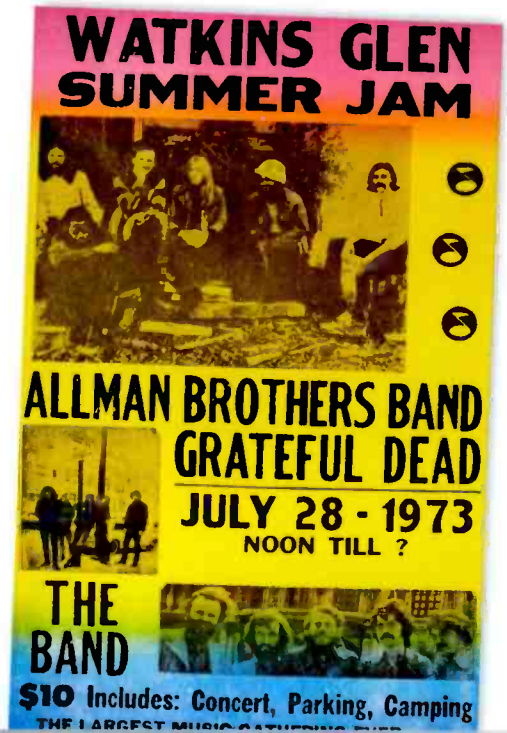
They had discussed it now and then, the band and all those people down in Macon connected with Phil Walden's Capricorn label. "We might just say, 'Ain't that a bunch of shit!' y'know. We'd already started doin' some benefits for people like the Salvation Army in our home town. Somebody suggested why don't we do one for an Indian group, and one thing led to another."

**THE INDIANS. HE'D** really prefer to talk just about them. No gossip writers. "There are so many damned interviewers who ask you what's your favourite colour, that kind of shit."

Still, since Duane has gone, he's the one who's had to shoulder the responsibility and in a way this has helped him personally, both as a man and as a guitarist, since it's pushed him to the front.

But Duane, you ask, does he mind talking about him at all? And he will put down his whiskey and look frostily across the table. "I don't especially care to," he says quietly. Sandy silently shakes her head. He reflects, and clears his throat. "I mean, if there's something that you'd really like to know that you think mebbe I could tell you?"

Changes musically? "I think it changed a hell of a lot, myself, because I think he had a hell of a lot to do with what the band sounded like at that time. But I think, actually, the band might've changed more after we lost Berry, because when we lost Duane we didn't add anybody. We just maintained what we had. But then when Berry died we added two people, Lamar Williamson bass and Chuck Leavell on piano, which is a hell of a thing to do."




When Berry Oakley died, some said it was like Robert Kennedy's death to the Kennedy family: that some sort of jinx was in operation. But he snorts disgustedly. "Yaaaaaah, that's bullshit."

A long silence. "You got any bubblegum with you?" he drawls. Touché. There is no romance in death. Except for the public.

He first met the two brothers at Daytona Beach in Florida eight years ago. They would run into each other and jam a bit. Dickey was from the Sarasota area of Florida, and he and Oakley had a group together, The Second Coming. "We had a message, y'know. We were tryin' to say somethin'. We were the Kansas City stars – y'know, the record that Roger Miller has cut – only we were the Jacksonville, Florida, stars; that's where the group was doin' good. Jacksonville is a pretty good town to gig in."

The Second Coming never really cut any records, but they had success with a certain tape, a demo made to hawk around promoters' offices. "But the local radio station started playin' it, and it got to be Number One by


request in Jacksonville. It was an old Cream song, 'I Feel Free', and an old Jefferson Airplane song, 'Funny something-or-other'.

"It was two pretty good tunes. 'I Feel Free' we did just about like them – in our own way, but the arrangement was about like that. We did a lotta jamming. We stretched the solos out pretty good. They were about five minutes apiece.

"Hell, it got I don't know what recognition, but it got somewhere in *Billboard*. It got so far from Jacksonville that our manager printed up some 45s of it, and they were selling locally, and then *Billboard* picked it up as a possible hit or somethin'. Anyway, right in the middle of the process of that, we had disbanded and started The Allman Brothers Band, so here Duane and Gregg and Berry and me and all of us were sitting in Macon, and we're supposed to be rock stars (*a small laugh at this*), and we're hearing The Second Coming's record over the radio and everybody's wonderin' what it is!

"I don't think it even had a label. It didn't really do anything. It looked like it might, but it didn't really deserve a hit."

**THE ALLMANS, IN** fact, had come into existence early in '69, when The Second Coming jammed in Jacksonville with Butch Trucks' band, The 31st Of February, which Duane and Gregg joined after the demise of their own Hour Glass. The well-anecdoted story is that they played together in a park for more than two hours, and when it was over they all decided it was the band they'd been looking for.

Phil Walden, a hip, white Southerner, quickly assumed their management. He looked after various artists like Clarence Carter and Percy Sledge, and had been a business partner of Otis Redding's.

Capricorn Records were formerly called Redwal, in fact, and it wasn't until a year after he'd begun managing the Allmans that it was changed. The Macon label is now the most prestigious young company in the South, with a reputation for its interest in basic country-blues-funk.

The Allmans seem to remain unaffected by recent experimentations. There is no desire to dabble with electronics or to attempt sophisticated lyrics. There is no need.

"We just keep playing, and whatever comes out of it is the direction we take. We don't have that much control over the music. I don't get interested in new ideas, and I don't think anybody else in the band does. We're more interested in the old things, from the '30s and '40s and the '50s, the old things that have already passed.

"We study those things, and then new expressions come out of it. Not reworking, just more or less studying where we're coming from, where our roots are at, how we learned to play. If we studied new music as such, we'd wind up copying somebody else."

Himself, he looks to the old Georgia blues, though his two personal favourites are Robert Johnson and Willie McTell. And then on the country side there's Jimmy Rodgers and Hank Williams. BB too, of course: "He's got that elegance that none of 'em ever have. Man, he's so much fun to jam with, because he's so passive in his own way; he won't force anythin' on you."

And then the English players. Peter Green jammed with the Allmans once in New Orleans. "I wouldn't especially prefer him to Eric, but he's mighty good. His style is real compatible with ours. Eric is actually more like me. He's kinda laid back a little bit in his playing."

Laid back. It's the key to their lifestyle: "We've always been kind of – I don't know how to put it in words – kind of working class. I mean, we never did get into being rock stars. It was always a family, people's-type trip. Somebody said we were the ultimate expression of a male chauvinist rock 'n' roll band."

Dickey laughs at this. He isn't a humourless man, just averse to committing himself as an individual. Why, he thinks he and the rest of 'em might be as strange to these people in New York as Alice Cooper, and there may be something to it. The easy-going Georgia style set down amidst the amyl nitrate rush of Gotham City. But stardom is a peculiar business. The night that Waylon Jennings played the open-air Schaefer Music Festival, nobody notice Dickey Betts in the audience.

And then he jammed on one cut with the bill-openers, The Marshall Tucker Band, and got the best applause of the evening. "The other night at Madison Square Gardens," he says, "I put a suit on and nobody recognised me, either."

> "When we lost Duane we didn't add anybody"

But this is a joke. There were 18,000 people there that evening and the Allmans normally do about three gigs a week. After all, it costs about $8,000 to sit in Macon and do nothing for seven days.

**AFTER FIVE YEARS** now with the Brothers, Dickey Betts needs to do something a little different, just for the fun of it. Like Gregg Allman, he wants to do a solo album, and in November he will probably do some recording in England (the Allmans as a whole may well arrive this year for their first British dates). Only this time he will do a little experimenting.

"You familiar with 'Revival', that tune we did? Well, it has a very gypsy-flavoured introduction to it, about three minutes, and I'm going to record it with Stephane Grappelli, one of yer home-towners over there.

"I haven't met him yet, but Phil and Frank [Fenter, Capricorn label manager] talked to him about recording. He said yeah, he'd do it, but he don't like flying, so rather than have him fly to Macon and all, I thought I'd just go over there.

"We're gonna do 'Revival', go into a jam, and do 'Les Brers'. We'll be doin' kind of a country-jazz thing. It's going to be fun. I just hope somebody tries to make me feel at home there."

There was a time when he disliked the studio, right up until *Eat A Peach*. He couldn't really understand it. "Seemed like prostitution of music. You been out playin' in bars, then you go onto concerts, and it's always the raw communication between people. But here you are in this tin can with a buncha machines all round you, and you're expected to produce... It takes a long time to get used to it, y'know."

There has not even been much overdubbing on Allmans albums until the new one, *Brothers And Sisters*. On one track, "Ramblin' Man", they put eight guitar parts together.

"I just said, 'Well, y'know, there is such a thing as a recording artist and I guess I'm one.'"

But *Sgt Pepper* was done on four-track. He looks incredulous.

"Nooooo, man, they had that big 32-track studio! Are you positive?"

He digests the thought. "Well, I did read somewhere they had the big 32-track." Then adds judiciously: "You can't always believe what you read."

There was no necessity to overdub when Duane was there. Duane on slide, Dickey playing counterpoint. It's funny, Dickey recalls, but there's still a lot of old, unreleased recordings of Duane singing. Some old stuff by Chuck Berry.

"He did one kinda real funny tune. Chuck Berry was drivin' – I can't remember the title of the song – he was drivin' an old Ford, and he was gonna pull in and trade it for a Cadillac. You remember that song? All the accessories he's gonna have in it, bed in the back seat and all that stuff? Well, Duane did a recording? It's funnier 'n hell."

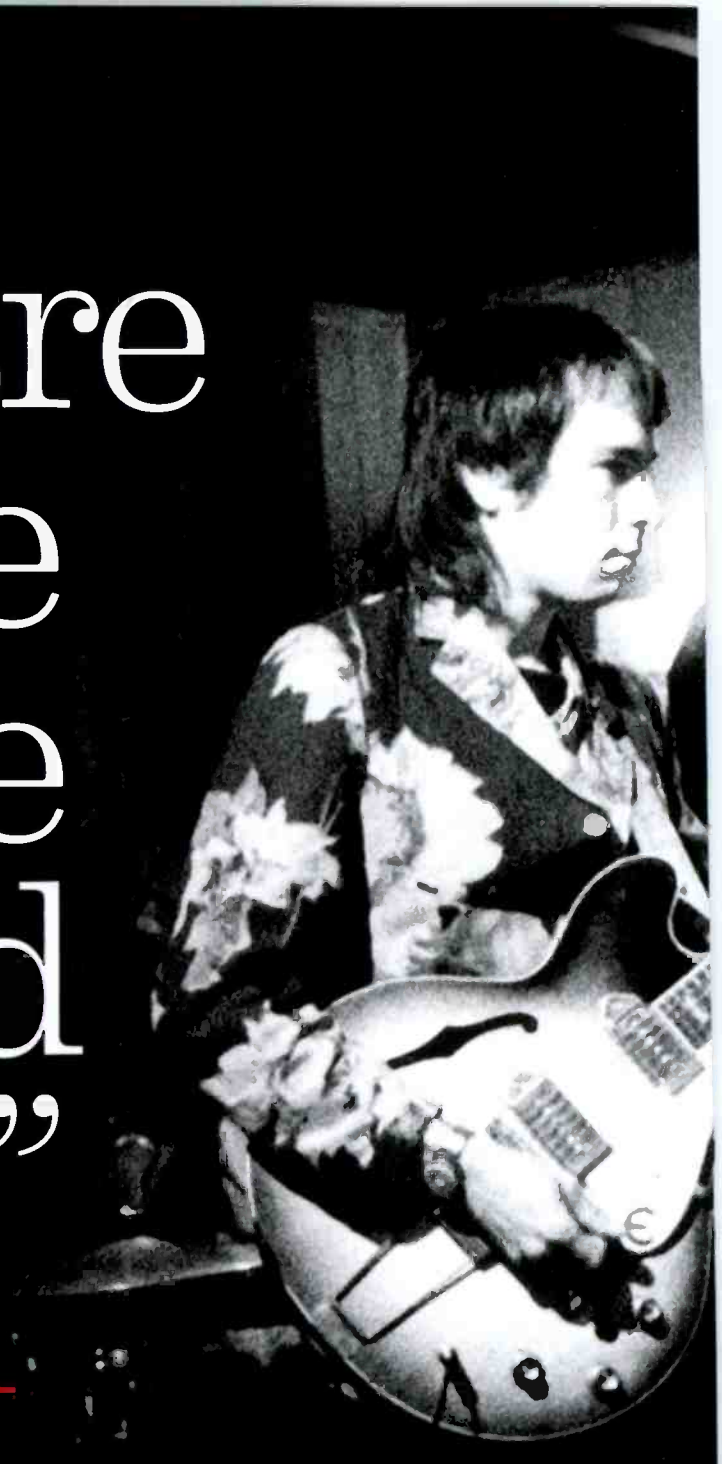
**DICKEY BETTS, A** good ole boy from in the woods around Sarasota, gets to reminiscing, but whatever he's thinking he keeps to himself. Among themselves, it's said, the Allmans mention Duane about every five minutes. But just then, a roadie walks into the cocktail bar with its smoky candles and smouldering waitresses, and Dickey calls out to him.

"Hi, Joe Dan! You wanna go to the show tonight? All right? We're gonna go see Brando, yeah." A group outing to *Last Tango In Paris* has been planned.

He turns back to the table, acting quite excited. "Did you see him on TV the other night? Oh sheeeit, he's great!"

But Richard Betts, chairman of the NAIF, husband of this beautiful Indian girl with a voice as deep and throaty as Cher's, has a couple more drinks in the meanwhile. And, in fact, he never does get to find out what *Last Tango* is all about. *Michael Watts* •

# "Pubs are not the place for loud music"



**It is the summer of PUB ROCK, in which small bands keep things low-key and low-cost. From Kilburn & The High Roads to Ace and Dr Feelgood, an ethos emerges.**

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 4 —

**DISASTER! IT SEEMED** to stare British rock in the face, only a few months ago. Cause? The massive close-down of small clubs, backbone of the scene. Without small clubs, there was little work opportunity for the up-and-comers, the new faces to carry on the tradition set by their forefathers, The Who, Stones, Led Zeppelin.

Economics which favoured the supergroups, with their massive turnover, were death to the small venues who could not afford them. The top liners ceased to subsidise support acts in their mad flight to America. And the result was many worried frowns among agents, promoters, musicians.

But this year has seen the emergence of a phenomenon that promises both salvation for music – and eardrums. With the bulk of small rock clubs gone, third-league rock musicians turned to their alma mater – the public houses of old England. Revolting against the big noise and big money syndrome, the small groups, dedicated to blues, rock and a good time, set up fire bases in any pubs.

And in a few months since last spring, groups like Bees Make Money, Kilburn & The High Roads, Brinsley Schwarz and Ducks Deluxe drew »

Kilburn & The High Roads in 1973, including: (l-r) Keith Lucas (later Nick Cash of 999), Humphrey Ocean (now a professor of perspective at the Royal Academy), Ian Dury and Davey Payne

delighted crowds who thought groups had long since been lost to the baseball stadiums of the States. Some of the musicians in these new bands had been around in defunct "name" bands. A good percentage had never been in a group before.

There was a big search on for AC30-watt amplifiers, the ones used by The Beatles, and most of the major groups of the early '60s. Hailed as one of the best amps built, they gave just the right depth and volume for maximum excitement in a small room.

In recent months the groups playing in London pubs like The Kensington, Royal Nelson and new clubs like Dingwalls at Camden Lock have proliferated. Record companies and agents are already pursuing bands like Clancy, Ducks Deluxe, Kilburn & High Roads, Ace, Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers, Katzenjammer, Paz and 747. *Chris Welch*

## Bees Make Honey

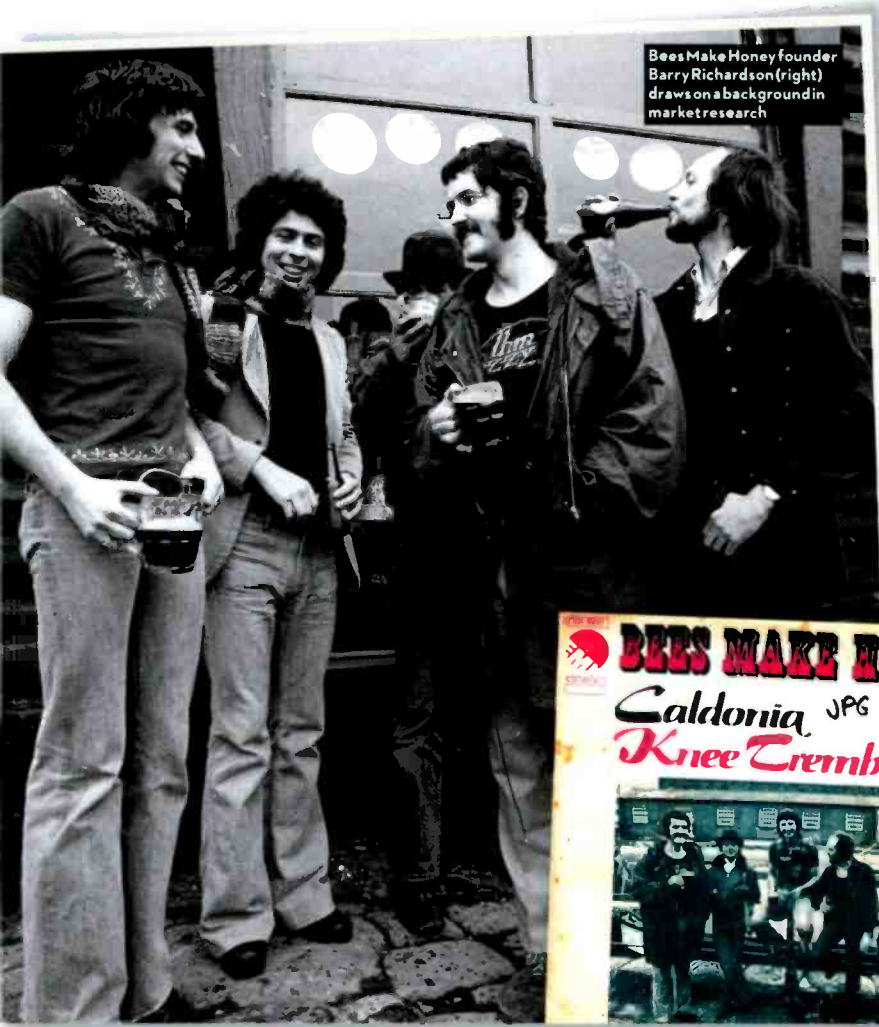
**BEES MAKE HONEY** were, perhaps, the first band to cause a stir on the pub rock circuit (although Brinsley Schwarz could well argue about that). Bees are a five-piece band made up of bassist Barry Richardson taking lead vocals, Ruan O'Lochlainn (electric piano, guitar, alto sax), Mick Malloy (lead guitar), Deke O'Brien (bass, guitar, vocals) and Bobby Cee (drums).

The band's roots go back to Dublin, 1960, when as a university student Barry Richardson was in a jazz band with O'Lochlainn. A footloose trip to worship at the altar of New Orleans led to Richardson's summary dismissal from the jazz band and he joined a showband where he met O'Brien and Malloy. At university, Richardson met Ian Whitcombe and they formed a blues band which included O'Brien and Malloy, and in that set-up they recorded the tapes that became Whitcombe's stateside hits.

