

# THE HISTORY OF ROCK

1974

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS  
THIS ISSUE: 1974



STARRING...

**CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG**

*"People have faith in us"*

**ROLLING STONES**

**PINK FLOYD**

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**

**LED ZEPPELIN**

**TIM BUCKLEY**

**MIKE OLDFIELD**

**QUEEN**

★  
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MELODY  
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★

**PLUS!** NICO | DYLAN | SPARKS | GENESIS | CLAPTON | ANGIE BOWIE | ELO

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# 1974

MONTH BY MONTH



## Welcome to 1974

**A**FTER A YEAR of high-profile valedictions, 1974 is a year of returning giants. Bob Dylan plays his first full tour since 1966. Eric Clapton, after spending a long period in a self-imposed hibernation, emerges with a new band and a new pastime: drinking and shouting. More triumphantly still, this year sees the return of our cover stars, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Relations in the band are thought by many to be strained, but the group's epic – and enormously lucrative – stadium concerts find music's loosest quartet involved in some breathtaking group playing. Indeed, Graham Nash will stop a reporter to ask: "Did you hear that conversation?"

Elsewhere, scions of the English underground like ELO and Mike Oldfield prosper in unexpectedly impressive ways, while a clutch of new groups offer a colourful and novel pop sound without any philosophical hinterland. Sparks, ABBA and particularly Queen provide a challenge to the more worthy, denim-clad musicians on manoeuvres. Reporters from the *NME* and *Melody Maker* were there to chat sequins or – as the occasion demanded – to "rock like a bitch".

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 tenth issue, dedicated to 1974, 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. These days, 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 right there where it matters. On the tourbus with Bruce Springsteen. Asking Keith Richards about his blood change in Switzerland, and his forthcoming dental work. Wondering why Angie Bowie suddenly needs half a ton of wet cement.

Why don't you join them there. As Keith puts it: "If you're going to get wasted, get wasted elegantly."

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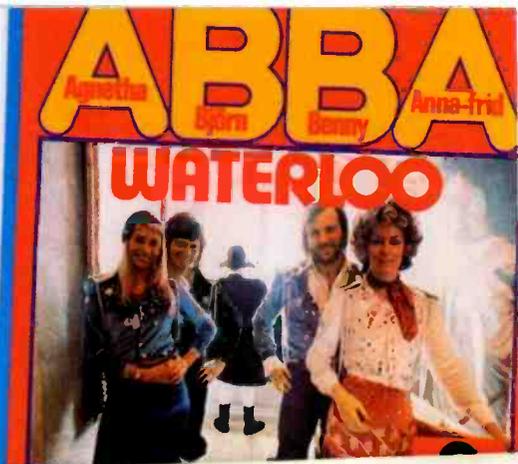
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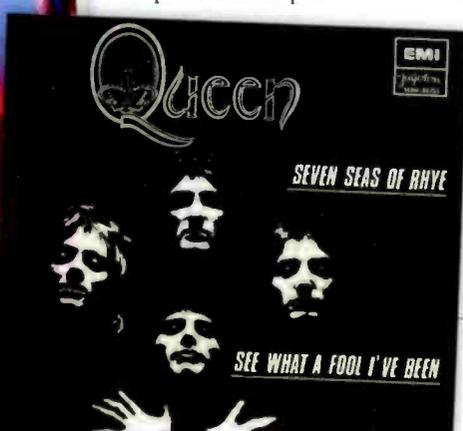
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THE HISTORY OF  
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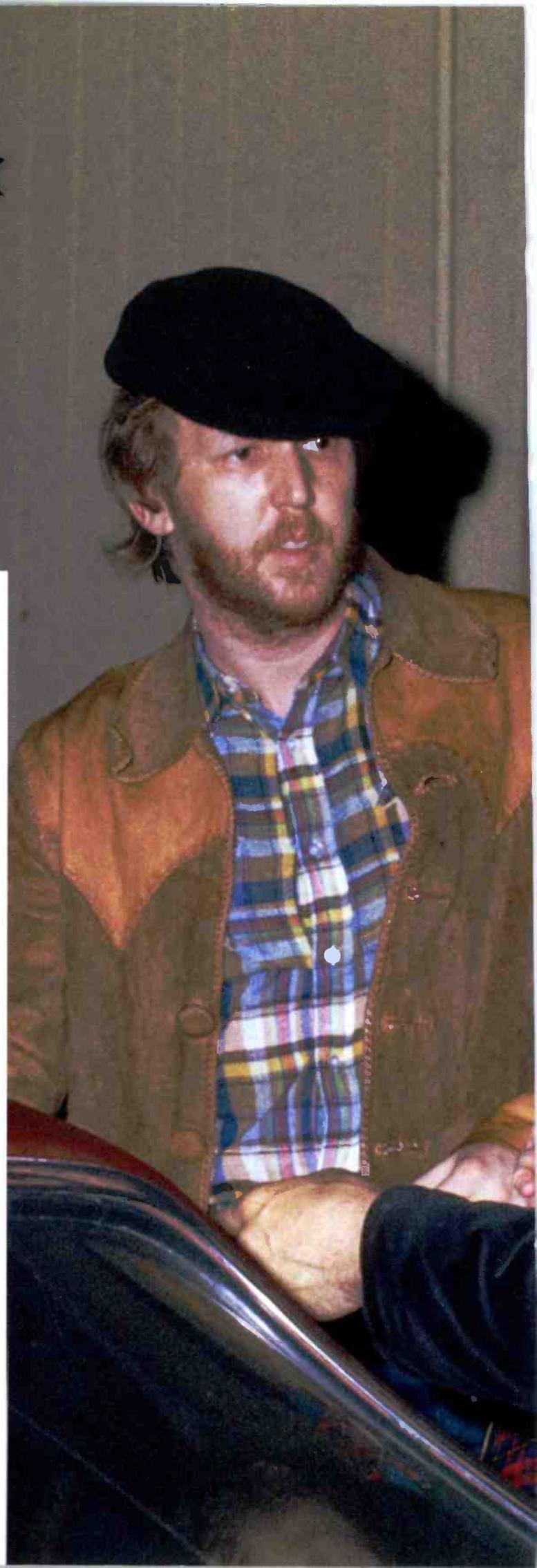
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# 1974

JANUARY — MARCH

**GENESIS, RONNIE LANE, BOB DYLAN, ELO, MIKE OLDFIELD AND MORE**



## “I’m Ed Sullivan”

**MM MAR 23** John Lennon is thrown out of an LA nightclub. “He was disrupting the act by heckling,” says one witness.

**H** EY, WHAT’S HAPPENIN’ to Johnny Lennon? The stories going round about him these days recall his hard-case period pre- and early Beatles. The latest one took place yet again at the Troubadour club in Los Angeles, where Lennon heckled and hissed all the way through the return of the Smothers Brothers. A few weeks back he showed up there with a Kotex on his head.

Crazy John, accompanied by Harry Nilsson and Yoko Ono’s former assistant May Pang, apparently shouted out obscenities and shouted out more than once, “I’m John Lennon.” After this continued for several minutes, Smothers Brothers manager Ken Fritz asked Lennon to leave, whereupon Lennon purportedly punched Fritz and missed. Fritz swung back but then Lennon threw a glass, missing the manager but copping a waitress. He also managed to upset several tables on his way out the door. By 12.30am Johnny had been escorted by Nilsson from the club to his car — where he told the attendant, “I’m Ed Sullivan” — but not before allegedly hitting a woman who was trying to take his picture.

The woman, a 51-year-old Hollywood matron, filed suit in the West Hollywood Sherriff’s department, charging assault. Another photographer said: “He was yelling, ‘They’re all a bunch of phonies...’” Fritz commented: “He was disrupting the act by heckling, so I went over to ask him to be quiet.” No one seems to know the cause of the ruckus or who the phonies were in an audience that included Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Flip Wilson, Helen Reddy, Linda Lovelace, Peter Lawford and Lily Tomlin.

No one is saying much about the split between John and Yoko, who have been separated now for five months. Yoko is still in New York and neither of them is discussing divorce for publication. For those of us with long memories, however, it’s just like old times.

MAUREEN DONALDSON/GETTY



March 12, 1974: Harry Nilsson (left) and John Lennon leave the Troubadour club in West Hollywood

1974

JANUARY - MARCH

## Cult heroes



Blue Öyster Cult: (l-r) Allen Lanier, Eric Bloom, Albert Bouchard, Donald Roeser, Joe Bouchard

## "Halfway between Alice and the Allman Brothers"

**MM FEB 16** Introducing... the Blue Öyster Cult. "Rather like The Monkees, but on a totally different musical level," explains their manager Sandy Pearlman.

**N**EW YORK: THEY say that heavy rock is on the decline and it's become fashionable to put down bands whose music is based on a series of riffs and repetitive time signatures.

But they're wrong. This particular brand of basic rock is not in a decline but maintaining a high and steady popularity, and is only unfashionable in the "holier than thou" circles within the rock business. Black Sabbath, the archetypal perpetrators of heavy metal music, are as strong as ever; Grand Funk, mellowed slightly with the departure of Terry Knight, are still selling albums at the phenomenal rate they did when they sold out Shea Stadium; and Deep Purple's absence from the concert circuit in America adds a mystery quality to the group rather than diminishing their popularity.

Also—and possibly more significantly—there's a new wave of heavy metal bands on the way up, and the one most likely to wear the solid iron crown of heavy metal magnificence is a New York outfit called Blue Öyster Cult, who combine raw, riffy rock with a style and image that flirts loosely with the evils of the occult. It seems significant, then, that on meeting their manager the other day he was carrying under his arm an album of Nazi war hymns which contained several tracks of hysterical cheering as crowds listened to the oration of Adolf. Stuff, explained the manager, to be used on the group's third album, which will be released in May.

Blue Öyster Cult's manager and guiding light is Sandy Pearlman, who was a well-known rock critic in New York until he discovered Blue Öyster and fashioned their image. He also writes most of their lyrics and produces their albums. Pearlman is a great believer in heavy metal. He says he actually invented the term when he was a writer and his favourite band in

the world is Black Sabbath, BÖC excepting of course. He's an eloquent spokesman, and as the musicians were out of town it seemed that the best way to dig into BÖC was to talk to Pearlman himself. Cult are Donald Roeser (guitar), Eric Bloom (vocals), Allen Lanier (keyboard and rhythm guitar) and brothers Albert (drums) and Joe (bass) Bouchard. They used to be called Soft White Underbelly: "One day in 1967 I was driving down Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn and I thought of the name Soft White Underbelly and decided it would make a great name for a group, so I went out and found one."

"I'll pause there for a moment to consider. Most, if not all, groups get together and then think of a name. Here we had the name first and no band; an interesting switch around but one which lends itself to the assumption that the group was formed with a specific purpose in mind. Rather like The Monkees, but on a totally different musical level.

"Three members of what is now Blue Öyster Cult were in the Soft White Underbelly," continued Pearlman. "That is, Donald, Albert and Allen, and we signed a contract with Elektra and made an album which never came out. After

that the then lead singer left because he wasn't good enough, and we made a new record, which again was never put out. Elektra own that record and I think maybe they'll stick it out now."

In 1970 the band left Elektra after what appears to have been an unsatisfactory relationship. About the same time, Eric Bloom joined along with Allen's brother Joe and a year later they signed with CBS, changing their name to Blue Öyster Cult. "At the time I had written a song called 'Blue Öyster Cult' and it seemed like a better name for a group than for a song," says Pearlman. That song wasn't recorded at the time, but it appears on their

**"BÖC are like an accessory to their equipment"**

new album, retitled "Sub Human".

Since then Blue Öyster Cult have trod the boards all around the USA, gradually building a reputation as hard, leather-clad rockers whose sets never let up from the grinding riffs of song after song. They've put out a couple of albums, neither of which they appear to be overjoyed with, but this third release, recorded almost "live" in the studio, is their best so far, according to Pearlman.

Both their albums have sold around 200,000 each, but these figures go over a long period, which is why they've never figured in the charts to any great extent. They're also very careful about studio costs. Pearlman estimates that the three albums have cost only \$50,000 to make—chicken feed by most rock standards.

And the group has had a helping hand from some of the bigger American outfits, who have used them as a support act on tours of the large venues in the states. "They did a tour with Alice Cooper, who at that time was into music rather than a show, and I considered them to be the leading heavy metal band in the world then," says Pearlman. "Then we went out with the Allman Brothers and Black Sabbath. We are very grateful to both these groups for helping us.

"I consider Black Sabbath to be the most original group of the '70s, providing music for an audience that I would call the anarchistic teens. Grand Funk did it too, but that was an example of management handling rather than music.

"Blue Öyster Cult," says Pearlman with a certain degree of honesty, "are like an accessory to their equipment. A lot of kids come to see us not because of the music but because of the high energy level of the show. I would say we're just halfway between Alice and the Allman Brothers.

"And," he maintains, "Blue Öyster Cult are unique as they are the only heavy metal band whose lyrics can be discussed. Most of the lyrics, apart from those I do myself, are written by Richard Meltzer and Patti Smith." Meltzer is another rock critic and Smith is a poet who appears at NYC rock clubs. *Chris Charlesworth*



# "Nobody would mind"

**MM JAN 12** The Beatles are back on speaking terms.

**T**HE BEATLES BACK together again? It could happen, according to Paul McCartney. He commented in New York that the financial dispute between him and the other three Beatles will be decided this month. The three-year legal entanglement has effectively stopped him working with the other three, although he recently contributed to the *Ringo* album.

"We have broken up as a band, but I'd like to see us work together on a loose basis – and I think we will," he said. This confirms rumours that relations between all four have improved greatly over the past few months. John Lennon told *MM* in Los Angeles: "Nobody would mind doing some work together again."

# First live appearance

**MM JAN 26** Brian Eno enlists the help of a band called The Winkies.

**E**NO WILL BE on tour next month with The Winkies as guest stars-cum-backing band. The tour, which opens at Kings Hall, Derby, on February 13, marks Eno's first live appearance since leaving Roxy Music last summer.

The tour lasts until March 12 and will feature Eno's own material taken from his forthcoming Island album, *Here Come The Warm Jets*, due out on February 8.

Last weekend Eno and The Winkies were in Island Studios recording a single, "The Seven Deadly Finns", which is to be released as soon as possible – probably within the next two weeks.

The Winkies are also hoping to have a rush-released single out. They have recorded two of their own songs: A-side is "Last Chance"; flip is "Red Dog". On the

tour The Winkies will play a 30-minute set before being joined by Eno.



Photosession for Cockney Rebel's debut album *The Human Menagerie* in 1973: (l-r) Paul Jeffreys, John Crocker, Steve Harley, Milton Reame-James, Stuart Elliott



"Maybe one day I'll relax"

**MM MAR 30** Introducing... Cockney Rebel and the intense creative world of Steve Harley. "I'm in a hurry," he says. "I can't stand ditherers."

**"O**HLORD, PLEASE don't let me be misunderstood" was the classic line Eric Burdon sang with The Animals. It could almost have been written for the impulsive and highly strung lead singer with Cockney Rebel – Steve Harley. Perhaps "highly strung" is an over-simplification, but Harley certainly devours life. He works at intense pressure and gives the impression of being in an extreme hurry, as if there is no time to waste.

If Harley lives on nerves, doesn't he feel the need to relax? "I can't. People say I should. Once in a while I'll spend an evening in front of a TV set, but I look and don't see. Yeah, I'm in a hurry. There's no time. I can't stand ditherers."

So most of his energy goes into Cockney Rebel and his career? "Every single minute. A lot of people who are close to me, over the past year have had no attention from me at all. I demand it of them, but they can't demand it of me. But it'll blow over and maybe one day I'll relax.

"I guess I'm basically old-fashioned. For me, the greatest works of contemporary song-writing were by Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and Cole Porter. For me, there are no shades of grey. It's the best or you don't do it. And if you fail, then it's miserable. My mistakes are really big.

"Oh yeah, I really try and want it to be great all the time. When I was two and a half, I officially died. It was an effort to get me back to the land of the living. I often wish now – I don't know how seriously, but it crosses my mind – what would it be like to cross over and go there to death and come back again? Think about it."

Although Steve had talked about imitating other singers, in fact there was little audible evidence that he sounded like any other in rock. His style can be mannered, but once absorbed, his approach was singularly stimulating and provocative, yodels, howls and all.

"I take some stick," said Steve thoughtfully. "I really do. It hurts as well. Just a little bit. At the time. You get over it. It's just like a kick in the groin. It doesn't matter. Bounce back.

"I love Marc Bolan. He's so together, so organised. All his boogies are great, and he was the original 'mirror freak', he was the one.

"But I think of a lot of people as I'm writing. Because human beings tend to be much the same as each other. We all look in mirrors.

"A few weeks ago I decided I'd done too much talking, and the criticism was beginning to affect me. I'm being perfectly natural, but they take it wrongly all the time, and you get insulted all the time, and they take the piss out of you week after week. I've been a bit noisy and some people took an instant dislike. So I thought I'd lay off. But I can't. If people want to talk, then talk, and not sit around like a dummy.

"The band is going to look a lot different now. We'll be playing a long set with most of *Human Menagerie* and stuff from the new LP.

"We've done gigs where the reaction wasn't so good and I got depressed, but at the end the audience have been stomping for eight minutes. The reaction says maybe they haven't played the greatest set on Earth but they've tried. That's why we had to look right. I can't say how long it will stay like it. We could split up tomorrow. Last five years. You can never tell."

How different will the new Rebel album be from *Human Menagerie*? "The difference is in feel. There's more ego. The first album was flat. You listen to it and the violin and piano player are taking solos and it's, 'Do you mind if I step out and take a solo?' This one they say, 'Get out of my way, I'm coming through, and I want the spotlight on me.' They're making a statement. The first LP talks a lot and says nothing. This time, there's no talking, no chatting. Everything said is a statement and a valid one." *Chris Welch*

March 21, 1968: Don Arden outside court in London during one of his many legal disputes

## "The Al Capone of pop"

**MM MAR 9** "I've always had this reputation," says legendary manager Don Arden. "But this business is not as rosy as some people would have you believe..."

**A**HH... THERE ARE these stories, Don. Always these stories. Like the time they say you hung someone out of your office window - by his legs. And all those rumours of shooters and stuff. But are they, er, true? Don Arden grins a little and asks for proof. Some of them, he says, might just be true. But the others, well, they're just stories.

Still, it's a heavy reputation. Seems you don't mess with Don. They say Don Arden's going to blow it someday. Go over the top. But then, they've been saying that for years and right now Don's hot. Hotter than he's ever been. He's finally cracked the American market, you see. Wizzard and ELO both his bands are doing real fine. And now he's got Raymond Froggatt and Phil Everly.

So why are they saying these things about him? Some of the stories must be apocryphal, though Arden admits to making a few enemies in this business. Not important enemies, mind you, but nobodies who somehow got in his way.

As for Arden himself, well, he's come up trumps. Reaped the rewards of success. His office is a beautiful, timber-beamed house overlooking Wimbledon Common. Must've cost something like a hundred grand, at least. And he's got the house next door, too. Then

there are the trimmings: the private bar - made of wood barrels - in the hall and the Rolls-Royce in the garage.

He's a big, dominant man with gold chains hanging round his neck like some mayoral symbol of power. The whole impression is decidedly heavy. He's been in showbiz for over 30 years now, knows the ropes as well as anyone and is acutely aware of his own reputation. Even plays up to it a little.

"I've mastered the art of making my presence more, ahh, meaningful. A lot of people say they're scared to argue with me. Rubbish. I work only with the top people in top companies. And they respect me for it."

And oh yes, he says, he did hang someone out of his window. And that was when his office was on the fifth floor. No name, of course, but this guy was allegedly trying to steal the Small Faces away from Arden. No way.

"I've always had this reputation; some people have referred to me as the Al Capone of pop. But this business is not so rosy as some people would have you believe. All I know is that my reputation has always been beneficial

to the artists. Let's put it this way. There have been people in the past, promoters, who've delayed sending my artists their money. I get on the phone and say, 'It's Don Arden here...' and the trouble's always been sorted out immediately."

Don Arden started early. The war was beginning, he says, and all the kids were being evacuated to the countryside. Arden was 13 at the time, but there was no way he was going to be evacuated. And there didn't seem much point returning back to school. So he dropped out.

Ever since he could remember, his one ambition was to be a singer. He looked older than he was, people thought he was 16, and his family couldn't stop him, so he auditioned for a touring revue, a show called *Ladies On Revue*.

That lasted about eight months, touring all the fleapits in England. Arden used to sing a little, do impressions, the whole vaudeville thing. So when *Ladies On Revue* finally ground to a halt, he joined up with other touring companies until he was 16. Then came a spell in the ENSA show, entertaining the troops, before Arden was finally drafted into the armed forces.

When demob came in the late '40s there was nothing much else for Arden to do but to return to the stage, resuming his vaudeville career. But he didn't have what they call "star quality". "I was too aggressive to become a star; I argued too

much and I didn't please the right people." All the same, he had a business brain. Even came up with his own promotions.

"I saw there was a market for Hebrew folk songs at that time, so from Monday to Saturday I'd be touring the variety theatre and on Sunday I'd be doing my own Hebrew folk song concerts. And from then on I started to put together my own shows. This was 16 or 17 years ago. I had all kinds of variety acts, touring revues..."

His own singing career, meanwhile, was almost a big fat zero. He cut a few records, all

ballad stuff, and even managed to sell 27,000 copies of "Sunrise Sunset". This was back in the late '50s, and the rise of rock 'n' roll had threatened the very existence of variety shows. Arden caught on fast, abandoning his singing

career and going into business as a promoter. He handled Gene Vincent's first British tour, for instance, even emceed the shows. Then came a touring package show with Conway Twitty, Freddie Cannon and Johnny Preston. Right through the early '60s, in fact, Arden worked his way to the top as a

**"I've come out winning, and so have my artists"**

rock'n'roll promoter, bringing over Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Sam Cooke.

Four good years, solid business and no worries about half-full houses. Rock'n'roll was hot. But, around 1963, the first signs of crumbling appeared. The Beatles were hot, hotter even than Arden's American artists. "I think it's safe to say I was the number-one promoter of rock'n'roll at that time, but with The Beatles coming along everything seemed to change almost overnight. I lost £100,000 in 10 weeks. No one wanted the Americans any more; the British groups just cleaned me out. So I decided to make my own attractions to promote, go into management."

His first band, so Arden claims, were The Animals. Around 1963 he kept getting phone calls from some guy called Mike Jeffery in Newcastle. "I had a name for being with the stars and Jeffery had this band called The Animals he wanted me to handle," says Arden. "Eventually we brought them down to London, put them on for £10 a night at a place called the Scene, and they were absolutely sensational."

So Arden became the band's official agent. But he made two conditions. One, the group were to be produced by a singer called Mickie Most, and two, Arden was to have sole rights to promote The Animals throughout the world. He had met Most in South Africa. He was on one of Arden's concert bills, supporting Gene Vincent. Arden was evidently impressed with Most; the two of them even discussed forming their own record company. So, says Arden, he seemed a good choice of producer for The Animals.

Something happened, however, some conflict between Jeffery and Arden. "I felt I was being used and so when The Animals became international stars, I sold my interests to other people. I wasn't interested in lengthy disputes. Most did a deal with Jeffery and it was the parting of the ways between us. But the whole episode whetted my appetite for management. Half the time in my early days I was a star maker and a manager."

Arden believes he has two distinct roles. There's the managerial function, someone who handles an artist's affairs. But there's something else, something Arden believes he's got. "A star maker is somebody who's got flair for detecting a certain magic in people.

"Like the time I signed up The Move, for instance. The band were at their lowest ebb. The whole number with the Harold Wilson postcard had cost them a few bob in their royalties. But", says Arden, "I saw a new potential in Roy Wood. A little bird told me that The Move wanted me, a heavy spokesman, to come along. Their tough image had offended a lot of people at the BBC and it took a lot of persuading on my part to get the band accepted again. First I saw a certain magic in Roy Wood, one of the most underrated songwriters in Britain, and of course, he eventually delivered the goods.

"I tell myself I'm going to do something and I go and do it. If anyone gets in my way, that's their business. I've come out winning. And so have my artists. Roy Wizzard and ELO are doing fabulously well. Roy's Rolls is lying



second to mine outside in the garage. I'm strictly me and that's one thing that keeps going is that I go to bed each night knowing there are would-be managers out there wishing they were the second Don Arden."

**T**HE BIGGEST BAND Don Arden ever had walked into his Carnaby Street offices one day in 1965. They'd picked Arden because the singer had been to stage school with his son, Dave Arden.

"They were in a sorry state, but eventually I agreed to see them and I immediately recognised that magic," he says.

He'd just discovered the Small Faces.

He put them on a summer season bill at the Margate Winter Gardens with The Nashville Teens and The Pretty Things. "As soon as they walked on stage you could tell they were something different, something special. Four Oliver Twists, and they were unbelievable."

So Arden signed them up to his record production and management companies and, in September 1965, they hit the Top 20 with "Watcha Gonna Do About It". But there were stories about the way that record made it so quickly. Arden's a little reticent about that. "Let's say that all kinds of means were used to ensure their success and all we ever did was bring them to the attention of the public a little sooner than normal.

"But we did place them in all the best venues, dressed them in the trendiest clothes and I managed to get them spots on *Thank Your Lucky Stars* and *Ready Steady Go!* without any problems. And they also had a mass of plays on the pirate radio stations, together with an accumulation of publicity."

But, again, there are stories about Arden controlling the band, right down to the time they went to bed each night. Is that so?

"Put it this way, when the boys came to me, the three of them wanted to live in a house together, they wanted to be free to play anytime they wanted. So I rented a house in Pimlico. At that time they didn't have anything at all, no clothes, no furniture. Within three months they had a house, a Mark 10 Jaguar with a chauffeur, a maid to serve them with breakfasts, get their dinners at night and clean their clothes. And after 12 months they had 500 pairs of shoes between them and more clothes than they knew what to do with."

They also had a string of monster hits, "Sha La La La Lee", "Hey Girl", "All Or Nothing" and "My Mind's Eye". But wasn't there some trouble with royalties? "After the Small Faces left me there were certain royalties owed to them.

But they owed me management fees and equipment costs, so the two balanced out. But one doesn't broadcast these things, so perhaps a few people were under the impression I'd cheated. But there's no animosity between us at all, now. In fact, Steve Marriott has approached me about managing him in Europe. Stevie has a very fine manager, Dee Anthony, and if something can be worked out I'll be delighted to accept his offer."

But the Small Faces, says Arden, were the most obvious success story he's ever had. He claimed he invested something like £20,000 in the band. Something happened, though. "After five or six hits the do-gooders in the business started to tell the boys they should make a change," says Arden. And, eventually, he sold the band's production company contract to Immediate Records and the management went to the impresario Harold Davison. It was, he implies, a heavy period.

After the Small Faces, well, Arden formed his own publishing company and went back into the agency business. And one of the bands he came to handle was The Move.

Those stories again.

There were reports that Don Arden had threatened Roy Wood into leaving ELO, something he resents bitterly. "How can I tell an artist like Roy what to do, musically?"

What happened, it seems, was that Wood and Lynne, the two focal points of ELO, were having major

**"Lets just say that all sorts of means were used to ensure the Small Faces' success"**

problems. Wood was getting all the credit, while Lynne was forced into the background.

"So Roy decided to go it alone and he had sufficient confidence to produce something new. As for those reports, well, it's because of my reputation, I suppose. But I can't heavy a man like Roy Wood," he says.

Besides, Wizzard's still managed by Arden. So's ELO. And now he's also taken on Phil Everly. "I've known the Everlys for a long time, and Phil has always had American managers who want him to become Mr Vegas. But Phil wants to stay with a rock'n'roll manager."

So, Don, you've been around this business for 30 years. What don't you like about it all?

"The biggest enemies are the hangers-on. There's a certain element who describe themselves as fans, but all they want to live on is the reflected glory. I've never hesitated in throwing them out of offices.