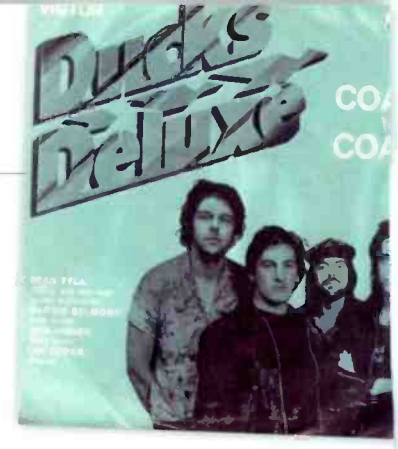
Meanwhile, O'Lochlainn had crossed the Irish Sea to find his fortune in London. Richardson followed the migratory path to play in Keith Smith's Climax Jazz Band by night and toil at an advertising agency by day.

Inevitably Ruan and Barry met in an Irish club in London and they played together until Barry went to the States in 1968 for a few months. He returned with the germ of the idea that was later to turn into the Bees burning in his brain. Barry put together a band with Ruan, Mick was called in from Ireland and Deke followed. The last link in the chain was getting in drummer Bobby Cee, who answered their ad in the *MM*. Bob, who hails from Los Angeles, joined just under two years ago. Despite writing their own songs they still play a lot of non-original material, but it's interpreted in their own, personal style.

The Bees will make money for two reasons. First, their music has the right roots and they've got the expertise to put it across. Second, Barry Richardson has had a long career in advertising and market research. He knows how to evaluate demand, how to cost and how to reach the right people fast – and in the music biz the answer, Barry realised, was to be found on the pub circuit. *Geoff Brown*




Bees Make Honey founder Barry Richardson (right) draws on a background in market research




## Ducks Deluxe

**ONE OF THE** hardest-working bands is Ducks Deluxe, who last week were rocking at the cheerful hostelry The Royal Nelson, Holloway Road. Fans were packed in a sunken arena on wooden benches, with a minuscule dance floor, and just enough room to fight a way to the bar.

The band consists of Martin Belmont on lead guitar and vocals, aged 24; Sean Tyla (rhythm guitar and vocals), aged 27; Harvey Garvey (bass and vocals), 20; and Tim Roper (drums), aged 19.

They play a lot of original material as well as trusted favourites by Chuck Berry and the Rolling Stones, and are particularly good on slow blues like "The Wee Wee Hours". The guitars are sturdy and exciting, without falling into shrieking feedback, and drummer Tim keeps his playing simple but effective. The cumulative effect of their rocking music is sufficient to cause outbreaks of rhythmic dancing on a massive scale.

Their manager Dai Davies says: "The British pub rock scene is comparable to the American situation where you get bands like The Allman Brothers playing long sets at small clubs. They get incredibly tight and they play rock because it's the easiest, most direct music. It's the way the Stones and Yardbirds started, and the reason so many top groups are so awful today is because they never had to work hard in the small clubs."

Martin Belmont explained that Ducks are now busy learning new numbers: "Things are happening for us and there is a lot of talk about a record contract. It's on the cards that we'll go with one of two big companies.

"Playing two-hour sets in pubs, we get through a lot of numbers and you can get sick of them unless there's new material, so we're taking a bit of time off playing to rehearse. Half of our songs are originals and half are standard R&B, Chuck Berry tunes. We do a bit of everything as long as it makes your feet tap! It's dance music really, and we're definitely not a progressive band.

"We're not trying to impress anybody with musical intricacy, which is just as well. We play music to give people a good time, and the atmosphere at the gigs is just like the early '60s when The Yardbirds were coming up. I used to live in Bournemouth when Zoot Money and Manfred were coming up, and it seems like we're going back to those times."

Martin says he has played in many local bands "best forgotten". Sean was in Help Yourself, Harvey was in The Ram Jam Band and the drummer worked with a brace of unknowns. "At the moment we are trying to cut down on the frantic rock'n'roll," says Martin, "and play a little more laidback. We've all heard The Average White Band, and they've had a great effect on us. They are like a breath of fresh air on the scene. It's a matter of getting the same rocking effect without forcing it.

"We've been going about a year, and the present lineup has been together since Christmas. It was hard to get gigs when we started and it seemed like a good idea to play in pubs. In a small place you can build up a strong relationship with the audience, especially when you play the same place each night.

"The money is not so wonderful but we get a good sound, and anyway, money wasn't the reason for doing it. We've done as well as a band without a record contract can do, and we go out for £75 to £100 for college gigs now, purely on our reputation as a London pub band.


"Just like the early '60s": Ducks Deluxe – (l-r) Andy McMasters, Nick Garvey, Tim Roper, Martin Belmont and Sean Tyla

"Hopefully people know they can expect a good time from us. The Kensington has been the most important pub for us. It was a jazz pub and then Bees Make Honey and Brinsley Schwarz began playing there and us. We used to play at the Tally Ho in Kentish Town; in fact we started there. In seven months we saw the place change completely. That's where the pub rock thing, in inverted commas, started, when an American band called Eggs Over Easy used to play there. Then the Bees, Kilburn and us carried on.

"I think the easygoing atmosphere is going already and it's getting a bit like the club scene. More and more pubs are having groups and bands are ringing up pubs saying, 'Book us; we play just like the Bees and the Ducks.' But a lot of the groups have more to do with progressive rock than pub rock. Good luck to them, but pubs are not the places for loud, progressive music." *Chris Welch*

> "The Tally Ho in Kentish Town is where the 'pub rock' thing started"

## Kilburn & The High Roads

**DINGWALLS DANCE HALL,** which sparkles in the night by the side of Camden Lock, is a long, rectangular room. Plenty of tables, lots of room to dance, a bar that runs half the club's length and, most important, a regular turnover of super-fine bands. This sweaty Thursday night the band is playing a self-composed reggae-based song that'd find its way into the charts with little trouble if it was put out as a single. Its groove is authentic, its hook-phrase catchy, its performance tight.

On stage the singer, short and dressed in a black jacket and black gloves, rasps in a broad cockney accent into the microphone, which he's gripping with a tense tightness. "We'd like to do a number now called 'I Really Got My Eye On Your Cheesy Pie'... it's all about food." And the wry, throwaway delivery hints that it indeed just might be about food and not what your first notion told you to expect.

The lead guitarist – white suit, red shirt, shortish, neatly cut hair – starts an ordinary four-in-the-bar chord sequence. After a few bars, the drummer bursts in playing a rhythm that hits the guitar at an acute angle. It's something totally unexpected; you feel it shouldn't fit but it does and the number comes together with the solidity of quick-drying cement.

It's an utter mind-blower and you're left standing there, mouth agape, thinking, "Whaaat?" Then the sax, raw and growling, jumps in on top while the bass slides in underneath and the piano fills out the sound.

That's Kilburn & The High Roads – one of the most impressive pub rock bands who've got the stamp of originality imprinted all over them, whose music has such a broad scope and whose future is full of promise. A few months back, Kilburn weren't much more than Ian Dury, their singer, plus backing band. Since then they've signed with Charlie Gillett's Oval record label, been in constant rehearsal for weeks on end and are now back on the high road.

The few golden old 'uns they play are given life by new, idiosyncratic arrangements, but it's the self-penned material that's the best.

Until recently the songs have basically been poems written by Dury and set to music by the band's pianist Russell Hardy. Now, it seems, there'll be more of a two-way movement, with Dury adding words to Hardy's melodies. Kilburn & The High Roads was formed around the Dury/Hardy partnership. Ian was teaching at Canterbury Art College (he's an ex-protégé of Peter Blake and had a blossoming career in commercial art having done work for the *Sunday Times* and for Pan Books). Two of Dury's pupils at the college, guitarist Keith Lucas and bassist Humphrey Ocean, proved to be interested in the possibilities music offered then and the Kilburns started.

For a long time the band was irregular in personnel and formation. They played only about one gig a week – a severe case of "If you're available, turn up." It was a very loose arrangement, and when David Payne, a friend of Hardy's from their work together in The People's Band, showed up at a rehearsal to play for a while, he never bothered to leave and so he was in.

Lastly, Dury heard drummer David Rohoman at a gig and invited him to join the band. He did. Rohoman has had the longest, most conventional musical background of all the Kilburns. He played to soul groups (like Ray Williams & The Grenades) and in heavy, riffy bands like Kripple Vision and in bands like the Magic Rock Band. There has been one other change recently. The bassist's real name isn't Humphrey Ocean; it's an unwieldly collection of syllables that's unpronounceable at best and »

GETTY

is a nightmare for unsuspecting journalists, civil servants and income tax inspectors (Humphrey Anthony Erdeswick Butler-Bowdon). So he's settled for Humphrey Ocean, which seems as good a name as any.

Kilburn have that bright spark of originality and it glows red-hot with potential. *Geoff Brown*

## Clancy

**"WE KNOW THE** slogan says you're only here for the beer... but there's not a bad drop of music being played here, y'know."

Ernie Graham, rhythm guitarist and vocalist of Clancy, on stage at the Kensington pub near Shepherd's Bush Green, kicks off the band's third set of the evening. There's more beer being poured down the back of the guy standing in front of you than you'd ever drink in a night's hard boozin' the pub's packed that tight. And Clancy's punchy rock is just as tight.

> "We've all had enough of the high-volume stuff"

The band started coming together in March of this year when Ernie, bassist Colin Bass and guitarist Jojo Glemser began writing and rehearsing. They added drummer Steve Brendell soon after.

"We wanted to get another instrument in the band but we weren't sure what it'd be. We'd thought of getting in some keyboards, but when Dave Vasco came down to London from the North he joined."

Dave, who played in The Foundations with Colin, had originally drifted down to the big city to play in Johnny Johnson's backing band, but when he arrived he found the plans that Johnson had made had fallen through and he was free to join Clancy.

And now it's the dual lead guitar work of Dave and Jojo that's one of the high spots of the band's music. Towards the end of the second set they played "Angeline", a song that closes with the lead guitars teasing each other, one egging the other on until the lines twist and turn and are finally tied in a tight, tight knot.

Clancy are writing most of their own material. At present they only include about three or four songs by outside writers. Ernie Graham was with Eire Apparent until three years ago.

"When we finally came back from the States," says Ernie, "we stayed together for about a year in Britain before we finally split up. We'd been together for about seven years and we were getting tired and stale."

From Eire Apparent, Henry McCulloch went to The Grease Band, Paul McCartney, Wings, fame and fortune. Dave Lutton went on to join Steve Ellis and Ernie laid low for a while. Then he played with the ever-changing Help Yourself for about nine months and recorded a solo album for Liberty.

Jojo was with Ernie in Help Yourself and when the Clancy gig was offered it was like slipping into an old, comfortable pair of jeans; they knew each other's music that well. "I enjoy the pub circuit very much," says Ernie, "before I came over to England I used to play on the Irish pub circuit, and the atmosphere around London now is very reminiscent of that Irish scene. We just wanted to get out and work; we enjoy gigging regularly and the pubs give us that opportunity."

Like most pub bands, Clancy have a record deal in the offing. Nothing's fixed yet but the band cut a demo of eight to 10 tracks, and although the quality's rough the tape has impressed the "right" people in the biz. The ones with the contracts.

"I think we'd have done better to get an outside producer to work with us," says Ernie. "We've a load of ideas but we need someone to bring them together, to tell us what to use and what to throw out. It's an objective ear that was needed. All the guys in the band have been around for a long time now and we're all looking for something that's going to be lasting and worthwhile."

Using two lead guitars invites inevitable comparison with American bands like Quicksilver, the Allmans, the Dead. "Yes, we do dig the way they play. We've all had enough of the high-volume stuff. We'd much rather use the small Fender gear we've got now. We could buy enormous stacks and blast everyone to kingdom come, but we've all been through that scene and now we want to play some music. We all feel it's time to play something a little bit more mellow," says Ernie, and his soft Irish brogue adds a warm poignancy to the words.

The pub bands have developed their own sort of "in-crowd", but it doesn't have the elitist air the phrase conjures.

"We all know each other... the Bees, Ducks, Kilburn... we're all friends, it's a close little circle, we all keep in touch, keep feelers out to see who's playing where, and what they're doing. It's developed into quite a little mutual admiration society."

Ernie picks his way back through the throng – the beery, jostling hairy drinking crush – to the stage for a final 45-minute set. The band meander on stage and Jojo puts on his guitar and starts a chunky rhythmic pattern. One by one the band come together and the numbers join in until they all rocking along.

A bit later, Clancy play a number that's got a guitar lick straight out of the James Brown song book; a hypnotic, repetitive hook that's scrubbed by Graham over Bass and Brindell's close-knit bass/drum parts. And topping it off, Clancy have two good singers. Colin Bass and Ernie, who's arguably one of the most promising talents on the pub rock scene, share the lead vocals – Bass' deliberate, plainer voice offsetting Graham's strong melodic tone.

This month, Clancy start a residency at Dingwalls in Camden Lock every Friday night. Catch 'em there – you can be sure they'll not be on the pub scene for ever; in fact they're not too keen about being labelled a pub rock band at all, for, they argue, it puts a limit on how far a band can go.

"I guess we're just using the pub circuit for a while. We could go out and tour as support band to a big name, but we'd rather play small gigs like the Kensington as top band."

Even a pub rock band has an ego, it seems. *Geoff Brown*

## Ace

**ACE WAS FORMED** something like a year ago from the remnants of two bands – Might Baby and Warm Dust. Alan King, who'd years previously been with The Action playing thunderous versions of '60s Motown greats and had then moved on to Mighty Baby, dropped in at the Tally Ho one night. There was a jam session going – ex-Action Reg King was there too – and from those roots Ace grew.

The rhythm section of Warm Dust – bassist Terry Comer, drummer Steve Witherington and organist Paul Carrack – having tired of the heavy 'n' hyped scene they'd drifted into, joined forces with Alan.

At first the band were known as Ace & The Dynamos, but the Dynamos was soon dropped. The band was completed by Phil "The Greek" Harris, a guitarist who'd been playing for 12 years but had never been in a band, preferring just to jam around. But Phil had jammed in the best of company, with Remi Kabaka, with Quiver, with Steve Winwood, and the fact of his on-stage inexperience gives the band a certain freshness.

In common with the more promising pub bands, Ace do much of their own writing – Alan, Paul and Phil being the main contributors. Alan has written some songs with Reg King, too.

Their set uses material ranging from Taj Mahal, Tommy Tucker's "Hi-Heel Sneakers", The Four Tops' "Loving You Is Sweeter Than Ever" (shades of The Action in that), The Cookies' "Chains" and "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood".

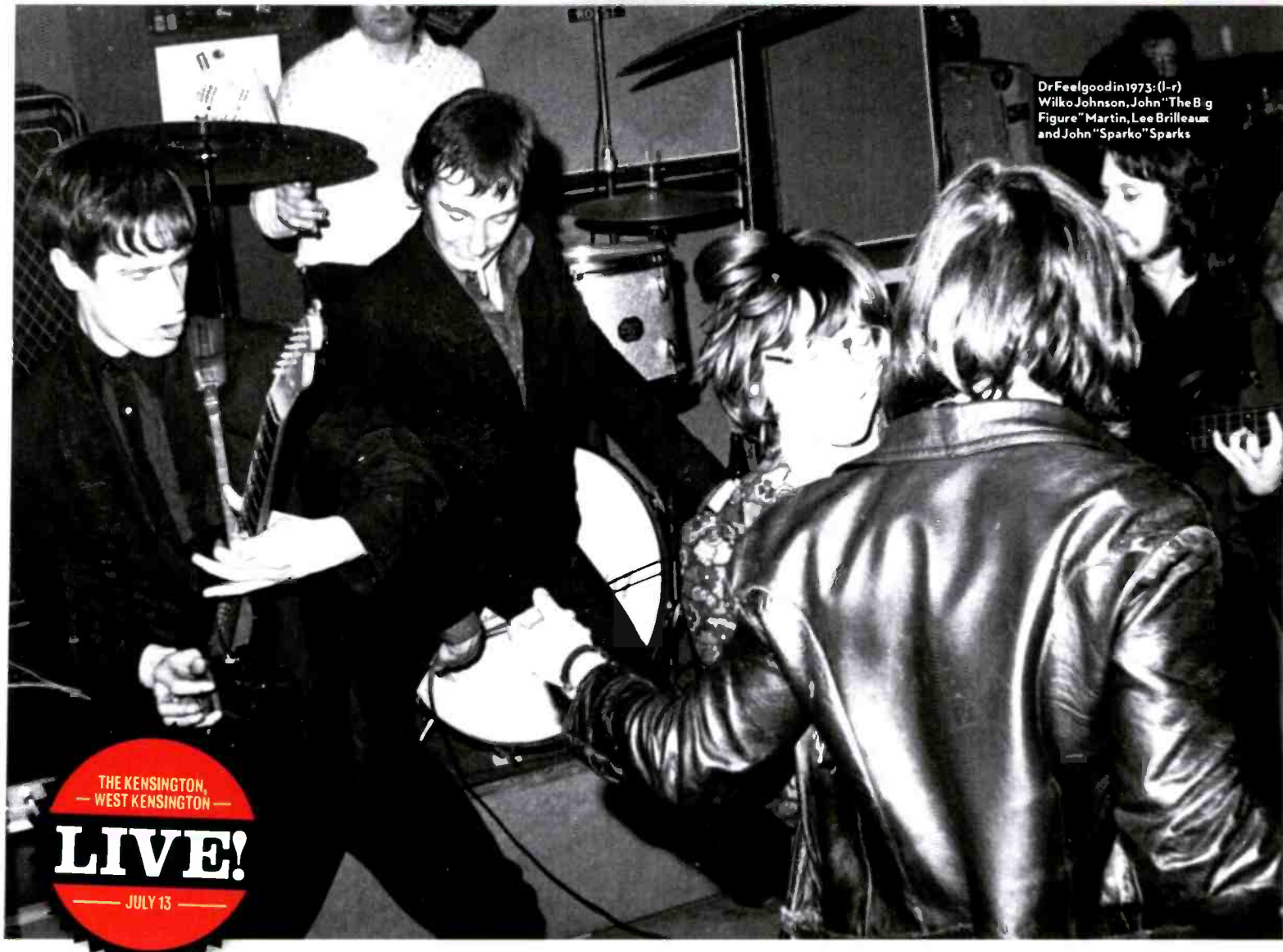
But the last five numbers in their set are originals, so there's no dependence on a Chuck Berry rocker to bring the show to a storming close. If their own stuff can't do it then they'll settle for an honourable close to the night's stomping, which is a bit of a refreshing change.

Ace are still a young band in terms of playing together (certainly not in terms of individual age; though again, they're not yet ready for the geriatric ward).

Nevertheless, they've been around long enough to know that they're not ready for recording and are holding off until the autumn. At present Ace are content to play as often as possible so that people can get to know their music and when it does become available on disc there'll be a hungry market. In the New Year, say Ace, the time should be ripe and a single or two – followed up by an album would be just about right.

Quiver have given the band encouragement and support, and Ace haven't been afraid of the big gig. They played on the last five dates of Hawkwind's last tour, and perhaps surprisingly, had little trouble getting through to the audience drawn by the last of the Greatcoat Groups.

At this stage of the game it's pretty clear that Ace are a band that hold a fistful of good cards. *Geoff Brown* •




Dr Feelgood in 1973: (l-r) Wilko Johnson, John "The Big Figure" Martin, Lee Brilleaux and John "Sparko" Sparks

# Pace and entertainment

**MM JULY 21/NOV 3**

## Kilburn & The High Roads

EITHER HE WAS propping the mic stand up or it was keeping him upright, but the guy certainly had style and the post was clearly Gene Vincent's. Ian Dury is rather like a modern Vincent with maybe a touch of Beefheart's growl and a hint of Bryan Ferry's mannered delivery. You've guessed it. Dury is really an original.

He's lead singer of Kilburn & The High Roads and this Friday night we're in a slowly filling Kensington pub in London to witness what is only their second gig in two months. They've been off the road rehearsing and recording, and it shows. A stiffness in the guitar work (lead and bass) was evident, but tenor saxophonist David Payne strung together some nice phrases on more than one occasion.

David Rohoman, Kilburn's drummer, is perhaps their most outstanding instrumentalist, holding the band together with a fine technique. It's his cementation of their playing that's of paramount importance to their whole approach. The High Roads are a unit, a tight band based firmly on ensemble playing, and Rohoman has the style to give them that extra kick when the band need to push a number harder. But the guy who's got it in him to really sell Kilburn is Dury. His individual voice clearly in the old rock'n'roll idiom, nevertheless manages to impress itself as a modern collage of vocal trails and tricks.

Interpretations of old standards like "Lucille" are nothing startling – at least not on this night – but they did a great campish version of "The Naughty Lady Of Shady Lane" (now can't you just hear Ferry singing that one?) and their reggae number – "You're More Than Fair" – is excellent.

Kilburn's own songs are, I'd say, the best part of their set, and that's a fact auguring well for their future. *Geoff Brown*

## Dr Feelgood

THE LEAD SINGER, Lee Brilleaux, has a great, snotty, hard-nut attitude. He stands with the mic and a cigarette in his right hand, a flick of the wrist takes the fag from his mouth and he sings in a snarl.

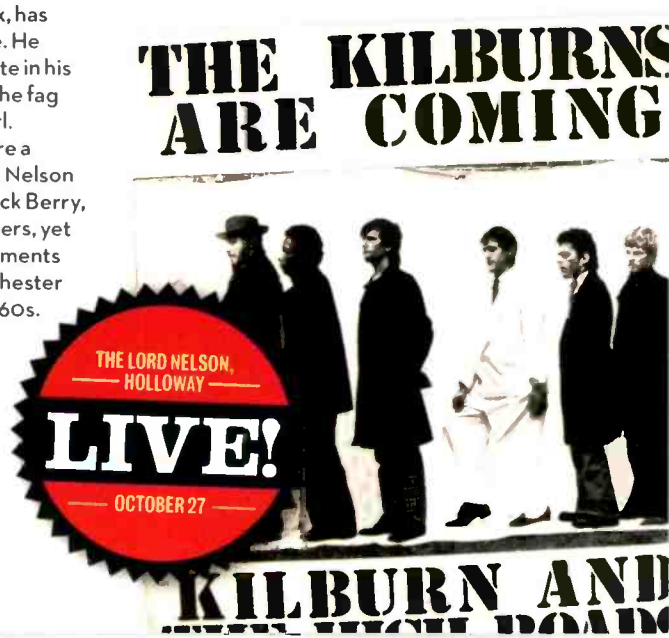
He and his band – Dr Feelgood – are a strange new brew. At London's Lord Nelson pub last week they played early Chuck Berry, Coasters and Jerry Lee Lewis numbers, yet appeared to have taken the arrangements and mood from the Liverpool, Manchester and London club bands of the early '60s.

Their approach to "I Can Tell", "Dimples", "Route 66" and the like are clearly reminiscent of white rather than black interpretations. For most of the first act they play these songs pretty much straight down the line. Then, during the last number – "Great Balls Of Fire" – there's an eruption of activity with lead guitarist Wilko Johnson doing the splits in mid-air à la Townshend and twirling and skittering around the stage.

The second set is a "show" comprising guitar humping, mic-stand masturbating, the lead guitarist singing (flat) Johnny Kidd's "I'll Never Get Over You", climaxed by their manager or roadie conspicuously thumping a table and demanding an encore, which he got.

Dr Feelgood have no original numbers. They're concerned with pace, simplicity and entertainment. *Geoff Brown*

STEVE LAMBERT



ALBUMS REVIEW 1973

# "People don't like it. Too bad"

**MM AUG 18 Mick Jagger previews *Goats Head Soup*. "I never listen to the old songs now."**

"*GOATS HEAD SOUP*," said Mick Jagger, pacing about the room. "I might change it. A lot of people don't like it. Too bad." A typically terse statement from the ever-impatient Mick Jagger. Actually, Mick denies that he is over-impatient with people, life. And he certainly has mellowed with the years. Or perhaps he has returned to his former self.

We were talking about the Rolling Stones' new album, and its disturbing title. What does it denote – a half-remembered children's fantasy tale, or some reference to privations on a desert island? The title has as much meaning as *Exile On Main Street*, if truth be known.

It's the music that counts, and *Soup* simmers with all the nourishing flavour of the new generation of Stones albums, *Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile*. The first generation of Stones albums now seem so long ago that even Mick has difficulty in remembering them.

And as we sat listening to the new album in the Stones' record office in London, I remembered Jagger interviews of ages past. Back in the early days when he seemed under terrible strain, but eager to communicate a wealth of ideas. And later, around 1969, the sad year, when Brian Jones died, when Mick was withdrawn and uncommunicative.

Now he seemed more relaxed than he had been for years, and much more interested, once again, in music and the Rolling Stones. Less the international celebrity and actor, and more the singer in a rock'n'roll band.

Dressed in a blued denim shirt and striped, mauve trousers, he didn't look much older, and if anything the new short hairstyle seemed to have lopped off a couple of years. Mick's form of defence is to attack, and he can be quite curt and aggressive when the mood takes him. But as Charlie Watts once told me: "He's quite soft really, y'know." And when a girl reporter was kept waiting for hours to see him until nearly 9pm, unbeknown to all, he seemed considerably dismayed, and apologetic.

We began with the basics of the album, released in time for the forthcoming tour. "It was recorded all over the place," said Mick, "over about two to three months. I think you'll like the album. The tracks are much more varied than the last one, and all that crap. And there's much more variety in the playing. I didn't wasn't it to be just a bunch of rock songs. We did 18 tracks altogether and we got the basics done very quickly.

"It's generally different from the last LP, which kinda went on so long that I didn't like some of the things, and the direction seemed to stand still. There's more thought to this one. It's kinda weird the way Keith and I work together. We both have songs we put to each other, but Keith tends to leave the lyrics to me. On his songs, he'll tell me the part to come in, and that's when I scream! I suppose I write most of the lyrics."

Does that ever become a chore? "It can be a chore, but I don't let it. You can usually get into the mood of a piece. All the songs tend to be an extension of a different mood and all have different meanings. The moods go up and down because I get impatient with things. Not everything, but I do tend to try and make judgements about people, and Keith doesn't. It's a good thing to have different attitudes, especially in a song-writing team. I enjoy writing and I like to have Keith help me. I'm sure he feels as involved in writing as I do."

We began to recall some of the Stones' older material, great hits like "You Can't Always Get What You Want".

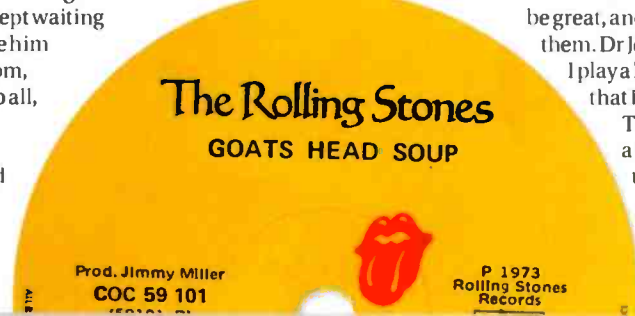
"Yeah, I really liked that song. But I never listen to the old songs now. I don't even have the records. I suppose I should get Decca to send me a set, but they've probably only got half of them. Yes I remember 'Yesterday's Papers', that was on a very peculiar album called *Between The Buttons*. I never play them, you know. I'm not saying they're not good, but if you go to some other musician's house, they don't play all their old recordings. You need not ignore what you have done, but you shouldn't look back too much.

"I really felt close to this album, and I really put all I had into it. People who like the Stones will be expecting a very good album from us, but people who don't like the Stones will be expecting a very bad album. Whatever you do, it's not going to be right for someone. You have to judge a record by what you think is there.

**"I really felt close to this album, and I really put all I had into it"**

"I played one track to Rod Stewart and all he said was, 'I like that because the voice is loud.' The best way to judge an LP is by the number of people that bought it. I buy records that are supposed to be great, and I never play them. Dr John's albums I play a lot, and I know that I like them."

There was a time when, understandably in view of their

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chequered career, Mick seemed to be losing interest in the Stones, and in being a singer. The call of a career in films was hard to resist. But now Jagger is back into music, going to hear as many concerts as he can and helping along new groups.

"We've signed an American group called Kracker, who will be on the tour with us. They play rock, not loud like Black Sabbath, but good and very tight. I hope to get a bit more involved with them, but of course what I'm most involved in is doing our music.

"Really, I always have been into rock'n'roll. There are periods when you are just not into it at all. You can't spend all your life being a Rolling Stone. After you've done a tour and an LP, you've got to think about something else."

The Rolling Stones have been in existence now for a decade, outliving even The Beatles, and a dozen shooting stars along the way. How many times have we heard of the new solo star, about to replace Mick Jagger. But here he is, back again, and selling concert seats quicker than a brace of bumptious new heavy groups, or freshly scrubbed teen idols. Mick began to muse on the changes he had seen in the rock scene.

"Yeah, there haven't been enough changes for me. It doesn't move fast enough. It's obviously changed in some respects, and it's a much bigger scene, but I'm not into your teenybopper things. I think David Bowie is a very serious writer, and Slade are good, but they haven't made it in America. Some of the bands are good, but some are rubbish. I thought the glamour thing was funny, because I've seen it all before, but it's difficult for the Americans to understand."

Didn't Mick regard it all as a challenge?

"I do, I do, I do! It's nice to see people talking about England of course. I'm looking forward to our tour. I don't know what the audiences will be like, but we'll play the best we can. I'm sure a lot of people will have never seen the Rolling Stones before; about 80 per cent will be there for the first time. It won't be a cosy Rolling Stones fan club convention. Obviously there will be some who heard us years ago, so I imagine the ages will be between 12 and 30. Audiences can be very weird sometimes."

How did Mick fit into Decadent Rock, a scene it is believed in some circles he pioneered many years before Dave Bowie, Sweet or the New York Dolls?

"It's all wrong," said Mick, setting out across the carpet towards the record player and heading back again at a rate of knots. "People bandy that word decadence about and don't know what it means. They haven't seen decadence because they can't see it in our society. They're too involved in what they are doing to see it. What do they mean by decadence – bisexuality? That's not decadence, but people think there is some mystique about it. It's immaterial.

"I think David is sincere and I like what he does. It would be a lie to say his image is hype. I think he's very talented. I don't think in three years' time we'll be laughing at what he does, 'cos he's done it better than anybody else. When we go on tour, we'll be putting on a show, people will expect it of us, and I couldn't just stand there and sing. It applies to everybody; even the Pink Floyd do it.

"There are very few bands that don't put on some kind of a show, except somebody like Paul Simon. His show is raising an eyebrow or hearing a pin drop. But that's still a show. I think our tour will be a bit of a laugh. We're going to have Billy Preston playing piano and three brass players, and the stage setting will look nice."

Mick headed towards the record player again, and this time decided to drop on the turntable the first copy of *Goats Head Soup*, for our delectation and delight.

He lay on the floor and bellowed up suitable comments as the album progressed, while I imbibed a quantity of alcohol thoughtfully provided by Mr J. The tracks he played were not necessarily in the order they will appear on the final album, release of which has been delayed a week. But he turned the volume up loud and whatever was played sounded good, a mixture of Stones funk and invention.

As Mick and I chatted quietly, and somewhat dully, about the barriers to the Stones working in Britain, income tax problems and the intractability of the trade union movement, I had the feeling that just down the corridor wild scenes and outrage were being enacted, to which Mick would shortly be a party.

"The only barriers are put up by the government and trade unions, and they are supposed to be the people there to help you," said Mick sagely. "The natural thing is to play, and I don't see how governments can object to that. A lot of people wanted to see us in Japan, for example. We asked the government there if we could play and they said yes. We sold the tickets, then two weeks later they said we couldn't come in."

Politics? "Oh yeah, of course it is, it all gets on too much of a high level, and you'd think those people would have something better to do. But they want to make some political capital out of it. It's all completely absurd. I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't go out on the road; I'd probably go mad. And we don't go around smashing up hotel rooms. That can get a bit boring, y'know. I go out to play music and that gets me off." *Chris Welch* •

# "Each track is different" MM AUG 18 The Stones' 11th album analysed.

**Silver Train** is a fast rocker, could be described as typical Rolling Stones, and said Mick: "It's the only one like it on the album." It featured some nice slide guitar by Mick Taylor, with a powerful bassline from Bill Wyman, and chugging rhythm guitars.

**Winter** followed, a pretty song, with overtones of a Jimi Hendrix-style ballad. And here Mick sings with great emotion and power. Mick also added rhythm guitar and there is much clunking piano.

**Hide Your Love** is a Stones boogie with much handclapping and boogie piano. Who was on the piano? "Me."

**Can You Hear The Music** is another rocker, with much phrasing on the organ, and the Stones sounding a bit like The Band in a Dylanish groove. Here Charlie Watts excelled himself with that flat, laid-back sound. Flute makes a surprise appearance – highly dramatic.

**Dancing With Mr D** is a highly evil rocker and my favourite track on the album. Loosely termed a boogie rocker with lots of noise and aggro. "Dance!" yells Mick in a kind of demoniac exhortation.

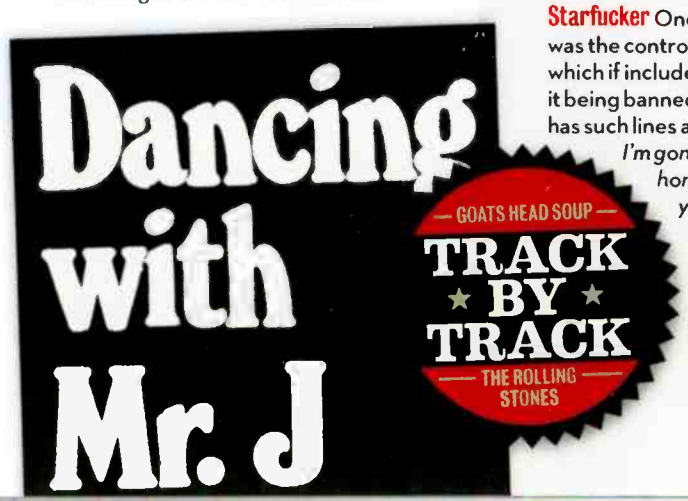
**100 Years** has Mick singing solo, once again in Dylanish mood (and here I am open to correction), with saucy tempo changes of a kind we are not accustomed to hearing from the Stones. Again the lead guitar shows signs of a Hendrix influence, and as the piece returns to its original tempo takes on a country-soul-blues mood that cues in a noisy, raucous climax.

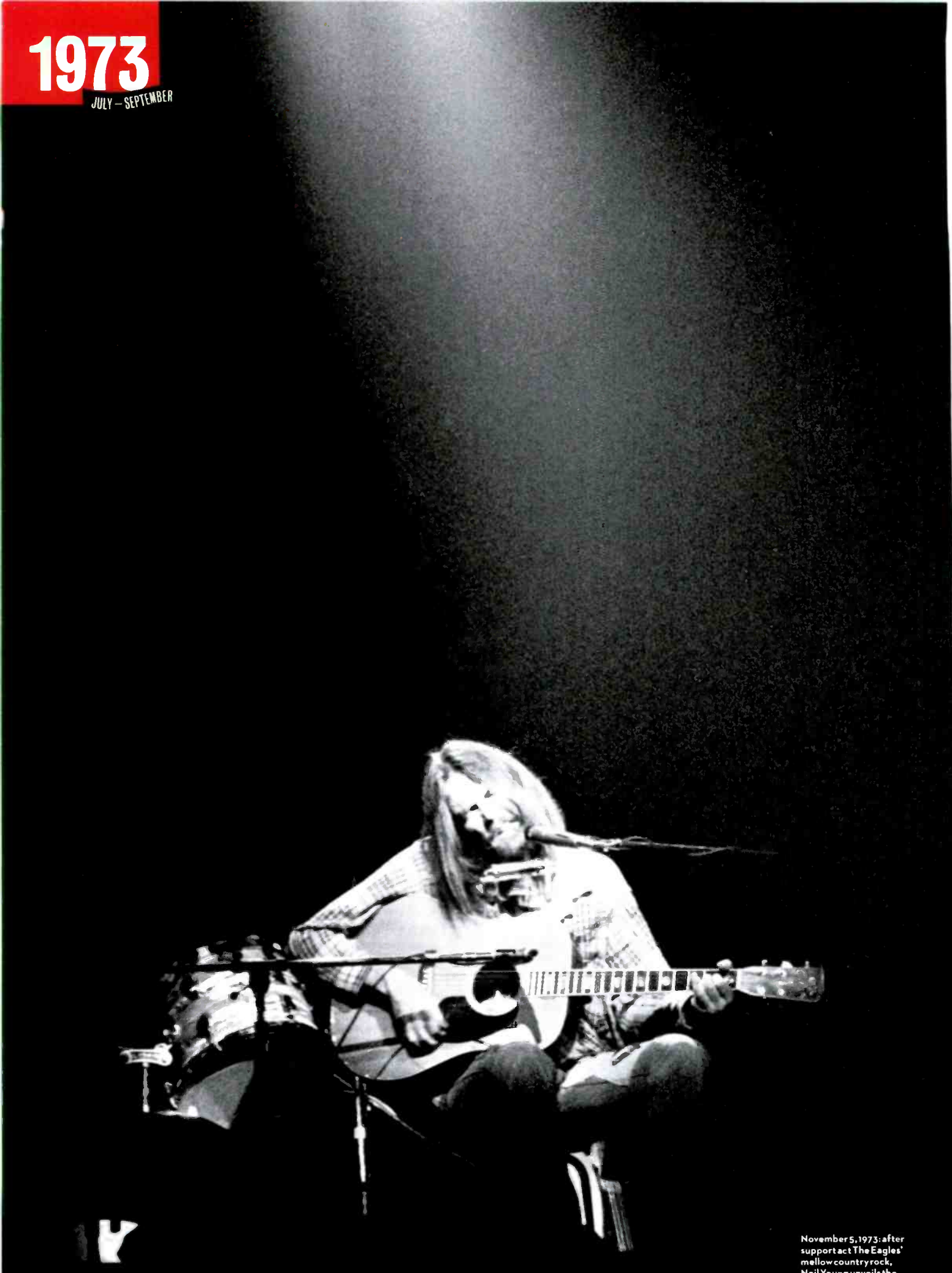
**Coming Down Again** has Nicky Hopkins on piano, and is a very funky, slow blues.

**Heartbreaker** has a hook line that as far as I can recall without having a copy of the album at my elbow went something like this: "*Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo*", to which my response was "yeah," and "rock on". The brass helped a lot here.

**Angie** is the single, with another chance for Jagger to shine as a vocalist of some stature, a fact which sometimes gets lost amid the general ballyhoo. Charlie clips beats off his hi-hat, and there is more good piano beating. Who was Angie? Mick affected deafness. "Each track is different," he said by way of explanation, "and there was not a lot of overdubbing. The flute and stuff was added afterwards."