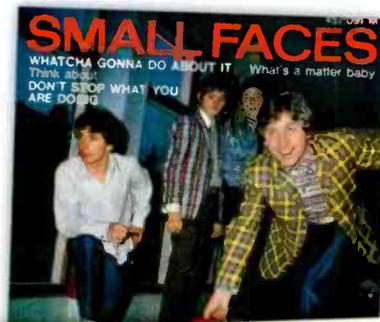
"I'm in the process of writing a book. A lot of people are going to have red faces."

And what's the book going to be called?

"Scum Bags."

Don't mess with Don.

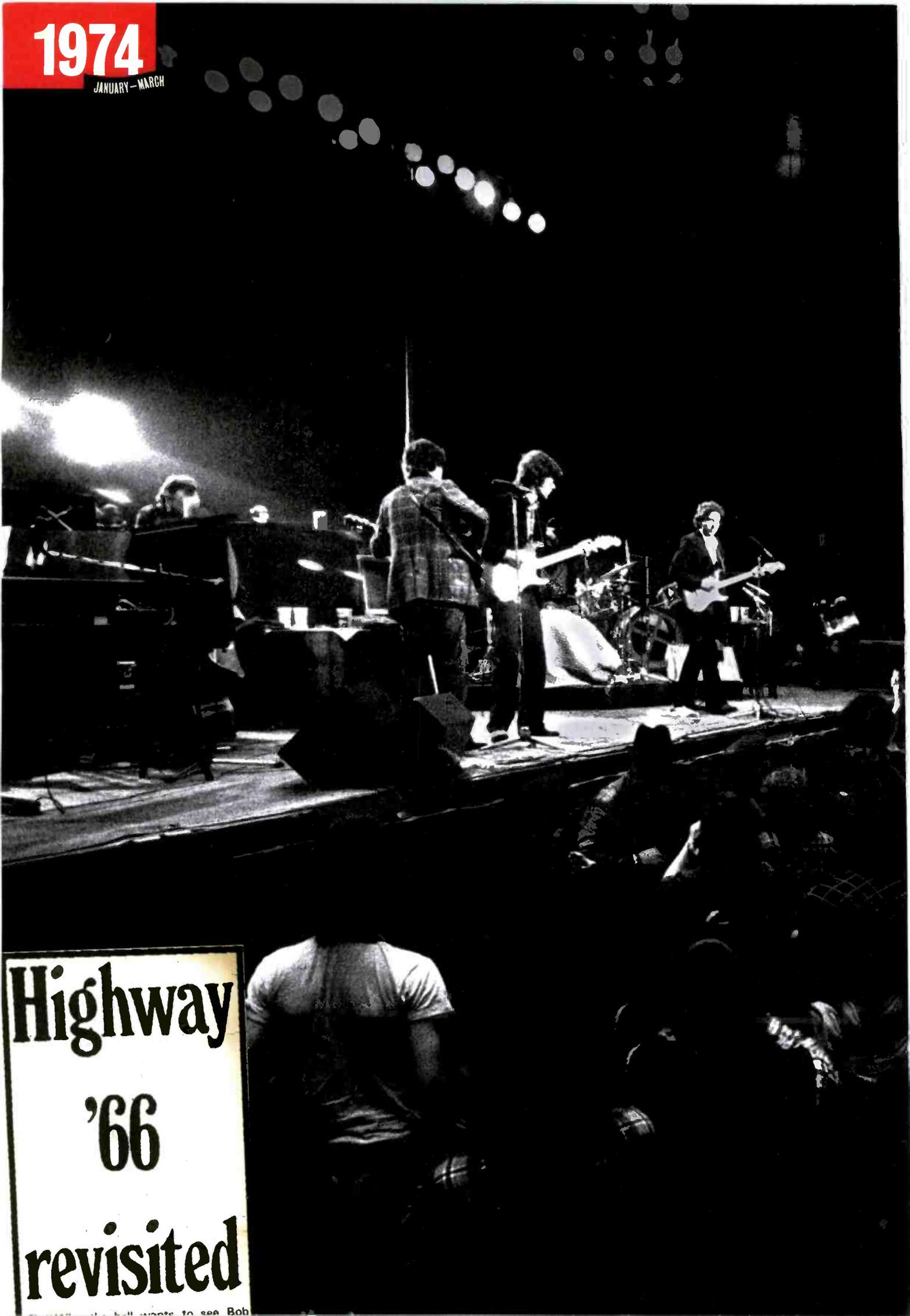
Robert Partridge



# DON ARDEN: THE HIT MAN

**1974**

JANUARY - MARCH

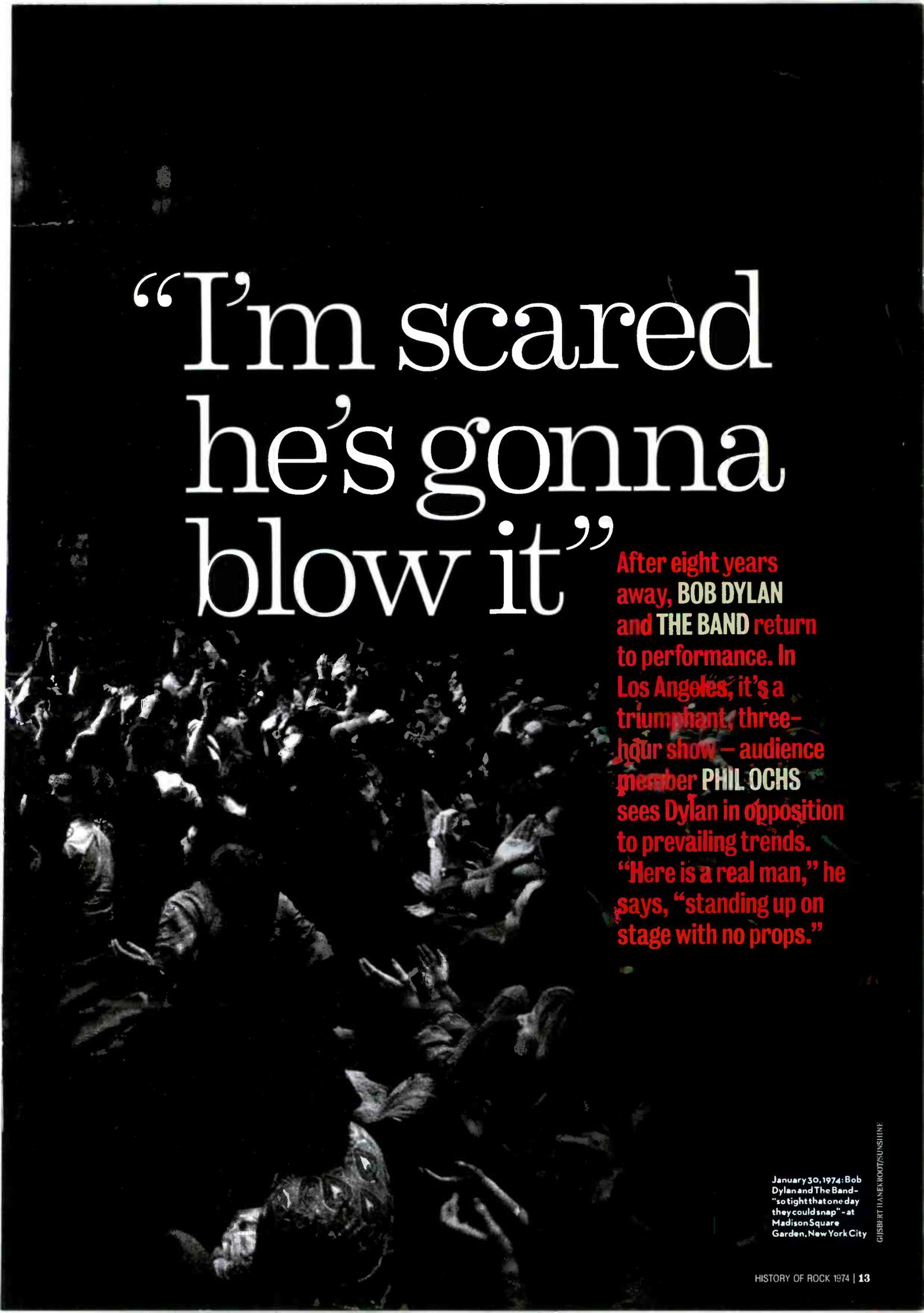


**Highway**

**'66**

**revisited**

... wants to see Bob



“I’m scared  
he’s gonna  
blow it”

After eight years away, **BOB DYLAN** and **THE BAND** return to performance. In Los Angeles, it’s a triumphant, three-hour show – audience member **PHIL OCHS** sees Dylan in opposition to prevailing trends. “Here is a real man,” he says, “standing up on stage with no props.”

January 30, 1974: Bob Dylan and The Band – “so tight that one day they could snap” – at Madison Square Garden, New York City

GUYSBERT HANER/ROOT/SUNSHINE

## — MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 23 —

*"Who the hell wants to see Bob Dylan in concert in 1974? He's history. Can't think of anything I'd want to see less. He should be left in the archives of rock – let's keep our idols on a pedestal, and in the context of the times to which they belong"* – Hollywood publicity guy Gary Stromberg

*"Dylan's only doing this tour for The Band's sake, y'know... to give them the exposure to enormous crowds that they've never had and would never otherwise get"* – Los Angeles gossip

*"I'm sitting here waiting for Dylan to appear on stage more as an obligation than anything else, but I'm real nervous. I'm scared he's gonna blow it. It's kinda unreal. He goes into obscurity, almost, and then comes back to this monstrous-sized tour. Just hope he doesn't shatter all our memories, right?"* – 31-year-old Dylan student

*"I've enjoyed the tour. It was successful and people seemed to enjoy themselves"* – Bob Dylan, backstage after the final Los Angeles show

CYNICISM AND ADRENALIN flowed swiftly round Los Angeles last week as Bob Dylan climaxed the most impactful and influential tour in popular music since The Beatles changed the world and set up a few records, more years ago than it would be polite to recall.

And even the deadliest cynic had to admit that Dylan had re-emerged from his self-imposed isolation to rapturous acclaim. Twenty-one cities and 40 concerts later, and Dylan has regurgitated the entire network of rock, restating his undeniable power as the most significant contemporary composer.

With audiences whose ages range from the lower teens to the late 30s, this has been a triumphant return to the spotlight for an older, wiser man who has turned full circle.

More than being a mere dollar spinner, Dylan's USA tour has acted as a reaffirmation of some basic musical values at a time when, for many rock students, there is a vacuum – or, as Dylan would have it, "no direction home".

Eight years is a long time to be away from touring, but having attended Dylan's final three shows of the trek, last week in Los Angeles, I was astonished at the great shape he was in, physically, philosophically, and musically. On stage, more than ever before, Dylan has acquired a piercing dramatic sense, a total realisation of what each show should be, and any throwaway postures of his early days have been swapped for a scientific approach to what will build up the suspense and please his audience.

The crowds at Los Angeles' cheerless Forum last week totalled 60,000 for three concerts. He could undoubtedly have sold out a dozen shows in a town like this. Tickets priced at \$9 (£4) were fetching up to \$150 (about £65) outside the hall. I saw three young girls weeping because they couldn't afford black market tickets. Those paying homage stood soberly in queues, as if waiting to enter church.

The mood of the crowds seemed one of awesome anticipation at the start, then relieved joy at the end of each three-hour show. To those of us who have been on a Dylan trip for 11 years, for him to make such a successful comeback was more than we could have hoped for.

He whipped through most of his big hits with just a minimal amount of spoken words to each audience, and while some knockers moaned that he had been just going through the motions like a puppet of the past, his treatment of every song was different from all recorded versions. I found it reassuring that he was not simply repeating his show and his phrasings of eight years ago. That would have been the easy way.

The California crowds were un-freaky. "Folkies, not rockers," observed my American friend. Less dope was smoked than at the average American rock concert, which may have indicated that more people were willing to submit to a natural high.

In the car park (£1 to leave your vehicle), a young man poked his head

in our car window and offered a Hare Krishna book which, he insisted, was Dylan's personal wish that everyone should read – and, more important, buy.

"I don't believe you," I said to him, but the point was lost. Next came Dylan T-shirts at \$3. But strangely there were no programmes.

DYLAN CAME ON stage immediately at the start of the shows, to standing ovations. He raced into a speedy "Most Likely You'll Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine" and we were off. The song was a perfect opener with heavy symbolism in the words: "Time will tell just who has fell, and who's been left behind."

Bob has a wiry presence, legs astride the mic yet not in the guise of your average phallic guitar swinger. His microphone technique, especially during the acoustic set, is now extremely polished and he veers to it and from it at precisely the right moments for emphasis.

And the sound! In this revolting construction of a basketball stadium, the effects are perfect, a great achievement for the technical crew, working against terrible acoustic prospects.

The Band rocks behind Dylan, stunningly good musicians whose sound texture and empathy is perfectly attuned to Bob's every move.

"Lay Lady Lay" is next, the words slurred into an even more countryish flavour, and when he goes into "It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry", the words are often incomprehensible. He sings most songs "up" at the end of each line now, giving them a new urgency but tending to expect us to know what the words are.

The Band were in mighty form by this time, with the organ of Garth Hudson, never obtrusive, setting up a wall of sound across each song. All The Band stood out, but on the three shows I saw, Hudson shone. On "Rainy Day Women", with Dylan and the crowd really hammering across "Everybody must get stoned", Levon Helm's drumming was stupendous.

By now, Dylan was more aggressive than when he first stepped on stage. "It Ain't Me Babe" followed, with completely fresh intonation and excellent vocal back-up from Robbie Robertson and Rick Danko. Now, after a drink from a can, Dylan switched to the piano for a stabbing version at one of his finest finger-pointing songs, "Ballad Of A Thin Man".

Applause for this was so heavy that Dylan actually bowed as he made an exit to allow The Band to do their own set.

This proved magical; they make no concessions to appearance but are so tight that one day they could snap. Vocally and instrumentally, they give out an elegant, irresistible sound, perfectly rehearsed and all their own with its subtle infusion of country music. And the songs are fine.

"I Shall Be Released", a slow dirge with a great vocal performance, was followed by the return of Dylan for "All Along The Watchtower", with its splendid imagery lost at such a racing tempo; "Hollis Brown", its raunchy treatment contrasting starkly with the simplicity of the original recording; and then "Knockin' On Heaven's Door" – sung by Dylan as "do-uer" – with The Band doing good back-up vocals.

Dylan's first spoken words came next: "Thank you, we'll be right back." After the interval his acoustic set proved a beauty, but slightly too short. He came out with "She Belongs To Me", sounding fragile, and the biggest roar of the night so far came when he blew harmonica.

It's odd: you might have expected Dylan, conscious of the passage of time, to have renounced all these golden oldies as his creations of yester year and not relevant today. But he was instilling them all with an unequalled energy and urgency, and had chosen the list of songs to be performed with painstaking care, according to his friends.

There was, after "Like A Rolling Stone", an unusual sight. In a rare acknowledgement of the audience, Bob turned to the people sitting behind the stage and nodded his appreciation of their applause – and perhaps at their patience for looking at his back for so long.

Now all the goodies came pouring out with vigour as Dylan knew the marathon performances of his life were nearly over and that he'd won: "Love Minus Zero (No Limit)", "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right", with real honky harmonica, better than ever; "Just Like A Woman", with the old melody barely recognisable, the words moulded into an altogether more forceful message, with the





February 14, 1974 (l-r)  
 Robbie Robertson, Dylan,  
 Rick Danko, Richard  
 Manuel and Levon Helm  
 onstage at the Forum,  
 Inglewood, California

LA FORUM  
**LIVE!**  
 FEBRUARY 13-14

accent on "*woman*". Now he went speedily into "It's All Right, Ma, I'm Only Bleeding", with the spine-chilling topicality of that knife-edged line: "*Even the president of the United States sometimes must have to stand naked.*"

The Band returned with marvellous songs: "Rag Mama Rag", "This Wheel's On Fire", "The Shape I'm In", "The Weight" – as solid as rock. The Band's whole feel is like a blood brother to Dylan's music.

"Forever Young", from the warm and fresh album *Planet Waves*, opened Dylan's final set.

Much of the stuff on the new album is openly personal, the first time I can recall Dylan baring his soul in public. Many artists would be slayed for being maudlin, but somehow he stops just short of it, and "Forever Young" is a simple statement of hope, a song from a father to his five children, a loving piece of paternal poetry.

After that came a thick, heavy and driving sound: "Highway 61 Revisited", and what a great, jumping track it was. Then, like a clarion call from all our yesterdays, "Like A Rolling Stone".

Hudson's swirling organ filled the auditorium. A touch of genius from the head of Bill Graham came next – a revolving ball of light which spun round the entire Forum and made it like fairyland. And on the February 14 shows, a giant "Happy Valentine's Day" card lowered into the back of the hall. The atmosphere was vibrant as Dylan and The Band roared through verse after verse of that mean old song so loaded with innuendo.

We demanded an encore with the traditional American routine of everyone lighting a match or cigarette lighter, and he came back, fittingly, with the song with which he had begun, "Most Likely You'll Go Your Way And I'll Go Mine". It really swung. Dylan had returned to the stage for this with shades, a neat piece of theatre.

Then he made a mistake, pressing on with an abysmal "Blowin' In The Wind". He reduced the song to muzak, at a dreary singalong tempo, and although the crowd duly sang along with it, any meaning or melody the song once had was lost. But that was only one dud moment in a majestic performance.

On the final show in Los Angeles, Dylan – always a man of few words – preceded his encore with: "We'd like to introduce the man who's put this tour together. Without him there would have been no tour. Mr Bill Graham." On stage with a broad smile came Bill Graham, and at the end of this tour which had gone without any big hitch, his release of tension was easy to see.

## He instilled all those golden oldies with energy and urgency

So was the release of the road crew, who in the time-honoured tradition then soaked Bill Graham with buckets of water. After the encore, Dylan held his guitar to the sky in a gesture of triumph, shouted "Goodnight", and it was all over now, baby blue.

Millions of words have been written and broadcast about this event, but few more pertinent than those I gathered from an early Dylanologist and friend of Bob's during his earliest days in Greenwich Village, singer Phil Ochs. Phil saw the shows in Philadelphia, New York and Los Angeles, and told me:

"The net effect of this tour is very healthy for the state of the country and the state of music and the development of new songwriters. In my opinion, popular music has become very degenerate from 1967 on. Look at this possibility: a 13-year-old kid who's listening to today's new stuff, or maybe even playing in a rock group, is experiencing Alice Cooper, David Bowie, Mick Jagger or Lou Reed. These people he has to regard as giants!

"But to me, Alice Cooper is a reflection of a sick society. So young kids think, perhaps, that making music has to go hand in hand with a stupid stage show. This is ridiculous, and that's what Dylan's concerts have proved.

"The social value of Dylan's tour is that here is a real man, standing up on stage with no props, and making some fine music. The man whom I, and many others, consider to be the greatest song lyricist of all time, going through his paces.

"I hope and believe," said Ochs, "that this will have a healthy and sobering effect on the state of music, and cut out the madness."

And that's a passionate piece of intelligence. Emotional attachment to Dylan aside, critical evaluations are hardly necessary in assessing the musical worth of the 1974 American tour.

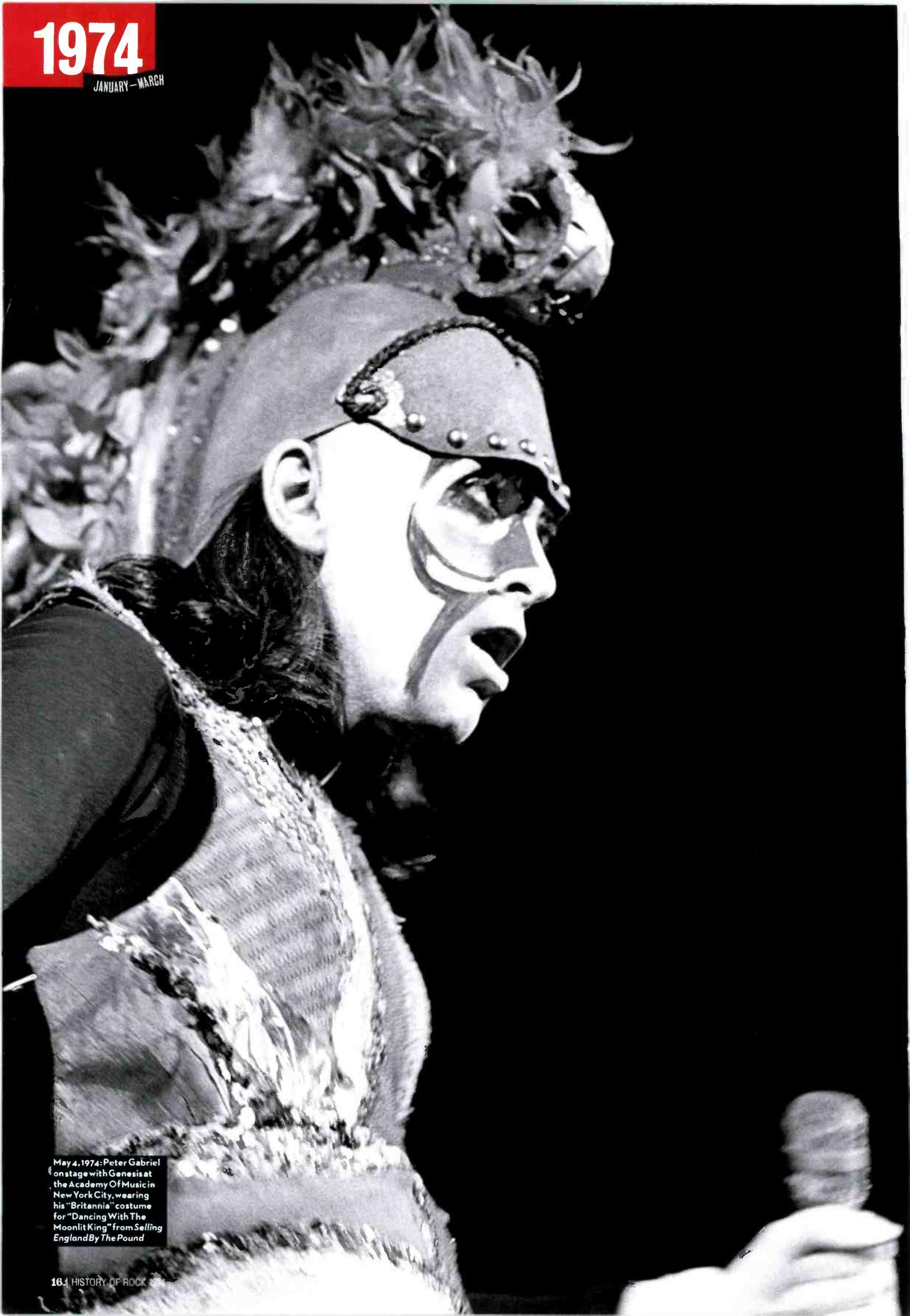
It doesn't matter that his guitar was occasionally out of tune, or that his voice showed signs of overwork, or that some people were enjoying sneering at the amount of money the tour will gross, or whether he did it for personal kicks or even to simply feed his ego.

What matters only is that he did it. And the vibes have been great. At a crucial time in the evolution of music, the tour will hopefully act as a catalyst for a saner world of music.

And at the very least, the Dylan tour has made a lot of old men very happy. *Ray Coleman* •

1974

JANUARY—MARCH



May 4, 1974: Peter Gabriel onstage with Genesis at the Academy Of Music in New York City, wearing his "Britannia" costume for "Dancing With The Moonlit King" from *Selling England By The Pound*

# “We had an underground mystique”

With remarks from “the Geesin report” in mind, GENESIS embark on a landmark year. In spite of setbacks (cancelled tour, stolen equipment, faulty explosions), Peter Gabriel is confident their new LP *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* “will break all records for pretentiousness.”

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 19 —

PETER GABRIEL, MAN of a thousand faces, is now also a man of several voices. One at least swoops upwards into the stratosphere, gibbers madly, then drops into the bowels of the earth. It's a frightening effect and can only be induced by judicious inhalation of noxious fumes.

Peter explained the trick and described how Genesis fared on their last American tour, when I called at his abode in a quiet backwater off London's Bayswater Road last week.

There were several alarming tastes—as well as noises—to be experienced in the Gabriel household, as Peter held the fort while his wife was away visiting relations. Reverting to temporary bachelor status, he had to cook his own meals as well as cope with an endless stream of telephone calls, and a flood of rainwater pouring into the lavatory.

“It's an optional, I mean compulsory, shower,” he warned.

He looked harassed and the suntan acquired on a brief holiday in Hawaii was beginning to pale.

Genesis, due this week for a series of concerts at London's Theatre Royal, were girding up loins, ready to deliver once again their unique and sensational brand of rock and theatre.

Although Peter was well together when I arrived, he got so bemused by the ringing phone, and sundry visitors, that it affected me as well, and I found myself wandering out of the house, babbling to myself. “Which way do I go—ah yes, down the stairs.”

But before tottering out into the daylight, we chatted sufficiently to report that all is well with the band. While they still haven't taken America by storm, they are building up a solid enough »

GETTY

GENESIS  
THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY



following there and each tour is getting better. Most important, their enthusiasm for progress on all levels has not waned.

So what events had transpired in the States, and what were the facts in the case of Mr Gabriel and the squeaky voice?

"I had hiccups for two days solid in LA. I had tried using some helium on stage to get a Mickey Mouse voice. It was really quite worrying, although I thought it was funny at first. It got a bit tiring, waking up in the morning and hiccuping."

The helium had been lying around the Atlantic Records office where they had been using it for a Dr John balloon-blowing session.

"I started playing about with it, and used it on the introductions. I started off speaking in a high, squeaky voice and some of the audience thought, 'It's true what they say about people who dress up.' Then my voice sank a few octaves and everybody was confused.

You see, the gas acts as a less dense medium for the voice. Any more food, by the way?"

No thanks - what did you do to cure the hiccups?

"Well, eventually I drank a pint of sugar and water and it seemed to go. It moved from one end to the other. Before that I tried all kinds of gulping and shock treatment. We were playing at the Roxy Club in LA and on my last costume change, when I change from black to white, instead of the white costume, I appeared dressed up as Santa Claus.

"I enjoyed that, and it went down well because we did six performances at the club and some

people had been coming to every gig. So the change was a surprise for them. One thing we found on the tour was it's harder and harder to get exploding equipment. We had one wiring which had to get hot before it would cause an explosion.

"Normally when we expect the flash we all move back and shut our eyes. But it didn't go off and we thought, 'That's it, we've ruined it tonight.' Then about 10 seconds later I had moved up to the front and - POW! It was a really big shock for us!

"It's harder to get explosives with all the terrorist things going on, and you need a licence now. And to get the licence you have to be vetted by the police and proved to be a responsible citizen with no left-wing tendencies. We may have to employ an exploder - full time."

What was the Roxy Club like?

"It's owned by David Geffen, a plush place with tables and it seats about five hundred. For us it was really amazing. We got there for the first show, thinking we were going in really cold, and it was one of the best welcomes we have ever had. And they still liked us when we went away. And as I said, some stayed for all six performances - poor suckers!

"It was our first time on the West Coast and we found we had a sort of underground mystique. One guy from a music paper said we were probably the last of the underground bands, and in a way it seems to have spread on the West - a strange, intense cult thing focused on us.

"The records haven't crashed into the chart or anything, but seem to be selling well, and we got some of the best reactions we've had in the States so far.

"It was really exciting. Montreal was good too, and for some reason French Canada has caught on."

Were Genesis besieged with cries for "boogie" and to "get it on", as has happened in the past in the States?

"Well, fortunately this time, pretty well all the people who were there knew something about us. So we had a much better reception.

"I'm sure there must have been some heckling, but I can't bring to mind any. I quite enjoy it sometimes. Ron Geesin has a word for it, which he calls 'prickly static'. If there is heckling, you can get a few sparks flying. But audiences have filled themselves with pills and chemical substances and ground to a halt.