**Starfucker** One of the tracks Mick didn't play me was the controversial "Starfucker", with its lyrics which if included on the album would guarantee it being banned on most radio stations. "Starfucker" has such lines as: "*If ever I get back to fun city, girl, I'm gonna make you scream all night/Honey, honey, call me on the telephone/I know you're moving out to Hollywood with your can of tasty foam.*" It sounds damn rude to me. What always amazes me about the Stones is that they seem such nice lads in conversation, and yet all hell breaks loose around them – enough to keep papers in endless headlines.





November 5, 1973: after support act The Eagles' mellow country rock, Neil Young unveils the harrowing sound of his yet-to-be-released *Tonight's The Night* album at the Rainbow in North London

# "I want to be able to live with myself"

**NEIL YOUNG has had enough of the music industry machine and craves simpler shows. "Filling a 20,000-seat hall is not rock'n'roll," he says, "but rock'n'roll business." Live with Joni Mitchell, he gets back to basics.**

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 25 —

THE DEEP-SUNKEN EYES, the wide mouth, straggly and unkempt hair, the rare smile, moody look and a load of "downer" songs – Neil Young has all the trappings of a manic-depressive loner who has seen it all. This is, of course, his huge appeal – few can resist his powerful way with a song that articulates the mood of a period or the depression of the wayward.

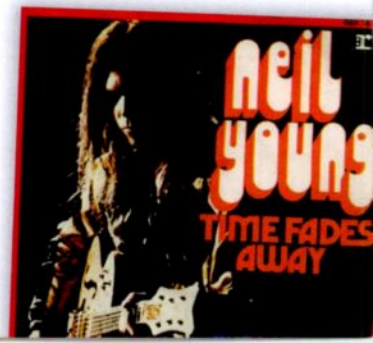
Beyond all these characteristics, though, Neil is a magnetic man of some style who stands today as one of the few rock musicians who transcends boundaries between honest musician and narcissistic personality. He's a star, all right, but he made it as a musician, so he ought to be at peace with his world. But he isn't.

Neil Young is not a cosy person. He has a strong presence but is deeply suspicious of those outside his chosen circle of friends. He despises formality, especially when it involves answering questions about himself. He seems to live in perpetual fear that he will be misunderstood. Don't we all? The difference with Neil is that he has allowed this obsession to turn him into something of a recluse to all but the chosen few. My interview with him began about a year ago in Los Angeles when he spent 15 minutes telling me he didn't like the thought of being interviewed but would happily chat. Everyone knew this was nowhere.

The conversation was renewed and ended last week in the same office – his record company HQ at Asylum on Sunset Boulevard – with Neil reaffirming that he didn't like being questioned by interviewers but go ahead. Bob Dylan, prophet of much of what we survey, wrote "*...it's only people's games you have to dodge*". And he was right again.

Neil was in a happy mood today. He joked a lot with Elliot Roberts and David Geffen, his managers, made and accepted lots of phone calls – "Hey, I'm acting like a businessman" – and asked the telephonist to get him Carl Wilson.

"Carl Wilson isn't in," said the girl. "Find out where he is, then," said Neil. Just a minor retort, but with enough edge to show that our star would not, even in a good mood, weaken too readily. He picked away at a guitar and I asked him to elaborate on his decision to return to club work. He condemned giant concerts at 20,000-seater venues as "circuses," and said time had proved that these events »

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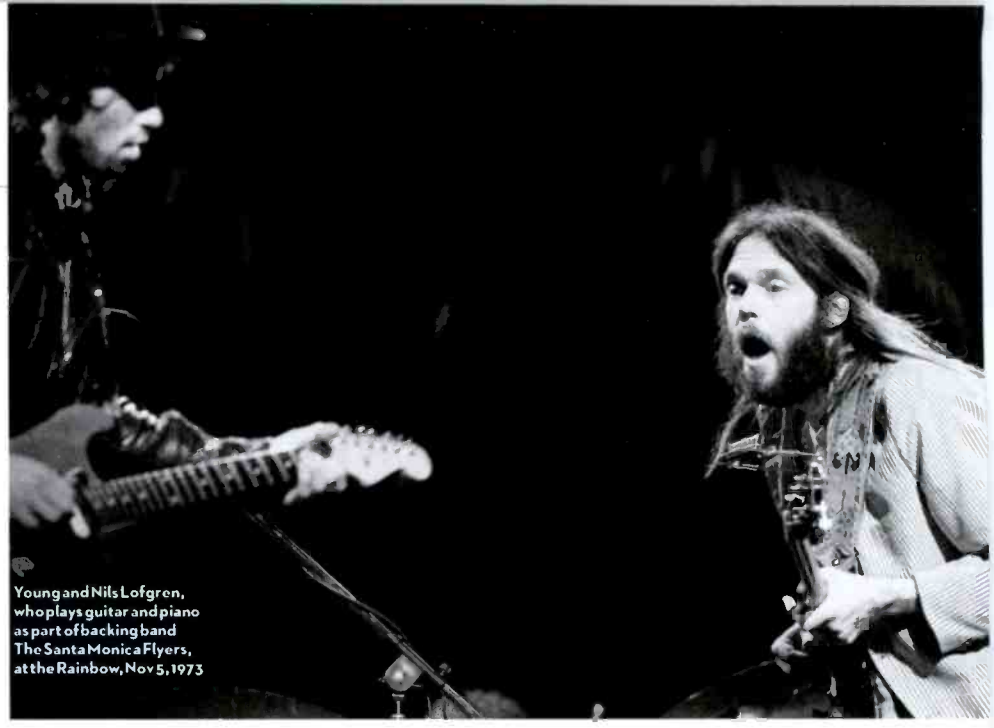

Young and Nils Lofgren, who plays guitar and piano as part of backing band The Santa Monica Flyers, at the Rainbow, Nov 5, 1973

were an enemy of musicians and of little use to fans either. "That wasn't what we were chasing from the start, was it?" he asked.

Well, getting back to the roots was a noble thought, but what about your ego, Neil? Doesn't it need feeding any more? Supposing only 200 people buy your next album...

"I've been right through that trip of massive audiences and my ego has been satisfied. I guess all these bands that are doing it have to do it, but once you've done it, then what? You realise that that's not what communicating is all about. Filling a 20,000-seat hall is not rock'n'roll, but rock'n'roll business. I can't imagine any musician would say he really enjoyed it and wanted to go on doing it. So, it's back to clubs for me.

"I want to be able to see the people I'm playing for and I want the people I play to to feel that the music is being made just for them – you bounce off people, that way. Get up, jump around, have a good time, get drunk – at least let's see each other. That's what I go to a concert for.

"Fewer people will be seeing it, but the people who come will have experienced something."

The changed attitude came during Neil's marathon American tour last year. At Oakland Coliseum, San Francisco, he was singing "Southern Man", he recalled, when a fan ran to the front and jubilantly threw up his arms. The guy was obviously happy. Next thing was I saw this cop behaving hysterically – he just ran up and smashed this guy down. I couldn't carry on playing, and this was a big concert.

"It was a terrible affair. It was like watching myself on TV and someone had pulled out the plug I was playing on, but I couldn't believe what I'd just seen. I was disconnected. Then I got out of that place and I said to myself, 'Who needs it?'

"Who needs to be a dot in the distance for 20,000 people and give the cops another excuse to get uptight and stop kids being happy? The circus might be all right for some acts, but it's not for me any more. I'm tired of singing to a cop, that's all."

> "I'm tired of singing to a cop, that's all"

As well as doing regular club work, Neil sees a fascinating future in films. For the past 18 months he's been directing and producing his own film ideas, called *Journey Through The Past*. A 90-minute colour movie, it is described by Neil as like a study of the current American generation rather than a rock film. Although its premiere performance takes place soon in Boston, Massachusetts, the film has been banned in Britain, presumably because of a shot in which a guy is fixed with heroin.

Yet Young insists the film takes a line against hard drugs and has "no nudity, sex or violence". He intends to keep resubmitting it to the British censors in the hope that they will change their minds – "They're a lot of fuddy duddies over there."

The movie features a student in a graduation gown who sees through a lot of experiences. And Neil said he intended, when making the film, to deal sanely with moral and political issues.

Obviously bitterly upset that his production has run into trouble, he added: "I really would like British audiences to have a chance to see the movie – ever since my show at the Royal Festival Hall [two years ago], I've realised the communication you can get with an audience. That was one of the best things I've ever done, that Festival Hall."

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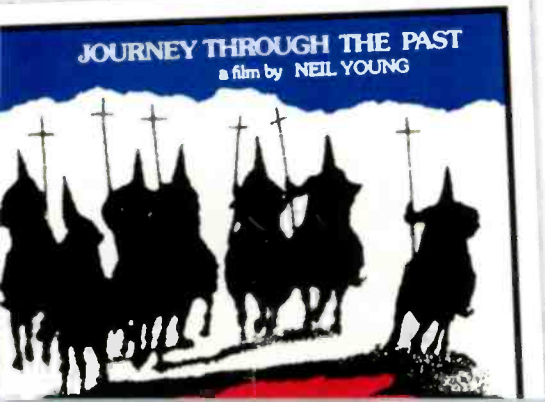


Films intrigue Neil Young. He'd seen Dylan's debut in *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*, and laughed: "I'd rather see Roy Rogers!" The Jimmy Cliff masterpiece *The Harder They Come* had him enthused and confirmed his enjoyment of reggae. "After half an hour, you don't need subtitles," he observed. "If the movie doesn't make it on its own, it's a loser. This was a winner." He doubted if reggae would take off as dramatically in the USA as in Britain. Too many Americans and not enough West Indians?

The talk moved on to rock artists and the insatiable determination of British bands to "make it" in America. As we spoke, a huge billboard hung over Sunset Strip: "THE COSMIC PUNK RETURNS" with a picture of Marc heralding the imminent Bolan concert dates. In England, a similarly prominent hoarding would proclaim the benefits of Bovril or Coke or even something that carried a government health warning. Not in Hollywood: rock is a dominant industry which is sold hard – and why not, when even your cab driver is often a lapsed musician?

"These British bands come over here and WORK SO HARD!" exclaimed Neil. Elliot Roberts, a wry guy with a firm handshake, shook his head in disbelief. "They come over here and can't wait to see their names in lights outside the Continental Hyatt House and the Sunset Marquis, and they set themselves up as the answer to this or the answer to that..."

"And," Neil finished, "by then you've forgotten what the question was in the first place."

Neil's earlier remarks about concerts and his contemplation of high-energy contemporaries seemed to indicate a satisfaction of ego-feeding. Would he ever go into the studio to concentrate on making a single as commercial as "Heart Of Gold"?

"No – I've dropped 'Heart Of Gold' from my concerts now anyway, so you can see how heavily I'm into perpetuating my singles! That track was not made as a single – we went into the studio to cut the album and I guess we were hot that night and it was a good cut, but it's gone now.

"I've seen a few artist who've got hung up on the singles market when they've really been albums people. The telltale sign is when you try to get off a wagon that comes naturally to you. It's easy to do, but if you're wise, you stay with being what you really are. I want to be able to live with myself... I just hope there's not a single off my next album."

So, with an enviable track record, Neil has climbed to the top of the helter-skelter and has decided not to aim to repeat his past achievements. There will be, he says, no more marathon tours that exhaust him and his musicians; no more monster concerts that satisfy no one; no more hit singles unless by accident; more new albums, yes, because they are him; and an uncertain future in movies. It sounds like an anticlimax.

"Well, I guess I can understand that view but I'm at the point where I feel the strain of having had a certain amount of success," he said. "I'm still passing through, feeling my way. I haven't come out at the other end yet, and I'm not dead. I've got to go on living, being myself, really."

He talks, when he's relaxed, accompanied by expansive hand movements, almost like he's conducting an orchestra. Insights into his emotions are rare, but the spectre of the old days of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young didn't seem too far away when he said, in explaining his distrust of interviewers: "I was the guy who was going to be NOTHING, remember, and then suddenly I came up and everybody seemed to expect me to go public. It's as if I hadn't been around for years then took up playing the guitar." *Ray Coleman* •

# A manic depressive on an up

**MM AUG 25** Two weeks before recording his *Tonight's The Night* album, Neil Young and Joni Mitchell jam together at a low-key show.

LOUIS IS ONSTAGE at the Corral, and Louis is rather stoned. He's trying to explain why the 250-odd kids here, crammed in-between the bar and the club's two pool tables, have paid their four dollars. It's not just music, it's for a cause.

"Like, we gotta raise the money to get a lawyer and stop them doin' this!" he appeals.

It seems some college wants to build apartments for students right in Topanga Canyon. The Canyon, 45 minutes' drive away from Los Angeles, down the Ventura Highway, is a wild beauty spot, and no goddamn students ought to be out there, riding around loaded on grass and whatever.

"Though I might do it myself," Louis grins slyly. But then, Louis' head appears to be unsteady in any case. Truthfully, he is not presenting a very good defence, and now the kids, initially sympathetic, are getting rather restless.

These kids are from California, wouldn't you know, which doesn't just mean LA. Lots of brown skin and beards, with voluminous shirts hanging round their denims, and shouting "Awright! Awright!" in the breaks between the songs.

Kids with long hair, but looking big and rough enough to be high school/college football players. Still, the Corral is a gas of a club, out here in beautiful, mountainous, but above all hip Topanga Canyon. Where else would you get beer in pitchers twice the size of steins and girls in bikinis hanging over the green baize and slotting eight-balls all around the tables.

A large wooden shack on a mountain road, that's what it is – not Rodney Bingenheimer's English Disco, Max's, the Marquee or the Bitter End. But tonight is special, not just because it's Saturday, but because Neil Young has decided he's had enough of playing aircraft hangars round the country.

The story was out of the bag that morning. Some loudmouth on the radio. Asylum Records had wanted to keep it quiet – just word of mouth. But by mid-Saturday afternoon there were at least 200 kids clustered around the Corral, kicking their heels in the heat and the dust. First come first served: a good Topanga Canyon principle.

So when Louis starts rambling and yawping into the mic, there's much dissatisfaction down on the floor, where legs and arms and backsides have all been joined together in painful congress.

Everyone has sat and squirmed through The Eagles' souped-up country rock, with notably fine picking by Bernie Leadon on electric banjo. And they've observed with reverence four songs by Joni Mitchell; even yelled out "You're beautiful, Joni" while their anal bones groaned at the hardness of the floor. Therefore Louis – and who is he, anyway? – had better be quiet. Neil Young says so. "Shuttup, Louis," he grins, "We want music."

Neil has arrived on stage, with his blue check shirt flapping behind him and long greasy hair falling over his face, like a sheepdog out in the rain, and he looks less a musician, really, than some farmer's son; strapping, you might say, nothing cool or groovy.

The audience is his mirror. He even used to live up here in the Canyon before he went further north, to La Honda, near San Francisco. Went occasionally to the Corral. It couldn't be a more apt place for his initial return to the clubs.

And there's Nils Lofgren of Grin and Crazy Horse, his old back-up buddy – a kid with the puffy look around the mouth of Keith Richard – Nils, testing out the piano. Ralph Molina settles back behind the drums, and Billy Talbot straps on the bass, and Ben Keith, all denimed-out, essays a few darting runs across the fretboard of the pedal steel.

**"This scruffy land-boy, wielding a guitar like it was a buzz saw, here in his backyard"**

Neil, he's plugging in, all the while ignoring Louis, who finally says, "To hell with Neil!" But it's OK because we're all men here. It's only superstars who get uptight. And eventually Louis gets the message and teeters off. An amiable fool, after all.

Four American Indians and some kind of chief are in the audience. A couple of kids, on the tipsy side, sidle near and ask loudly what "these rednecks" are doing here. Joni was trying to get them to play some of their ceremonial music, but it's no good now.

So they watch impassively as Neil Young stomps into his first number of the night, a little thing off his next album called "Walk On", which he is to perform four times this evening.

The jagged edges are noticeable. Neil goes horribly flat when he tries to scale those high notes; he attempts again and again, until finally he blurs the vocal into the mix of instruments. And he's no more than a reasonable rhythm player on guitar.

The songs, most of them new, like "Albuquerque," "Speakin' Out" and "Mellow My Mind", seem ordinary. Whatever it was, he's said it all before. Maybe he's too happy now, living up in La Honda with Carrie and child Zeke. The best writing generally comes when you're a little lonely or sad, or bored. Neil's a manic depressive on an up. It's the classic confrontation between personal and artistic welfare.

What saves it, what disguises the aesthetic distinctions, is the momentum of his character. This scruffy land-boy, wielding a guitar like it was a buzz saw, out here in his own backyard. There's almost a Neanderthal air about him; that prognathous look, those heavy eyebrows. It's less the excellence of the music than the fierce proximity, though no one could deny that Lofgren, particularly, is a fine pianist and an even greater guitarist. No one has been short-changed.

And he has one very arresting new song after all. "Tired Eyes", it's called. Great, hip-dramatic intro: *"Well he shot four men in a cocaine deal..."* Drugs and murder, the rich spice of American "other life". *"Please take my advice"*, he sings. Neil Young may be anti-drug, but he has a fascination with the romance of the needle that is positively Poe-ish.

What offends the censors in his film *Journey Through The Past* is a scene involving shooting up. But that high, thin voice strains with the lament, and the auto-destructiveness of the act dissolves in the sweetness and languor of the romantic. Sometime he should record Bert Jansch's "Needle Of Death".

But by the time the second show comes around he's digging into his own past with "Cowgirl In the Sand". Lofgren has on a pair of horn rims now, and the guitars are counterpointing on the breaks. Joni gets up with an electric guitar and sings a song to their backing that she's written that very afternoon, high up on the grassy Topanga peaks.

The hard clicks from the pool tables are lost in the sound and the sweat. The club has its own romance, really: that a couple of palpable superstars should drop in and play together. The funny thing is, by the end of the night it's not Joni Mitchell or Neil Young, it's the club itself that's the star.

Even funnier, when it's all over you realise how precisely it's the surroundings that create the illusion of stardom. After two sets it could've been almost anybody up there onstage. Dangerous thing, stardom. Still, it was really OK at the Corral the other Saturday evening.

*Michael Watts*

THE CORRAL – TOPANGA CANYON, LA – LIVE! AUGUST 12

# Neil and Joni: fun night at the OK Corral

1 MICHAEL WATTS

os Angeles

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# 1973

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

**BRIAN ENO, THE WHO, DAVID BOWIE, RONNIE LANE AND MORE**

## A seasonal offering

**NME NOV 10** Slade adapt a two year-old song for Christmas.

**SLADE RELEASE THEIR** first ever seasonal single next month. Titled "Merry Xmas Everybody", it is issued by Polydor on December 7. Following the style of their current single "My Friend Stan", in which the letter 'n' appears the wrong way round, the official spelling of their new title has the letter 's' back to front. However, release of their new album – completed in London before their US tour and mixed in the States – has been delayed until February because the group have decided on a totally new sleeve idea.

The band have scrapped their original intention to play three or four "Christmas party" type concerts in London mid-December. This is partly due to recording commitments, but mainly because, in view of the seasonal nature of their new single, they will be appearing extensively on television during the pre-Christmas period.

Slade are currently touring Europe, and Noddy Holder is experiencing no further problems with the virus infection which caused a delay in the opening of the tour. Said a spokesman: "His back has responded well to heat treatment."