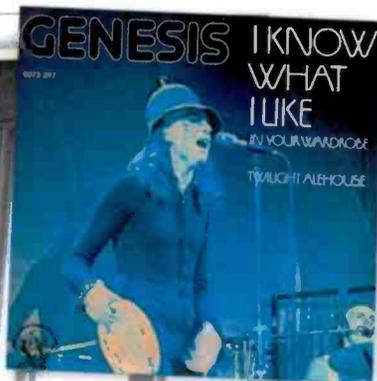
"But there wasn't nearly so much drug-taking in the States among the kids, this time around. Wine and yoga seem to be catching on. Not often together. (Laughter) Drugs aren't quite so trendy as they used to be, at least among the older people. The schoolkids are still into it."

How about Genesis' management - haven't there been some changes made?

"Tony Smith is our manager now. We got into a strange situation where we had three managers. Roles were not clearly defined and there wasn't enough contact between them. So it got a bit messy and in the end Tony came in. He travels with us, and can be there - on the spot. So it's a much better situation for us. And things are getting brighter every day in our bank manager's eyes. We have a slogan - 'Black by May'. And as long as we keep our writing situation healthy, the band will be all right.

"There is a high level of tolerance among us on the road, but each album is a testing

## "It's harder to get explosions with all the terrorist things going on"



"We're all going to live in a house in Surrey to work". Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins take a break from rehearsals



time for all of us, you know, the democratic process of composition. Ron Geesin, who came on the British tour with us, wrote a special Geesin Report on the band which was a three-page critique of Genesis' presentation, and it was full of very good suggestions, one or two of which we've tried.

"A lot of it was details, but it does seem to have made a difference. At Drury Lane we will be doing a full show ourselves, hopefully including some of the older material because we haven't had time to get any new stuff written and we won't have until Easter anyway. And we've only done one tour with the last lot of material anyway, so there will still be a lot of people who haven't heard it.

"We haven't rehearsed yet for the Theatre Royal, but I went down this morning to have a look, and it's a lovely place. It's a tremendously moody place; you could well imagine it being haunted. But can ghosts buy records? We wanted to find somewhere we could do theatre, and Tony found us the venue.

"Originally we were hoping to do something more elaborate, but the equipment got stuck in the States, and hopefully it will arrive in time. Somebody didn't have the right papers—one of those things. We've got a few ideas for the show, but we don't know as yet how many we'll be allowed to do. It's a nice situation that you can get the feel of the place. I really like to do weekly gigs rather than one nighters."

What was Genesis' main objective for 1974?

"We want to become rich and famous." (Laughter.)

### — MELODY MAKER MAY 25 —

**W**ELL—HAVE Genesis finally cracked America? Are they now in the Moody Blues/Jethro Tull bracket? "It's still early days," says their ebullient drummer Phil Collins. But a certain bounce to his gait, and a swift hand at cracking open cans of powerful foreign lager, would indicate that all is well with the lads who just scored a home run with "I Know What I Like".

While Genesis have been romping around the concert halls of America, they have been keeping up appearances at home with their first big hit single, a cut from *Selling England By The Pound*, and it has certainly given this most unusual of groups a cheering boost. Phil was sporting a drastically trimmed hairstyle when he appeared at the Soho headquarters of his record company this week. And a commando jacket gave the impression of a man who will brook no nonsense and is going places, armed to the teeth.

Except that Phil's armament consists of tough tom-toms and sniping snare drums. And he is planning to add more to the battery of percussion effects that made "What I Like", such a success.

"It's strange. We were in Boston when we heard it was a hit. We only released the single to help people get into the album, and it certainly seems to be having an effect. Even *Nursery Cryme*, one of our oldest albums, is starting to move again. The single hasn't been a hit in the States yet, but it is being re-released.

"The band is going to take two months off for writing now and we're all going to live in a house in Surrey to work. They're going to bring the new Island mobile studio down to us to try and capture more of the excitement and feeling we put into our playing. Whenever I tape a rehearsal it always seems to have more feeling than when the final LP comes out after it's been mixed and remixed in the studio."

It seemed as if Genesis weren't getting much time off from work?

"Not really. We had our guitars stolen in America and that put us back on schedule. Peter has moved house from London to Bath and his wife is expecting a baby, so naturally he wants to spend some time at home. I've inherited a family, too, so things are pretty good."

What happened about the guitars?

"Oh we had six pinched, but two were returned. What puzzles me is that the guitars returned were virtually un-sellable. There was a double-necked 12-string bass and a special 12-string acoustic guitar. No dealer would accept them because they are so rare. After this next LP we've got a European tour, and then a short British tour, playing two or three nights at different places, and ending up at Wembley on November 4.

"Then we go back to the States. The plan is for a month on the East Coast and Midwest."



Genesis in 1974: (l-r) Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins

Last time we spoke, Phil had been talking about the possibility of a solo LP, as apart from his drumming talents he is also a fine singer.

"At the beginning of next year we'll get our own things together—maybe the solo albums. The band is reaching a stage where it can afford to do solo LPs. The concerts were very well received and attended in America. We played to 4,000 a night and most of them were sold out.

"In America we were playing our own concerts this time, and not supporting anybody, which meant that at least 60 per cent of the audience came to hear our music.

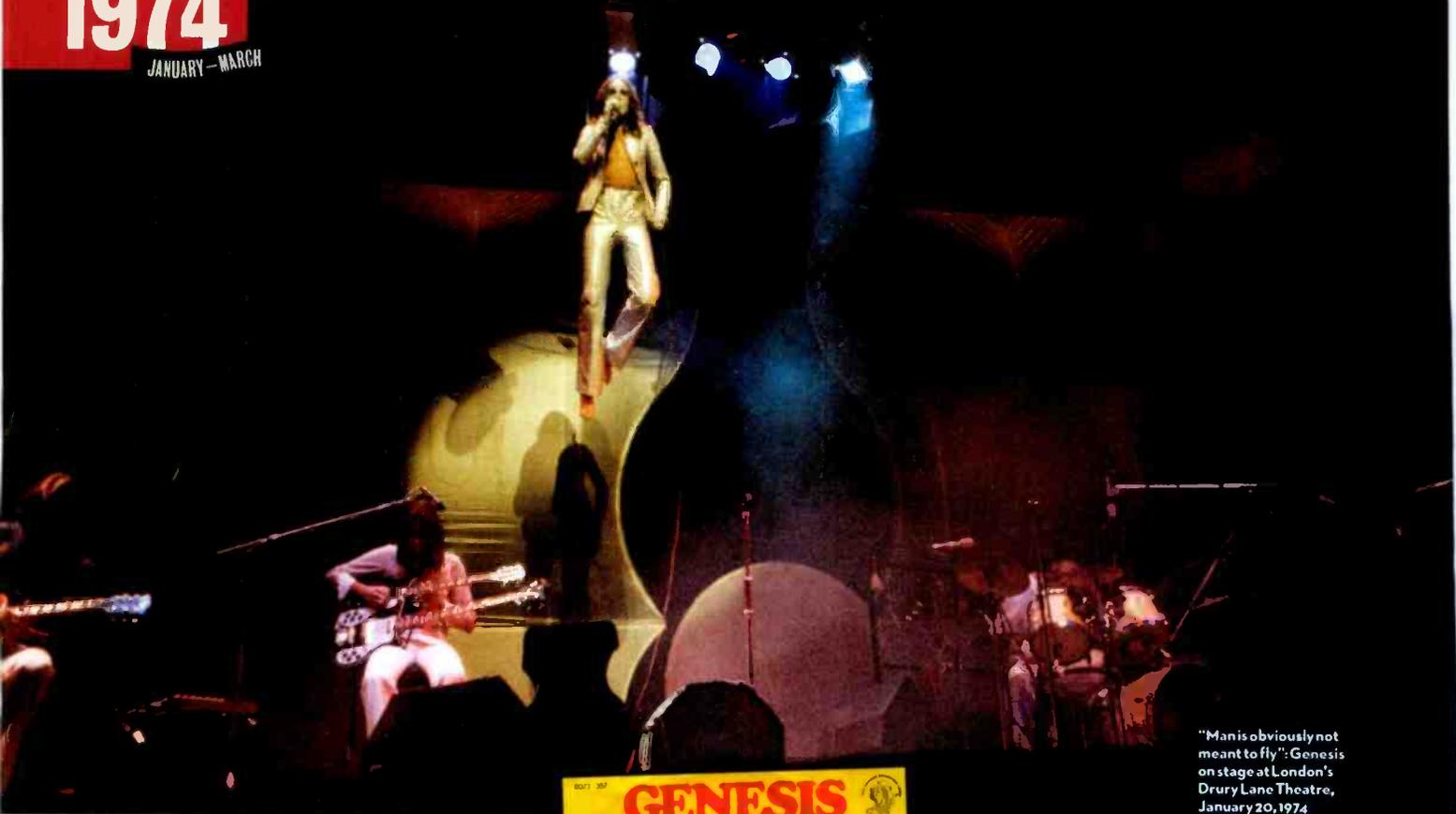
"The rest were either curious, or had come to see something that we're not. We are very vulnerable as an act. We're so open to heckling, when Peter tells his stories or there is a very quiet section of music. But there was surprisingly little heckling.

"One night Peter was moving from microphone to microphone to speak to the audience, and everyone 'died'. We just didn't realise what was happening and the audience began to heckle.

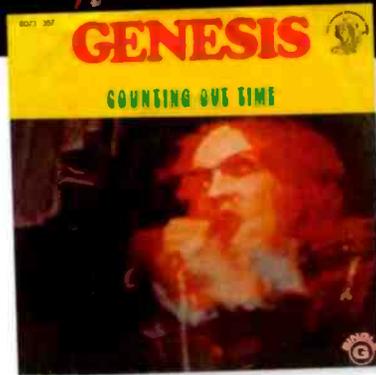
"Peter started shouting back, but of course, the kids were just complaining that they couldn't hear us. Terrible!

"One of the bad spots was the Winterland in San Francisco, which is a boogie hall. People »

# Genesis: England rules the waves!



"Man is obviously not meant to fly": Genesis onstage at London's Drury Lane Theatre, January 20, 1974



have to stand up to see the band – no seats. So anybody who has to stand up for two hours to see a band is bound to get irritable. There were people just wandering around, they probably didn't even know a band was on.

"Overall we were very satisfied with the tour and it's given us a lot more confidence. The money has gone up a bit – but it's still early days. No, we didn't do any TV. We had a disastrous show in France once and we vowed never to do TV again. We had to play 'Supper's Ready' five times before they could get it right, and the piece lasts 25 minutes each time. They had some good effects and were really trying, but in the end we walked off and said, 'We're getting the plane home!' By the fifth time you've played it, there's no feeling left and it just drives you mad when they keep calling out 'STOP!'"

"We tried to make a film of the act at Shepperton studios, but for some reason it just doesn't come across. When we saw the film, we couldn't say anything to each other. It wasn't right. They were going to use a bit for *Top Of The Pops*, but we'd sooner have Pan's People dancing."

Phil shook his head when it came to discussing plans for the next Genesis album: "I can't think in terms of what it will sound like. It's daunting. I'd like it to be freer, even more so than the last one."

"The stage act will be the next LP, and how that will be presented, no one knows. I'd like to see it veer away from headaddresses and costume changes, and for Peter to use his hands more in mime, just in the black suit. But we haven't talked about it."

"The last LP related to England, but we only realised that halfway through making it. The theme just seemed to emerge. It helped us a lot in the States, and anything English seems to be a help. For instance, the waitress in the cafe won't spit in your eye, and you get double helpings instead." *Chris Welch*

### — MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 26 —

**A** MAN APPROACHED ME upon a flight of stairs in a West End cinema recently, sporting a black beard and dark-blue velvet suit. He smiled a greeting and yet was unrecognisable to me. There was something devilish in his expression, which hinted that he understood my discomfort, rather like Sherlock Holmes confronting Doctor Watson in one of his various disguises.

"Don't you know me?" cackles the old crone, begging for alms. It was man o' a thousand faces, Peter Gabriel, of that most secret society, Genesis, who came within an inch of being struck down by my sword stick.

"Great thunder, Peter, what are you doing here in the stews of Tottenham Court Road?" It was quite simple really. Even Lestrade could have solved the matter. Peter had decided to grow a beard. And brush out that curious patch over his forehead. And in the ensuing days, he was to be unrecognisable, even to his manager and promoter, "Just my yearly change of image," giggled the culprit.

But Peter and the rest of the band were in no giggling mood come last Friday. For then it was clear their forthcoming tour had to be cancelled. An agonising decision because it was to have included

their first appearance at the Empire Pool, Wembley, which had sold out in a matter of hours. And after three months work preparing music and a new stage act, they were all keyed up for their first major shows here in a year.

Apart from the disappointment, there is also the vital matter of cost. Although the tour will now be staged next April, it is no easy matter to pull out at the last moment. And the entire promotion and work schedule has been thrown out of gear. Peter explained what had happened in the somewhat surprising surroundings of a grace-and-favour house near Kensington Palace. His wife's father is the Queen's secretary, and while he has been finishing off the forthcoming album, Peter has been staying in town. It was a cold, wet, stormy day, and eerie shadows cast themselves around the attic room overlooking the windswept park.

"They say this room is haunted," revealed Peter, curling up on a settee with his cats, Bruce and Stockhausen. "Not a ghost, but a manifestation. People don't sleep in here very well. They suffer from strange dreams."

Far away from the roar of Knightsbridge traffic, all was silent as the grave outside, save the footsteps of a lone policeman, patrolling against spies from the Central Powers, anarchists and traitors.

What treachery had caused the cancellation?

"It's a real drag. Steve Hackett had his hand stitched up yesterday, but he should be able to play again in about three weeks. He crushed a wine glass in his hand. It was an incredibly stupid thing. And it happened at the most important time. It's particularly upsetting when you think of all the fans who have stayed out all night waiting for tickets."

"What we are trying to do is refund those who don't want to keep the tickets, or they can keep them for the concerts in April."

There must have been a lot of swearing at the news?

"Yeah. There still is. We are left in a sticky situation. Apart from anything else, we've lost all the money deposited on the halls. I think the rest of us will have to go and busk outside other people's concerts."

"The accident happened about five days ago, and the first doctor didn't think it was that serious. Then it was discovered Steve had cut through

some tendons, and even a Django-style Hackett would have been ineffective because his fingernails had been damaged. I think it happened at an Alex Harvey reception – the story varies. We're not a group that goes around smashing up hotel rooms, Rolls-Royces and TV sets. But Steve goes out for a little, tentative raving, and this happens."

Couldn't they get a dep guitarist?

"Not really. There is more improvisation on this album and a lot of arranging. It would have meant an incredible amount of work for anyone to learn all the parts. I don't know if you could relay an apology to all the people who bought tickets – especially to those who waited all night?"

"However, because of overrunning with the LP, by April we'll be much better rehearsed. That's a small consolation. We were trying to do some shows before Christmas, but we couldn't get the halls again until April."

The new album has a curious title, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. What does it all mean?

Peter separated the fighting cats and attempted to explain. "There were various alternative titles bandied about."

Was the title inspired by the band's work in the States?

"No I don't think so, although it's a fantasy beginning in New York. The central character has a basis of speed and New York is a city of extremes. This album is split up into self-contained song units, but it is based on one story, happily more direct than in the past, although still involved with fantasy. We're trying to make the writing more accessible."

"The character's name is Rael. I spent a long time thinking of a name that would owe nothing to any particular nationality. Then I found out three days ago that he was the name of a character on The Who's *Sell Out* album and was later the basis for *Tommy*."

"I don't know if my memory has been playing subversive tricks on me, but I was annoyed. Never mind, the name still serves, and it has no traceable ethnic origins."

Was there some Biblical connotation to the story?

"Oh no, I don't think so. Biblical rock was last year, man," Peter laughed. "The hero isn't the lamb, either. The lamb is merely a catalyst."

I exchanged glances with photographer B Wentzell. "Very interesting," we said, sipping tea, and feeling like a pair of constables, listening to one of Holmes's unfathomable theories.

According to Peter, the lamb's sojourn on Broadway is "just a random external event. This will break all bounds and records previously set for pretentiousness. No – nobody's said it yet – we're waiting, in anticipation."

"We've always been scared of double LPs, but this one won't just be padding. The temptation has been to keep going back and remixing tracks, but now time has run out, and we've got to finish it tonight."

"We're very excited about the stage act. Geoffrey Shaw, the artist, has prepared several slides for us, which will be projected on three screens behind us, which will simulate a panoramic scene, and will relate closer to what we're doing on stage than the family snapshots we tried last time."

"We hope people will like our new show. We've been criticised before for being too wishy-washy. Geoffrey has held exhibitions when he's put screens on all the walls of a room, where the illusion is much stronger. Ideally we'd like to have a 3D situation and hand out glasses to the audience. It would be fun to see them all wearing glasses. Something for us to watch. But we're actually trying to keep the amount of equipment down. It can get to the stage where it becomes too unwieldy and impersonal."

"We're trying to do more with less. The last LP was not suitable visually for the things I was trying to do, and of course we don't really write for the live side. We find out how to project the music visually after it's written. As this is a double album there are more things that will be appropriate. I'm still an amateur, you know. I'm learning all the time."

We began to reminisce about some of the old Gabriel kinetic art displays (or stunts as they are known in showbusiness). 'Ere Pete, remember the time you came up on a ramp at Reading Festival inside a white pyramid? Cor, that was a turn-up for the books and no mistake.

"Oh yes, I enjoyed that. Great fun. And the harness of course, you remember that? When we did that in New York we were surrounded by incompetents with union cards, and the wires got twisted."

"There is a split-second decision to be made when I come off the ground, and the wires got caught round my neck, which freaked me out. Man is obviously not meant to fly."

While Genesis were away in the Americas, they managed to grab a hit single in England, "I Know What I Like". Had it come as a surprise to Peter?

"We always wanted to have a single in the chart, ever since we started out as pop writers at school. It only took us seven years to get there. There is a new single being taken from the album called 'Counting Out Time'."

"There are other things being planned outside the group as well. I've had an LP planned for a long time with Martin Hall, a poet and songwriter. Every year I say, 'I'll do it next year.' We've written some things together and there is fodder out of two minds rather than the simple ego-gratification of a solo venture."

"Mike Rutherford is working on a solo LP with Anthony Phillips, the old guitarist. He'll probably finish it while Steve is in hospital. Phil Collins has been doing quite a few sessions for Ringo's label. By the way, we got to meet Eno at

Island Studios, and he's done some voice sounds on the LP."

It is sometimes forgotten that apart from his role as singer and master of disguises Peter is something of a percussionist as well as a flute player of considerable ability.

"I used to be a drummer until my kit got taken away from me. A major revolution took place when my bass drum got moved off stage, leaving me naked in front of the audience."

"But Phil is getting more tolerant of my bass drum now, or else he's getting senile. Most rock singers have nothing to do except wiggle their bottoms when they aren't singing. But when the music gets exciting – I want to hit something too!"

"I don't keep up my flute playing as much as I should. To me songwriting is the most important, and being a Miscellaneous Instrumentalist is secondary. I must be the most inept Misc Inst player."

Peter then played tracks from the album, including the single. Owing perhaps to the influence of the ghostly manifestation, only one speaker was working. Nevertheless it sounded superb. Beautiful songs, fascinating lyrics, and sensitive, subtle playing, mixed with humour and harmonies. What more could a Genesis fan desire?

As Peter played part of *The Lamb*, he pointed out one of the Eno voice effects: "The riff is constantly changing, with different instruments taking over. You can't hear too much of it with only one speaker."

Phil Collins' drum sound was outstanding, with great booming-but-musical tom-toms, and lots of subtle effects, like a hint of phasing on a snare-drum roll. One of the tracks was called "Hairless Heart" with lots of clever tempo changes, and "Counting Out Time" itself has a marvellously lunatic guitar break that sounds like a human voice put through a synthesized kazoo.

I can see this effect being pinched by hordes of single makers, ere long. "The Carpet Crawlers" has soft, gentle vocals and a bubbling background, but as Peter said: "This is like putting a track through a washing machine. It's really shrunk!"

But he promised that when Genesis finally hit the road, "We'll play all of these songs, if the audiences will allow us. It lasts 90 minutes and I suppose it depends how strong it is as a stage act." Chris Welch •

## "We find out how to project the album visually after it's written"

TONY SMITH FOR  
JOHN SMITH ENTERTAINMENTS  
PRESENTS

# GENESIS

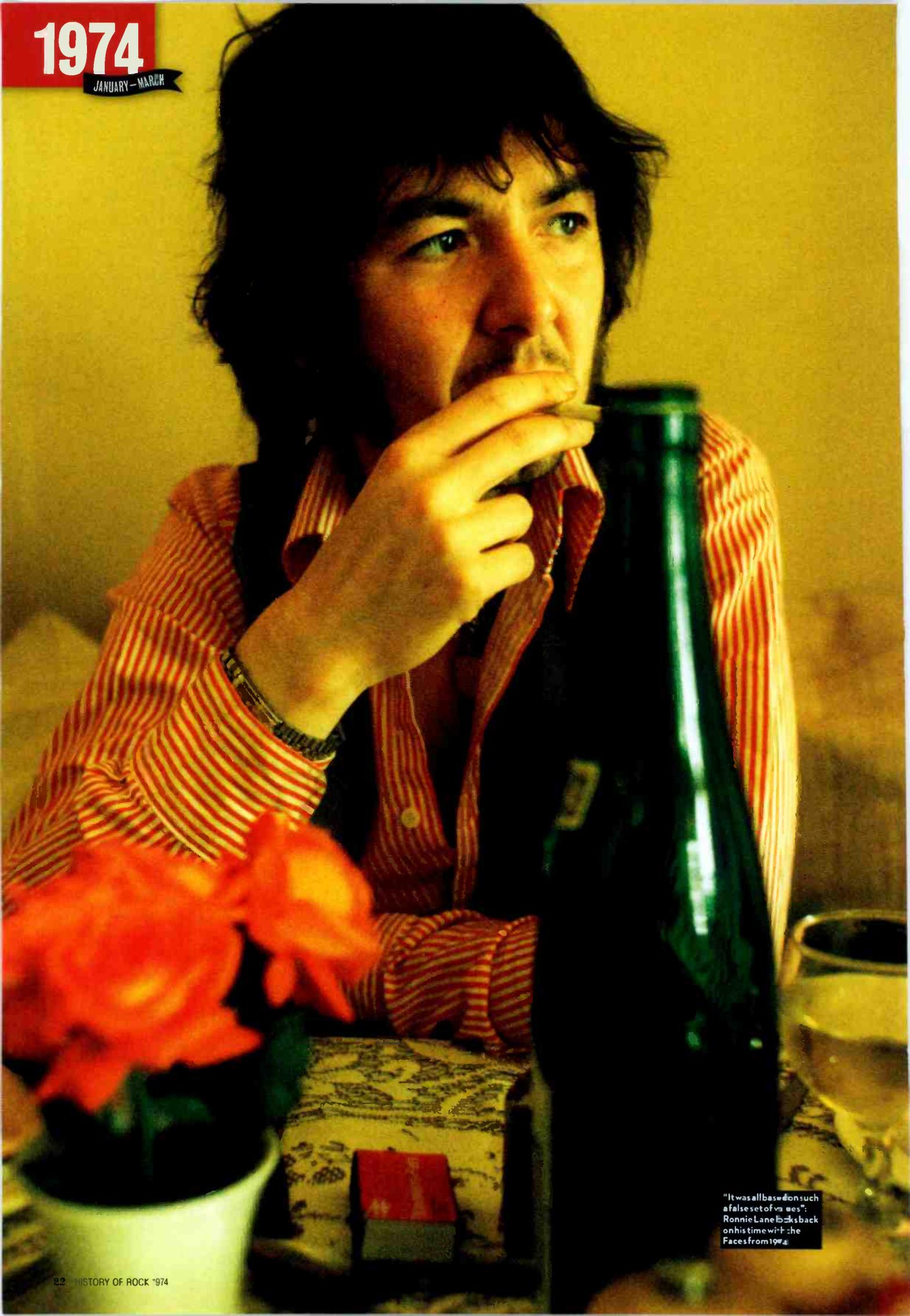
ON TOUR  
OCTOBER NOVEMBER 1974

Tuesday, 29th October Wednesday, 30th October <b>THE ODEON, NEWCASTLE</b>	Wednesday, 6th November Thursday, 7th November <b>THE USHER HALL, EDINBURGH</b>
Friday, 1st November Saturday, 2nd November <b>THE PALACE THEATRE, MANCHESTER</b>	Friday, 8th November Saturday, 9th November <b>THE HIPPODROME, BRISTOL</b>
Monday, 4th November <b>THE EMPIRE POOL, WEMBLEY</b>	Monday, 11th November Tuesday, 12th November <b>THE HIPPODROME, BIRMINGHAM</b>

All tickets for all concerts on sale at Theatre Box Offices  
on Monday 16th September.  
All concerts except Wembley, 09.00. 12.00. 15.00.

1974

JANUARY—MARCH



"It was all based on such a false set of values". Ronnie Lane looks back on his time with the Faces from 1974.

“No telephones, no bills. It’s wonderful!”

Life on the open road is working out for RONNIE LANE’S SLIM CHANCE and their rolling revue, the Passing Show. Caravans? Buses? A big top? “Only I would be mad enough to try it,” says Ronnie.

— NME FEBRUARY 2 —

**D**URING HIS LAST year with the Faces, Ronnie Lane seemed increasingly distant from the band. He would sit backstage in a crumpled suit and waistcoat all worn and wasted, with a stubby chin and a glum expression. Whereas Rod Stewart and Ron Wood were especially committed to all the faster and flashier delights of touring, Lane was tired and disillusioned.

He started living on a different level from the others. On the Faces’ British tour a year ago, the band flew to concerts in a private jet—all except Ronnie Lane, who would travel with his family from one town to another in a Land Rover. Without even knowing it, maybe, he was forming for himself a gentle alternative to the Faces’ more blunt and lofty style.

Also every now and again, Ronnie would be troubled by this vision. In it he saw himself, his family and a group of musicians travelling around the highways, stopping and putting on a show when they felt like it, all in the form of a musical circus.

At first he dismissed it as naive and idealistic—similar ideas had been found impractical by bands like the Stones and Pink Floyd—but gradually it took hold. Now, several months further on, Ronnie Lane believes it can work. He’s formed his band, Slim Chance, and hired a marquee from Chipperfield’s Circus.

With the success of his single “How Come”, the vision could move nearer to reality. He seems undeterred by the problems and excited by the prospects. He might look and in many ways act like an optimist, an idealist and somehow oddly vulnerable. His ideas are rather »

Presenting, with apologies to Chipperfield’s Circus

**The Ronnie Lane Dreamshow**

PREPARE TO ROCK ‘N’ ROLL UP FOR YOUR TICKETS SOON

eccentric by rock world standards. It's like he needs some protection at times, a few people around who care and are interested in what he feels.

The exact lineup of Slim Chance has yet to be finalised, but it looks like featuring Bruce Rowlands (drums), Chris Stewart (bass), Jimmy Jewell (sax, clarinet), Billy Livsey (keyboards) and Kevin Westlake (guitar). Lane himself will concentrate on rhythm guitar and vocals rather than bass, and there's also the possibility Gallagher & Lyle might figure in the operation in some way.

"I've no reason to ask them to chuck their career in with mine," says Lane. "But we've talked about it and all we know at present is that we enjoy working together."

Even though this interview at London's modish Portobello Hotel was his fifth of the day, Lane leaned forward, elbows on knees and talked eagerly about the things to come. The new band, he said, had turned out exactly how he hoped when he left the Faces.

"I didn't want the loudness the Faces had, I didn't want all them big amplifiers 'cos I can't sing against 'em anyway. I just want the band to be pleasurable, good-time and entertaining. I think it is."

Also, it's a chance to give his own songs a wider airing. With the Faces, it often seemed that Lane's neat, sad little songs were neglected in favour of the more snorty, strident efforts of Stewart and Wood.

"I felt that at times. It was nobody's fault, but I always had the feeling that when people paid money to see the Faces, they paid money to see Rod Stewart sing. I couldn't have sung with the band comfortably anyway, but I got to thinking it would be nice to get me rocks off singing my own songs. I've got no desire to be the great frontman, but I would like to sing 'em, 'cos I don't think they're that bad."

It was about the same time that Lane's horror of the more conventional methods of touring turned into a neurosis.

"It's all right when you're a kid, but I've got a family now and I love 'em - so I don't like to be away from them. Also it was all based on such a false set of values. Why should I want to travel on a private plane? I've done it so many times it's the same as travelling in a car. Also I began to wonder where it was all going to end. I'd been at it eight years and it was no different from when I started except it was faster and a lot bigger.

"The only answer for me now is this circus idea. If it doesn't work out I'll probably just live on my farm in Wales and write songs. Yet I wouldn't like to do that, because I still like to show off on stage."

One wonders over the likely reaction of the rest of the Faces when Ronnie voiced his thoughts. How much sympathy would Rod Stewart have with touring in a circus, living on a farm in Wales, or in Ronnie's guiding light, Meher Baba?

"I wouldn't say the band wanted me to leave," said Lane. "I think it was a shock to one and all. There was a bit of friction at one point, 'cos I said to 'em I'd just be the bass player - nothing more, 'cos I was up to 'ere with it. And they said I couldn't do that, and I said I felt I had to leave."

"I think me leaving has given the band a kick up the arse, in fact. It's helped put a lot of things in perspective and has probably made them a better working band. Like we were very emotional with each other at the start, and now I think that's been cleared."

Soon to the circus. Apart from Slim Chance, the show is likely to feature an acrobat, a couple of dancers and a local talent spot. Ronnie doesn't expect it to be hugely profitable. He'll be happy if it just gives him a living wage: "I'm just trying to slow down the business of going on the road so I can cope with it. This is never gonna get any bigger than when it starts out, or at least I hope it won't. I really think this kind of thing is missing in music today. It's all gone away from the people. It's like all the bands are running round entertaining the business, and the people are left out in the cold."

"It's all so simple, really, that I can't see why it hasn't been done before. I suppose it's just that most bands prefer a bit of luxury rather than travellin' around in a wagon."

Apart from these ideas buzzing around in his head, Lane hasn't been altogether idle since he left the Faces. He's been recording an album with Ron Wood for a film soundtrack, Mahoney's Estate, and indirectly been involved in the recording of The Who's *Quadrophenia* since the original tapes were all recorded in his mobile.

It was through Pete Townshend, in fact, that some time earlier he became a devotee of Meher Baba: "I was very interested in the spiritual side of things after I'd been through various other scenes, and Pete had been going through the same thing. We met on an aeroplane on that terrible Who-Small Faces tour of Australia where we all got thrown out of the country, and it was Pete who told me all about Baba. At first I thought he was just another guru, but now I know he's all right for me. But I've no desire to turn the rest of the world on to him."

Nevertheless, Ronnie Lane has been through a few changes since his days in London's East End with different ambitions from the usual cockney kid. The trail has taken him a long way from the Mile End Road.

He remembers: "When I was young I was really scared. It seemed like me prospects amounted to being a lorry driver or working in a factory or being a tramp. I was really scared that was going to be my lot. So I suppose I've always been a bit more of an instigator really; more so than a musician or anything. I think it would be fair to say I was an instigator of the Small Faces and the Faces. Now I'm instigating this new thing. It's been my saving grace really." *James Johnson*

## — MELODY MAKER JUNE 8 —

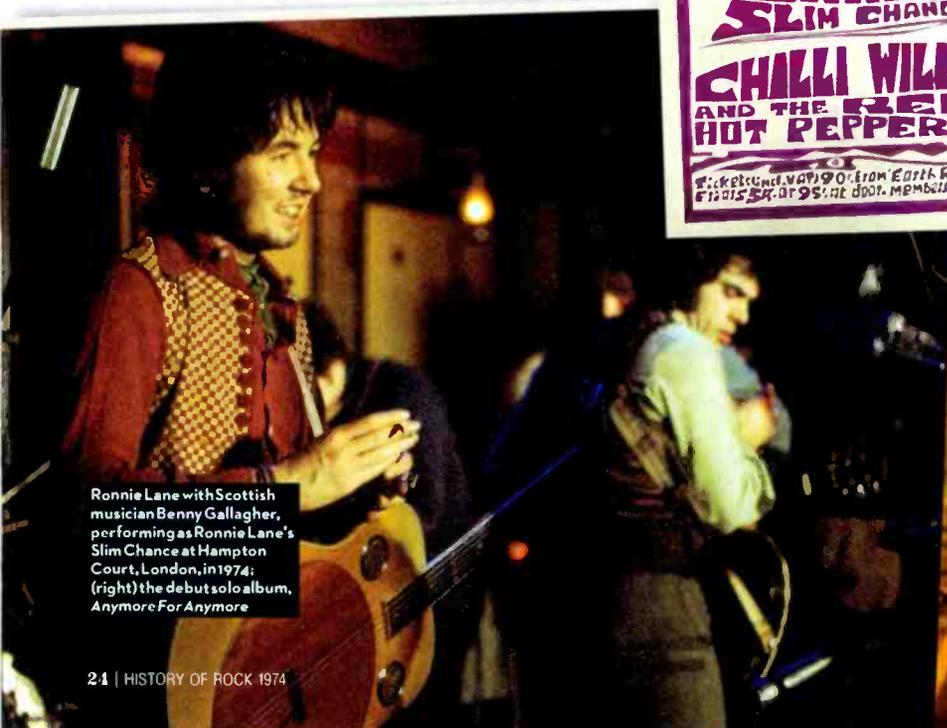
"CHAOS!" SAID RONNIE Lane, crinkling his expressive face into a smile against the sunshine raining on his caravan. "Courage." I thought, gazing at the Big Top, flapping in the summer breeze.

For this was the Passing Show, a brave venture in any language, including Romany. "Only I would be mad enough to try it," Ronnie told his first-night audience later, affirming the doubts and anxieties that prickled behind the breezy confidence of that most likeable of itinerant songwriters.

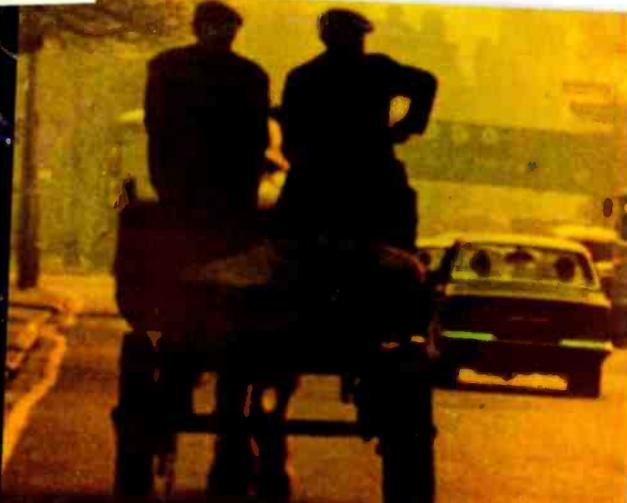
Clowns and tent-men, roadies and musicians have joined forces in a project that has been mooted before by idealistic rock'n'rollers. Only Ronnie Lane has had the courage to put his



GETTY



Ronnie Lane with Scottish musician Benny Gallagher, performing as Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance at Hampton Court, London, in 1974; (right) the debut solo album, *Anytime For Anymore*





money where his vocal cords reside, and turn a dream into a reality. Many a musician has gaily given voice to the concept. "Wouldn't it be great to travel around the country, set up a tent on the village green and just play for the people?" This is exactly what Lane has done, even though the financial risks are nerve-wracking.

Ronnie's brother, Stan, a busy East End toy trader, confided that chances were being taken, and laughed wryly at the young lady reporter who expressed shock when she learned tickets for the Passing Show cost just over a pound. "If she knew how much it cost to put this on the road..." he snapped, on the verge of snapping a tent pole in frustration.

The Passing Show is a rebellion against the grinding inevitability of accepted life on the road. No more jet lag, bumpy flights, rotten hotels, greasy meals, ulcers and exhaustion. Instead the leisurely jog across hill and dale, with a merry clutter of half-naked babies, screeching parrots in cages, and the glow of campfires by night. For room service, see Camping Gaz stove, and for check-out time, well the wagons roll at sun-up.

Not that the gypsy life is without its problems. As Ronnie sat on the steps of his beautiful, ex-fortune-teller's caravan, earring a dangle, he betrayed his nervousness by saying that if the afternoon's rehearsal did not take place he would be off, and the show could start without him.

It was the day before the debut performance, and the testing ground for this exhilarating venture was the Marlow Football Club training pitch. The grass was green and pleasant, and the site cosy enough, but unfortunately, since Ronnie had last passed this way, a small estate of council houses had been erected nearby, with their threat of complaining neighbours.

"I've written a personal letter to everybody explaining what we are doing and asking them to bear with us," said Ronnie sipping a mug of tea. "Most of the noise will be caused by the generator, but we've put it as far away from the houses as possible."

"I've got an old London Transport bus I'll be travelling in later, when it's ready. We're pulling all the seats out and replacing them with a couple of rooms. It's a beautiful bus—a Guy—and it's about 25 years old. It's funny, I always wanted to be a lorry driver, but me dad talked me out of it."

"I was a lorry driver," chipped in Stan, "and I wish Dad had talked me out of it!"

A passing circus man wanted to know the purpose of the gnarled shillelagh that Ronnie was twisting in his hands.

"It's for the hobble-de-hoys," said Ronnie, and we all thought it a reasonable explanation. "We put the tent up last Sunday. Most of the stuff had to come from my place in Wales, including the show caravan. I started collecting wagons some time ago, but they've started to get pricey now. This was a palm reader's wagon and it's still got her hat pinned in the mirror, where she left it before she died. It's much simpler than living in a house—no telephones, and no postmen bringing the bills. It's wonderful!"

"But there are problems. I wouldn't have chosen this site if I'd known the houses were so close. I was surprised. We've had all the kids off the estate come over to see us..."

As Ronnie spoke, a handful of respectful children appeared, hands outstretched to offer a bouquet of wild flowers. The one-time Faces bass player seemed charmed.

Inside the caravan, actually planted on a modern transporter to save its tired old wheels, was a bizarre world of tiny knick-knacks, drapes, mementoes, a large bed, for Master Lane and his good lady. It looked like the 19th century in miniature.

"What's happening in the tent? Is it ready?" Ronnie looked anxious again. There had been grumbles from the tent-man and a certain amount of melodrama about who put what where. But acting as the peacemaker was the quietly spoken even-tempered chief clown, Digga, of Digga, Mose & Mooche fame, whose caravan's interior represented the 20th century, or at least the 1950s. Digga, alias Paul, was an Australian, not unlike Robert Mitchum in *The Sundowners*.

"Aw yes, *Melody Maker*," he said with a wry smile, "not bad at all. I was reading it on the toilet the other day, and I still had my kecks down an hour later." There could be no finer compliment.

While Digga soothed the tent-man, roadies soothed Ronnie, who was concerned that the PA system had arrived from America—late—and with

all the wrong leads. Inside the big top, a two-poler ("The day of the big four-poler is over," said Digga), signs were being painted and wooden planks set up for the expected thousand or so revellers. An American technician helping to put the show together took a rest from his labours.

"Ronnie has sunk so much bread into this, he's got an overdraft," said Russell Schlagbaum.

"Nothing's cheap these days. Just one section of this tent costs a thousand quid. At least, that's what the tent-man told me. Our main problem is transport. There's nine people in the show and we've got to move around in caravans. But teething problems, like the equipment arriving one week late, are being ironed out. The sound is my responsibility, but the acoustics in the tent are good, and we've got an efficient 1500-watt PA.

"By the way, this is Michael Hurst. He's in charge of the generator."

A man covered in oil and emitting blue sparks dashed past with a preoccupied look.

**F**RIDAY: DUSK WAS settling over Marlow as folk trooped into the Big Top, past a gaily painted wooden entrance and pay booth. Nothing could be further from the industry image of rock 'n' roll. The spirit of gentle fun and make-believe seemed to communicate to the audience. Even when the clowns weren't so funny in their slapstick routine, and when technical and human goofs held up proceedings, nobody took umbrage.

The first night was a greater success than most of the cast had dared to hope. Ronnie has such a casual and cheery attitude you had to laugh, even when microphones went dead, one by one, as he attempted to sing the first line of his second song. Where other singers might scream and stamp their feet, Ronald smiled, waited and listened as the band gave up and broke into "I Want To Be Happy". When contact was restored, Ronnie said coolly: "I think we'll start that tune again."

The show was a long one—over three hours—with a workmanlike set from acoustic duo Ken Nicol and Pete Marsh, ex-Gwenyway, who added drums and bass for their final numbers. They sang "April Eyes" ("A silly song") and delighted with excellent harmonies.

Surprise of the night was Scots singer and comedian-compere Billy Barclay, the funniest man heard in many a spin of the wagon wheel. He tore into the audience with a stream of jokes, like, "Let's all hold hands and see if we can make contact with the living," and gave warning that "If anybody leaves, I'll come down to the bus stop and sing to you."

Robin Lucas and Drew McCullough, from Ayrshire, proved a sweet wee folk duo, with a pretty tune or two, who later joined the Lane-ites in Slim Chance.

A roar greeted their diminutive leader, in black trousers and waistcoat, partially hidden by an enormous guitar strap. Ronnie's songs are happy, easy, and occasionally pointed at the mysteries of fate, all delivered with that infectious two-beat, like an East End boogaloo, which made "How Come" such a hit. It's a

gentle, chugging rhythm, in which mandolin, violin and excellent saxophone, played by Jimmy Jewell, are pushed along by Bruce Rowland's sympathetically, although occasionally under-rehearsed, drums. Ronnie occasionally fished out a list of tunes to remind him of the set, as he slipped and slid across the circus ring.

In response to yelled requests he said disarmingly: "Give us a chance, I ain't warmed up yet!"

One of the surprise numbers was "Amelia Earhart", about the lost pre-war flyer and the first lady of the air, while the troupe also excelled on such high-wire tunes as "Careless Love", "Debris", and "Silk Stockings". Just to add atmosphere, three rather attractive young can-can dancers displayed their charms in the ring during an energetic "Ooh La La", with a flourish of suspenders and stocking tops.

There were encores, of course, and demands for more, but as Ronnie said: "The man from the council is here", and doubtless the mutterings of suburbia were already being voiced backstage.

And so the first of the Passing Shows concluded to wild applause. If you'd like to see the show—just watch out for the man with the parrot, should e'er he pass your door. *Chris Welch* •

"This was a palm-reader's wagon and it's still got her hat pinned up"

# “I wasn’t into rock at all before I met David”

— NME MARCH 2 —

**I**’LL NEVER FORGET the day Angie Bowie rang me up and asked for Nick Kent’s address. When I asked why she wanted it, she replied, “I’d like to have half a ton of wet cement delivered to his front door.”

Poor old Ange. She has quite a reputation for things like that. Her freak-outs are frequent and of epic proportions. On the other hand, she’s been known to answer fan letters for five or six hours at a stretch, and it’s a long time since June Bolan or Bianca Jagger did that.

These days she’s best known as a professional failer of auditions, as a chat-show guest and the frequent subject of photo spreads in the *Sun* and the *Daily Express*. She’s about as upfront as a rock star’s wife can get without actually playing in the band. She’s got her own fan club, and her husband’s fans find her almost as fascinating as David himself.

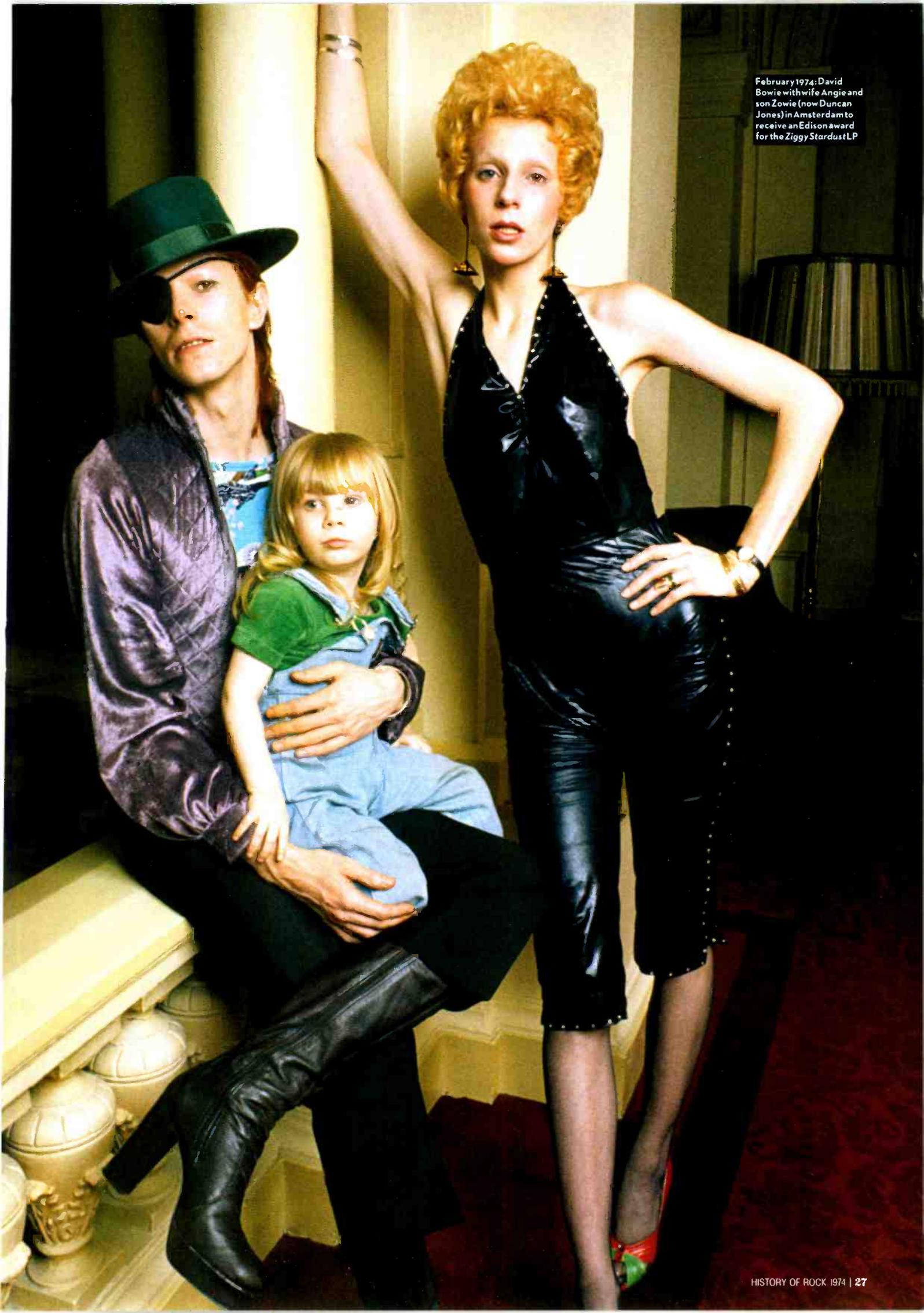
Depending on the circumstances of meeting, Angie Bowie is both well hated and well liked. Many people in the business have got Angie Bowie horror stories to tell, and yet I’ve always found her both excellent company and very considerate. Whatever Bowie’s up to, she’s usually right in there. During the tours, Angie was liaising between him and the fans, even going to the trouble of taking down addresses and writing letters. Some fans even got Angie notes from Japan.

Under the thinnest of thin disguises, she’s modelled as “Jipp Jones”, failed an audition for the lead in a *Wonder Woman* TV series, and attempted to embark on a career as a straight actress. She’s also taking a considerable interest in the career of her close friend Dana Gillespie. She does a lot more than just stand around posing at concerts. Poor old Ange.

She spends most of her time getting numbered as some kind of super-bitch and she really isn’t like that at all – most of the »

**In the absence of DAVID BOWIE, his wife ANGIE makes a compelling subject. Sexually open-minded, passionately pro-fan and supportive of her husband, she’s a force to be reckoned with. “If I hear anybody talking badly about David,” she says, “I’ll beat them up.”**

February 1974: David Bowie with wife Angie and son Zowie (now Duncan Jones) in Amsterdam to receive an Edison award for the Ziggy Stardust LP



time. Also, the fact that every 10 minutes spawns a rumour that she and DB are headed for the Great Divide can't be too good for the Health, Education & Welfare department of the head either. On the other hand, the peremptory and bullying tone of her "Look Here" page in the Bowie fan-club magazine is rather off-putting.

**T**HE PENCILLED SIGN thumb-tacked to the stair-rail read "Tony Ingrassia rehearsing Sheila". Covent Garden rehearsal studios don't exactly rate four stars in the cosmic AA Guide, but this one is quite spectacularly tattered. No lights on the stairs, large starbursts of wallpaper ripped away to reveal pockmarked plaster, crippled furniture, a table that's obviously seen life as she is really lived, a single glaring light bulb hanging disconsolately from the ceiling – The Rehearsal Studio. Got it?

It's like a stage set in itself, and right there behind the table is the star of the show, Angie Bowie in the too, too solid flesh. Short white hair in impeccable waves, eyebrows conspicuous by their absence, a black see-through dress with strategic non-see-throughable sections. One of the latter areas has slipped a bit and one highly appetising and almost unnaturally crimson nipple surveys the scenery with an air of perky but baffled incomprehension. An upturned biscuit-tin lid does duty as an ashtray and the table serves as a suitable spot to lay down one's weary cassette.

Well, now – your Lindas and yer Yokos and yer Biancas are quite public these days. What brought you all out of the closet? "Maybe it's a difference in attitude on the part of women in general. Maybe the motivation for getting married was different 10 years ago. You know a wife was a very bad thing to have if you were Elvis Presley. He waited a long time before he married Priscilla."

I mumble something about how it took Lennon a little while to own up about his first wife. "I got to confess to you," ripostes Ms B, "I wasn't into rock at all before I met David. But when your motivation for getting married is not based on possession, then owning up about having a wife is a very different thing."

"I mean, anybody who professes to practice faith and devotion in the '70s may think they're telling the truth, but it's just an illusion. Maybe I just move in very different circles, but I know very few people who really behave like that. That doesn't mean that it's not good if it works for you, but I'm sure that if you really like someone you'd prefer to stay with them on a basis of pleasure and enjoyment rather than frustration or boredom."

"Things have totally changed for people who are entertainers. If anybody said that Bill Haley didn't have groupies I'd be sure they were lying. I mean, Paderewski had groupies. One of them was a music teacher at my school. She was 50 years old."

"Entertainers in any field – classics, pop, avant-garde, makes no odds – have always been surrounded. Groupies are the people who make it all worthwhile. Fans will sit very quietly and applaud at the end of numbers, and they're well loved, but it's the groupies who scream and shout and want you to know they're there. So if you can't accept that fact you really shouldn't get married in the first place, you should just be a close friend. So I was never hoodwinked into thinking that faith and possession were virtues."

**B**EATLE FANS ALWAYS gave Beatle wives a hard time, but Bowie fans seem to have considerable affection for Angie. "I really dig them too. I don't know about the Beatle thing because I really don't remember that. I may have sounded coy when I said that I didn't know anything about rock'n'roll until I met David, but that's the truth."

"It's a different situation now, because sexuality's different. I think the openness is very important, but it's like totally depressurising the sexual drive instead of keeping the pressure within the body and causing frustration. Fans are smart. They bang on cars and try to get in to see you, and what could be more wonderful! I don't understand how anyone could not think about the fans. They're the ones who make it worthwhile. The music business doesn't make it worthwhile. You don't make records for record company executives, you make them for people."

"It doesn't matter whether they're old fans who stay very cool, or young fans who cry when they see you. Anybody who's an entertainer is into audiences and that's what they're feeding off. The parasite element of entertainment is that you must feed off that audience."

Alright Ange. Lay it on us. How'dja meet yer old man? "I was invited out to dinner by a mutual friend and he happened to be at dinner. I was doing



economics at Kingston Polytechnic and I had a boyfriend who was a record company executive – can you believe it? And I went to see him at the Roundhouse in a band called Feathers. The record company executive refused to sign David, and I broke up with him because I thought he was a schmuck. I said, 'You don't recognise talent when you see it.'

"The band were great. They were on with The Who that night. That was my first taste of rock'n'roll; I saw Feathers, Scaffold and The Who."

She smiles, obviously digging the memory.

"I was astounded by The Who. I didn't think people did things like that. I couldn't believe Pete Townshend. I was totally destroyed by him. I just sat there and thought, 'I've got to go and have dinner with this horrible record company executive afterwards.'

"Feathers broke up, but in the meantime one of the other executives from the same company had managed to persuade the management not to listen to the other dude, and he got them a deal. This led to 'Space Oddity'. Literally two weeks later he was in the studio doing that."

"We were very lucky, I suppose, because we were never successful in the beginning. If we had been, it would have been very hard for me to suddenly come to terms with it. 'Space Oddity' came out and it started to become a hit in the summer, and by the end of August and September it was building up and his manager, Ken Pitt, was rather unprepared for it. He didn't like the way the deal was set up. It hadn't been set up through him. He didn't want David to be successful; he wanted David to be obedient."

**W**HAT WAS IT like being around when Bowie was getting songs like 'The Width Of A Circle' together? "David and I are very fortunate in that I'm not musical. There is nothing musical about me, neither a rhythmic beat of the foot nor a vigorous clapping of the hands. I'm surprised that I can even dance in a disco."

"Now that kind of ignorance is a vital piece of equipment when you're dealing with someone who's so totally ahead of everybody else. I had no basis for comparison, and everything he played me sounded great. He always wrote about things that fascinated me. *The Man Who Sold The World* was conceived during a period when we were really poor, we didn't have any money. Our band were really frightened."

"We didn't understand Tony Defries, who we'd just met. We didn't understand that it would be alright just like he said it would. We'd sit in our big house with nothing in it and think, 'Jesus, I hope it all works out.'"

How do you ask a nice lady like Angie how it feels to be married to the man who everybody on the planet and his dog Eric thinks is the world's



"Anybody who's an entertainer is into audiences": press conference at the Amstel Hotel, Amsterdam, February 7, 1974

king gay? Here's what you do. You say, "How does it feel to be married to the man who everybody on the planet and his dog Eric thinks is the world's king gay?"

Your interviewee will then totally out-vibe you by replying, "I think that's wonderful. I never thought of it like that. I think it's great. I love it. It all depends on your knowledge of the gay culture, of which I can happily say I'm a member. It includes a wide variety of individuals. Without wishing to go through a big long hoo-hah, there's one commonly known as The Stud. David is a Stud.

"If someone who's gay reads, 'Look, I'm gay,' he thinks, 'Oh, he must be one of those people who goes up to Hampstead Heath.' See what I mean; it's two different things. How can you say to a writer, 'Look, I'm sorry but you've got things wrong? I'm gay, but I don't mean that I like to get it; I like to give it.' It's really unfair to lay a trip like that on a guy. He's probably a queen anyway and just being cool about it."

**W**HILE LARGE SECTIONS of the planet and his dog Eric are looking in on David Bowie, Angie is on the proverbial inside looking out. "It's very strange that you should say that, because that's getting right down into it. I'm very bolshie, very aggressive. If I hear anybody in a bar talking badly about David, I'll take them outside and beat them up.

"I got pulled out of a ballroom by five policemen for beating a guy up. It was at a Gravesend gig when we first started. David was headlining, and all they wanted to do was bop. David came out, you know, a fuzzy-haired folk singer. He made me promise that I would never do it again.

"I'm a very subservient wife, I would never... actually that's not true; I beat some people up in Japan. Not fans, guards who were picking on the fans. There's warrants out for my arrest. At the airport they said to me, 'Goodbye, Mrs Bowie, please don't come back.'