The group go into the studios early next month to start work on a new album – this will be for release after their LP now rescheduled for February.

They return to America in January for a one-month tour, then fly to Japan for their first ever visit to that country, followed by another concert tour of Australia. It now seems unlikely that Slade will be playing any live dates in Britain before May.

Slade's new Christmas single was, in its basic form, written two years ago by Noddy Holder and Jimmy Lea. But it was not until two months ago that they had the idea to adapt the lyric into a seasonal offering.


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Slade filming a pop show for Dutch television in 1973


"Not many people want to live in a caravan": Ronnie Lane in London with some of the props for his new roadshow

# "It had to be a complete change"

**MM DEC 1** Former Face Ronnie Lane debuts a customarily disorganised new venture... The Passing Show. "It's more carnival than circus," the freewheeling musician and songwriter explains. "Terribly trendy."

SOME POP STARS like to rock. Some pop stars like to roll. But little Ronnie Lane has got the gypsy in his soul. One day this year, Mr Lane, a rich and successful rocker, who had once been a poor but popular rocker, decided that jet time lag, motel food, endless tours and the prospect of the inevitable country mansion was not for him.

Laney, bass guitarist with the Faces, and Rod Stewart's alter ego, decided to strike out on his own and take a long, cool look at his life. With a fine new single under his belt and exciting plans for the future in hand, some of the old Lane spark had returned, as he talked about his remarkable venture The Passing Show, and his life in a caravan.

For Ronnie wants to take rock back to the people, and travel around the country with a kind of musical circus, pitching tent where'er the authorities will supply water and essential services. He has already had a test run on Clapham Common and next year will start a kind of pilgrimage around England.

What was the first show like? "Oh, a shambles. But if it had been more professional, it wouldn't have been as good. The idea for the show has been in my mind for ages, but now it has come together just at the right time. All the problems I thought would have been around, people have come along and said, 'Oh, I can take care of that.' It's really weird the way it's coming together.

"The problems were, y'know, getting a site, and sussing out the authorities, and the regulations on fire and sanitation. I went into see Brian Hutch at GM records and told him what I wanted to do and he said: 'Are you serious? Well, I was brought up in a circus, and my parents are still in circus, over in France.' So he introduced me to all the right people.

"Not many people want to live in a caravan, of course. But I've been doing it all year, parked in people's drives. It's a 1920s fortune-teller's wagon – a lovely old thing. I must say, I'm very happy doing it.

**"We'll grow veg in window boxes on the wagon"**

"We're now in the process of buying a load of old single-decker London Transport buses, 'cos they're in good nick. We'll put bunks in and turn them into box offices, etc. We'll have to see how the money comes on, because the mobile recording studio took the guts out of my bank balance. But that's doing well, isn't it? Did The Who's *Quadrophenia* on that, and it's starting to pay for itself. Chipperfield's Circus have been incredibly helpful in the project, and they are a bit excited about it."

What will the show consist of, when the caravans and tents hit town? "Well, there'll be me! It'll be more carnival than circus. The audience will come basically because it's music, and there won't be any animals or trapeze acts. But we'll have dancing girls and a good comedian/compere. I ain't worried because it'll come together and it's out of my hands now.

"It'll be a circus in as much as we'll be living like circus people. I'm hoping that Gallagher & Lyle will be involved in the show, although I hope I'm not shooting my mouth off too soon.

"We get on very well and they're also on me record. They'll definitely be involved, but I haven't exactly approached old ladies yet. 'You won't get me in a bleeding wagon!' But it's got to be your life, and you've got to love it. Travelling Hippy Commune!" Ronnie laughed at the headline. We'll grow our own veg, in window boxes on the wagon. Terribly trendy."

Does Ronnie come from Romany stock, perchance? "No, I don't think so. There was a tinker some way back. And the Lanes used to travel some distance as haulage, y'know, heavy duty? And me dad was a long-distance lorry driver. I always seemed to like travelling around, that's for sure. I get itchy feet pretty quick," he said, pacing restlessly around the room. "That's why I never built the studio in

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any one place. I thought, soon as you build it, you'll want to move."

After all the travelling he'd done with the Faces, didn't he want to take a rest? "Yeah, but this is a different type of travelling. The other way is being transported. I'm going to enjoy it this way. I really got unhappy with the old way, which started all sorts of things. So I got out in the end. Also I've got a family now. I was given a family overnight. And I don't want to keep putting them second to the band. This way, at least we can all go together. The old lady will be dancing, and working in the canteen. The kids will be working an' all."

Ronnie's tent will hold about 2,500 people and he'll be charging £1 a head admission. Seating will be in tiers, with an area for dancing during food and refreshments. And the hope is to involve local communities that don't often hear live music.

"There's so much you can do in a tent, and of course the acoustics will be the same each night, which solves a lot of problems. And also it will go to a lot of places where kids don't have bands. We'll be going to recognised circus sites of course, with all the power laid on.

"I was amazed how together these places are. They've even got 'phone lines. I'm very concerned that we play in a nice environment, because I've got to live in it for a start.

"We'll be starting off in the spring. It's a bit cold at the moment. And my caravan is a bit old. Cough in the night and all the sides fall off. But some of the big trailers are beautiful – much better than living in hotels."

Will Ronnie be forming a band? "Well, it's Gallagher & Lyle; at the moment I haven't got a band. I just called it Slim Chance for a laugh. But playing with me at the moment is Bruce Rowland on drums, Chris Stewart on bass and a young American fellow, Bill Livesy, on keyboards, and an amazing sax player called Jimmy Jewell. He does a lovely solo on the B-side of the single. Oh, and Kevin Westlake on guitar. He helped me write 'How Come'.

"I made the single because I was getting a bit bored, and Glyn Johns said I should make one. The band is not committed to anything, 'cos I've got nothing to offer them and there are no immediate plans. I could have got a band together and gone out doing the same sort of circuits as the Faces, and that would be very depressing. It had to be a complete change."

"It's horrible going over the same ground. And there seemed no end to it. I woke up one morning and thought, 'When's it all going to end?' I'd been at it for eight years, and I still hadn't got around to singing any of me songs. This time last year, I went over to Ireland, lived in a Land-Rover, and went singing in pubs, just so I could sing some of me own songs for a change.

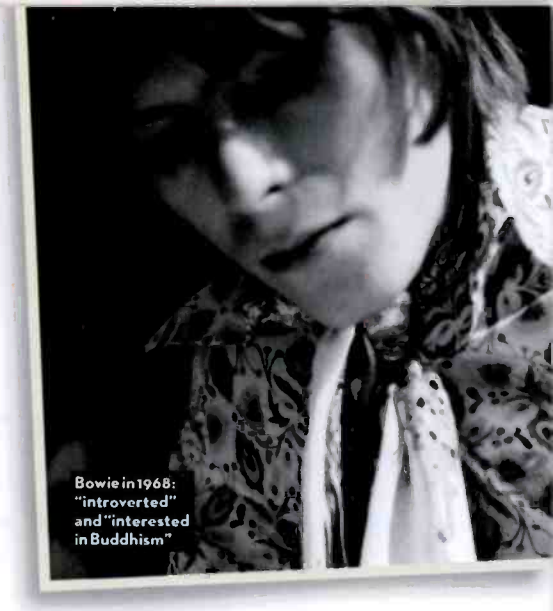
"I was getting very frustrated. You see, my songs weren't really suitable for the Faces. They are a loud, hard rock'n'roll band. Whereas this band will be much lighter and looser."

It seems as if the years of pent-up frustration and endless chasing around are over and a highly talented singer and writer will at last be able to shine forth. So book your seats early, folks. Ronnie Lane is coming to town! *Chris Welch*

# Ronnie Lane changes face

# "He was very very anti-glam"

**MM OCT 20** Explained: the relationship between David Bowie and his former manager, Ken Pitt.



Bowie in 1968: "introverted" and "interested in Buddhism"

BY NOW WE know most of the facts concerning the extraordinary rise and rise of Mr Tony Defries and his glamorous protégé, young Dave Bowie. What's not so apparent is the history of Bowie's relationship with his former manager, Mr Kenneth Pitt.

Mr Pitt, who shared a flat with Bowie, managed him from '66 to April 1970, when the two parted company on a handshake. "We spoke for half an hour and then he said, 'Thank you, Ken.' We still see each other."

He's rather concerned that the true facts of their period together are appreciated. For instance, he says that Bowie's association with the mime artist Lindsay Kemp has been much exaggerated. "I saw something in some dreadful weekly pop magazine, *The History Of Pop* or something, that says he was with him for two years. That's very misleading. He'd never been to the theatre before he met me. I took him to lots of things. We went to dreadful things and lovely things. One I remember was Cliff Richard at the London Palladium, a pantomime, because I wanted him to see exactly what he shouldn't be. We also went to see Joe Orton's *Loot*.

**"We went to see Joe Orton's *Loot*"**

"He always had the potential, but I think it had to be done on his terms and in his own time. You see, intellectually, he had a lot going for him even at 18. But he went through a period when he was tremendously introverted, when his brightest colour was black, and he was very, very anti-glam. That would be when he was interested in Buddhism.

"I first took to him because I wanted someone who wasn't the usual run-of-the-mill guitar cowboy, driving up and down the M1 and all that. I wanted something theatrical because I was very much into theatre myself. There was something incredible in the way he moved, his eyes, the little indefinable things. I used to talk to him about costume."

Did he resent Defries' arrival on the scene? "Well, he introduced himself to me as a lawyer. I met him for less than half an hour, and shortly afterwards he left his firm of lawyers to join Laurence Myers (at GEM), and one of his first clients was Bowie. But Defries and I are totally in two different worlds. He doesn't have any pretensions to the artistic, I don't think. He's totally a businessman.

"I'd be surprised if he had any connection with David as an artist. He could've helped to discipline him as an artist, I suppose, but I think Angie has helped too."

Ah yes, the fair Angela currently residing under the pseudonym of Jipp Jones, as we learn from an embarrassing piece of crap in the Look! pages of the *Sunday Times*. Mr Pitt was not too forthcoming about her. "At the first meeting I liked her. She struck me as one of those very clean, all-American co-eds." He paused. "But then she changed. For the worse." Her influence on Bowie? "Whatever she did, she did it behind locked doors."

We asked him, finally, if Bowie had in fact been bisexual, as he himself had admitted. It hadn't simply been a stunt? "Yes, but not that anyone would know. He was certainly bisexual. But he's done a lot of good. He's liberated a lot of oppressed people."

Amen, as the Rev Troy Perry might say.

# "Consider the man's intelligence"

**NME NOV 3** Why has Jim Morrison (RIP) opened a bank account?

JIM MORRISON DIDN'T die in his bath tub in Paris, as has been popularly supposed. He's just opened up a bank account in San Francisco. This is the rumour spreading around California this week following a report on the UPI press wires to the city's newspapers. But the plug has been pulled out by one Danny Sugarman, press agent for the late Doors, who currently looks after the interest of Ray Manzarek and Iggy Pop.

Sugarman hastily denied the story and hoped that it wouldn't reach Morrison's wife, Pamela, who's about to visit the UK. "Jim's dead," he told us, "and has been for going on three years now. One point in the rumour suggests that he's opened a bank account in his real name. Consider the man's intelligence – carrying out his own death and funeral just to appear gone, and then to be so careless as to bank using his own name. It doesn't make sense."

At any rate, Sugarman finalised, poor old Jim remains in the earth, where he's been since July 3, 1971.

REX FEATURES

# "I don't like synthesizers, I must confess"

**BRIAN ENO has amicably departed Roxy Music ("lacking insanity"), and as he explains is "a luxury" in any group. A non-musician, he trades in ideas and fun, hoping to make a record with Percy Edwards. "I'm interested in things being absurd," he explains.**

— MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 10 —

"I'LL MAKE A prediction here," said Brian Eno, stretched out on a sofa and looking as wan and wasted as a consumptive 19th-century poet. "I think, in fact, I shall be seen as a rock revivalist in a funny way, because the thing that people miss when they do their rock-revival rubbish is the fact that early rock music was, in a lot of cases, the product of incompetence, not competence."

And if there's one thing that Eno is, it's an incompetent musician. That's what he thinks anyway. "There's a misconception," he continued, "that these people were brilliant musicians and they weren't. They were brilliant musicians in the spiritual sense. They had terrific ideas and a lot of ball or whatever. They knew what the physical function of music was but they weren't virtuosi."

Just like Eno, see? The reaction he's predicted should follow the release on January 11 of his solo album. He's finished it. He played me the tapes. It's great stuff, marvellous fun. There's a track with out-of-tune piano, there's a track that's just two notes, there's a track with a frantic Fripp scrubbing a violent solo, there's a track with great and witty lyrics, which sounds as though it just might be a dig at Ferry.

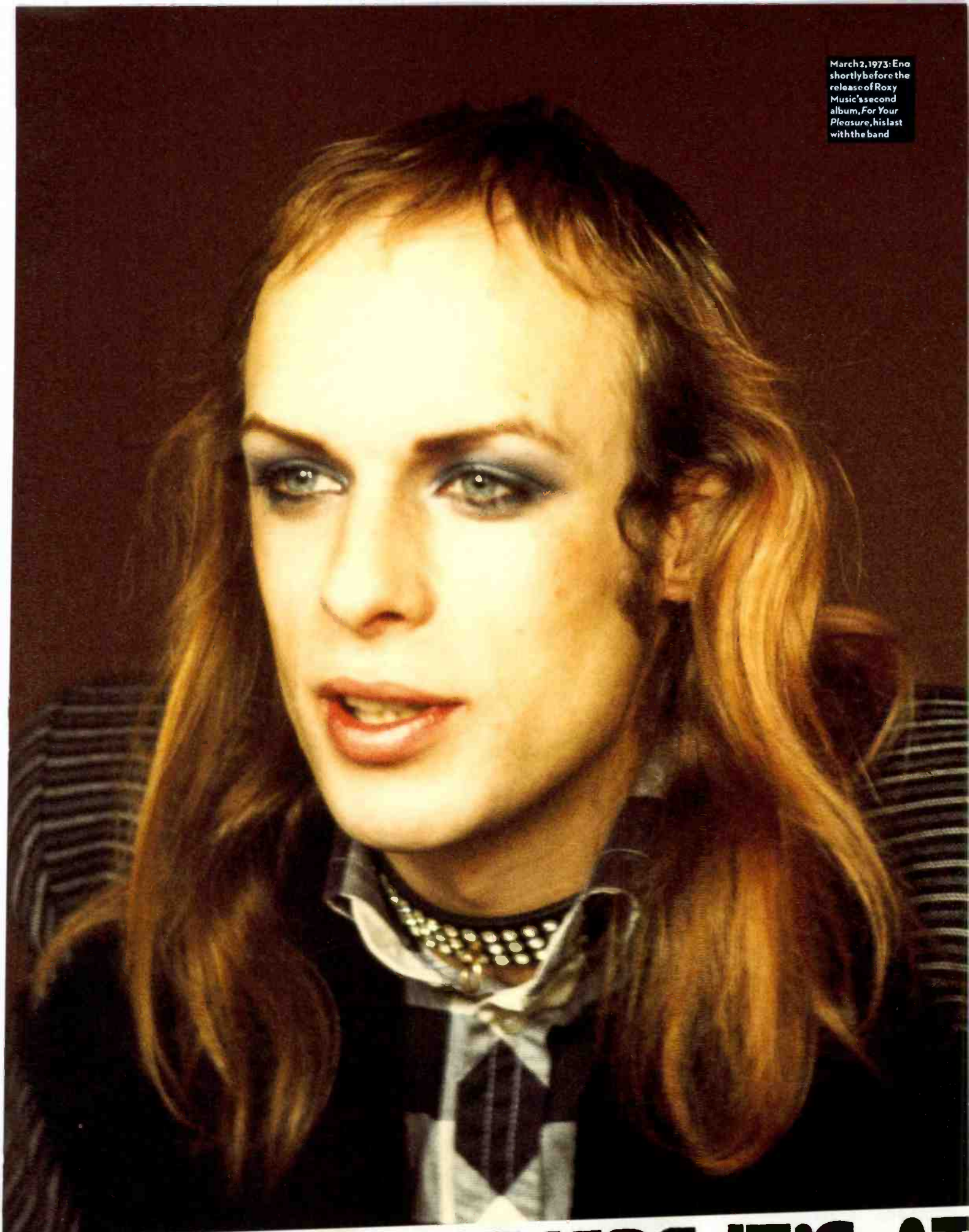
Lovely titles, too – "Blank Frank", "Dead Finks Don't Talk", "Driving Me Backwards". Brian Eno is a complete contradiction. His glamorous stage appearance presupposed a cultured speech, a distant coolness. In private his accent is softened cockney; his manner is open and friendly.

His face is like one of Tolstoy's starving artists. Gaunt, aquiline, sensitive nose, high cheekbones topped with thinning white hair which is streaked with reddish rust colouring over the right ear. The surroundings in this Ladbroke Grove living room match the image perfectly. Faded elegance. A fox fur hanging over a cane room divider, a broken rocking horse in one corner, shelves of books, records and tapes in another.

Since leaving Roxy, Eno's been working prolifically. He's recorded an album with Bob Fripp, he's recorded his own solo material for future solo albums and he's heavily involved in the formation of an avant-garde music label. All this and he's bringing fun back into rock, too.

It has made him ill. He can't swallow, yet he's often very, very hungry. The night before, he'd bought a three-course meal and, he says, had just about managed to eat the soup. His weight is down to 8st 11lb and, dressed in black shirt and trousers, he »

MICHAEL PUTLAN/GETTY



March 2, 1973: Eno shortly before the release of Roxy Music's second album, *For Your Pleasure*, his last with the band

# ENO'S WHERE IT'S AT

**Brian Eno is an incompetent musician with a love of the absurd and ridiculous—**

"I'll make a prediction here," said Brian Eno, stretched out on a sofa and looking as wan and wasted as a consumptive 19th century poet.

looks like a pencil. But though he's not physically fit, his eyes have a bright sparkle. They laugh.

Brian Eno left Roxy Music because he got bored. "First of all, let me say that I think Roxy is a great band and I think their new album is terrific." Right. "But what it lacks for me is one of the most important elements of my musical life, which is insanity. I'm interested in things being absurd and there was something really exciting in Roxy at the time. We were juxtaposing things that didn't naturally sit together."

Brian liked the awkwardness of the early band – "things were just being collaged together. The element of clumsiness and grotesqueness that arose from that early thing ceased to be there." Everyone in Roxy had completely different talents and interests and "there was a terrific tension at one stage in the music, which I really enjoyed."

You get one person playing simple rhythms (himself, for instance, stabbing chords on piano, playing simply through sheer necessity) and another would play complex patterns over the top. There's a lot of that contrast in ability on his solo album because he used musicians from totally different areas in the sessions. There was, for instance, Fripp and John Wetton on bass and Simon King on drums "and me on piano, and I can't play piano to save my life. I think it's successful because the piano and drums are so restricted in what they do that it gives those other instruments a terrific amount of freedom."

There's an impression that Eno is trying to recreate the early spirit of Roxy Music and move it in a direction that he would've preferred. There is, however, no great evidence of any personal friction between Eno and Ferry. "The problem in the last year of being in Roxy was that I didn't feel that there was any time to experiment."

Eno could get an idea he'd want to try, but he'd need time to set it up, say, in an hour. "Since we were paying equally for the studio time, it's quite expensive... It works out at about £10 each for me to do an experiment, and it's in the nature of an experiment that it might fail."