"So because I get very stropky, if I hear people talking bad about him, I get very uptight and I don't forget it. I never forget anyone, not a face, not a name. I'm very quick to take a person's name."

Angie Bowie's going round taking people's names, huh? "Well, you know it's true. When people put me uptight, I remember it. David

says it's the most evil part of my personality, and I think he's probably right. On the other hand, where I adore people, I'd do anything for them. They all tease me at the office because I answer fan mail."

How about all the different levels of Bowie appreciation? Like, there's this line in 'The Width Of A Circle' which goes, "And he laughed insane and quipped 'Kahlil Gibran!'" Now how many young Bowie freaks have ever heard of Kahlil Gibran?

"I don't think it makes any odds. I heard a programme on the radio about rock 'n' roll, and the dude said that the guy who wrote 'Blue Suede Shoes' was talking about it and said, 'Man, I don't think I ever had a pair of blue suede shoes. I couldn't afford a pair, but I heard this cat in a dance hall talking about them.'

"And I was thinking that that was the same thing. How many kids who dug that song ever actually saw a pair? In England at that time, there were very few men wearing coloured shoes. Kahlil Gibran—that's just the natural explosion of consciousness that has taken place among young people. Now, instead of 'Blue Suede Shoes', it may be an obscure reference to a writer with whom some of us are familiar and some of us aren't. In the end, they understand the song so much better than any of us who try to get into it on any intellectual level."

**S**O WHAT IS Angie Bowie doing in this godforsaken armpit of a rehearsal hall? Another extension of the Jipp Jones thing? "I'm not becoming a model called Jipp Jones. I'm sorry if it appeared this way. I love doing things if they come off good, and I did some photographs which came out great. People said, 'They're really beautiful, you should do more.' I would never be a model; it'd be the most boring thing in the world. I've always wanted to be an actress. I'm rehearsing now for a play called *Sheila*, written by Tony Ingrassia who did *Pork*. It's a play which is part of a trilogy, but mainly one of a pair. The other one is called *Fame*, and we'll be producing that one for sure.

"It's going to be either West End or Broadway. We're not sure which, because of Equity. I'd like to do it here first for the fans, because a lot of them had said that they'd come and see me, which is great. Also I'd like to do it here because I don't really know New York that well."

A lot of what goes on around the Bowie machine is to a certain extent misinterpreted. I suggested to Ms B that she was one of the leading players in a long-running piece of fiction. "That's a lovely phrase, but it's very hard to answer, honey. It just makes us all tighter. People think that you don't care after a while. You may just say to yourself, 'I don't care, say what you want. Fuck off, bastard.' That might be what you say to yourself, but that's not what you

think. You think, 'Why did you say that?' I mean you've heard me on the phone to you screeching about things."

Yeah, like that Kent business. "Absolutely. I mean, I wanted to kill him. Other people aren't as drastic as I am. David's never liked that; he never means anybody any malice. I just want to kill them for being so horrible and for not looking at something and seeing it for what it is. I get totally distraught. I can't think in a logical fashion. I just think in this dramatic fashion, thinking that they're evil and that they're doing it on purpose. Of course, that's not fair because they're probably not like that at all."

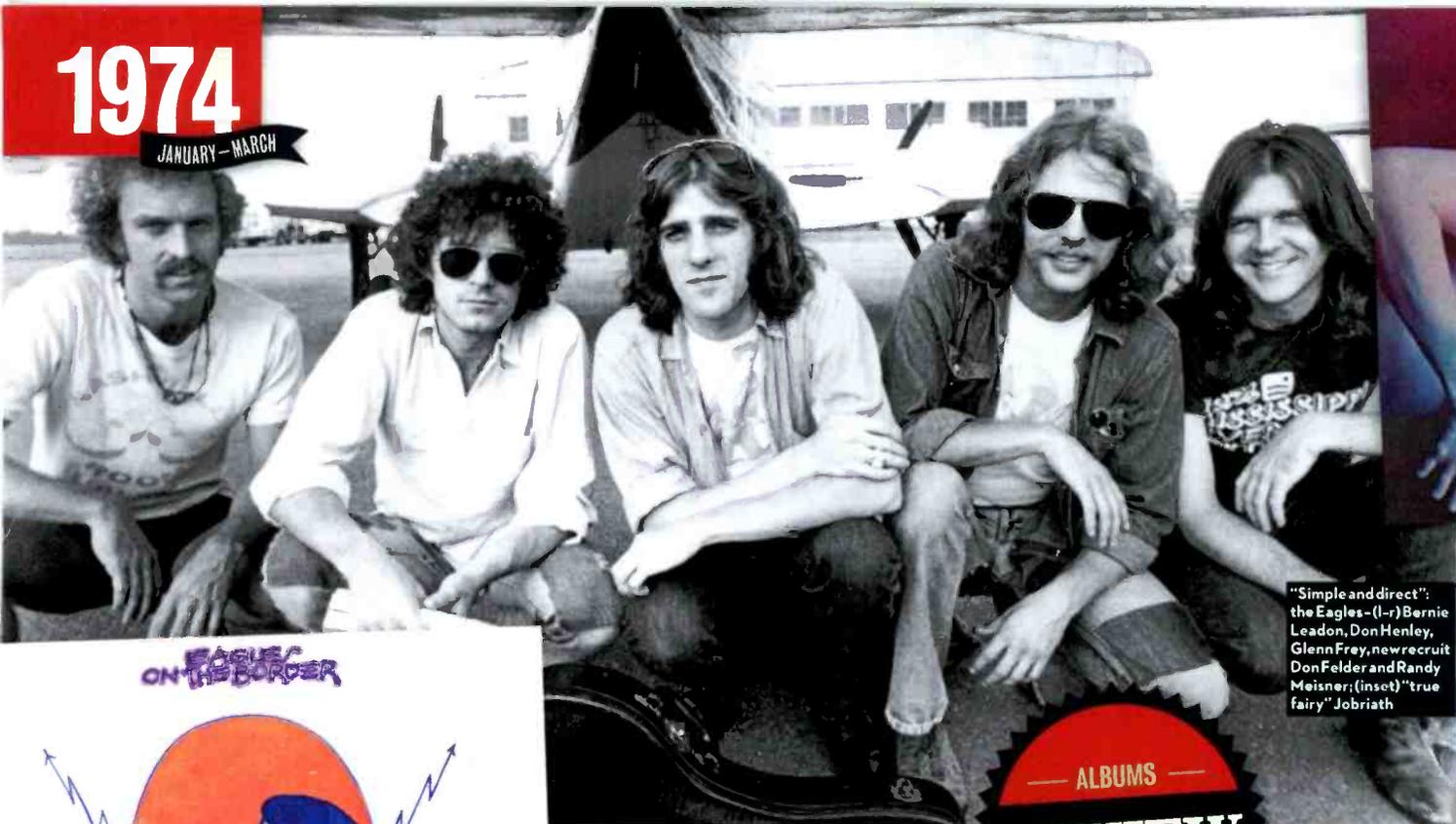
We did this interview last November, and since then all I know about what Angie's been up to is what I read in the papers. There was the *Wonder Woman* debacle, and a couple more photo-spreads. I hope she gets something together.

Good luck, Ange. You're gonna need it. Charles Shaar Murray •

"David never means anybody any malice. I want to kill them"

## ANGIE BOWIE'S TAKING NAMES

...and mister, if you're on her list,  
you'd better split town.



"Simple and direct": the Eagles - (l-r) Bernie Leadon, Don Henley, Glenn Frey, new recruit Don Felder and Randy Meisner; (inset) "true fairy" Jobriath

## ON THE BORDER



## ALBUMS

# REVIEW

1974

### ALBUMS

#### The Eagles *On The Border* ASYLUM

No two ways about it, this album is great - it really is. Their other two records, *Eagles* and *Desperado*, were pretty excellent, but this one eclipses both.

Of course the Eagles have a lot of people to thank for doing the groundwork - people like CSN and Y, The Byrds and numerous other West Coast country rockers. But they haven't got any pretensions. They don't sing songs about freedom or politics. They stick to what they know. Like their music, their lyrics are simple, direct, uncluttered statements.

There's a song called "James Dean", co-written by Jackson Browne, Bernie Leadon and Don Henley, and before I heard it I'd half-expected some maudlin dirge about what a fine rebel Dean was, but not a bit of it. The song rocked like a bitch, a kind of "Slow Down" shuffle, and the lyrics come over slightly tongue-in-cheek.

There is, however, a more serious song about a dead rock star and that's "My Man", written by Bernie Leadon and about his ex-colleague Gram Parsons. It's not sloppy but sincere - a good song. Otherwise the songs are about girls or cars, and there's a fast

country rocker, "Midnight Flyer", about a train. Listen to Leadon's breathtaking banjo-pickin'. That song really shifts too.

"Old '55", "Is It True" and "The Best Of My Love" are filled with romance but it doesn't get sugary. "Old '55" has this great chorus and someone singing in it sounds a lot like Neil Young, but then he does a lot of hanging around in LA too.

Like the songs, the musicianship is very effective. The sheer panache of "James Dean" and the pure electric rock of "Already Gone" is shining.

And it's not just all down to one guy. The Eagles aren't carrying dead weight. They all write and they all sing too (with the exception of newcomer Don Felder, who just scrapes in on "Already Gone" - he only joined a couple of weeks ago).

Compared with the previous two Eagles' records this is a lot more concise, a lot more clean-cut and everybody seems to be going in the same direction. And the sound is just right - great production, great record. Go out

and buy this just as soon as it's released in a fortnight's time and you'll have all the good parts, the sin and girls, of California in your front room too. Steve Clark, NME Mar 30

#### Rod Stewart & The Faces *Live Coast To Coast/Overture And Beginners* MERCURY

Ladies and gentlemen, a study in disintegration. When the Faces began their current incarnation, their boozy looseness helped to add some riotous vibes to a tight, powerful, hell-for-leather set. Just an extra little something to liven up the act, kind of like a rock'n'roll Dean Martin.

Now, several gold records and a few years of gigging later, they've indulged themselves to such an extent that their music is virtually unlistenable. Not to put too fine a point upon it, their new live album contains some of the sloppiest and most incompetent playing I've ever heard from a so-called major band. And that's not an easy thing to have to write, because while I've had some reservations about the Faces, Rod Stewart has been for four years (and to some extent still is) one of my favourite British singers.

The first side chugs along fairly unremarkably but not too offensively with

"It's All Over Now", though "Cut Across Shorty" gets a trifle messy.

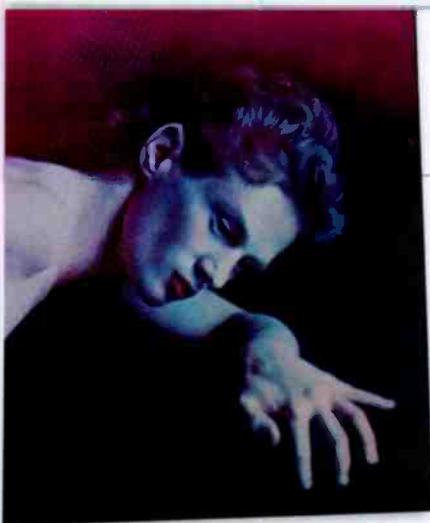
It builds up a little steam towards the end of the "Too Bad"/"Every Picture Tells A Story" medley and reaches a peak with a gorgeous version of "Angel" which slashes the "Never A Dull Moment" version to shreds before winding down with an overly loose version of "Stay With Me".

So far so good. Acceptable party stuff. Flip the album over and the rot sets in.

The Faces' version of "I Wish It Would Rain" is, according to Mr Kent, the worst Motown cover he's ever heard, and it moves with all the grace and drive of a man with two broken legs trying to climb a rope.

Next up is the single most irritating piece on the album, "I'd Rather Go Blind". Gorgeously soulful vocal, but Tetsu and Kenney Jones spend the whole piece trying to agree on a beat, and Ian McLagan and Ronnie Wood don't help much. It's actively painful to listen to.





Moving right along now, a medley of "Borstal Boys" and "Amazing Grace" bridged with some appallingly clumsy slide noodlings from Wood. "Borstal Boys" just about holds together, but on the latter track it's hard to tell who's more out of tune, Rod or Ronnie. That a group of the Faces' stature can not only play so badly but actually have the balls to put it out on an album is quite phenomenal.

Lastly, a slipshod version of Lennon's "Jealous Guy" poleaxes this limping set in its tracks.

Once upon a time the Faces were one of the most genuinely exciting bands in the country. On the evidence of all the gigs of theirs that I've seen (with one exception) they are now a painful travesty of their former selves.

Maybe this album was released simply to get Rod out of his Mercury contract; to neither know nor care. But in the interests of a one-time fine band, I'd like to ask the Faces (and their persons) to play this album in the cold light of day and do some re-evaluation on that basis. To continue on this basis is a disservice to both the band and to those members of their audience who can tell a bad set from a good one, and who are financing this disintegration.

Rod has gone on record as saying that he didn't like *Ooh La La*. Well, it was a damn sight easier to listen to than this one. Face facts, my friends. A word to the wise guy. *Charles Shaar Murray, NME January 19*

#### Jobriath Jobriath ELEKTRA

You will soon be told that this cat is going to be the big breeze in 1974. Receive this piece of information with sceptical, though polite, curiosity, weigh it carefully, and then watch it crumble and trickle through your fingers.

Quite an interesting hype, Jobriath. "A true fairy", as he insists on calling himself, he is a trained pianist, an actor, a mime artist and dancer, and a vocalist stuck somewhere between Bowie

and Leo Sayer. He dresses up as a pierrot, too - which means that either he or Sayer have got to go, or stay firmly in their own countries.

Jobriath is reasonably gifted all right, but that doesn't mean he's necessarily any good. His songs have a chordal basis that recalls Satie and Chopin - and sure enough those turn out to be

his favourite keyboard composers. His phrasing, arrangements, and the general showbiz glibness in every move he makes on this debut album remind one vaguely of *Hair* or something - and sure enough he used to be in the cast of that show in America. That's about two casefuls of finest quality distilled mystique down the drain straight off.

What else? The lyrics? They convince most when they're sexual, as in the masochistic ("Take Me I'm Yours") and narcissistic ("I'maman") exercises in chic gay consciousness with which each side of the record begins. Beyond that it's tawdry sci-fi, a dash of fashion news, and the obligatory song about being born to rock 'n' roll.

The musicianship is deafening and professional to the last semiquaver. A brilliantly conceived and designed package built around a run-of-the-mill talented young New York queen that... crumbles into dust as you play it, just like Jobriath's legs do on the cover. A good hype indeed. I enjoyed it while it lasted.

*Ian MacDonald, NME January 26*

#### Can Future Days UNITED ARTISTS

I've had my paltry reservations about Can in the past, but their previous album, *Ege Bamyasi*, allied most of them and this, the group's fourth LP (excluding *Soundtracks*), wipes the slate impressively clean. *Future Days* is an immaculate piece of work, the best German rock record so far, apart from Faust.

On it, Can have at last found the perfect quality of sound through which to express their very highly developed internal musical relationships - a sound full of distance and air, halfway between abstract and concrete, sometimes bursting with light, sometimes glowing vaguely as if through a rain-washed window. A bit like a Turner painting.

Everybody comes through on their own level without distorting anyone else's - which means, for

example, that Damo and Michael Karoli fulfil themselves far more than ever before, the latter's playing emerging as something of a revelation.

Elsewhere, Irmin Schmidt is getting into new, more rarefied regions and has managed to produce an ersatz string-tone without recourse to the mellotron's instant deep-freeze, while Liebezzeit and Czukay are consistently amazing throughout.

The title track, based on a rhythm-box figure, bossa-novas its way through shadow and translucency, guided by the bass and the subtlest of guitar inflections - music of nuance, endlessly listenable and performed with an ear for detail so finely developed that it makes the majority of top-flight Anglo-American outfits look about as sensitive as a bunch of Sumo wrestlers trying to waltz.

"Spray" is more aggressive and loose, improvised (I'd guess) from top to bottom, and hopefully a model for Can's Live excursions in the future. "Moonshake", one of the best singles of '73, concludes Side One with a nervous jittering rhythm and tastefully sparse electronics. But the best is on the other side.

"Bel Air", a 20-minute project (elsewhere rather loosely described as a suite), is the most impressive thing Can have recorded. It's basically a number in several sections played twice, quite differently, divided by a naturalistic interlude of bees buzzing in a summer meadow.

First time out, Damo sings the melody line with Czukay holding one note under it; then it breaks and takes off, picking up a lovely guitar theme from Karoli during the soaring duet between him and Schmidt.

The second run of the song features all the chord changes, but omits an effective descending passage until the singing's over - whereupon the group take off again and, this time, don't come down. The standard of creative interplay during this section is close to supernatural.

*Future Days* is sheer good music and is perfectly easy for anyone with a pair of ears attached to their heads to get into and thoroughly enjoy. Forget the krautrock tag. Forget how you're supposed to react. Just get this record. *Ian MacDonald, NME January 26*



## SINGLES

### Lulu The Man Who Sold The World POLYDOR

It seemed an unlikely pairing when Lulu sang with David Bowie and recorded in Paris last year. But here is the result, and as I have been trying to convince my assistant Tinker Bulstrode, it's not so daft.

"Come off it, guv'nor, you don't mean ter say that Lulu used to sing at the Marquee?" "Fraid so, old man.

Like David, she was one of the embryo stars from the '60s who regularly jived to a firm twist beat. And what is more, Lulu has not lost her touch. She lilts through the Bowie classic with calm assurance, while the composer adds a fetching alto saxophone and vocal backing. They make an intriguing team and let's hope they whizz chart-ward together.

"Well, if you say so, guv..."

I do. *MM Jan 12*

### Ringo Starr You're Sixteen APPLE

The *MM* Glee Club, consisting of the massed singers of the sub-editing department and combined ace reporters, down ballpoints to join in the chorus with Ringo on the old Johnny Burnette hit. Kazoos help out on Richard Perry's simple but effective production, and it should hit the chart 'ere dawn. *MM Feb 9*

### Genesis I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe) CHARISMA

One of the band's most interesting and beautifully constructed songs, (as opposed to their major works), it makes fine single material, and may well help to bring them to a wider public.

Genesis fans who fear an outbreak of commercialism should remember that they began their career as a team of songwriters. The arrangements came later.

Note the loping beat and sitar sound blending with the unusual percussive effects. Should be a big hit, but it depends on the whims of those devils the DJs, of course. *Chris Welch, MM Feb 9*

1974

JANUARY—MARCH



## “People expect something special...”

**NME MARCH 16** After an educational support tour with Mott The Hoople, Queen are wowing their own crowds. Backstage at Cambridge Corn Exchange, Freddie Mercury explains how it's done...

**F**REDDIE MERCURY'S A pretty regular guy—uses regular Biba black nail varnish, regular black eyeliner, and straightens his hair with regular electric tongs. You get the idea that he's bored with being told that Queen are going to be big—he reckons he's a star now and wears that star-apparent attitude like a well-fitted pair of trousers.

Freddie's not bent, just camp. Ask him if he's queer and he'll turn round and say: “I'm as gay as a daffodil, dear.” (He has a habit of saying “dear” at the end of every sentence.) Drummer Roger Taylor expounds: “Freddie's just his natural self—just a poove, really.”

Apart from Nick Kent describing their first album as a “bucket of urine”, Queen have had few mentions in *NME*—yet even so they managed to pull second place in the Best New Group readers' poll. Pull them down as much as you may—they don't really give a damn. They'll all still come up smelling of roses.

This week their single “Seven Seas Of Rhye” makes its debut in the chart, just days after release. Soon, their second album, *Queen II*, will doubtless follow. For Queen are big business, and though you may hate them, they're gonna confound you by being huge.

There's money behind them, for a start. For a band who are still on the verge of making big bread they've got an amazing amount of gear and a lighting system that Bowie would be jealous of. They also have a professional setup that makes you wonder why it's taken them

so long to get where they are now. Every one of them is academically bright; all possess degrees and, while no one likes a smarty-pants, being above average intelligence has helped them avoid being rooked.

Mercury: “The moment we made a demo we were aware of the sharks. We had such amazing offers from people saying, ‘We'll make you the next T. Rex’, but we were careful not to jump straight in. Literally, we went to about every company before we finally settled. We didn't want to be treated like an ordinary band that's going to be launched. We're signed to Trident Audio, so basically all the money comes from them. We were their first management venture and they are prepared to lend us—or whatever—the money we need. Within reason.”

At the time of signing, Queen had no manager and it was Trident Audio who found them one, in the personage of Jack Nelson, a smooth-working character from America. “The whole point of him being our manager is that he's based in London, but he's obviously got all the American contacts, which is great.” Shrewd, too—advance publicity in America suggest the band promise more than most British groups—and already they've sold an incredible 150,000 copies of their first album *Stateside*.

Backstage at Cambridge Corn Exchange, the band are getting ratty. Drummer Roger Taylor explains: “The road crew got here early

and were told by the promoter that they couldn't get in till five, and when it takes hours to put up this equipment, there's just no way you can get a soundcheck.”

While support band Nutz are onstage, the road crew are still fixing up Queen's lights. Guitarist Brian May says, “I'd walk off stage if I were them. Do you realise they've got all the house lights on? How can they play under conditions like that?”

Subject changes to hype: Queen are very sensitive about being described as hype. “It's rubbish to say we were hyped,” Taylor claims. “We started playing the really small gigs and then we released the album. There was no big splash of publicity or anything. Now Cockney Rebel—their publicity came before they'd done anything.”

At this stage in the proceedings, record producer John Antony is considering doing rock's first streak, but finally comes out with this gem: “The best quote I ever heard about Queen was from the drummer of Roxy Music, who said, ‘I don't like them because they are too contrived!’ I laughed for about 10 minutes.”

Cambridge Corn Exchange is one of those places that's draughty, but has atmosphere. Beercans may litter the floor, and hot dogs may be on sale at the back of the hall, but it's

CAMBRIDGE CORN  
EXCHANGE**LIVE!**

MARCH 9



March 31, 1974: Queen's Brian May and Freddie Mercury at the Rainbow Theatre in North London

get a whole barrage of our new songs whether you like it or not. It's nice to do a barrage but in the end it's nice to do something they can associate with so they don't have to listen too much. All they do is boogie and have a good time. We do 'Jailhouse Rock' because we've been doing it for years, and I don't give a fuck if people say it's now a trendy thing to play. It suits us and that's all that matters."

Strangely enough, Mercury, self-confessed poseur and dandy, says they don't come in for a big gay following. "We don't get letters from gay people or anything, though I've had letters saying I look very evil."

True, he does look evil, and if you study the lyrics on their second album with its mentions of thunder and lightning, defying the laws of nature and ogres... you begin to wonder.

"I just like people to put their own interpretation on my songs. Really, they are just like little fairy stories. Last night [at Sunderland] I felt really evil when I came on stage - when I'm out there I'm really in a world of my own, I go up there and have a good time. It's the audience participation that counts and last night they were really great. I felt I could do anything. I could have gone into the audience and had a rave. Just Freddie Mercury poncing on stage and having a good time.

"People expect something special, so you've got to create a real show - the Mott tour helped us an immense amount. I don't think we were a real band before that, but Mott taught us how to behave as a band and how to survive over a long period."

Was it a difficult transition to make, from being a support band to headlining their own British tour? "The responsibility now lies with us. But I've always thought of us as a top group. Sounds very big-headed, I know, but that's the way it is. The opportunity of playing with Mott was great, but I knew darn well - and even Ian Hunter knew - the moment we finished that tour, as far as Britain was concerned, we'd be headlining.

"We took it in our stride. It was something we had to do - I wouldn't have liked to have done a headline straight away because we wouldn't have attracted many people, but the Mott tour just did us right."

On their debut album, Queen, the band were compared to a variety of bands, mainly Zeppelin and Yes. I asked Mercury if he was aware that, at times, his voice sounded remarkably similar to that of Jon Anderson.

"I'm not as weak as that..." he counters - then realises he hasn't said the right thing and adds, "I could take that as a compliment because I know I sound gritty in other places. In other words, you are saying it's versatility. I don't sound like Jon Anderson all the time, do I?"

Everything in this man's manner suggests he is vain. I broach the subject.

"My dear, I'm the vainest creature going, but then so are all pop stars..."

He poses quite a lot on stage, looking evilly at the assembled masses around the stage before standing sideways, holding his head in profile for seconds, flicking his hair back. All good stuff. And there's more to come if he gets more of his ideas through: "I'd like to be carried on stage by six nubile slaves with palms and all."

It had been suggested to me prior to the gig by a somewhat cynical person that initially Queen had sat down and, in the manner of Chinn/Chapman, worked out what was commercially needed in the music business. Therefore, they were clinical in their approach.

Mercury: "Untrue. We haven't suddenly decided, 'Here is an open market. We've geared ourselves, certainly, but with our music coming first. And we've been pretty confident all along. I still think the strongest thing we do is our music - and the way we put it across. That's all we're about, actually, from start to finish. I don't think we're suddenly going to say, 'Oh look, the phase is going to change!' That's why we're concerned about people going, 'Here come Queen.' Suddenly glam rock is in and they are following tradition. We were called Queen over three years ago - and that's pre-Bowie."

They seem ultra-touchy about being accused of jumping on bandwagons, yet Mercury adamantly states: "I don't care what they say, really. I think people have said things about us and then changed their minds after listening to the album."

I venture that "Liar", on their first album, has been described as as close as this to the Russ Ballard composition of the same name - and Mercury counters with "Bullshit" before adding, "I thought that might arise, actually. It's a very old song that we used to do on stage ages ago. I heard much later there was an Argent track with the same name, but that's a completely different song."

With an education and qualifications apparently second to none behind them, it might appear that this is just a gathering of four intellectuals who want to toy with the music business.

"No, we're not just playing with the music scene. It's just the way things happened. We went to college but we were also musicians doing it part-time and we thought it would be a nice idea to take it seriously for once."

Julie Webb

## "I'm really out there in a world of my own... Just Freddie Mercury poncing on stage"

# QUEEN

Described by Roxy Music's Paul Thompson as 'too contrived' and by NME's Nick Kent as 'a bucket of urine', this band have nonetheless come from obscurity to a headlining tour in six months flat.

They must have something.

Mustn't they?

JULIE WEBB finds out what...

phantasmagorical, man. And when Queen take the stage, it's echoey as well.

In this establishment, Queen fans look like any other fans except they wear overcoats. And before you know where you are, the place is being blacked out, the opening strains of "Procession" (from their new album) are being played, prior to lights switching on Mercury as he gets into "Father To Son".

If I seem to be dwelling on Mercury and drummer Taylor, it's because they hit you between the eyes as the two genuine image-makers in the band. Taylor is the pretty one with class, while Mercury is the evil-looking type with vibes. He describes himself as being "sluttish" on stage, and it's true - just the way he slinks around the place spells out "street-walker, whore, tart". In fact, when he sings their encore "Big Spender" and yells, "I don't pop my cork for everyone", you'd better believe him.

Musically, Queen are brash, loud and heavy. There's little subtlety at this point in their musical career and there's not an awful lot that's totally original, but they do have a flash way of putting it across that makes it with the audience. It seemed a compromise when they played "Jailhouse Rock" coupled with "Stupid Cupid" - who needs that after all? Yet Mercury was adamant afterwards that it was a vital and relevant part of the stage act.

"You see, the thing is, we're out on stage to entertain and it's no good saying, 'Look, we've got a new album and you are going to

They are all set up to see why it's to get when every academic degree and a waste of average intelligence avoid Mercury made a definite mark the stark amazing saying 'we're not straight in about we finally and to be the band reached. We Audis money were the venture to lend the more reason." At the had no Trudis one, in Netter

# “I find life a strain”

**MIKE OLDFIELD** is well on the way to platinum with *Tubular Bells*—an LP no big company wanted. Recording the follow-up, however, he seems troubled and withdrawn. “I’m not very happy with myself as a person,” he says. “I find life a strain.”

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 16 —

**T**OM “BULK ERASE” Newman threw back his head and guffawed. “That sounded like a reindeer with a broken leg,” he observed, none too candidly.

Mike Oldfield peered up into the engineer’s booth in the split-level Manor Studios. Fake indignation gave way to a broad grin. Without a word he played it again, this time without goofs. Elbows propped on the lid of a grand piano, he shook the set of sleigh bells with grim determination. Not that the rhythm was anything complicated. If anything it was the reverse. So simple it was tempting to elaborate unnecessarily.

*Hergest Ridge* is now nearing completion, the first side finished, and the second about half done. From the snatches that I heard, it appears to be very much a “Son Of Tubular Bells” epic, but is tighter and steers clear of the blandness that, for me, dogged the original.

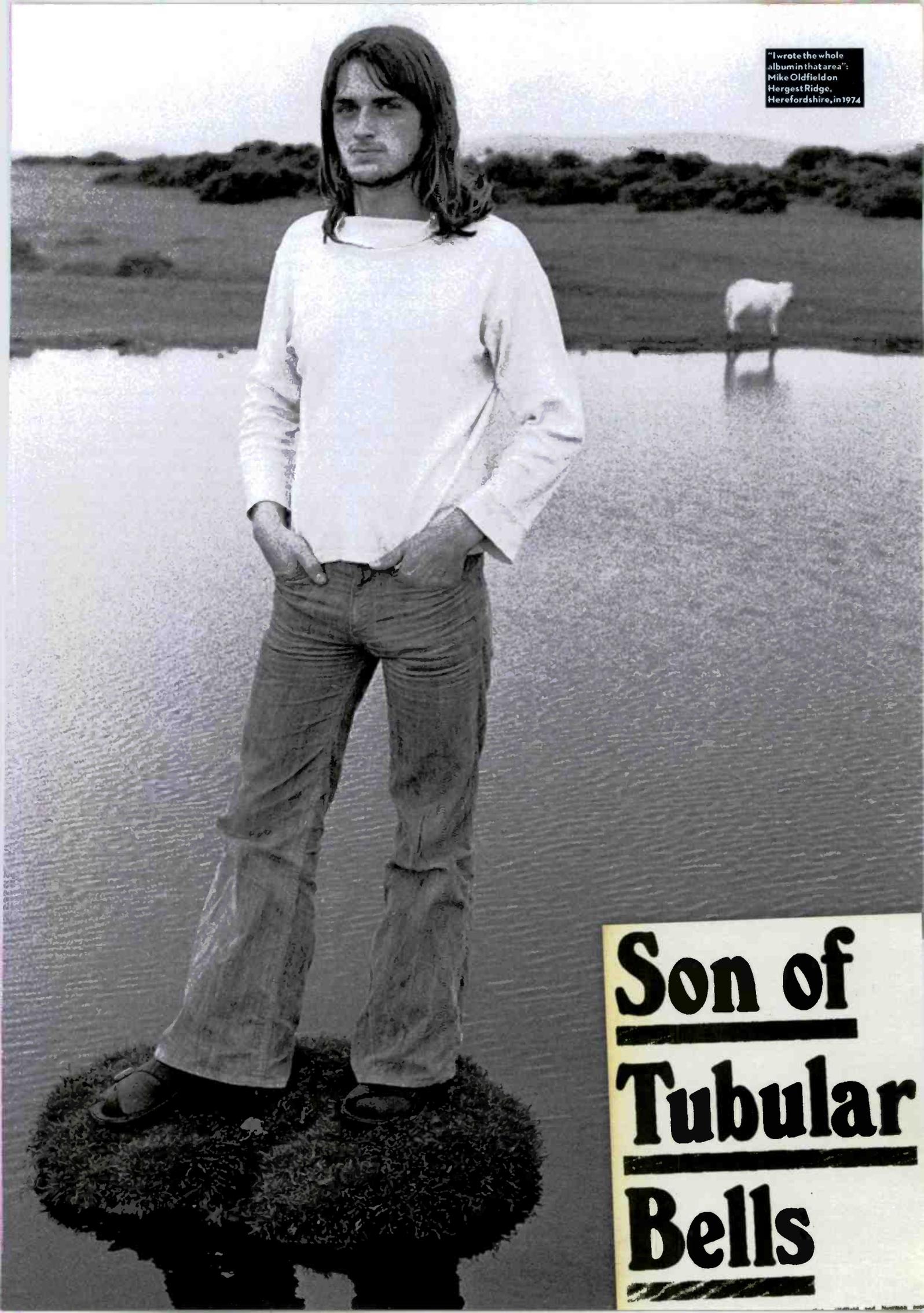
“There were a lot of bits on the first album that I’m now not happy with,” said Oldfield, much later in the day. “This time I’m ensuring that everything that’s in the music is really vital to the music.” It took a long while to get such a quote from Mike. He’s without doubt the most introverted artist I’ve ever met. In the 13 hours I was at the Manor, he spoke barely a handful of sentences, preferring to just get on with the job at hand, with a minimum of fuss or moodiness.

Clearly, with such a temperament, he’s fortunate to be working with Tom Newman, a very creative engineer, and a person who’s not at all backward in coming forward. Newman is the ying to Oldman’s yang—it’s a near-perfect working relationship. Newman keeps the session flowing smoothly, with an abundance of wit, and he seems, at the Manor at least, to be the only person that can really communicate with Mike. The young guitarist trusts him implicitly.

“The bass notes there make the sound too cluttered,” says Tom, “why don’t you just strum it, skiffle style?” »

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

"I wrote the whole  
album in that area":  
Mike Oldfield on  
Hergest Ridge,  
Herefordshire, in 1974



# Son of Tubular Bells

Oldfield looks surprised, but tries it. Newman is right. Mike climbs the wooden stairs to hear how it sounds on tape. One arm around his lady, Maggie, he listens in silence, and then nods. He mutters something inaudible in Newman's ear.

"Ah, the Chinese bit," says Tom sagely. The Chinese bit it is.

Oldfield isn't a virtuoso piano player by any means, but he does have a natural flair for creating pictorial images with the simplest of devices. The "Chinese bit" turns out to be a percussive and jerky foray around the flat and sharp black notes, which immediately evokes pictures of rickshaws and paper fans, although it takes Oldfield maybe half-a-dozen attempts to get the exact sound that he's after.

"Can you turn the mandolins up in the cans," he requests, "and turn the other piano track down. It's hard to concentrate on this one when I can hear the other thing going all the time."

Like everything else, it comes together eventually. Listening to the playbacks, Oldfield and Newman seem satisfied, as they take alternate slugs from a bottle of brandy. At this point, Oldfield is forced to temporarily abandon the session, by the arrival of a car salesman, Mike has apparently been test driving sports cars all week, and this latest one is a beautiful streamlined turquoise Ferrari, which Oldfield duly climbs into, before hurtling off around the Oxfordshire countryside.

"What did you think of it?" the salesman asks him an hour or so later.

"Well..." whispers Mike, "I don't want a fast car so much as a quiet one. That one seems very noisy. I've been thinking about a Lamborghini..."

**R**OUND ABOUT MIDNIGHT, after a cosy evening around the Manor television, Mike Oldfield decides that he'd like to do an interview. It's an unprecedented gesture. Having met Mike before, I know his general dislike for conversation and specifically when applied to music. He seems to feel, perhaps rightly, that music is for listening to, rather than talking about. Still, here we are. So, why is the new album so titled?

"Well, I've got this house in Herefordshire that stands on a hill, and it looks out over a much larger hill called Hergest Ridge. It's a great place to go for walks, and seeing as how I wrote the whole album in that area, it seemed as good a title as any."

Who else is on the album? "Nobody really well known. There's an oboe player, and a trumpet player, you heard the choir, and there's an Irish lady singer, multi-tracked lots of times. My brother [Terry] plays a bit of flute and a friend of his plays cymbals. Chillie Charles does a drum track."

This time, says Mike, there won't be any concert performance to launch the album. "We were going to do an Albert Hall concert in May, but the way it turned out, with the second side especially, it wouldn't be possible.

"There's an eight-minute section where I play 30 guitars and each of those is double-tracked, so that's 60, and with double-tracked bass guitars, it works out that you'd need 95 guitarists, all using fuzzboxes, to create the same sound. To even get near the sound, you'd need at least 40 players, and that's just not practical.

"I had a few reservations about the way *Tubular Bells* turned out as a live thing, anyhow. I didn't really enjoy it. If I do any more live things, I shan't actually be playing, because when you're playing it's very difficult to have any control over what's going on. Anybody could play my bit really, so I'd be free to do conducting and engineering."

For a couple of years, Mike was the musical mainstay of Kevin Ayers' band, the Whole World, where his role was totally different to that of the composer mantle he's now taken on. He was an excellent and inspired lead guitarist and a fine bassist too, when occasion demanded. This is an area of operation that Mike misses. "Yes. The best part, for me, in the Queen Elizabeth Hall concert, was the guitar solo with the strings. That was really enjoyable. I'd quite like to do the odd thing with a band as well if somebody asked me. I've been thinking of going to a few auditions. The Whole World was sometimes OK. It was a very good training ground, and I learnt a lot from working with Kevin and David Bedford."

All of Mike's remarks are delivered in an incredibly quiet monotone, and the most unnerving part of it all is that it seems as though he's thinking about the answers to the questions for the first time. A routine line like "Are you surprised at the success of *Tubular Bells*?" for example, meets with a thoughtful response that suggests that Oldfield has never even considered the matter: "I don't know, really. I never seem to be surprised

about it. When I made the record, a few people said to me that it was a commercial album, and so I just took their word for it. I can't remember whether I thought it'd be successful or not. By the time I'd finished it, it had become meaningless to me. I'd heard the thing about a thousand times, and I was acutely conscious of every bang, squeak and bit of tape hiss on it. After all that it was really a strain to have to resurrect it for live gigs."

**B**UT IF SUCCESS hasn't surprised you, has it changed you at all? "It's changed the way that I live. I exist a bit more comfortably now than I used to, but I'd say that it hasn't changed me enough. I really wish that it had changed me more than it has. I'm not very happy with myself as a person. I'd like a different brain, you know, I'm tired of the one that I've got. I find life a strain."

He laughs quietly, but a little sadly, too. I thought I'd change the subject. Ask about the future. "Oh, I'd like to produce some people. Don't ask me who, because I really don't know yet."

And as far as composing's concerned, Mike emphasised that he needs to be left alone to create... "Since the first album, I've found it increasingly hard to concentrate. I have difficulty in sustaining the drive to keep at it. What I need, what I really NEED, is to be settled down snugly in my own studio, somewhere in the country, where I could just get on with it, and without being forced to do gigs. I think that under those conditions I could

probably turn out a masterpiece every... oh, I don't know. I think I could turn out one good album a year. And I'm sure that I'd improve, too."

Mike acknowledges classical music as being his principal influence. ("The only pop music I listen to is heavy metal rock, and I only listen to that when I'm depressed.") And he reckons that church music has shaped his direction somewhat, although he's also into Delius, Bartók and Stravinsky. Bach's *B Minor Mass*, too.

He feels that he hasn't quite come to terms with the 20th century yet, although he likes Sir Michael Tippett's work. Mike's interest in

talking about music was subsiding again. He looked a bit distracted. Suddenly he perked up, and with something approaching enthusiasm, said: "Oh, you must come and see my model aeroplane; I got it last week. I'm really pleased with it." *Steve Lake*

## — NME MARCH 23 —

**T**HE STORY SO far: the scene is the 1973 Midem Festival in Cannes, the music biz's annual orgy of international wheeling and dealing, and Virgin Records boss man Richard Branson is doing the rounds with a master tape of Mike Oldfield's then just-recorded *Tubular Bells*. He's just played it to one US label representative and been told: "OK, slap some vocals on it and I'll give you \$20,000."

Which is about the most positive reaction so far from a whole host of US labels displaying varying degrees of apathy to Branson's search for an American outlet. In fact the rest of them – including the mighty CBS – were so apathetic they didn't even put in a bid. "It'll never sell in America" seemed to be the consensus of opinion from all sides – the Midem saga in itself being a repeat of Oldfield's own difficulties in finding a British label before Branson's enterprising Virgin label opened its doors.

This week, *Tubular Bells* entered the American Top Five and seems certain to achieve both gold and platinum status before the month's out. In Australia, the album has just taken the top slot on import sales.

Meanwhile, back in Britain, *Tubular Bells* has racked up sales far in excess of 200,000 since it first chimed into the best-seller lists on July 21, 1973. If the album continues to move at its current rate – and there are no indications that it's about to slow down – it could eventually eclipse the success of Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon* and even rival Simon and Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* as an all-time recording phenomenon.

Not bad going for an introverted little bloke just turned 20, who hardly anyone wanted to know a year ago! The man in fact is as docile as Lewis Carroll's shagged-out little dormouse and about as animated as a day-old corpse. Experienced journalists have been known to stagger away from Oldfield interviews bemoaning the fact that they have insufficient copy to cover a G-string, and harbouring an overwhelming desire to return to their old vocation of wiring readers' letters for *Forum*.

If the truth be known, I thought I'd blown it with my second question, through which I was attempting to create some kind of rapport with the

## "The only pop music I listen to is heavy metal rock"

reluctant Oldfield. We'd been labouring to establish interviewer-interviewee relations in the claustrophobic control room of The Manor recording studio somewhere in the Oxfordshire outback, and I'd asked him his feelings about *The Exorcist*.

What with *Tubular Bells* being used as the soundtrack, and all those blood-curdling tales (fact or publicist's fantasy) circulating about how people connected with the making of the movie are being beset with all kinds of personal traumas—accident, death and madness—I wondered if Oldfield was aware of the nasties currently being dealt out of Satan's pack.

A look of fear rapidly replaced the tranquillity of his placid blue eyes; his frail body trembled ever so slightly as he mumbled: "I wish you hadn't told me that. Anyway, that's it, you've finally convinced me; I'm definitely not going to see that film now.

"Even before you told me all this," he continued in a dry wavery voice, "I was much too frightened to see it. Judging from what I've read in the papers, coupled to what you've just said, that's it. I don't wanna know."

His cause for concern goes deeper than that of the thrill-seeking cinemagoer averse to performing a technicolour yawn all over the lady peddling albatrosses on a stick. The fact is, the four-minute segment of *Tubular Bells* used for the soundtrack of the film was, states Oldfield, taken without his prior permission. "The thing nobody realises," said Oldfield in a voice that starts in a strained whisper and invariably trails off mid-sentence into thin air, "is that I knew absolutely nothing at all about this. It's not that I really minded, but honestly, I wish you hadn't told me all those stories." There was a long silence.

As it transpired, when the man spoke up again and the "interview" progressed, Oldfield didn't suddenly start carrying on in an alarming manner. Neither did heavy objects begin to levitate around the control room. To his credit, this man didn't start screaming obscenities, spew green bile in my face, make his head rotate a full 360 degrees or perform unmentionable acts on his person with the guitar that he was carefully re-stringing. In fact, he didn't do very much at all, and said even less.

"I'M TELLING YOU, you'll have to peg Mike down if you want to get anything out of him," was the word-to-the-wise advice whispered in my right ear by sound engineer Tom Newman when I first arrived at the rambling old Manor house.

At which point, Oldfield shuffled by grunting about "Scottish Tom" being on the other end of the phone. When one finally "pegs Mike down", he appears so anonymous that we could have quite easily printed a photograph of our own Steve Clarke on this page and no one would have been the wiser, except the barmaid at the Marquee.

In his defence, however, I suppose I may have manifested myself at an inopportune moment, for after spending six weeks working on his new masterwork *Hergest Ridge*, Oldfield (sweat-stained armpits and all) is currently in a state of stagnation and acute frustration.

Apparently he's just scrapped one complete section of recorded music and was attempting to work up some enthusiasm to finish the task within the next two weeks. The previous days spent constructing and flying model gliders hadn't brought forth a much-needed burst of inspiration.

"I'm going through a bad phase at the moment, things aren't going quite right for me," husked the voice of mental constipation. "Nothing is turning out the way that I want it, and at the moment I'm not quite sure how to go about rectifying it. Everything keeps going right out of tune, so I've had to re-string just about everything."

Suspect tuning, he admits, can in some instances enhance the sheets of sounds. But he goes on to reveal that this is by no means his only dilemma: "I also have a lot of trouble keeping time."

He slumps over the 24-track console, fiddles with a battery of knobs and switches and suddenly the room is filled with the celestial sounds of hallucinogenic voices, sky-diving guitars, macaroni mandolins and other heady noises that slurp 'n' slide in and out of the giant playback speakers. "This is the bit that's giving me a helluva lot of trouble."

We listen for a moment, before he bashes the stop mechanism. "I've got a dreadful sense of timing... can't understand it. I think it's OK at the time, but when I come to play it back I find I've slowed down and speeded up in all the wrong places. I must have had my mind on other things."



After rewinding the tape to another section, 95 guitars in full array tickle our senses like 40,000 headmen galloping across one's lobotomy on leapers. Very impressive.

"Christ, how could I ever possibly hope to recreate that live?" he ponders with a voice so dejected I felt like slashing my wrists, but at the same time giving some insight as to why *Tubular Bells* has only been performed twice in public. Once in concert, once on television.

"I don't like doing gigs, and won't do any until such time as the whole concert thing is so incredibly rehearsed, well equipped, and I've got the right people to play with. If eventually I am to do gigs, I want each and everyone to be a satisfying thing to go out and do. And only then will I consider it. You see, I want people who are not only musically capable but also emotionally equipped to do it.

"To be truthful, I think I'd be much happier conducting and engineering it than actually participating. The engineering is twice as complicated as any of the parts. When we did that concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, we didn't use any amplifiers—all the guitars were fed straight into the mixing board, which a lot of people didn't realise. But even that had a lot of major technical hang-ups."

Despite this, Oldfield feels that eventually such problems can be surmounted. But as to whether the effort and expense will justify the result, all he can offer is a non-committal: "It might... but I dunno."

As yet he hasn't managed to overcome all the limitations of the recording studio. "The electronics stand in your way," he quietly drones. "They get between you and your final thing, so until such time that someone invents a control board that has inbuilt aesthetic judgement, that's the only way to do it."

It's a line of conversation that prompts him to dismiss any suggestion that by going it alone and playing most instruments he's in danger of becoming involved in a sophisticated exercise in recording technique.

"All I'm doing is just making some music that I can listen to... Well, I think it's that! There's not a lot of music that I enjoy listening to. Mostly I like classical music, church and choral things—there's not too much rock that I can get off on.

"I'll tell you something—I always thought that once I had made my own album, held the cover in my hands and read my name, I'd think it was wonderful. But, you know, it's not like that at all."

Jeez, Oldfield, I've got enough problems of my own without you crying on my shoulder as if I was some rock'n'roll Marjorie Proops.

"If I do get any sense of achievement from what I'm doing," he blubs, "it's when I'm mixing the thing. After that I'm so exhausted I couldn't really care less about things. I'm a bit too dazed to know if I'm really satisfied or dissatisfied with what I've done."

**I**NDEED IT APPEARS Mike Oldfield gets his kicks in some very strange ways. He may have received unanimous praise from the world's press for *Tubular Bells*, but nevertheless he encountered great difficulty in relating to it. As he tells it, the only printed comment that made any real impression was a reader's letter in the musical press describing *Tubular Bells* as the biggest load of rubbish ever recorded.

"Believe it or not, that letter made me feel quite good inside. The fact that somebody hated it was great, but quite honestly, I can't understand why that one letter had such a wonderful effect on me. It gave me much more satisfaction than any of those positive reviews I read."

But then—as you many have already gathered—Mike Oldfield is an introverted personality beset with screaming contradictions, out of which here's one little gem: "Basically I'm very insecure. In fact, I'm a bit worried about what's gonna become of me. I'll tell you, if I'd have started going on tour right away, I'm quite certain that something very nasty would have happened to me. I'm positive I wouldn't have come back in one piece."

Again this conversation is punctuated with a strained pause as he attempts to detect the root cause of his fears. He fails, and dismisses it and the remainder of the interview thus:

"It's probably the curse of *The Exorcist*"—delivered with a very unconvincing laugh. "After what you've told me about that film, I'm really very worried."

And with that he dashes off to take a call from the elusive Scottish Tom. Hey Mike, careful as you go—don't walk under any ladders. Roy Carr •

1974

JANUARY—MARCH



ELO pictured on August 16, 1974: (l-r) Mike Edwards, Jeff Lynne, Mik Kaminski (squatting), Bev Bevan, Richard Tandy, Hugh McDowell and Mike d'Albuquerque

“I don’t like none of this pseudo-intellectual stuff”

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 2 —

**T**HE STRING QUARTET had just concluded a short recital of chamber music, when one of the violinists – a somewhat distinguished gentleman with shiny bald pate sparsely trimmed with tufts of silver grey – suddenly jumped up, tucked his instrument safely under one arm and proceeded to elbow his way towards Jeff Lynne through the crowd of inebriates and media-men who had gathered to welcome the Electric Light Orchestra to America.

Grabbing hold of Lynne’s right hand and pumping it furiously, the violinist (who was old enough to be Lynne’s grandfather) effected his own introduction: “Say, young man,” he gushed, “I’ve got all of your three albums and both the members of the quartet and myself think they’re just great. Yessir, they’re quite splendid.” Lowering his voice, Lynne’s confidant disclosed: “We play them all the time, and to be quite truthful we’ve learned a lot.”

Before Lynne had time to recover from this unsolicited outburst of senior-citizen fan mania, his newly acquired admirer zoomed into a highly technical discourse on the Electric Light Orchestra – interspersed with innumerable questions concerning musical theory as applied to ELO’s synchronisation of classical rock forms.

“I hadn’t understood a single word he’d said,” Lynne recalls of the incident. “And when I informed him that I can’t read or write music, you should have seen the expression of utter amazement on his face.

“Sure,” Lynne continues, “I know what all the notes and the chords are, but really, that’s about as far as it goes. It took me quite some time to convince him that I wasn’t just having him on.” »

PETER MAZEL/CAMERA PRESS

**Farewell, cold dressing rooms of Grimsby – ELO are doing the business in America. The business-minded Jeff Lynne talks football, money and classical music, as the band rise to greatness with their *Eldorado* album.**



Yet in no way has Jeff Lynne's lack of academic training proved to be a hindrance. Quite the contrary. If, as the man says, one is unaware of the applied rules of the game, then accordingly one just plays it by ear. As simple as that.

In all innocence, this approach has enabled this amiable musical lawbreaker to do those things that would no doubt prompt the entire faculty of the Royal College Of Music to tut:

"Tish-poo." Dare one even hazard a thought to how these most learned tutors would react to the following modus operandi: "I just go right ahead and do things just the way I feel 'em."

And the way Mr Lynne "feels 'em" has made the ELO a power to be reckoned with. One minute they're tearing through a roughhouse send-up of Beethoven's *Fifth* neatly tacked onto the Entire Chuck Berry repertoire of riffs; the next moment Norman Whitfield is expertly rolled over and out for a slice of cello-dominated soul sleaze. By way of non-stop contrast, guitars and violins stand toe-to-toe as they thrust and parry. Moogs are synthesized and percussables are percussed in a wild profusion of original – if somewhat unorthodox – ideas.

ELO may well have given Tchaikovsky the news, but Lynne adamantly refutes any suggestion that he is a frustrated classical musician who's just jumped out of the closet.

"Sure, I love a lot of classical music, but there's also a helluva lot that I don't like. I suppose I've got the same kinda taste as the average bloke in the street. You know – a little bit of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, but I don't like none of this modern pseudo-intellectual stuff... the stuff that usually sounds like crashing cans.

"The last thing you could accuse ELO of being is pretentious. From the very start, we've carefully avoided the problem that some groups have of taking themselves too bloody serious... the ultra-cool, far-out-man brigade." He points fingers but doesn't name names.

"Yeah, we play some serious stuff – well, let's say: as serious as we want it to be. But we've always managed to offset that part of our programme with some harmless nonsense.

"That was the reason why we came up with 'Roll Over Beethoven' and 'In The Hall Of The Mountain King'. We weren't doing any rowdy rockers at the time and we thought it would be good fun to arrange them for our instrumentation as a bit of a laugh."

Now, contrary to what one might be forgiven for thinking, Lynne insists that – as a musician – he experiences far fewer restrictions within the complex format of the Electric Light Orchestra than those of his immediate contemporaries, employed in the more accepted rock group lineup: "Really, that's one of the main reasons why ELO came into being in the first place. Simply because I'd become so fed up with the usual guitar bands."

He clarifies: "After a while, you're forced into a situation whereby you just keep on repeating yourself over and over again. There's only so much you can do with guitars after you've exhausted straight riffs and half-hour guitar solos."

From experience, it's nearly always the strong-brewed British beer-and-skittles bands that are consumed in vast quantities by American audiences. Anything milder just pays its way. Though a new wine in an old bottle, ELO are proving that America is now becoming more appreciative of the exotic, exported bouquets. "I was really amazed

## "I was totally unaware of the business side of music"

In the midst of the '60s British beat boom, The Idle Race were a band forever on the brink of breaking into the bigtime – but that, in the end, didn't. Today they're remembered as something of a minor cult. It's somewhat of a paradox that the comparative commercial failure of The Idle Race was in some ways responsible for the escalating success of the Electric Light Orchestra.

"The Idle Race served as my apprenticeship," Lynne explains. "The thing was, I was very naive in those days... totally unaware of the business side of music. I just made the little records, sat back – and watched 'em all go down the drain.

"We didn't have a manager and so naturally we didn't know what to do about it. Everyone would say what great records we made and that they were hits, but none of 'em ever did make it.

"Funnily enough, it never worried me too much that those records didn't sell, 'cos I really didn't know any better. I just kinda accepted it.

I'll tell you, I wouldn't accept it now... never."

Obviously, Jeff Lynne is an artist who has learned from past mistakes, even if they were not of his own making. Believe me, it's not often you can write that about someone. *Roy Carr*

### — MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 28 —

**A**LL RIGHT THEN, Jeff Lynne. Here you are just about to take your orchestra to Europe followed by a big tour of the States, which means we won't see you again for ages and ages. So what have you got to tell the British public before you leave?

Waddya mean, Birmingham for the cup and Trevor Francis for England? He likes his football, does Mr Lynne; so much so that at times it's difficult to get him talking about music – until you say you understand the Electric Light Orchestra have just completed a new album.

It's the greatest record he's ever made, he tells you categorically, and though he doesn't actually say it, after a few minutes you get the impression he thinks it's the greatest record anybody's ever made.

Critics will be falling over themselves in search of new superlatives, and there'll be queues down the street as people fight their way to the record shop to buy it. That's the impression Jeff (enthusiastically supported by Bev Bevan) gives you as he talks about the album *Eldorado*, which is not due for release in Britain until early next year.

It's a concept album, based around the story of a dreamer who achieves nothing, but the individual tracks reflect his various dreams.

"It's coming out here in January," said Lynne, "but is being released in America in a couple of weeks for when we're touring. They've told us it'll be gold there this time. The last one just missed being a gold album by 20,000, but they guarantee we're going to get it with this one.

"We're delighted with the way it's turned out. It's quite a sad sort of thing about the eternal dreamer who wakes up and sees the stark reality of life and can't stand it. Different characters come into it, famous people in history like Robin Hood. This bloke's very into dreams and can't live in real life, because he's nothing."

Lynne was responsible for the material, but it also required some intensive arranging and orchestrating as a 30-piece orchestra has been used in addition to a 20-member choir.

"It's a real big experiment for me. There are separate parts, as we wanted to make it into a symphony thing. It's that sort of concept."

Working with an orchestra he found a strain, although he doesn't think it would have worked fractionally as well without them. "It was real hard work. I was really on edge making it, because with an orchestra you have all the problems of the Musicians' Union and all that. They want a tea break every 10 minutes and all that crap.

"The majority of the music is played by the group, but there are bits and pieces which need the rest of it. It was worth all the worry, because it turned out exactly right. It's exactly as I envisaged ELO ever sounding."