He laughs. The fallacy of rock music, says Eno, is that experimental music is successful. That, he says, is obvious but not true. It wouldn't be an experiment if there wasn't a chance of failure. He's spent a whole day in the studio just trying for a sound and he never reached it. That's experimenting.

"The worst thing about feeling that constraint of time is you feel you must make safe experiments, so you don't actually move very far because you do things that you know have a very good chance of succeeding."

Eno first got into music through poetry. He used to sing along to records a lot, of course, and by the time he was 10 could do a very fair Buddy Holly imitation. He never thought he'd be in a group, though. He couldn't play an instrument, which doesn't really help, and he had no inclination to learn, which also doesn't help.

His first real instrument was a tape recorder. "It was the first thing I learnt to use in a creative way. I think the only way one can define a musical instrument is a piece of equipment, be it a piece of wood with metal on or a couple of engines with tape on them, that one uses to create or transform sounds." The first things Eno did were connected with phonetic poetry rather than music and singing. He'd build up tracks with spoken words and then he'd talk over the top of them. He did this at Ipswich Art College, where he was studying art.


"I was a painter... not a very good one incidentally."

He leans over the side of the sofa and produces a plastic bag. It's full of notebooks. In them are descriptions of his paintings. "They're far better than the paintings, they really are" (*that eye-sparking laugh again*). "Someone's making a film about the notebooks at the moment."

He opens one. It's full of minute writing and diagrams. They go back to when he was about 16 and look like Leonardo da Vinci's earliest doodlings. "Then I gradually found myself becoming more and more interested in avant-garde music."

He found that music was a much quicker medium than painting and therefore more satisfying to him. There wasn't such a gap between the formation of an idea and its execution. That's why his paintings are unfinished or completed in "a very unconvincing way. They looked as if I'd got bored halfway through, which in fact is what had happened."

Music was that much more immediate. As soon as you start you're making sounds. "It's an activity that has a more direct emotional appeal." That's why most of the art forms revolve around music, says Eno. He shifts his light bulk in the sofa. His empty stomach is causing some aggravation.

He got into rock music in 1969. He was a singer for a short while before returning to the avant-garde fold. But it was an important few months. The group was Maxwell Demon.

Their music, says Eno, was "not unlike some of the stuff on my album, actually. It was very advanced in some ways but backward in others. We didn't rehearse very much and I never used to write lyrics, or not very much. I used to improvise them, which is, in fact, how most of the lyrics in this [solo album] are done."

Eno improvises and then writes the lyrics down: "The way I write lyrics is very interesting... I don't know if I should reveal it before I patent it."

Maxwell Demon was an ambitious project. It took a lot of confidence to get on stage with 10 minutes' rehearsed music and play for an hour. By definition, improvisatory bands like that often do things which don't work out.

Eno found it "quite nerve-racking. I thought it craved the indulgence of the audience a bit too much really, but it was a very useful experience because it indicated that I did have a feeling for rock music that I wasn't aware of before, and also that I really loved singing. I really loved it, very, very much. And I never forgot that."

After Maxwell Demon broke up, Eno thought that this flirtation with rock had come to an end. The fact that he couldn't play an instrument was the problem once again; he'd be a luxury in any group. Then in early 1971 a group was formed that needed a luxury addition. Eno joined Roxy. He'd known Andy Mackay from some work they'd done on one or two avant-garde electronic music things.

> "I spend my life in studios and feel very ill as a result"

One of the reasons Eno thinks he was asked to join is because he wouldn't play the instrument in an ordinary way, "which is the most pedestrian and boring way imaginable, where they treated it as an extended Farfisa organ".

It's not as good as a Farfisa for that type of work, says Eno, and anyway he thinks that the term "synthesizers" should be extended to include the more general term "electronic". The people he likes for electronics are Phil Spector and Jimi Hendrix. People who realise that "what they're doing is a whole extended process right up to the loudspeakers. I don't like synthesizers, I must confess at this stage. They've got so many bad associations."

He's always asked about people like Walter Carlos and so on but says, "I'm totally bored by them, I really am."

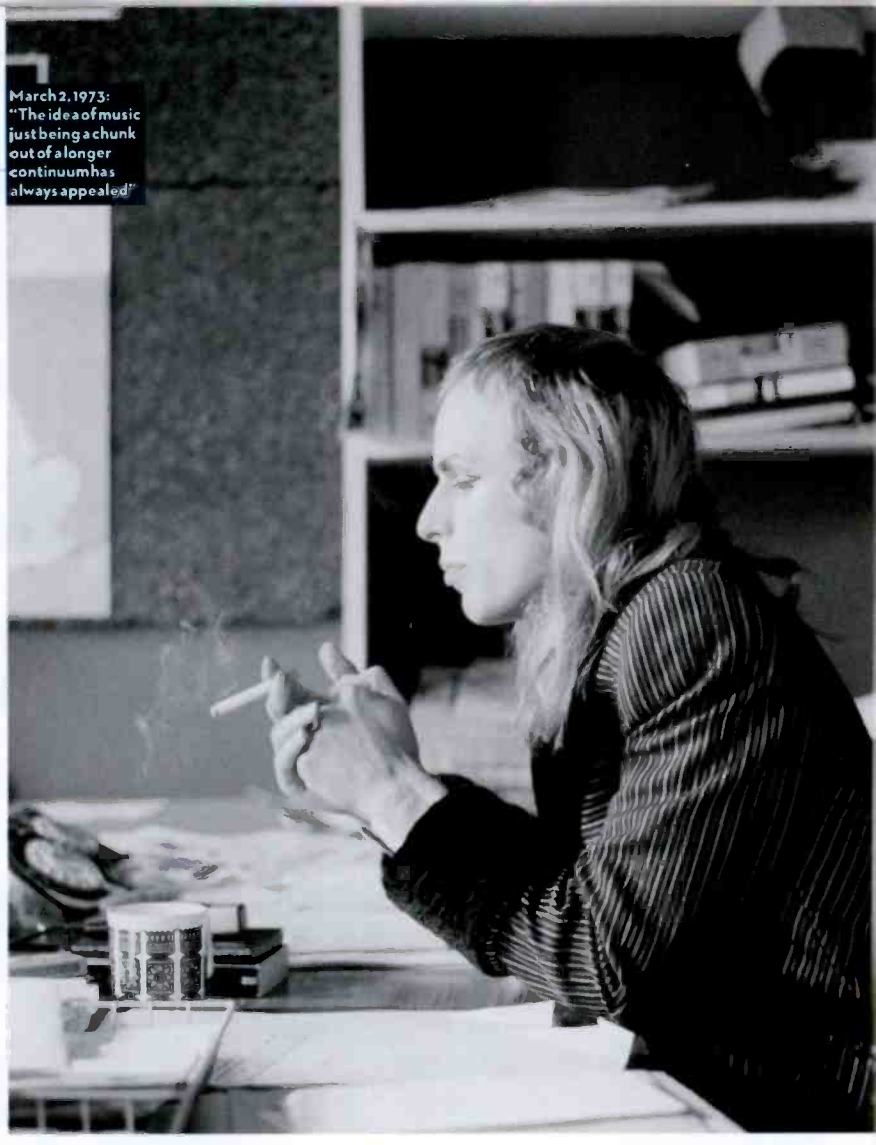
In electronics and avant-garde music, John Cage has most influenced him as a theorist; Morton Feldman has been most important as a composer. "The idea of music as being just a chunk out of a longer continuum has always appealed to me. That's why I like The Velvet Underground. You get the feeling with a lot of their tracks that they started many years later and all you're hearing is just a chunk taken out somewhere and put on to the record."

Much of Eno's solo album has that same feeling; quite a lot of the Fripp/Eno has it too. The collaboration happened quite by accident when Eno mentioned to Fripp that he'd invented something that treated guitar sounds in an unusual way. Bob popped in one night, tried out the device, immediately realised what was happening to the sounds and adapted to it, played on it as though it was the most natural thing to do.

"The first side of that album took literally 15 minutes to make. Nobody believes that, because there were about 50 guitars on it and it wasn't doctored or anything."

Eno had "invented" a whole mess of things that relate to the use of tape recorders. Once you accept, he says, that all you're dealing with is time and the ability to hold things from the past it's quite simple.

"Nothing I've ever done with a tape recorder is brilliant... It's just obvious if you think of what the true function of a tape recorder is – if you think of it as an automatic musical collage device."



March 2, 1973: "The idea of music just being a chunk out of a longer continuum has always appealed"

Brian Eno reckons he'd perform on stage again at some time, but not heavy touring. "I think what I'm doing at the moment is much more important to me than performing anyway."

He prefers the studio. It's become his natural environment. He doesn't feel it necessary to direct musicians. He just listens to what they're playing and "then I'd take what they're doing and say, 'What position does this put me in?' and 'How can I justify the musical idea to suit?'

"I just find myself so happy in studios... (*that laugh again*) – so happy, I just spend my life in them and feel very tired and very ill as a result."

The musicians on the solo album, says Eno, don't mind his manipulation of their sound. They know what to expect when they play on his sessions... "If nothing else I'm known as being a mutator of sound.

"I learnt very much doing this album. I did this very quickly. I recorded it in 12 days, so it's quite a cheap album."

He had a good relationship with the engineer, which was important for his type of work. "Empirically, I know what sounds I want, though in technical terms I might not be able to express them as well."

In many ways he sounded like Willie Mitchell describing the development of the "Al Green sound".

Eno has already started on his second solo album. It sounds, judging by the tapes he played me, an extension of the first album. No new directions, just working the same field a bit more. He shifts in the sofa again and looks uncomfortable, pained. A bit more talk about Roxy, perhaps.

He enjoyed America when they were there. Not the playing but the stimulating tension of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. "I get the feeling that I enjoyed America more than anyone else in Roxy. It was disappointing in terms of playing, because it was a very badly structured tour."

Eno hates touring. So much time is wasted in travelling, so little is spent on music. On that US tour he worked out that they were in America for four or five weeks. In all they played 10 hours' music. Such a waste.

Now he's left Roxy the group has, apparently, eased off the glamour. "I assume they'll have replaced it with some other kind of image. I don't know, but Roxy is in a position now where it doesn't have to push itself in any way. People are going to come to the concerts however the band looks or however they play," he laughs that twinkling laugh.

"It's true, it's evidently true." That accent. The 'tees' and 'aitches' are beginning to fall away like autumn leaves. "After a while, so many assumptions are made about your music, the audience is actually hearing assumptions rather than sounds. It really is irrelevant how Roxy play – for a while anyway."

Eno, by the way, thinks they play very well but were under-rehearsed for the start of their tour. He'll probably go see them at the Rainbow. Had Eno developed his 'glamorous' image deliberately? Was this a slight blush?

"I don't think one ever does consciously plan out a campaign that way. What tends to happen is that you do something, it gets responded to well, so you do it a bit more and you keep doing it more until the response starts falling off."

He's always been doing things like the glam bit, though. "It wasn't a difficult thing to do. I didn't suddenly think I'm gonna change my life and do this; it just seemed like a natural thing for me to do."

He shifts once more. Lights a cigarette. The pause lengthens. That smile erupts. "It's connected with sexual affairs quite strongly, I should imagine. In a way that I can't amplify on either."

Then let us talk, I suggested, about the avant-garde label he's trying to set up. At present there's Gavin Bryars and there's the Portsmouth Sinfonia. Bryars, it seems, happened to be walking under Waterloo Arches in 1968 with a portable tape recorder in hand. He recorded a tramp singing a hymn – "Jesus' Blood". He made a tape loop of it, wrote a score for it, hired a small orchestra and recorded each instrument coming in one at a time. First strings, then bass, then tuba, then organ, etc. So that over this "very sad, broken old voice" a beautiful orchestra builds up.

Sounds a bit like "Amazing Grace" to me, but Eno reckons it'll get compared to Terry Riley. Everything avant garde gets compared to Terry Riley, he says, and cites a review of the Fripp/Eno album as evidence.

The Sinfonia are, says Eno, "a group of musicians of varying degrees of competence". Some can play, some can't; some can read music; some can't. There seem to be more can'ts than cans. They try to play the popular classics seriously, but their untutored personnel ensure it comes out sounding very funny. The violin section, for instance, has a good lead violinist whose fingering is copied by the man sitting next to him, who is copied by the one next to him and so on.

"So there's a delay in terms of time and a decay in terms of accuracy... you get this very lush feeling to the thing."

It may sound pretty appalling, but Eno's enthusiastic about it. "The vast majority of these people can't play their instruments and yet they are definitely producing music."

Brian Eno is the clarinettist in the Portsmouth Sinfonia: "And if you think I'm bad at guitar"... the smile glows again.

There's also another project he's toying with. "I actually thought of writing a piece of music and not using rock musicians at all for it and yet try to make it sound like rock music. People like Winifred Atwell and Larry Adler and Percy Edwards. It would be just amazing to get them into a studio to try to make rock music with them."

Though he may be feeling physically drained at the moment, Eno's been talking for almost two hours with infectious enthusiasm. If he sells enough solo albums, he may get on the road but it'll have to be a short tour.

Travelling is, he reiterates, an unproductive chore and his health deteriorates and he needs a long time after to get creatively thinking again. He's unsure whether the usefulness of playing live is worth the aggravation, though it does feed a certain side of his ego.

Eno on stage getting the buzz from the crowds, roaring through the encore ("Roxy always played best on encores"), then slumping like a zombie in the dressing room. Is that all there is? "Inevitably you want something more to happen to carry the feeling on."

A recording studio back at the hotel would get some great music taped, he says. The release, of course, would usually come in wenching and clubbing. Apparently, unlike the rest of Roxy, Eno has little trouble in this direction. Did he miss that aspect of the road, that type of release?

He got up from the sofa and disappeared into the kitchen. He returned with a plate. On it rested half a pineapple. He bit squelchily into its flesh just as a tall, somewhat gorgeous female creature walked into the living room. Brian Eno munches at the pineapple. It looked like he was starting to eat again anyway. *Geoff Brown* •

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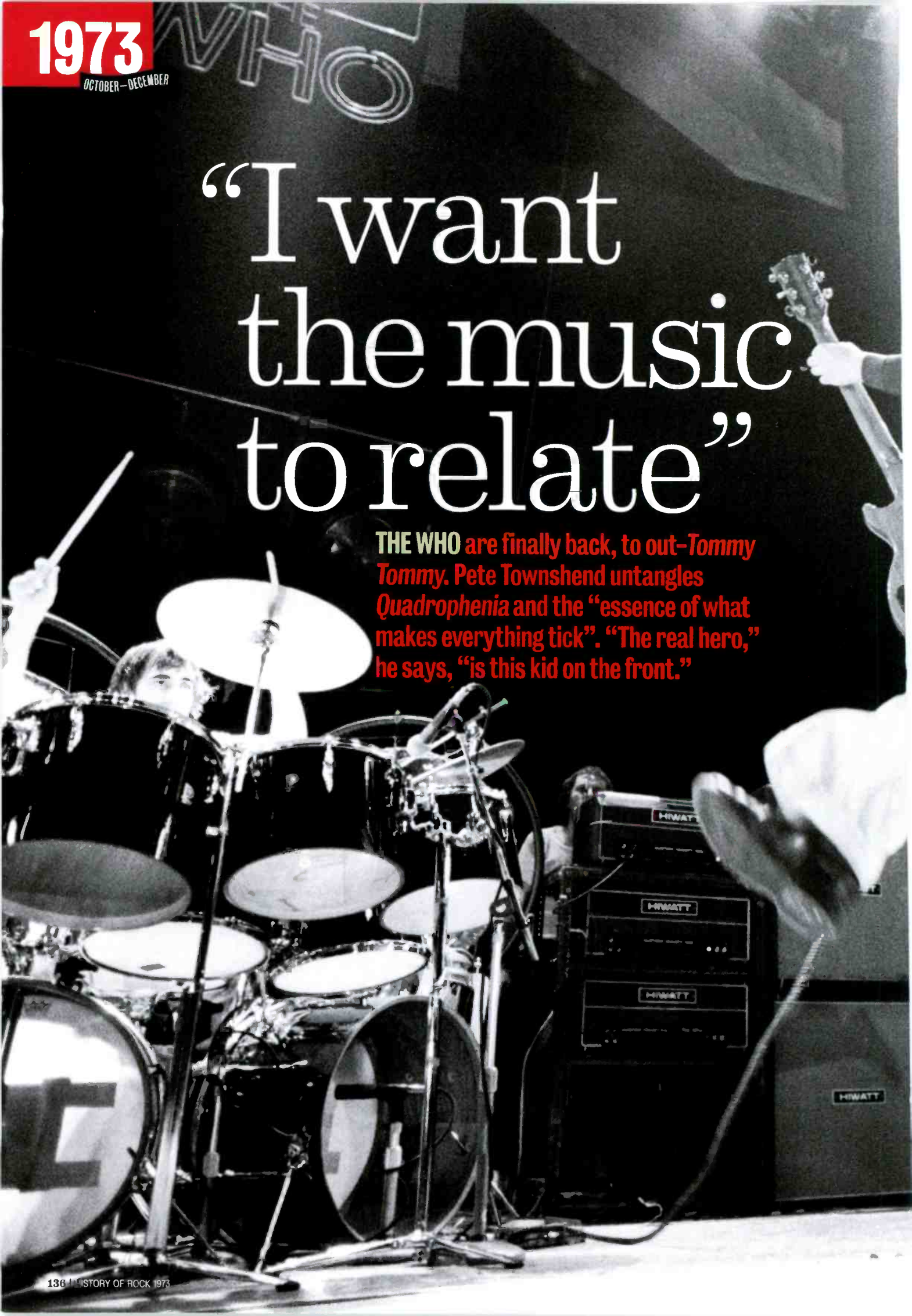
# "I want the music to relate"

**THE WHO are finally back, to out-*Tommy* *Tommy*. Pete Townshend untangles *Quadrophenia* and the "essence of what makes everything tick". "The real hero," he says, "is this kid on the front."**




Late November, 1973: after struggling to integrate quadraphonic backing tapes into their UK shows, The Who take *Quadrophenia* to the USA on the Fallout Shelter tour

CORBIS

## — NME OCTOBER 27 —

**TOWNSHEND'S *QUADROPHENIA* IS** a rather daunting proposition. Another Who double-album rock opera? About a kid called Jimmy? With a massive booklet of grainy monochrome tableaux stapled into the sleeve? With titles like "The Real Me", "I Am The Sea", "Love Reign O'er Me" and "I'm One"?

The mind boggles, and you get the sneaking feeling that Pete Townshend has tried to out-*Tommy Tommy* and gone sailing right over the top. The impression even persists when you start playing Side One. The first thing you hear is a *Desert Island Discs* surf-crashing-on-the-shore sound effect in sumptuous stereo while distant echoed voices intone the four principal themes from the piece.

Then it suddenly cuts into "The Real Me", and you hear that sound, as uncompromisingly violent as a boot disintegrating a plate-glass window at 4am, and simultaneously as smooth as a night-flight by 747. Prime-cut Who, and suddenly you realise that Pete hasn't blown it after all. Face it, he very rarely does.

*Quadrophenia* is both less and more ambitious than its notorious predecessor. *Tommy* tripped over its mysticism rather too often for comfort, and after being the indirect godfather to everything from *Jesus Christ Superstar* to *Ziggy Stardust*, it didn't seem likely that Townshend himself would return to the scene of his former semi-triumph.