Jeff reckons that although the band have reached a pinnacle with *Eldorado*, they've always done good stuff, and is therefore somewhat disappointed they haven't been acclaimed more in their home country. Their *On The Third Day* album has sold something like 50,000 over a period of time, which isn't bad, but he thought it would have done better.

"We play in America more than anywhere else; in fact we'd like to play there all the time. We've got a big band which needs paying and it costs





# Much influenced by *Revolver* **MM JAN 5** ELO wow US crowds with their rock-classical gas.

**WE ARE GATHERED** together, ladies and gentlemen, for a recital by that promising septet of young British musicians who call themselves the Electric Light Orchestra. Please take your seats quietly and refrain from ruffling the programme. Tonight's recital will include compositions by such well-know composers as Bach, Beethoven and Chopin as well as pieces written and scored by the Orchestra themselves.

Well... the Electric Light Orchestra are the nearest thing rock has to a classical group. One of the cellists even dresses in a tail suit, while Bev Bevan's drumkit carries a picture of Ludwig Van to reinforce the image.

ELO are probably the most original rock/classical group of all the bands that have tried to fuse the two forms of music together. The basic difference between ELO and all the bands that ever attempted the merger - Nice, Deep Purple and perhaps Procol Harum - is that ELO was formed specifically for this kind of music, while the others tried it later, after being successful rock bands.

As a result, ELO included the necessary instrumentation from the outset instead of adding an orchestra later. Their repertoire is based heavily on classical themes - or quotations from them - and the split is a straight 50/50 in favour of neither or both forms of music.

And America has taken to ELO in a surprisingly short space of time. Although they've yet to progress to the amphitheatre stage, they're now comfortably filling the smaller halls here on their own, and occasionally sticking their necks out and playing support to a bigger band in front of 20,000 or so. It could be that curiosity has swelled their audiences, but the curious seem to have gone away feeling satisfied.

It's a classic case of the eccentric Englishmen - something the Americans dote on. With their instrumentation and peculiar style of musical expertise, ELO seem more at home in a small, older hall than in a stadium.

Here in Philadelphia - a town which itself is as much steeped in history as anywhere in the

United States - ELO are playing a venue not unlike the London Coliseum. The audience is young, and because of the surroundings, there's a distinct absence of the sweet-smelling odour of exotic cheroots that seems to pervade almost every American concert I've seen over the past few months.

On this occasion ELO are the only band appearing, a situation that came about because an argument developed between the road managers of Nils Lofgren's Grin and the roadies for ELO. It appears that ELO's crew wouldn't allow speakers to be placed in a certain position, so the band walked out. As a result there's a long delay before ELO appear, but the audience is remarkably patient. When they do appear, there's a hushed silence during tuning. What the hell? A rock band with two seated cellists and a violin as well as the guitar, bass, drums and keyboards.

The music, when it begins, has a quality that only this kind of lineup could produce. Behind the rocking guitar of Jeff Lynne is a sort of drone from the string section, almost like backing tapes used by some bands. Except that this time it's real. It adds a kind of haunting quality to Lynne's compositions, creating a very, very full sound, both inspiring and uplifting.

The classical quotes come midway through the pieces they play. There were excerpts from *Swan Lake* which reminded me of an old single of the same tune I had years ago, "Saturday Night At The Duck Pond" by The Cougars.

But the best classical excerpt really occurred in their version of "Day Tripper", which suddenly swerved off its normal course and into a quiet Chopin piano concerto. It was an instantly

memorable rock riff and an equally instantly memorable classic piece merging. Very effective.

Comparison with The Beatles doesn't really end there, though. Much of ELO's music could have been influenced by *Revolver* or *Magical Mystery Tour* and when Lennon and McCartney experimented with strings on songs like "Eleanor Rigby". This facet was more apparent on Lynne's lengthy new opus "On The Third Day", which takes up a whole side of their new album. It last around 20 minutes, moves through various themes and was reproduced live almost to perfection.

Violinist Mike d'Albuquerque was given an opportunity to solo with a little Bach which moved into a super fast version of "Orange Blossom Special", the inevitable number violinists choose to work their nimble fingers to best advantage. "Showdown" followed, before they finished the set with their British single hit "Roll Over Beethoven", a long version that erupted into a free-for-all among the musicians. The two cellists arose from

their seats to leap around the stage, cellos in hand - a rather comical gesture.

Despite the activity the crowd didn't leave their seats, although they cheered for more. The band returned to play Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King", which diverted into "Great Balls Of Fire" with Lynne screaming the vocals above the screeching string section.

Backstage, Jeff Lynne had enough time to tell me that ELO were happier working in the States than anywhere else. The band had received favourable reactions almost everywhere they played, he said.

Chris Charlesworth

## The best classical excerpt occurred in their version of "Day Tripper"



a lot of money to keep a band like ours on the road, so why should we play elsewhere when we make much more money in America? They enjoy us much more over there, too. They just like to listen to music, and we get things like four encores."

Bev Bevan elaborated: "Promoters over here are pathetic. They book you for a date and that's it, they just expect you to turn up on the day and don't even come up to you and say hello.

"We've been around for a long while. In America things are such an improvement, you can't help being bitter about things over here. This album we've made can't be much better - it's such a good album, but if this doesn't sell there just ain't no justice."

OK then, if America's so great and you do so well over there, are you going to follow the present trend of British rock artists and go and live there?

"No," says Jeff Lynne, "I couldn't leave the blues." ELO last toured Britain early in the year, and although they had successful full-house concerts at places like Birmingham Town Hall and London's Drury Lane, many of the venues had empty spaces in the audience.

Jeff: "You get a cupboard to change in and it's cold and you're shivering, and you're expected to go out and put on a good performance; you can't win. We're going to tour here again next year, but there's no way we can

play every town. We might sell out in Birmingham one night and do nothing in Grimsby the next. Why should we play here when we can earn fortunes in America?"

ELO have had four hit singles but nothing since "Ma-Ma-Ma Belle", and that was quite a time ago. No singles have been released since, and as far as Jeff and Bev are concerned they would be quite happy if none were released again.

"We don't want singles out, it ain't our scene," said Jeff. "It's against our principles. I suppose we've been lucky that every record we've had out has been a hit, but it's not part of our scene. We're not a singles band, but if you have a hit single there's always people who think you're a singles group. In America you can release singles and they don't class you as a singles band.

"Over here, for the majority of people, if you haven't got a record in the charts it means you're not doing anything, but that's a pathetic attitude. But if the record company say they're going to release a single, what can you do about it? You can't argue.

"I could write horrible hit singles, I'm sure I could, but I don't want to do it. I like to get my teeth into something serious, something with a bite to it. You do whatever you like, and I like something a bit deeper than pop cliches." Colin Irwin •

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**NEED ANY BACK ISSUES?  
SEE PAGE 144**

# Readers' letters

**MM JAN-MAR** Music vs mascara, the K-word, Robert Wyatt's tax bill and more...

## Million dollar bash

Who the hell does Steve Harley of Cockney Rebel think he is? In the *MM* you quoted him as saying: "You've no right to be on stage if you don't look a million dollars, not if you think you're in show business."

So in other words good bands like Status Quo, Pink Floyd, Hawkwind, etc, have no right to be on stage, because they wear jeans and T-shirts and look like they should be working for the council. Don't forget, Mr Harley, it's not eyelashes and glitter that make a good band. It's the music.

**PAUL GOVAN, Sutton Road, Barking, Essex (MM Jan 19)**



## Nothing but a Yes man

After reading the unanimous bad reviews and put-downs of *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, it was with considerable trepidation that I flashed my cash at my local record shop last Saturday, half expecting to end up with some kind of misshapen musical Quasimodo hopelessly entangled in its own Byzantine intricacies.

I mean, if even Chris Welch had reservations about it, something must have gone wrong somewhere. However, after spending the weekend listening to it, I'd just like to know what all the fuss was about.

Although it takes several plays before it comes across. *Oceans* is at least as good as anything Yes have done previously, and it might well turn out to be as important a landmark for them as *The Yes Album* was. Sure it's not perfect. "The Ancient" in particular takes some listening to, but it'll all come across eventually, just as *Close To The Edge* did.

Anyway, Yes never set out to make music to wash the dishes to, so what's the sweat?

**PHIL HARDING, Crown St, Failsworth, Manchester (MM Jan 12)**



## Merseybleat

I must let the people of Britain know what a musical desert Liverpool has turned out to be; it's so bad now that it wouldn't surprise me if The Beatles said they hailed from Manchester.

Firstly, with the rise in "pub rock" around Britain now, Liverpool has tried to join in, with disastrous results.

Nearly everyone has turned out to be the "cheap and nasty" type, banging out tuneless "self-composed" drivel.

If it's a number we're all supposed to know, we are treated to an unrecognisable din churned up out of distorted chords, pneumatic drumming and flat, nasal gruntings (if it is, of course possible, to grunt flat).

The standards of the groups in Liverpool are laughable if not hilarious. The Cavern is the musicians' graveyard, and has been for the past five years.

The audiences are nothing but lethargic zombies - "wind me up, let me go".

Any good group that does "make it", if they value their sanity, will never come back to Liverpool.

**JOHN HERDMAN, Lessups Road, Liverpool (MM Jan 19)**

I don't know where John Herdman (*Mailbag*, January 19) has been all these years.

Far from "joining in" the current boom, there has been pub rock in Liverpool since the Liverpool Scene first used O'Connor Tavern for weekly sessions back in '67.

Since then scenes have developed in the Masonic Arms, featuring the best in local soul music most nights, the Sportsman - where Supercharge are the main favourites with an enthusiastic crowd, and several others around the city.

O'Connors itself continues to flourish - in the last year it's featured local bands most weeks, plus guests from out of town of the calibre of Victor Brox, Pete Brown and Lol Coxhill.

Nobody pretends that the scene - in terms of venues or groups - is as healthy as it was in the heady days of the early '60s, but attitudes such as those displayed by Mr Herdman can only do a disservice to local live music, which needs

all the support and encouragement it can get.

**MIKE EVANS, Huskisson Street, Liverpool (MM Feb 2)**

## Let's just say German rock

Why does it make Mr Dulish from Mönchengladbach, Germany, feel sad if British newspapers are talking about "Kraut Rock"?

Remember, once the British decided that all goods from foreign countries had to show "Made in..." if imported by British traders, it became a quality mark.

I think that "Kraut Rock" is a good trademark, too. If music is good, people will listen to it and it makes no difference if they are British, Japanese, French or German.

I know that many Kraut Rock bands can even be successful in Britain. Some record labels and concert agencies are speaking about "Kraut Rock" and use it as a slogan.

There are other expressions - eg, "Yankee", "Pommy", etc. "Kraut" will sound good if the music is good. "British Rock" will sound bad if the music is bad. We have to understand little jokes. We have to laugh, not be sad or angry. That's my impression, as a German music manager.

**KARL-HEINZ SNEIDER, Sneider Promotions, Germany (MM Feb 2)**

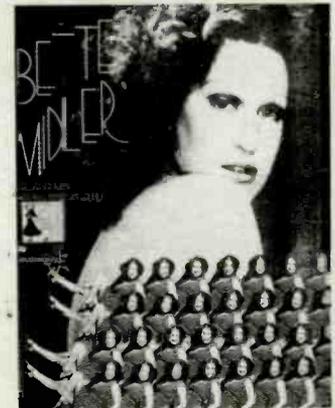
## Robert Wyatt's mum writes

You may remember - and certainly I will never forget - the recent benefit concerts held by the Soft Machine and Pink Floyd on behalf of my son, Robert, who is paralysed after an accident. This wonderful gesture brought in ten thousand pounds.

But I think you may be interested to know that Robert will receive seven thousand. Two thousand goes in tax and one thousand in VAT. Every penny is of importance, for he must now find expensive new equipment and a new home.

Also, not having been able to earn for eight months, it will probably be a year or more before he can earn again. Yet he has been taxed on the ten thousand as though it were an annual income. What an odd world we live in that such a manifestation of human warmth and kindness should be at the mercy of inhuman government action.

**HONOR WYATT, Dalmore Road, West Dulwich, London (MM Jan 12)**





MUSICAL EXPRESS

JONI APRIL CONCERTS

Dylan sought; Beefheart set for Olympia Rock Proms

IGGY TOUR

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# 1974

APRIL - JUNE

TIM BUCKLEY, RICHARD THOMPSON, SPARKS, RICK WAKEMAN & MORE



## It was evident ABBA would win

**MM APR 13** Sweden wins the Eurovision Song Contest. *MM* reports the spectacle, and wonders what the songs that *didn't* make the cut were like.

**A** STONE'S THROW FROM the haughty crowd shuffling into the Brighton Dome was an old tramp, hidden by a corner, clasping himself against the chilly night air. He stared blankly into space, and no one took any notice of him as they passed by.

It was a deep contrast to the moment – the 19th Eurovision Song Contest – and to the jewels, blue rinses, dress suits and bow ties being worn into the auditorium. One wondered what it all had to do with music. The very idea that you have to dress to a certain way to listen to it is like overkill in reverse.

Two buskers turned up on the pavement with their guitars, took a look at the queue, and shoved off – they didn't seem to think they'd get very far playing to this lot. Once inside, the crowd, these representatives of the "militant silent majority" whose appetite for the surrogate is vast, were greeted by a guitar-accordion-drums trio playing, inevitably, "Girl From Ipanema".

This, after having passed through the tight security net composed of constables (outside)

and over-jovial jobsworths (inside), whose toys were airport-style frisking rods for examining the inside seams of jackets. With the Irish, Israelis and Greeks in the contest the poor old Beeb had got the jitters. They needn't have bothered really; who'd want to start something that doesn't exist. Realising the utter futility of an assassination attempt, I'd thrown my automatic off the Palace Pier beforehand.

Earlier in the day I'd arrived to check in at the press room. Posters saying "Brighton Welcomes Eurovision" decorated the streets and the buses. Well, a million quid's worth of publicity to the town, so they said. Brighton, with its tawdry, anachronistic atmosphere, seemed a fitting venue, however.

You had to pass a metal detector and have your case searched even to get to the press tables where the BBC bureaucrats were left only with releases in French. There were also strange notices telling you not to run in the corridors or touch the walls, lest you be suspected of sabotage. One wondered what it had to do with music. »

OLIE LINDERBERG/ASPGETTY

Swedish pop group Abba performs during the Eurovision Song Contest 1974 on February 09, 1974 in Brighton with their song



# Eurovision: our Waterloo

Swede bashers  
trounce Livvy!



I settled into my balcony seat with apprehension, above the cheap-looking silver and black stage (later to turn pink, turquoise and yellow like a birthday cake – it actually cost £5,000) among members of the Irish press, who had plenty of caustic comments to make. The parade of the puppets, willingly putting their necks on the chopping block like so many lost lambs, was about to begin.

An event comparable in its gargantuan folly to that other international embarrassment, *It's A Knockout*. But 500 million viewers are tuning in throughout Europe, subjecting themselves passively to the pre-packed superficiality of what are in no way the choicest songs in Europe, but essentially Eurovision songs, another kettle of (poor) fish entirely.

As Olivia Newton-John was heard to say about "Long Live Love": "It's not the sort of song I'd choose personally if I was looking for a new single, but it's a good Eurovision song."

The British selection panel boobed badly. By choosing a bomp-bomp formula song with the usual waltz-like feel they failed to match the products of the more enlightened Europeans like Holland, Israel, Yugoslavia and Sweden, who won with their group ABBA and "Waterloo". (It was more than evident that Abba would win, even in rehearsals.) Though the contest remains in a fake showbiz limbo

all of its own, Britain lagged about seven years behind: it was in 1967 that we first won with Sandie Shaw's "Puppet On A String", a number that really should be the Eurovision theme.

Another interesting aside was that the Dutch and Scandinavian entries sang in English, when surely it would have been more respectful to have them sing in their own languages. Apparently, they'd had some advice from someone.

Terry Wogan, for one, who was doing the BBC radio commentary, seemed to think the whole lot should sing in English.

As nation after nation coughed up its doubtful talents, one pondered the grey conservatism that could produce such huge acceptance, far greater than for any other music programme; one also pondered on the record companies in 20 countries

who were lending their ears; on the original 7,000 songs from which the final entries were chosen – what on earth were they like?

Old trouser Kate Boyle came and said that apart from the 500 million viewers in 32 countries there was another million people listening on radio: "It's a fantastic thought."

Leaving the Dome afterwards, the old tramp was still hunched in the same nearby doorway. He knew nothing about it all, while Europe had seen and heard it as it happened. Ignorance can be bliss. *Jeff Ward*



**"It's not the sort of song I'd choose, but it's a good Eurovision song"**

## "A legacy of superb masterpieces" **MM JUNE 1 RIP, Duke Ellington.**

**D**UKE ELLINGTON, THE greatest composer and band leader jazz music has ever known, died last Friday at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Centre, New York, aged 75. Ellington had been ill since the beginning of the year and his stay in hospital had to be extended recently. He was there on his 75th birthday, which took place on April 29.

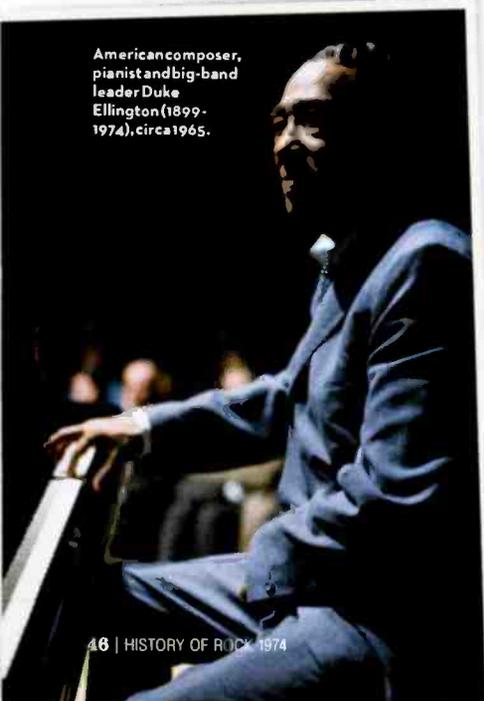
An anticipated reunion with his orchestra for a 12-day engagement in Bermuda last Tuesday had had to be called off. But the band was reorganised to open there under the direction of his son, Mercer Ellington, with Billy Taylor depping for the Duke.

His funeral took place on Monday at New York's Cathedral of St John The Divine.

In a musical career that spanned more than 50 years, Ellington attained a status that has never been matched by any of his contemporaries. He was respected by all musical factions – from jazz to classical pop. He was an accomplished pianist, a brilliant orchestrator and composer. Many of his works became standards in the world's musical repertoire, among them such melodious compositions as "Solitude", "Sophisticated Lady", "Satin Doll" and "Mood Indigo".

His first attempt at extended composition was the brilliant suite "Black, Brown And Beige", which ran for 50 minutes when it was presented at New York's Carnegie Hall in January 1943. British bandleader Alan Cohen sums up the whole spectrum of Ellington's talent by saying: "He has given us a rich legacy of superb masterpieces."

American composer, pianist and big-band leader Duke Ellington (1899-1974), circa 1965.



## "I think women are unnecessary"

**MM JUNE 15** An audience with Nico. In her sights: Lou Reed, John Cale and Kevin Ayers.

**S**TRANGE DAYS! WALK into a Ladbroke Grove hotel, open your mouth to say, "Where can I find Nico?" and the ghostly, haunted tone of a harmonium rises right beside you. Turn to your immediate right, and here, in this very hotel foyer, a very curious spot of improvisation is taking place. Nico's feet pump away at the bellows of the tiny reed organ. Paul Buckmaster saws at cello strings, and across the lobby hunched in an alcove, Jan Akkerman picks at a Spanish guitar. Thijs van Leer watches this happening impassively.

But what's weird here is that with one of the world's leading arrangers on one flank, and a poll-winning rock guitarist on the other, it's still Nico's *Amateur Hour* keyboard doodlings that seem the most moving noise.

It's maybe unfortunate that her detached stage personality extends over into her interviews. In this realm, she's fascinating to watch, her facial contortions and sudden switches of expression often alarming, but attempting to actually communicate with her is at times like trying to make contact with an autistic child.

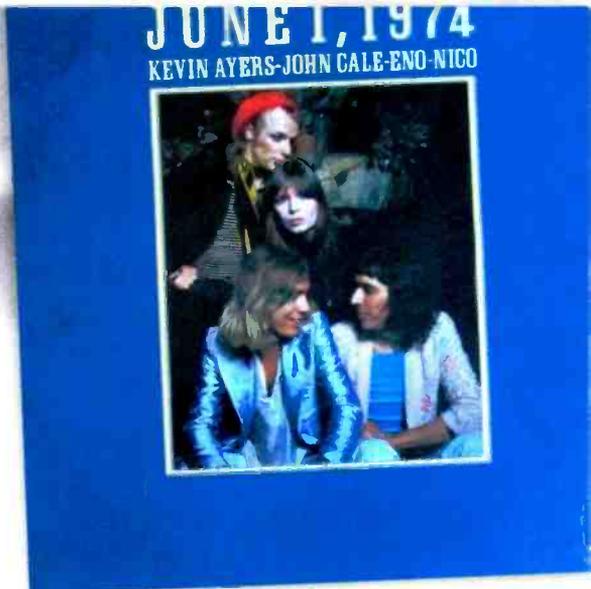
Much of the time she seems distant, as though troubled by some half-remembered dream. Often she doesn't appear to hear the question asked, or will counter one question with another. However, this isn't any Beefheart- or Zappa-type battle of wits, this is almost tragic. Tragi-comic, perhaps. Here's how we begin:

"There is a tree in the garden, we can talk beneath it." Sure, that's fine by me. "Actually, I would prefer to stay here."

What? Oh yeah, sure, that's fine too. Fearing the worst, we begin by asking about Lou Reed. It transpires that our chanteuse doesn't like the phantom of rock too much. In fact, of the dozens of names that arise in conversation the only people she appears to have any affection for are Eno and Jo Lustig, an unlikely pairing if ever there was.

Nico recently flew to New York to procure Reed's assistance with her forthcoming Island album, which Lou has tentatively dubbed *I Want To Be Bald*. Assistance, however, was not to be found. Rather than work together, Reed and Nico fought instead. Lou's got bad problems, says Nico, lips puckering, Jagger-like. "He wants to be black."

She spits out this last word with contempt – a sneer perhaps rooted in her own infamous tussles with the Black Panthers? Nico also flatly denies that she'll be working with any



"I can only be like somebody else": Nico in London, 1974

very much, at least." Ayers wrote a song about you, I remind her, intended I believe as an extension of your style. A piece called "Decadence". "Yes. Yes, it was an extension, but I don't know if it was the right extension. It's his image of me, which is not the same as my own. I can only be like somebody else," she concludes, not a little sadly, "at the most. But nobody else can be like

revamped Velvet Underground come autumn, hell or high water. She scoffs particularly at the thought of Sterling Morrison and Mo Tucker being involved.

"Sterling's an English professor at a North American university, not into music so much now. And I would not work with Maureen either, because she mucked everything up. She did everything wrong. Like Lou, she was a traitor. Lou should never have performed the old songs with different people. Maybe he should have played them alone. And I don't get along with John [Cale] either. He's such a married person."

Hmm. Do you foresee ever working in a rock band again? "It would have to involve admiration from the other musicians that worked with me."

Did you enjoy playing with Eno (at Kevin Ayers' Rainbow Concert, June 1, 1974)?

"Oh yes," she sighs, suddenly very girlish, "a lot. He's great, incredibly talented. But don't even speak of that terrible concert. I should never have agreed to do it. Because I don't enjoy Kevin's kind of music—it escapes me completely, and the same is true for John Cale. Kevin's music is just fooling around."

Nonetheless, Nico is also featured singing with Ayers on the singer's *Confessions Of Doctor Dream* album. "That is true, and I thought it was very badly mixed. Going backwards and forwards and together. It sounds like fake Arab music. I was disappointed by the record and the concert. I said to John and Eno that we should not do the show at all. We did not even get a proper appearance, just drifted in and out.

"I don't want to put anybody down," and even Nico laughs at the absurdity of her own words here, "but just because we are all on the same record label doesn't mean that we will accept anything. At the moment I am just

being drawn into other people's happenings. I am not doing what I want to do."

What do you want to do? "Perform my own songs. Only if I perform my own songs alone can I really feel alone."

So why perform Jim Morrison's song "The End"? "Because it's the most beautiful song in the world."

She laughs again, face turning scarlet as she does so. Knowing that Nico was originally scheduled to play concerts with Magma on the French band's last British tour, I ask if she has any involvement in that direction. "In a way, I'm drawn a little to Christian Vander, because he's an inventor. He creates language styles of music."

Why didn't you play the Magma tour anyway?

Nico heaves a deep theatrical sigh. "Everybody assumes that I want to be a beggar woman, which I'm not. I'm not a beggar woman. Not a beggar woman."

"The reason that I agreed with Island Records was that I was completely without any money. So I started stealing. I started ripping people off. It was very embarrassing. And the amount of money that I was ripping off was the kind of money that I would make if I was successful. I lived in all the most expensive hotels. Late in all the expensive restaurants."

Then, without prior warning, Nico's stream-of-consciousness conversation flashes back to

Kevin Ayers. "It's a funny thing. Ever since he met me Kevin Ayers has been playing West Indian music... I don't even like West Indian music. Not

me. Or else my name wouldn't be Nico. It would be somebody else's name.

"Kevin is very taken with what I'm doing and the idea of me being German. You see, he is kind of attracted to Marlene Dietrich."

Do you think like a German lady? "A fracture?" I'm sorry? "A fracture, is that the wrong word? Oh yes, fracture. I feel very German in the way that I have lost the Second World War, and I was too little to do anything about it. I think in terms

of movies, cinema, motion pictures. Everything's visual. I can't think in terms of paintings, for example, like my best friend."

Half expecting to enter impassable abstract straits, I desperately try to steer back to rock'n'roll. Think of a name. Any name. Tim

Buckley! You used to work at the Dom with Tim Buckley for a while. "I really adore his voice, not so much what he's doing right now, though. He's become embarrassing like Lou Reed. Buckley is another one who wants to be a black man. I can't understand it, can't appreciate it at all."

Much of Nico's time of late has been spent in planning what she describes as "The Perfect Picture" in conjunction with filmmaker Philippe Garrel. "Philippe... doing everything possible to make himself a pile of ashes," she says somewhat enigmatically.

And Nico's contribution to this piece of celluloid? "Lyrics, sound and my acting ability. I play the role of a person that's opposed to female emancipation. I think women are unnecessary; I'd like to destroy the entire Women's Liberation movement—Women's Lib (*smiles*)—they're a pain in the neck. They can't get themselves together—ever—because they're not strong enough." And here I retire, confused.