However, he has avoided most of the expected pitfalls with his customary agility. The hero of this little extravaganza is Jimmy, the archetype mod. Frustrated, inarticulate, violent, thoroughly confused and prone to all the ills that teenage flesh is heir to.

Each member of The Who represents a different side of his character, and a recurring musical theme. Keith Moon represents the "bloody lunatic", John Entwistle is "the romantic", Roger Daltrey appears as the "tough guy", while Townshend casts himself as "a beggar, a hypocrite".

His odyssey leads him away from the constriction of his parents' home to a dead-end job as a dustman, and by way of various other adventures to Brighton via a pill-crazed ride on the (you guessed) 5.15 train. Finally, he ends up dexed up and pissed out of his brain on a rock off Brighton Beach, where he achieves some kind of satori and reconciliation with himself.

On the face of it, there's nothing very heavy going on there, especially when synopsised as ruthlessly as I've had to do. Whereas *Tommy* took a headlong dive into esoteric symbolism, *Quadrophenia* is superficially mundane, as far as subject matter is concerned – but the implications of this autobiography of a generation go far deeper than those of the previous work.

As the prose on the sleeve puts it, Jimmy feels "me folks had let me down, rock had let me down, women had let me down, work wasn't even worth the effort, school isn't even worth mentioning. But I never felt that I'd be let down by being a mod."

That particular piece of disillusionment occurs when he discovers the King Mod from the seaside battles, the ultimate cool guy who everybody followed and mimicked, working in a menial, humiliating job as bellboy in a hotel.

When Jimmy eventually discovers himself on the rock, he finds his own peace by realising what he truly was even when stripped of his music, his friends, his clique, his beliefs. All that is left is himself, and that is more than sufficient.

To say that *Quadrophenia* is an affirmation of the strength of the human spirit is an invitation to accusations of pretension and screaming wimp-ism, but I'm afraid that that's the way it breaks down.

Beating a hasty retreat from the Philosophical Implications, Cosmic Messages & Assorted Heaviness Department, we can start looking at *Quadrophenia* simply as the latest album by The 'Oo. It would be an interesting critical exercise to demolish it, and I've no doubt that there's more than one typewriter jockey who'll try.

In some ways, it's extremely vulnerable to adverse criticism. Some of the more extravagant production touches, for example, even after a half-dozen listens, sound about as comfortable as marzipan icing on a half-ounce cheeseburger.

Also, the band have dubbed on so much synthesizer, keyboard and brass parts that, at times, one aches just to hear some unalloyed guitar-bass-drums-and-vocals Who.

In any case, does rock'n'roll need masterpieces, magnum opuses (apologies to my school Latin teachers; I know you tried hard) or works of genius?

GETTY

November 11–13, 1973: supported by Kilburn & The High Roads, The Who play three nights at London's Lyceum

Isn't intensive listening to two-years-in-the-making double albums antithetical to the spirit of true rock'n'roll?

Personally, I couldn't care less. If you're not prepared to listen to *Quadrophenia* in the spirit that it was made, then simply don't bother. If you're going to sling it on at a party or walk in and out of the room when it's playing, then you're not going to get a damn thing out of it and you might as well save your £4.30 for other purposes.

On the other hand, if you're genuinely prepared to work at getting into it and let it work at getting into you, then you might just find it the most rewarding musical experience of the year.

As you journey through it, you'll find some real classic Who crunchers carefully placed to waylay you en route. The second track, "The Real Me", is almost as strong as "5.15" with its ferocious splintered chord work and vicious vocal, while Entwistle's bass seems to be plugged straight into this planet's central power source.

"Dr Jimmy And Mr Jim", which opens the fourth side, is as good an exposition of the raucous mod stance as anything Townshend's written since the "My Generation" days:

*"What is it? I'll take it / Who is she? I'll rape it / Gotta bet there? I'll meet it / Getting high? You can't beat it..."*

Basically, the early Who classics were straightforward expositions of an attitude, while *Quadrophenia* is an investigation of what went into constructing that attitude, and of its results.

It could be described as an obituary for the mods by the band who did most to define that attitude. I mean, we've all heard about how The Who were more a band who played to and sang about mods than they were actually mods themselves, but for those of us who were out in the provinces during the mod era, mod was The Who. And it is only fitting that The Who should be the ones to conduct this lengthy exorcism of the Ghost Of Mod.

After all, the spectre of those days has hung over The Who for the best part of a decade, and now Pete Townshend has summed up every stage of The Who's chequered past in one work. There's even a flash of "The Kids Are Alright" between "Helpless Dancer" and "Is It In My Head".

*Quadrophenia* wipes the slate clean, leaving The Who free, hopefully, to follow it up with their freshest collection of new material since their very first album.

The Americans are gonna love it. What today's 14-year-old, who was six years old in the heyday of the pill and the parka, is going to make of it, Yog-Sothoth only knows. Ethan Russell's photo-booklet is gloriously replete with period detail, a perfect blend of documentary realism and the curiously dreamlike quality of events long gone imperfectly remembered.

*Quadrophenia* is a triumph, certainly. It's by no means unflawed, but a triumph it is. I'm glad that Pete decided to write it and that the band decided to do it, and I don't grudge a single day of the waiting time.

Fade to black and cut to Twickenham.

Pete Townshend opens up the door, immediately preceded by a large and presumably amiable dog named Towser (the facts, Ma'am, we just want the facts). Townshend is clad in bovver boots, extravagantly patched jeans and an Indian cotton shirt. He whips up a couple of coffees in large brown mugs and settles down on a sofa to get quadraphonic.

Now, talking to Pete Townshend is always a treat. He's intelligent, aware and articulate, qualities that aren't as prevalent among rock musicians as one might wish. Furthermore, he's capable of discussing the more esoteric aspects of his work with a remarkable detachment that's totally removed from the self-indulgent, egocentric ramblings of many other acts.

First off, if the word "quadrophenia" is an expansion of "schizophrenia", as is indicated on the sleeve, why the missing "r"?

"It's a sort of jokey expansion of it, but it's a bit of a mouthful with the 'r'. It's something of a pun on 'quadraphonic' as well. The whole album has been put together as a quadraphonic composition. I suppose stereo is a bit of a compromise.

"We're fairly happy with the quadraphonic mixes we've done, but you know the problem with the transcription down to disc. It's all very well on tape, but when you try and get it down onto a record everything goes completely berserk.

"We were talking about a January 1st release date for the quadraphonic version, but at the moment it's a bit of a myth. I heard The Doobie Brothers' quad album of *The Captain And Me* and it just doesn't come anywhere near the stereo version."

OK, onto the album itself. Is it in any real sense an epitaph to mod?

"It's probably a lot more than that. That's right in a way, but then songs like 'My Generation' were that kind of epitaph in a more realistic sense. This album is more of a winding up of all our individual axes to grind, and of the group's 10-year old image and also of the complete absurdity of a group like The Who pretending that they have their finger on the pulse of any generation.

> "Rock is not youth's music; it's the music of the frustrated"

"The reason that the album has come out emotionally as it has is that I felt that The Who ought to make, if you like, a last album. Also, in a way, I wanted to embrace The Who's early audiences – but also to give a feeling of what has happened to rock and to the generation that's come up with us. It's very peculiar that this album has come out at the same time as something like *Pin Ups*, because although that's a more direct thing, the ideas are fairly similar.

"What I've really tried to do with the story is to try and illustrate that, as a study of childhood frustrations, the reason that rock is still around is that it's not youth's music; it's the music of the frustrated and the dissatisfied looking for some sort of musical panacea.

"Then we have difficulty relating to the business. We're not pure innovators, and we never really have been. We've always been people who have latched onto things which were good and reflected them, and I don't feel anything at the moment.

"I mean, if someone like Bowie, who's only been a big star for 18 months or two years, feels the need to start talking about his past influences, then obviously the roots are getting lost. The meat and potatoes, the reasons why people first pick up guitars, are getting forgotten."

Harking back to what Townshend had said earlier about rock responsibility, there's a considerable case for the view that when rock starts thinking about what it's doing instead of simply reacting, then it's losing something of its essence. The most hilarious thing about arguments like that is the fact that people put forward the arguments in the first place. It shows that they're viewing the whole thing intellectually, that they're arguing intellectually and that what they're actually doing is putting forward an intellectual argument to denounce their particular rock star for becoming an intellectual – which is what they are. And they're blaming him for the fact that they've grown old.

"In actual fact, most of the American rock journalists that use these arguments are suffering from maturity, and it's unpleasant for them because they're in the rock business. A pop star somehow seems able to get away with it, I don't know why. Jagger and people like that are still able to get up on the stage and prance about like idiots.

"It's very difficult to write like an enthused child, which is really how rock should be written about all the time. It's very difficult to do that if you don't feel like an enthused child all the time, or if you're not a showman and can't switch it on and off like a light bulb."

A lot of people in my profession, I pointed out, prefer their stars to be noble savages.

"A lot of them are like that. I've never been like that; there's always been something missing. At times when I was heavily doped I never got any chicks. At times when I was playing good I never got any chicks or any dope. You really can't have all three at once unless you're a physical dynamo.

"In the case of Iggy, I think the music suffers. Look at a band like Sweet, for example. They're probably a very straight bunch, dope-wise and wife-wise and God knows what, but I think their music does contain a lot of the tight, integrated, directed, pointed frustration of a 15- or 16-year-old, although it doesn't quite get there and they're a bit out of place time-wise. They should have been around 10 years ago.

"But someone like Iggy and the Stooges couldn't grasp that if they stood on their heads, because inside they're old men. I think that applies to many people. I think in a way that is why the freshest music that you can find at the moment is very, very middle-of-the-road stuff. »

"I think that there's a strong argument about whether a journalist's idea of what a pop star should be really means anything. I think that our album clarifies who the real hero is in this thing. It's this kid on the front. He's the hero. That's why he's on the front cover. That's why he's sung about. It's his fuckin' album. Rock'n'roll's his music.

"It's got nothing to do with journalists, and it hasn't really even got anything to do with musicians." *Charles Shaar Murray*

## — NME NOVEMBER 3 —

**AND NOW YOUR** starter for 10, viewers. See if you can recognise this rap. Are you ready? "Really what I've tried to do in the album is put the band in perspective. Each member of the band obviously thinks that he's God's gift to the music business and to The Who and that the world won't revolve without him. In actual fact, each member of the band is a very small piece of the band, and each member of the band is a very small piece of the boy."

Did you get it? Did you catch the use of the phrase "in actual fact"? Did you notice the mention of The Who? In that case, you have obviously sussed that what you've just read is Pete Townshend discussing *Quadrophenia*, The Who's new double album, which, despite any qualms that anybody might have about four-sided rock song-cycles, is actually pretty damn good.

The scene is Pete's gaff in Twickenham, the subject *Quadrophenia*, the scope grandeur. We continue.

"I've really had more control over this album than any other Who album we've ever done, from the beginning right through to the very end. I've directed it, if you like, and certainly people in the band have contributed fantastic amounts in roles that they normally wouldn't play.

"John Entwistle's role has been that of a constructive arranging musician, which is something he's never, ever done. On other albums he's worked off his frustrations by writing a couple of songs. Well, on this he's done a fantastic piece of arranging work, sitting in the studio writing out and then dubbing on 50 horn parts.

"So really what has happened is that the music on here is the first album where The Who have used each other's capabilities as musicians to the full. I've used my capabilities as a constructor and composer just to get the thing in shape, and then suddenly you realise when you play it that it's been written with a reason, that there was a driving force behind it."

So what was the first flash that ignited *Quadrophenia*?

"I think the first seed was that I thought that if we couldn't make a film, then, in Frank Zappa terms, I'd like to do it myself. I'd like to either buy a camera and direct it myself, or alternatively do a Frank Zappa thing with a kind of movie without pictures.

"That's where the idea came from, the idea of casting the four guys in the band as four facets of an archetypal mod kid's personality. It's obviously a kind of schizophrenic thing that I can relate to, because I know everybody in the band.

"I was probably more involved in the mod thing than anybody else in the band, and so it started off as a loose script and gradually grew into something where I felt that the characters could be represented musically by themes. Then it became quite a complicated musical task.

"Musically and impressionistically, I'm not so hot. I've had to work fantastically hard on this. Lyrics come very easily to me, but music is always very tough, and so stuff like "Quadrophenia" and "The Rock" were fuckin' incredibly difficult for me to get together without feeling that I was on a Keith Emerson trip.

"I wanted the music to be solid and really relate, and be emotive without creating a sort of *Big Country* drama. It was very tricky. It hasn't really come off, but it's really great to hear it. It's amazing to hear a song like "Can You See The Real Me" followed by "Quadrophenia".

A scanning of the storyline of *Quadrophenia* reveals a suspiciously strong resemblance to that of the *That'll Be The Day* movie, in which Mr Moon distinguished himself. What's the story, Pete?

Faint grimaces. "When I went to see *That'll Be The Day*, I got about halfway through to the bit where he was on the beach and then walked out in complete disgust.

"I said to Keith, 'You've been making this film all this time. Why couldn't you tell me that the story was very similar? I wasn't irritated by the fact that it was a similar idea. I was irritated because it seems that the British rock public thinks that Brighton Pier, a fairground and Butlin's Holiday Camp is all there really is to life.

"I'm a culprit in this respect, since *Tommy* ends in a holiday camp, but this is how the bloody British mind thinks. Ray Connolly is a few years older than me, and his nostalgia is a different trip. This isn't a direct nostalgic thing, it's more a search for the essence of what makes everything tick. I'm trying to approach the thing and find an answer.

"Brighton Pier features very heavily in this, because of the two big events that I remember really being moved by. One was when we were playing at Brighton Aquarium and I saw about 2,000 mod kids, and there were three rockers up against a wall. They'd obviously just come into it thinking that they were going to a party and they really were scared as hell, and the mods were just throwing bottles at them.

"I mean, there's no sort of hero in my eyes in something like that. There's no nostalgia. It just moved me to do something to perhaps make the music elevate people a bit. I know it sounds like idealism, but those people who were kicking rockers in on the front would then come in and listen to our music. So I knew then that I had what felt like a certain kind of power. There were all the tough guys looking at me, waiting to hear what I was about to say.

"In this album, the tough kid ends up as the bellboy. Jimmy ends up gaining a fantastic amount from the experience, but also losing a fantastic amount because of loose ends being drawn everywhere.

"The problem with The Who is that if I try to draw more out of their image and their history than rock can sustain, you end up with a situation where there's nothing left that hasn't been milked or soiled, any emotion that hasn't been buggered about with, any mountain that hasn't been climbed by some plastic, made-up geezer who climbs to the top and says, 'I've seen God and He's a pig.'

"In the end, the loser is rock because people just look at it and say, 'I'm not interested in this shit any more,' and it becomes empty and it becomes Hollywood and it becomes plastic again. Because if the actual people involved can't act out a fierce enough role, then the business, seeing that it's starting to lose money, will invent people. People like Alice Cooper, good as they are, are inventions of a hungry industry. They might think they're real. I know better."

Once again, back to specifics. *Quadrophenia* was a long time in the making and a lot of assembly work must have gone into it...

"The reason why you end up with particularly strong material is that you have learned by past mistakes. I wrote about 50 songs for this and really creamed off the best. I had a much, much longer story. We could have made it a quadruple album. There's still a fantastic amount of material which is potentially quite good stuff, but what I really wanted to do was to make the album something that invited you to forget The Who a little bit and make you think about other things.

"So we started off with the sea. It was a big decision to do that, because I knew that people would say, 'Christ almighty, 'ere we are, an epic work.' But I really wanted that because the actual story begins with the kid sitting on a rock. He's gone out to this rock in a boat and he's completely out of his brain.

> "Lyrics come very easily to me, but music is always very tough"

# Who's Jimmy?

**IN THE SECOND LEG OF THE TOWNSHEND-MURRAY TALKABOUT, PETE TELLS ALL**

**...AND MORE**


"You see, it's not really a story as such. There's a big difference between this and something like *Jesus Christ Superstar* or *Tommy*. It's not a story, more a series of impressions of memories. The real action in this is that you see a kid on a rock in the middle of the sea and this whole thing explains how he got there.

"This is why I used sound effects: to establish atmosphere. Some of the sound effects I've tried to manipulate impressionistically. It's something that's new to me and I'm not particularly good at it, but I'm glad I did it."

A large amount of the time that went into *Quadrophenia* was in post-production work.

"It took much, much longer to mix and blend than it did to record the backing tracks. It took about six months to mix. Stuff like 'The Rock' and 'Quadrophenia' were all recorded here at the house, all John Entwistle's horn parts. Extra synthesizer stuff, guitars, voices, drums and so on were added at the studio."

The Who have never been noted for their ability to make records with any rapidity. Apart from that Stones thing ("The Last Time"/"Under My Thumb"), which took about two days from idea to over-the-counter-sales and is thus the greatest piece of journalistic rock in the history of Western culture, they generally take an awful long time to figure out what they're gonna do and how they're gonna do it. Elucidate, Pete.

"Doing anything with The Who recording-wise always takes a billion years. Always. Dunno why. I mean, we can rehearse a stage act and do a gig without any effort at all. Eighteen months after last playing together, we can still walk on stage and play, but recording is something that we have to re-learn every time we go in. I think it's because basically I want the music to embrace more ambitious sounds, and the band is a pretty simple affair. It's bass, guitar, drums and the vocalist, and what happens a lot of the time is that ideas that happen in the studio have to be continually revised before they come to anything.

"Let me put it another way. I think we've been far too tight on ourselves. By that I mean that we've imposed so many rules and regulations on ourselves about what The Who are, what The Who can do, and what The Who can't do, what rock'n'roll is and what rock'n'roll isn't, what falls into our category and what doesn't."

A curious situation thus seems to be emerging. One could put it unkindly and say that The Who were strangling on their own self-consciousness – or rather one could if they hadn't been vindicated by the excellence of *Quadrophenia*. But the problem is very real. What do you do if you're in the semi-fortunate position of being one of the world's premier rock bands, with each album that you issue a major event in its year? Pete Townshend can, one supposes, be forgiven for occasionally getting so wound up in his own worries that temporary artistic paralysis sets in.

"I think it's more down to earth. That's why I felt, rightly or wrongly, that I could afford to take more chances with a fairly ambitious package, putting in a synopsis story and the photographs. I feel that I can talk about this thing in a far less guarded way.

"I eventually ended up with a set speech on *Tommy*. People always used to ask me the same questions. They used to say, for example, 'If Tommy is deaf, dumb and blind, I assume that as a result of the miracle cure he became the Messiah.'

"I really don't think that it's going to happen with this, because of a conversation I had with a lawyer from the States. She had to work out the dramatic copyright, which means that you have to present the thing and show that it has dramatic structure so that, although individual songs can be recorded, people can't put out an album called *Quadrophenia* or film it.

"She was trying to pin me down as to what character was saying what at different times. So I said, 'Well, I don't fucking know; the whole point of it is that the geezer's completely mixed up. He doesn't know and I don't know. I've just adopted this frame of mind in written songs.'

"'Dr Jimmy And Mr Jim' is more about Mad Moon than anything else. *'What is it? I'll take it/Who is she? I'll rape it'*... that's probably Keith Moon. *'I'll take on anyone/Ain't scared of a bloody nose'*... that could be me or Roger or anybody."

How about the problem of selling it to people who might not have the chance to hear it first?

"I think we're gonna lose a lot of sales because if people go into a record shop and hear the first track, all they're gonna hear is sea. It'll be a tough one, but I'm not really bothered whether mods of that era approve of it. The whole mod detail is really because it's an archetype, and that's what helps to build a character.

"The incredible thing about *Tommy* is that you could listen to it thousands of times if you're stupid enough, and you still don't know what his clothes are like or what colour his hair is. It could be anybody.

"No, I can understand that consciousness because I'm guilty of it myself. I played the music from this album far, far more when I just had test pressings. When you get the whole package you tend to get into packaging consciousness. The reason that it's all grey and black and scruffy is so that it doesn't come on looking all tinsel and glitter. I'd call something like *Who's Next* a fairly straightforward album. I'm certainly not against albums like that. We've got a new *Meaty Beaty* album coming out soon, which is unreleased material drawn from over the years. It'll make fantastic background music."

That seemed to be that for the time being. Back out along the embankment looking forward to the tour.

What you think of *Quadrophenia* is your problem, and whether you buy it or not is Pete's. Anyway, having The Who back and functioning is something of a small blessing.

Now – let's see action. *Charles Shaar Murray* •


"We've imposed so many rules and regulations on ourselves": The Who in 1973 – (c/wise from top left) Pete Townshend, John Entwistle, Roger Daltrey and Keith Moon

PHOTOSHOT

October 18–20, 1973: Bowie plus various musicians, including Ava Cherry (left), film *The 1980 Floor Show* at London's Marquee Club, for broadcast in the USA a month later

THE MARQUEE LONDON
LIVE!
OCT 27

# "We've written a musical"

**MM OCT 27** David Bowie unveils a substantially augmented Spiders – sans Woody Woodmansey – and songs from a new work set to be called "1984".

**DAVID BOWIE IN** action at the Marquee (where it all began) was just one of the many rare and knee-trembling sights to be enjoyed within the noise-battled walls of the old clubhouse last Saturday afternoon. David, Spiders and friends were in the throes of filming a spectacular that will never be seen in Britain. For three days an NBC film crew had been at work, capturing the full glory of Bowie madness for US TV show *The Midnight Special*.

They especially wanted the atmosphere of Soho's Marquee, which with the curious logic of moviemakers, involved ripping out all the club's identifiable features and building a new stage and anonymous backdrop, much to the chagrin of club manager Jack Barrie.

David was joined in the spectacular by such '60s stars as Marianne Faithful and The Troggs, hence the sudden appearance of a slightly bemused Reg Presley, adrift in a sea of celebrated transvestites, glamorous gays and what is known in the trade as "kids off the street". If it all sounds faintly horrifying, in fact the overall atmosphere kept reminding me of the Youth Club Scene in Cliff Richards' *The Young Ones*, with David as The Mystery Singer.

In a fascinating cross-section of modern society, grumbling British workmen with "everybody out, brothers" trembling on their lips, rubbed thighs with tittering school children, harassed American technicians, furtive journalists and illicit photographers. The star, in high spirits, was remarkably patient. For technical reasons, such classics as "Space Oddity" and "The Jean Genie" had to be performed endlessly, often cut short after a few bars. This was a frustrating situation and David fled the stage only once after Mick Ronson snapped a string.

There were three shows – one on Friday night when Marianne Faithful sang "As Tears Go By" and two on Saturday, with a different audience of 200 souls for each, drawn from the Marquee Club and Bowie fan club members by democratic ballot. Time was of the essence but seemed to be running out fast. My sojourn at Saturday's session lasted from midday right though to 9pm, and during that time Bowie and the Spiders got through four numbers, and slightly more costume changes. There was a queue of fans down Wardour Street but not the fighting hordes it was feared that would be aroused by advance publicity.

> **"Frustrating, ennit?" grinned Bowie in a blunt London accent**

Sweeping into our midst was no less a personage than Wayne County, the friendly neighbourhood drag queen who recently graced the front pages of *MM*. Face caked in white makeup, Wayne swished around in a red negligee purchased in Piccadilly and a wig that looked like a ball of candy floss. She was regarded with total awe and confusion by the British contingent, until David's PR Cherry Vanilla with a voice like from the *Laugh-In*, grabbed Miss County's fake bosom and shrieked in delight "Are they silicone, my dear?" "Wayne – they are so firm and – Wayne, those shoes are fabulous." Wayne curtsied and modestly replied "I've been doing my exercises."

But those "kids off the street" were far more interested in Angie Bowie, chattering loudly and signing autographs. It was very much a family affair, even baby Zowie putting in an appearance. An incredibly beautiful child, he swore innocently at us, arousing the spectre of infant revolution. Showbiz romantics of the year Lionel Bart and Dana Gillespie made their dramatic entrance, while Mary Hopkin strode hither and thither, and the cessation of hammering on stage announced that the music was about to commence.

"Oo's on second guitar?" demanded a gaggle of music lovers upfront. "It's Mark Pritchard – he's David's neighbour," proclaimed an expert. Cripes this was going to be exciting. A huge cheer went up as the musicians appeared for a soundcheck.

There was Aynsley Dunbar, late of John Mayall and Frank Zappa; clad in black and methodically testing his tom-toms. There was Trevor Bolder on bass and (shriek) Mick Ronson, starman in his own right, clutching guitar, zip partly undone and ready to sign autographs. But still no sign of David, believed

GETTY

to be lurking in the dressing room. The first number attempted was a spirited version of the old Mojos hit "Everything's Alright" from *Pin Ups*, obviously familiar to the drummer, himself an ex-Mojo.

The producer appeared and in best military briefing style explained what was happening. Mick Ronson reappeared this time in a fetching white costume, and then at 3.15pm Bowie cantered into view, red hair aflame, a bejewelled earring glittering, and yellow pants, sawn off below the knee, pulsating. The assembly stamped into "Everything's Alright", only to be signalled to an abrupt halt. "Frustrating, ennit?" grinned Bowie, his blunt London accent oddly at variance with such sophisticated garb. "Well, these are the Astronettes," he said indicating a trio of dancers and congo players. "And you all know the Spiders..."

"So what have you been up to?" enquired Bowie impudently, rather like Alexander The Great having conquered the East, asking Mr and Mrs Alexander how they enjoyed their weekend. While elders chuckled, fans ignored this frivolity, and pleaded "David, David – oh why doesn't he look over here?" "Oh shut up and look at his trousers" advised one maiden, her face set in grim concentration as she chewed her gum (then for good measure she yelled "Donny!" just to show that even teenyboppers have a sense of humour).

**"Donny!" shouts one maiden – even teenyboppers have a sense of humour**

As inner anxieties ebbed away, a bold new spirit filtered through the psyche. I decided to buy Wayne County a drink. David was intoning that doom-laden statement "*Ground control to Major Tom*" when Wayne appeared at the bar ready to hold court. David was now sporting a lurex suit of red and gold stripes, but the press were lured away by the eye-searing vision of New York Culture. "Tell us about your career, Wayne" demanded a keen young music reporter.

"Well, you know I used to sing in churches in Georgia [gasp!] and later in drag shows. I'm here to record an album which will be coming out in March, but it's very hard to find musicians who are drag queens. I'd like to live in London. I came here two years ago with Andy Warhol's *Pork*. That's when I met David. The only instrument I play is mouth harp. But I refuse to play it because it messes up my lipstick. I'm trying to find a special lipstick that's harp-proof." She could try to find one that's people proof, as practically everybody on the premises bore traces of a County kiss.

"I'll be talking to David about my LP, and we'll get some musicians off the streets. I'll be writing all the songs. I like him. Look I've got to go now..." We all laughed a little hysterically.

At this point I requested that a young Swedish photographer of startlingly good looks be allowed to snap a quick camera study of Miss County in her finery. The lady suddenly abandoned her threat to leave, her arm in red organza streaking out to grab the startled youth's hand. "Honey, you're beautiful. What are you doing after the show? – Do you want my room number?" Having prised the photographer free and smuggled him out the back door, we left Wayne chatting to the young, keen reporter, whose laughter became more hysterical by the moment.

Meanwhile Mr B was undergoing yet another costume change. Feeling as confused as Jack Lemmon in *Days Of Wine And Roses*, I peered past the blazing lights and laughing heads, at Bowie, now apparently in a red, fur-trimmed frogman's suit and shiny black PVC boots. He announced "The Laughing Gnome" and instead went into "I Can't Explain".

Voices babbled in my ear: "You should have seen David on Friday night. He had 10 men dancing about in black wings. It was fantastic!" My head was reeling. "Fun and games all day," said the barman, his voice echoing.

Suddenly, real horrors began to set in as the deadly "heaven and hell" drink took effect. Despite rubbed eyes, a new version of Bowie refused to go away. Now he was attired in a fish net of a type usually employed in catching small whales, with disembodied gold hands attached to his torso. Apparently there had been a third hand, but American television would not stand for that. Nor would it stand for the sight of David's black jockstrap. Glimpses of underwear are taboo and had to be removed. Pubic hair is considered less tasteless. Even some of the lyrics had to be changed – one base word transmuted to "*swanking*".

"The Jean Genie" rocked again and the band developed tremendous power. And although the PA equipment was minimal, there was no doubting the authority of David's singing.

"We've written a musical," he announced. "And this is the title song called '1984'. We'll be doing the show in March next year." There were constant interruptions to "1984" with yells of "Fifteen seconds, David" from the producer. "Hold it. OK when you are ready."

David: "But we are ready."

After a number of false starts, they began to dig into the tune, and David ripped off his black-and-red striped garb to reveal a tight, green suit with a keyhole emblazoned on the chest. It represents the moment in George Orwell's story when Winston is entrapped by a giant TV screen – I guess. Ronson's guitar, which had been dropping out of tune, was afflicted by a broken string, and David finally ran off the stage, his first sign of petulance. It seemed a good moment to leave this exhausting but entertaining glimpse into Babylon, and advance to the nearest supermarket to collect the weekend groceries. Except by this time they were all shut.

The rock 'n' roll pantomime tinselled on, with another show to complete 'ere midnight. It occurred to me that possibly the best way to effect entry to any such future burlesques would be to don the hind legs of the pantomime horse. Or perhaps in view of current trends – the front legs. *Chris Welch*

# Bowie's free for all

**Chris Welch describes**

ALBUMS REVIEW 1973

## ALBUMS

**David Bowie**
**Pin Ups** RCA

Bowie's second of the year celebrates his mod youth. It's one of those ripe coincidences that within a few weeks of each other both David Bowie and Bryan Ferry, arch arbiters of current British fashion, should put out albums composed wholly of nostalgic tributes to previously fashionable eras in music – Ferry's is essentially American and orientated to the singer-songwriter tradition of the early '60s; Bowie's concentrated on the years of mod British pop from '64 to '67.

Possibly because that period of the early Who, the Merseys and The Pretty Things seems not so long distant, it takes a certain amount of daring to revive the kind of music that went with Lambrettas, parkas, Carnaby Street and pill-popping. Bowie returns to the age of innocence and comes up with a pastiche that's as funny as it's marvellously insightful. If Ferry tended to be po-faced, Bowie moves towards irreverence, balancing his enormous relish for the songs per se and his desire to reinvent them.

His approach is to impersonate, and he's masterful, not so much in his absolute fidelity to the originals as in his grasp of phrasing, nuance and style. This is at its most overt in his treatment of the famous Syd Barrett opus "See Emily Play," where he employs deliberately screwy use of electronics in a fond pisstake of the Pink Floyd; and on part of the vocal he has a gruff, cockney chorus, reminiscent of "The Bewlay Brothers," but this time conjuring up the picture of singing pugs down at the Thomas a' Beckett gym.

I had to bust out laughing at that. His ear is as sharp as his memory, and his taste is impeccable on both counts. He judges exactly that rough, punk sneer of Phil May's on the Pretties' "Rosalyn" and "Don't Bring Me Down", and he's best of all on The Who ("I Can't Explain" and "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere"), where he very subtly slows down his voice in a great approximation of Daltrey ("Anyway" has an even finer absurdist quality in Aynsley Dunbar's attempt to parody Moon's breaks).

Then again, there's all the fun of Mick Ronson trying to ape Jeff Beck on "Shapes Of Things," which I suspect he urged Bowie to include. The laughter is that of recognition at the accuracy of it all, and the humour is gentle. There's not one version that usurps the original – maybe "Sorrow", the single – but interpretation is valid. I suppose *Pin Ups* will be seen as a trifle. I think it clearly emphasises his brilliance as a stylist and innovator of modes, which is where his true originality lies. Oh, and it was a nice stroke to get Twiggy on the cover. *Michael Watts, MM Oct 20*

# Readers' letters

**MM OCT–DEC** Modernism revived, 10cc squeezed out, Dylan defended and more.

## Mod moves in mysterious ways

LP WINNER

The era of the mod is at hand once again. This creature of the early '60s is being reborn.

Bowie's *Pin Ups* bathes us ageing 25-year olds in warm nostalgia. Townshend's *Quadrophenia* is an homage to the mod. In his interview (*MM* October 27) he remembers the intimacy of the early "in-crowd" modism.

The Marquee and its "modist" elite is an element of continuity for both. How long will it be before the style of that halcyon exclusiveness returns? How long must we ancient creatures of the '60s fantasise?

And how long must we wait for the return of our Cathy and *Ready Steady Go!*? The Second Coming is at hand. The Stones will play real ropey rhythm & blues. Phil May will re-cultivate his pimples. The Union Jack will be back.

**MIKE OWENS, Saxon Green, Gregory Street, Lenton, Nottingham (*MM* Nov 10)**

## UnGodley non-appearance

Is there no comeback for fans who devotedly travel distances for a group's highly publicised concert only to learn that they have decided at the last moment that the stage is not big enough? We refer, of course, to the 10cc walkout from the Global Village at Charing Cross on September 21. Despite the distance we travelled we were fobbed off with a substitute group: Duffy (as good as they might be).

**STEVE PROCTOR and GEOFF IRELAND, Dartford, Kent (*MM* Oct 6)**

After reading the letter from Steve Proctor and Geoff Ireland in Mailbag, I thought I'd better reply and sort things out. 10cc travelled four hours and actually got to the Global Village, Charing Cross, at five o'clock. Our road crew had already been there four hours trying to get our equipment on stage.

The stage should have been 30ft wide by 20ft deep, as asked for in all our contracts. The stage at the Global Village turned out to be 11ft wide by 8ft deep. This only being told to our agents when we were already on our way down there.

As you are aware, 10cc have stated in interviews that they would try to reproduce their record sound on stage. This has involved us in buying equipment to the tune of £15,000. On a stage 11ft x 8ft we cannot even accommodate our two drum kits; therefore we cannot put on the kind of performance people expect from us. We had invited over 150 press and guests to the gig and after much arguing had to cancel it.


We have travelled four hours, lost over £200 in hotel bills, car hire, etc, and ended up heading home very disappointed. The last thing 10cc want is cancelled gigs. It's taken us two years to get off our backsides in the studio and get the act on the road. Don't blame 10cc. Blame promoters who sign contracts with fairytale dimensions.

These guys are the reason so many groups have to cancel. It's got so bad that we have to send our road crew to check gigs two weeks before we're due to play them. Sorry about the disappointment, Steve and Geoff. Hope you can catch one of our other London gigs in October.

**ERIC STEWART, 10cc (*MM* Nov 10)**

## Silent treatment

Customer: "Excuse me, could you play a couple of tracks from this LP?" Assistant: "Sorry sir, we don't play records any more!"

And thus another record shop joins the army of disc sellers who have unplugged their headphones. Surely this is unfair. The only way to hear new records is via a friend or from the minute selection played on Radio One.

Obviously the shops dislike playing records as many people don't always buy them, but surely if they have good styli in their turntables, what harm has been done? It's so frustrating to be told of a good LP and not be able to listen before buying. If these shops continue this trend, the public will eventually be buying records on the strength of the "pretty" covers.

**RP HILLIER, Walter Way, Silver End, Nr Witham, Essex (*MM* Nov 4)**

## Bob: better than your uncle

Over the last 10 years I have read numerous articles and letters in the *MM* about Dylan. Now is an appropriate time to reply to some of them. Firstly, comparisons simply cannot be made between him and anyone else – either before his emergence or since – because he more than anyone belonged exclusively to the '60s and should be judged as such. The whole pattern of popular music in the last decade was shaped by Dylan in the same way that Dylan was shaped by the '60s.

One was reflected in the other and neither could have existed separately in the same way.

For this reason Dylan may have "lost contact with the '70s" as suggested by Michael Watts, but let's be fair and recognise him for what he was.

I don't see anyone around now who is in tune with this decade to the same extent as he was with his. This is borne out by the wealth of his tapes, bootlegs and articles, etc, suddenly made available, which only serve to emphasise the fact.

**AE JENKINSON, Edgeware Road, Blackburn, Lancs (*MM* Oct 20)**

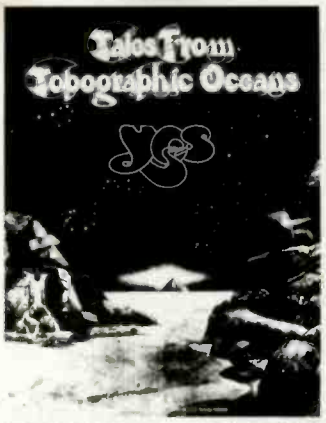
## Campaign for real rock

Jagger might turn on Wembley with his songs of violence and revolution, but those words would carry more weight in Haiti. Along with assorted international capitalists of ill repute, he chooses to erect a monument to white racism: the world's most ostentatiously rich hotel amidst the abject poverty of one of the world's poorest nations – symbolising one of the most obscene forms of exploitation of the Third World by the West.

**NOREEN SLOAN, Temple Road, Chiswick, London W4 (*MM* Oct 27)**

If you dig Slade but aren't going to buy their new single because you think it's a change of style, un-Slade and a load of crap, give a listen to the flip-side, "My Town". A real Slade rocker.

**FRANK O'DONOVAN, Downside School, Stratton-On-The-Fosse, Somerset (*MM* Oct 27)**









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# Coming next... in 1974!

**SO THAT WAS 1973.** Glad you didn't quit. Certainly, that's not it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1974!

## LED ZEPPELIN

**THE ENIGMATIC JIMMY PAGE** breaks cover to discuss magick, his search for "an angel with a broken wing", and even his early sessions. The Kinks, he learns, have played down his involvement in their records. "That's bollocks!" he says. "I played on a whole LP and on some of the singles, too."

## QUEEN

**A NEW PHENOMENON** is in the making. Queen have been promised a future as the new T. Rex, but aspire to something more. Nor is their frontman one to wilt in the spotlight. "I'm the vainest creature going," says Freddie Mercury. "But then so are all pop stars..."

## RONNIE LANE

**AFTER THE TUMULT** of the Faces, the songwriter joins his own circus. On the road with the "Passing Show", a travelling performance on a tour of various patches of waste ground. "Only I would be mad enough to try it," admits Lane.

## PLUS...

LOU REED!
PINK FLOYD!
PHIL OCHS!

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

# THE HISTORY OF ROCK 1973

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1973.
*"Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way..."*


*Relive the year...*

**PINK FLOYD JOURNEYED TO THE DARK SIDE**

**LED ZEPPELIN BROKE ALL RECORDS**

**DAVID BOWIE KILLED OFF ZIGGY STARDUST**

...and **PETE TOWNSHEND, MILES DAVIS, CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, BOB MARLEY** and many more shared everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

## More from **UNCUT**...


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