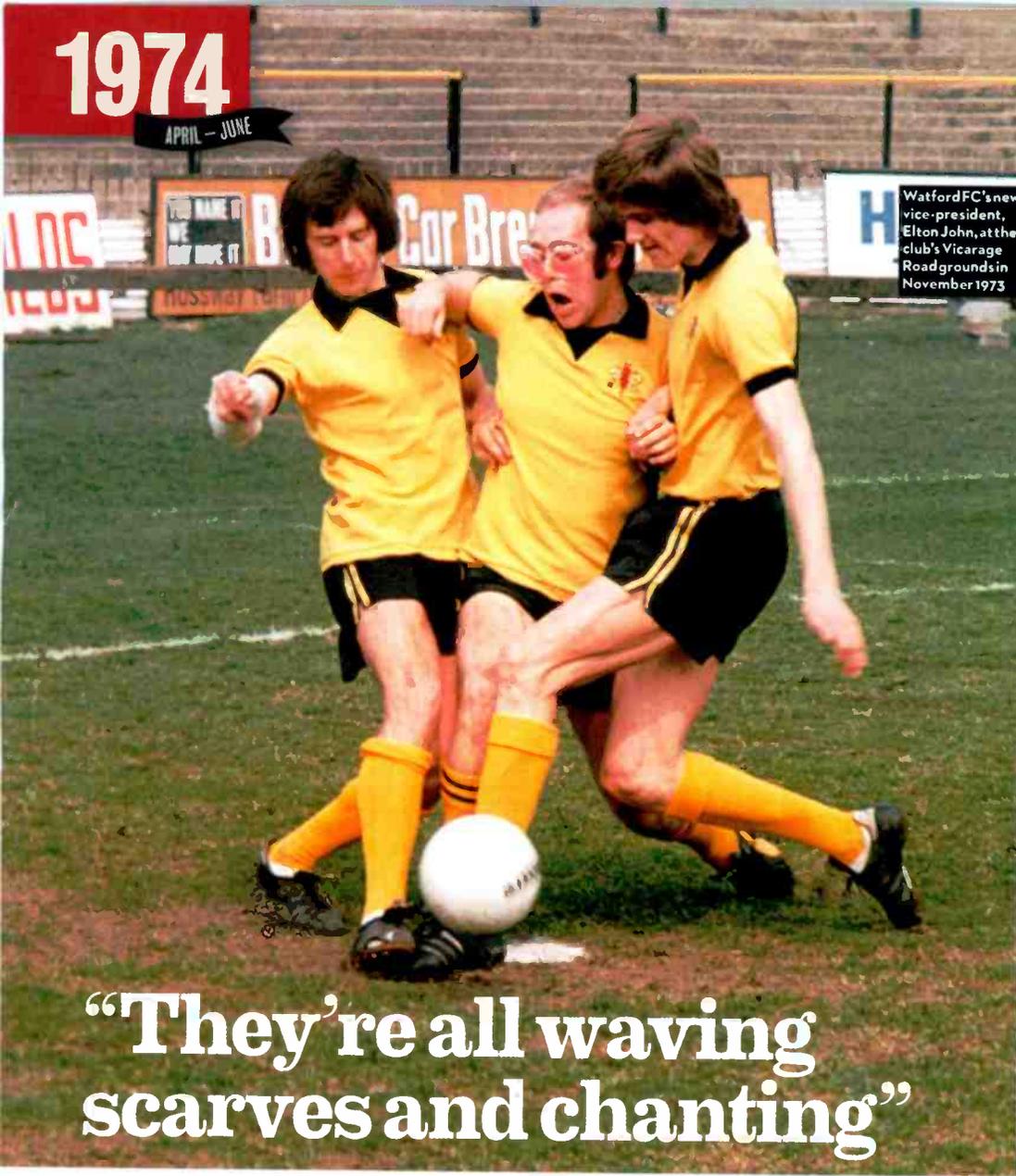
Much too weird for me. Over to you, *Spare Rib*. Steve Lake

**"I started stealing, ripping people off. It was very embarrassing"**

\*\*\*\*\*  
**I'm not a beggar woman**  
Steve Lake

# 1974

APRIL - JUNE



Watford FC's new vice-president, Elton John, at the club's Vicarage Road grounds in November 1973

## “They’re all waving scarves and chanting”

**MM MAY 11** Rod used to play, and Pink Floyd still do. Elton’s a director. All round, the bond between football is closer than ever. But why? *The Maker* investigates.

“**I**T’S FUNNY, REALLY. At the gigs now they’re all waving scarves and they’re chanting, just like at football matches. They even sing ‘You’ll Never Rock Alone...’” – Rick Parfitt, Status Quo and Crystal Palace.

Football creates its own passion. A special, almost intangible emotion which remains, for unbelievers, mysterious and inexplicable. It’s like trying to tell a stranger about rock n’roll.

That moment, for instance, when Queens Park Rangers scored with the last kick of the match against Coventry in the cup. Or the day England became World Champions.

Rock and football, twin aspects of popular culture forever linked by the same dramatic intensity. Just like when Bob Dylan finally made it on stage at the Isle Of Wight and the night became transformed by a new excitement, a magic almost. Or whenever a new Beatles album was played for the first time.

So perhaps it’s not so strange Elton John should become a football club director. Not so strange, either, that Rod Stewart should hire a special relay system from Scotland to Texas just to follow the Scotland v Czechoslovakia World Cup qualifying game.

Rock/soccer consciousness, today, is extra high. Rick Wakeman, for instance, together

with Yes manager Brian Lane and Atlantic Records’ Nesuhi Ertegun are trying to become directors of Brentford, a club that once had a young apprentice by the name of Rod Stewart.

Then there’s the Spreaders, a soccer team that includes most of Humble Pie – Jerry Shirley, Dave Clempson (“a midfield genius”) and Greg Ridley – plus the Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters (“a tricky inside forward”) and Dave Gilmour. And Steve Marriott is the team’s non-playing manager, or so they claim.

John Peel, of course, has roots, having always been an avid Liverpool supporter. So too is Terry Sylvester of The Hollies, who even flies to Liverpool to catch the team’s home game. “I remember I was driving home from some gig, coming up to a roundabout in Bury St Edmunds, when I heard on the radio that Liverpool had scored. I had to stop, I was crying with delight,” says Peel.

“I’ve followed Liverpool all my life and the reason I love football so much is because the game produces an incredible release from tension. After a match I can almost feel the tension falling away, a cathartic effect. And I get the same kind of thing from music. Bands like the Faces have the same effect on me as Liverpool, though I’m probably more extreme about football. It’s just something that people not into the game don’t understand.”

Rock and soccer both claim the same social roots. “They both rely on natural talent; football and rock n’roll are something ordinary, working-class people can become successful at,” says Junior Campbell.

Soccer, like rock, relies on a will to succeed. A motivation. That’s why Brazil are the greatest national team the world has ever known. Soccer provided the perfect escape route from poverty. In what other area of life, for instance, would a slum kid like Pete have succeeded? Or James Brown? Sport and music, the two ways out of the ghetto. And both supplied a focus for the aspirations and, indeed, the identities of their audiences. Soccer’s contemporary image probably dates back to the early ‘60s and the abolition of the maximum wage limit.

The image changed to one the kids could immediately appreciate. And right up there was George Best, who seemed much the same as a rock musician. He had flair and arrogance and long hair and flash. The kids

screaming for Best on the soccer pitch were really cheering themselves, it was the same identity. Best was one of them; when he scored, it was shared experience.

At the same time, of course, much the same thing was happening in rock. Bands like The Yardbirds and the Rolling Stones and The Who were attracting a whole cross section of kids, from university students to pill-popping mods. But the music remained solidly rooted in a

# Kick out the jams



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

new, working-class, culture. It was only a brief period, say 1963 to 1966, but during that time there really was a unified "youth culture".

The music had spontaneity; the musicians had destroyed the old "star system", the feeling of Them/Us. The Who and the Small Faces belonged, in a very real sense, to the mod audience. The bands were theirs; the musicians seemed to be just kids from the clubs who got lucky. But somewhere around 1967 everything seemed to change. British bands were increasingly successful in the States, demanding huge fees and finding less and less necessity to work the clubs. They began to distance themselves from their early audience. And that initial inspiration, which had caused the whole thing, began to dissipate.

In 1965 The Who were singing "My Generation", full of arrogance and impatience. But by 1969 Thunderclap Newman, with Pete Townshend's help, were singing about "Something In The Air". The feeling of latent violence, frustration almost, had been diluted. The message no longer connected. San Francisco and the hippy culture, of course, had given rock a new artistic stance. The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper* was lauded by music critics. It was, they claimed, an indication of rock's maturity.

But what that album really signalled was the end to any unity in rock: a prelude in the schism that began to develop during the late '60s. "Progressive rock" alienated most of the new generation of working-class kids, the descendant of the mods. The album-as-lifestyle concept created new barriers. Rock as Art found a new audience, kids committed to finding some deep, perhaps even intellectual, experience in the music.

The rise of the "counter-culture" and its later manifestations, in fact, created divisions.

Meanwhile, the kids on the streets began to discover a different sub-culture. The skinheads. They cropped their hair, adopted tough poses, and wore workmen's boots. It was almost a total rejection of what was going down in mainstream rock culture. The skinheads, virtually the antithesis of good vibes, rejected the superstars of

contemporary rock. They identified with other heroes, footballers.

By this time, George Best had also distanced himself from his grass-roots audience, a victim of the star system. Swedish girlfriends, Jaguars, nightclubs... the whole thing just didn't correspond with that initial image.

Football retained an identity for the skinheads, a game of extremes where the drama's always natural and real.

And there's a tremendous UP when your team wins. The team became a focal point for fantasies.

And the skinheads' music was strangely imageless. Reggae and Motown soul mostly, anything good to dance to. But there were no stars, no point of identification. It was simply the music, and simply records too. There were few skinhead musicians, few aspirations to produce pop music.

Around 1970, rock was completely divided. A longhaired generation still identified with its original heroes. Bob Dylan's entrance at the Isle Of Wight was still a magical moment for countless thousands of people. But, every week, thousands more skinheads went to chant for their new heroes, football players. Football had taken many of the working-class kids whose immediate predecessors had created British rock.

Four years on and they'll be chanting football slogans at rock concerts. Something's changed. "Suddenly football's become very fashionable. It's happened over the past two years," says John Peel. The skinheads, too, have changed. Rod Stewart and Elton John have found themselves as heroes, though not in the same, committed way the mods viewed their bands and singers. The artist as star, perhaps, but not the artist as one of us.

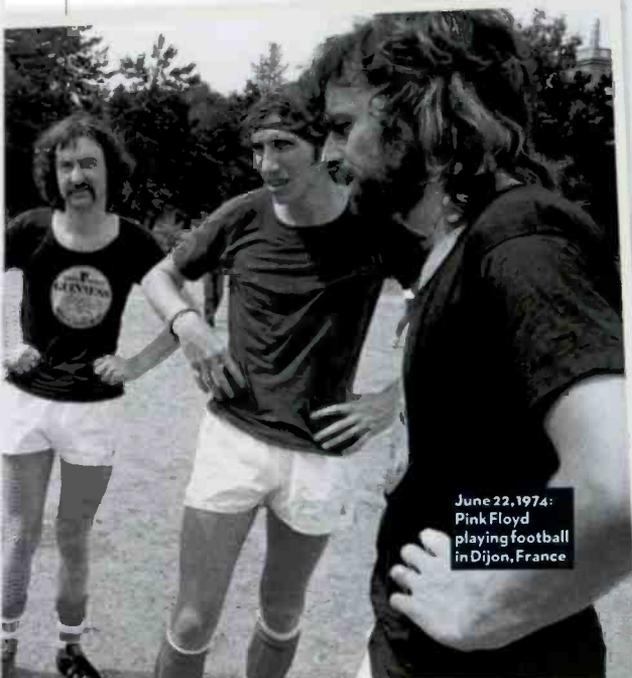
Still, the resistance of the skinhead generation is breaking down. Football's hip, so at least there's some unity. Slade, whose early attempts at becoming a skinhead band - almost a contradiction in terms - ended in failure, have found a post-skin audience. Elton John can do a benefit concert for

Watford FC, and that's OK, it's cool.

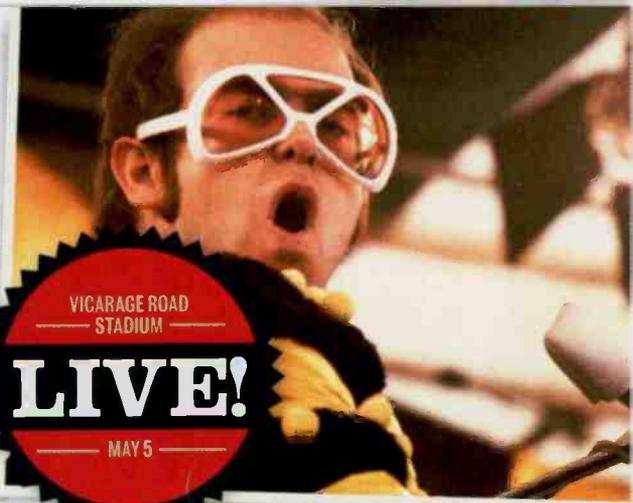
Flash and outrage have replaced denims and personal anguish, and artists like David Bowie can transcend the cultural divide. Existentialist thinker/pretty face. Bolan, too, had a couple of good years, though whether his 'Children Of The Revolution' actually means as much in the '70s as Townshend's "My Generation" did almost a decade before is open to debate.

But the new rock still seems to remain mere supper-club decadence. The real breakthrough will come when some young rock musician starts back at zero once again, writing songs rooted in the realities of those kids on the street. In the meantime, down at QPR, Stan Bowles rules. OK? *Robert Partridge*

**"Suddenly football's become very fashionable. It's happened over the last two years"**



June 22, 1974: Pink Floyd playing football in Dijon, France



**EL-TON!... Rod-nee...!  
Watford!.. Scotland!..**

**MM MAY 11** Rod Stewart helps Elton John notch up a home win at a benefit gig for Watford FC.

**I**T WAS, APPARENTLY, the biggest crowd they've seen at Watford FC for many a long season. Forty thousand people, spread right across the pitch. The last big crowd, said the man in the corner shop, was for Manchester United. Or was it Liverpool? But anyway, that only attracted 34,000. Kid's stuff.

Elton Hercules John, as you might've heard, is a director of Watford FC, a Third Division soccer club. Now, Third Division is not exactly the dizzy heights of football.

At that end of the football spectrum mere survival causes a few ulcers. So it was a jolly nice idea of Elton to organise a special benefit concert for the club, raising a few bob to buy a new player or whatever.

And the concert, on Sunday, was jolly nice too, especially if you weren't trapped right up front by the stage. Throughout the afternoon kids were constantly pulled from the crowd, crushed by the squeeze. It was the only bad thing about the whole concert.

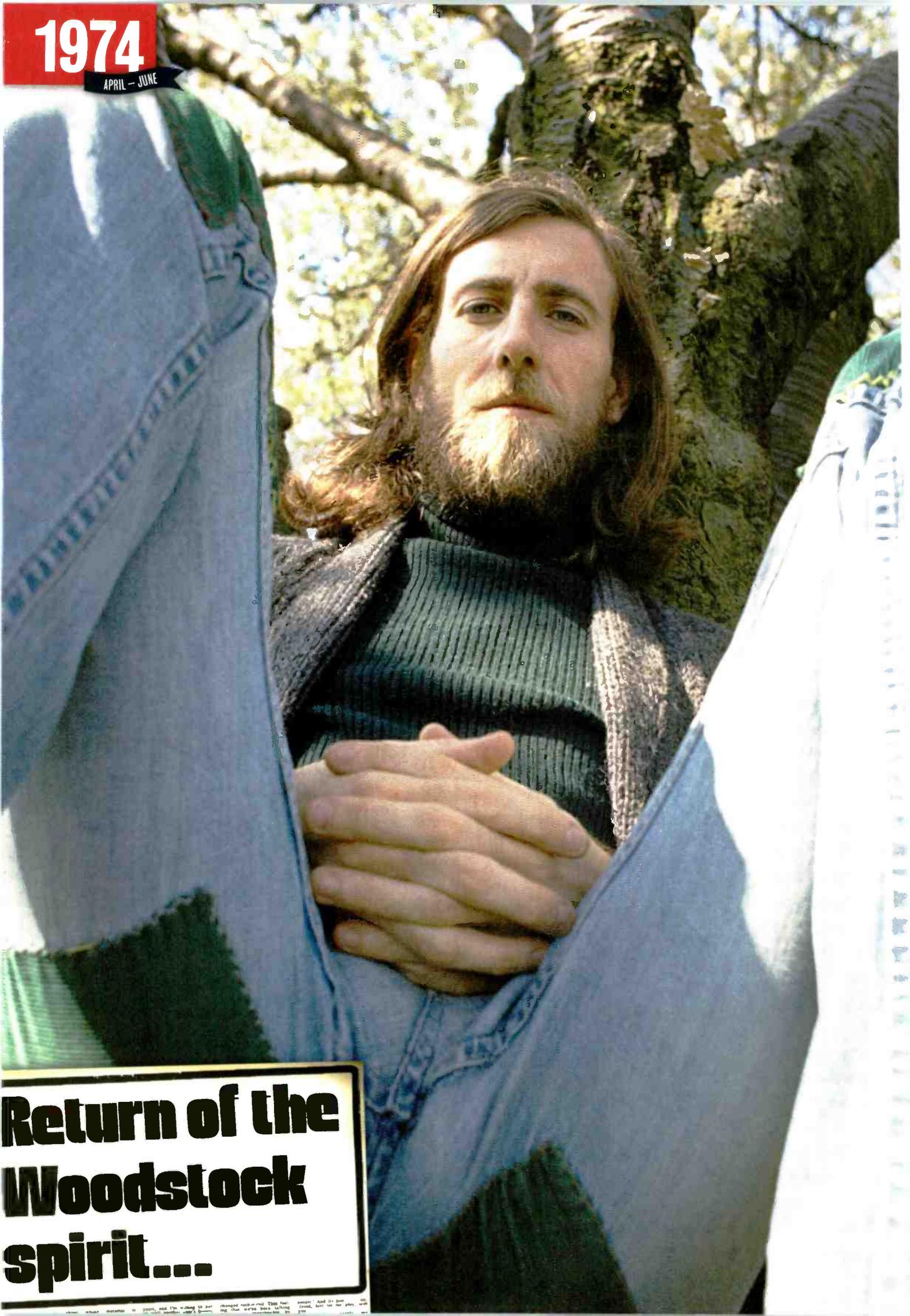
Elton, dressed in chic Watford gold and black plus bauble trimmings, looked like some satin bumble bee. And he sounded in fine form despite all those stories about fatigue that led to his European tour being cancelled. He went through a selection of his oldies, "Daniel", "Rocket Man", "Candle In The Wind", "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road", "Crocodile Rock", "Your Song", plus a surprisingly good version of "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds". The backing band were tight and responsive, no doubt helped by a superb sound system.

But one of the biggest cheers of the day was reserved for Rod Stewart - sans Faces - who sang three numbers. The combination of Elton's band plus Stewart sounded more effective than the Faces of late, opening with a raucous version of "Country Comfort" and finishing with "Angel".

Nazareth, Scotland fans to a man, opened the concert with a powerful performance that confirmed their growing status. It was an excellent way to spend a Sunday afternoon - might even bring in a few more fans for Watford. *Robert Partridge*

1974

APRIL - JUNE



**Return of the  
Woodstock  
spirit...**

# “Those guys get me high”

He's proved himself with his solo career, but **GRAHAM NASH** has an itch he can't scratch: **CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG**. “I've seen a lot of bullshit,” he says. “But I'm willing to put up with another year's bullshit if we can play some good music.”

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 20 —

**T**HE SPIRIT OF Woodstock is not dead. That's bad news for all you posers that have just had your hair dyed bright orange, and finally splashed out on that divine Lurex jumpsuit, but it's all right with me. I can always use a bit of love and peace. So can Graham Nash. Well, Graham is actually excited at the prospect, but then Graham gets excited a lot. Not as excited as he used to, mind.

After hanging out with Joni and David and Stephen and Grace and Paul and Jerry and Neil, the impulsive former Hollie is treading more carefully. He's cooled himself out. Mellowed is the vogue word, I'm assured. Mature is another word altogether, but some kind of development is going on inside Nash's head.

Naivety is a quality that Graham is often damned or blessed for possessing. And certainly his enthusiasm suggests a kind of childlike innocence. However, he's no dummy. He's acutely aware of the location of his own faults, and he's found out exactly who he is and knows where he's going. How many other artists could claim the same?

Lyricaly he's progressing. Becoming more assured and self-confident. From the nervous “*Be sure to hide the roaches*” of “Pre-Road Downs” to the single-minded “*Rules and regulations, who needs 'em/Throw them out the door*” of “Chicago” is a big step. Now he's going further.

“Oh! Camil (The Winter Soldier)” on *Wild Tales* is a pertinent and insightful view into a real political situation. But, »



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

“I see a giant hole everywhere... That indefinable something that was there around about '69/'70”: Graham Nash in 1974

says Graham, squalling cross-legged among the nonchalance of Blakes Hotel, South Kensington, his solo career as a profound or otherwise songwriter is of secondary importance to him.

"I'm a harmony singer, man. That's what I do best, so that's what I'm going to concentrate on from now on. I've just finished a solo tour. I've proved that I can get people off without help from anybody else, so I don't have to keep on doing that."

And from June 1 onwards, Graham will be able to fulfil his best function. That's when the pieces fall into place again, and David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash and Neil Young try to fit the pieces together again, after an absence of three years. They'll be aided by Russ Kunkel of The Section on drums, and Tim Drummond, a former Famous Flame of James Brown, on bass.

The reunion, surprisingly, was not instigated by a member of CSNY, but by that famed master organiser David Geffen, the business brain behind the Bob Dylan resurgence. "I tell you," says Nash, with the vaguest hint of California now colouring those broad Mancunian tones, "those guys get me high. CSNY has its pros and cons, but the music overrides all that. Something happens when the four of us get together, some special sort of chemistry."

Nash's role in the chemical formula has always been a vague one. Musically, he has little of the technical instrumental control that Stills and Young possess, and he doesn't share Crosby's flair for original or unorthodox jazz-type chordings, either. But then, like his song tells it, he's a simple man.

With Young and Stills like duelling stags at either side of the stage, another solo instrumental voice isn't so vital. Graham digs the licks that Neil and Stephen let fly, but he's not impressed by virtuosity for its own sake.

"Did you see Focus? I hated them, thought they were awful. But I get very paranoid about people that play good, because I don't. I think I can write good, but I just can't get myself into the state of mind to sit down and practise for, like, 10 years just so I can go mowowowowowahwah..."

He mimes a McLaughlin-fast guitarist. "I can admire that ability in other people, though. Neil practises for four or five hours a day for weeks on end."

Despite all the stories of feuds and ego trips, Nash insists that it's been mainly work situations that have kept the band apart these past years. Rehearsals have always been scant, and this time out there's going to be only three weeks or so before the group take on the major concert halls of America.

"We always under-rehearse. We've never, ever, gotten to the point where the show was slick. I'm a little worried this time; I don't know if three weeks is gonna be enough. But there's always sufficient madness to make it work."

Any truth in stories that the band battle backstage about whose material is going to be performed? "No, we've always got round that one. We're very honest about it. You have to be. If somebody's song doesn't turn you on, then you're not going to be able to feel it. You won't be able to sing it right."

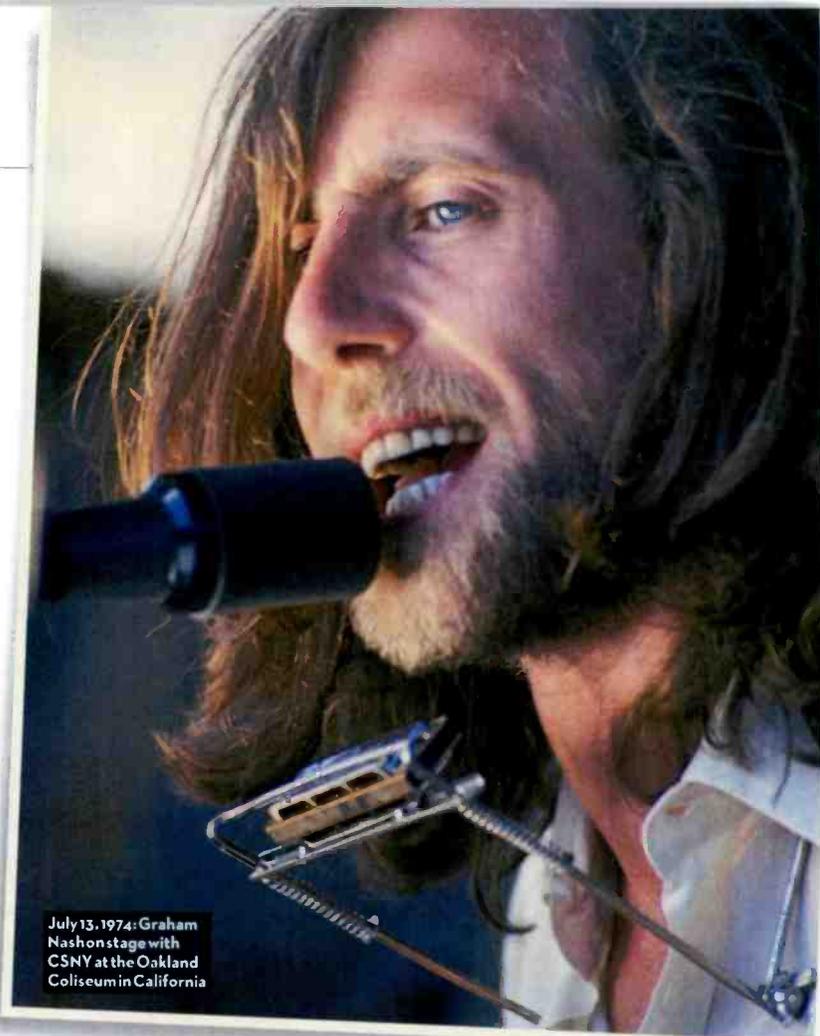
Graham's pretty optimistic about the tour. Almost willing it to work. "I've seen a lot of bullshit go down in the past few years, and I'm willing to put up with another year's bullshit if we can play some good music."

Wow, that sounds provocative. He sighs, almost theatrically: "Well now... How can I put it? Sometimes people aren't who you expect them to be. You expect people to be trustworthy and they turn out not to be. But I've been realising lately that people aren't gonna live up to my expectations and I'm starting to come to terms with that. Starting to accept people for what they are."

Evasive. I still don't understand. "Y'know... so what if friends are assholes some of the time? Aren't we all? Before, in the group, it used to get serious, and we'd get real crazy about it and not communicate. We're growing up, I think." He smiles, and adds, "At last."

Growing up and growing older. The years are beginning to show on Nash's face. Considerably more than a decade in show business taking its toll. And yet anyone less like a pop star in appearance would be difficult to imagine. The sprouting beard and outgrown urchin haircut give him an almost medieval look, not contradicted by the plain green shirt and pigskin waistcoat.

Painfully thin and with cheekbones prominent in his starved face, shoes split and cracked, he looks like some Sherwood Forest outlaw down on his luck.



July 13, 1974: Graham Nash on stage with CSNY at the Oakland Coliseum in California

Nash cups his hand together and raises them in the air. He waits for me to watch before continuing. Remembering that a man's a man who looks a man right between the eyes, I do just that. He continues.

"I see a giant hole," he says. "I see a giant hole everywhere. I find very little of that special magic in the music. That indefinable something that was there round about '69/70, the Woodstock period. We're going to bring that feeling back. There's good music around, but I haven't, for a long time, seen people get off like the way they do when CSNY really hit."

But Woodstock was five years ago. Can we be sure that it was real, that nostalgia hasn't painted it a lot more rosy than it actually was?

"Oh, it was real. It was a wondrous event. There was a feeling there that you just couldn't believe."

At the time, this side of the Atlantic, the festival appeared, as one writer put it, not unlike an orgy of self-congratulation. Graham tensed, visibly. A little uptight, he spoke louder.

"I gotta tell you that getting 500,000 people together and having no fights and no murders and no craziness was a great feat, something to be proud of. With 28 bands on, there was all the ingredients there for a major madness, but that didn't happen."

So what did Woodstock achieve, in concrete terms, either for America or for rock?

"It was just such a fantastically good thing. It changed rock'n'roll. That feeling that we've been talking about was spearheaded by Woodstock, although the seeds had been sown a little earlier. The first Crosby, Stills & Nash album had something of that spirit. That everybody is really not so different, and maybe we can pull together. Just that hope."

It was the same motivation, the same optimism, that sucked Nash into the early Jefferson Starship recordings. "Right. Those same people, Paul Kantner and everybody—they're always out there saying, 'Listen. We know it's crazy. Nobody's saying that the situation isn't bad, that the world isn't fucked up. But for one hour we can get off!'"

"That's basically what the Airplane say, and it's what the Grateful Dead say too, except that they say it for five hours at a time. It's what we'll be saying, as well. It's so important for me..."

"For two years I analysed and digested specific problems, political and social problems, and tried to help out where I could. You can't do it. You really can't do anything."

"You're playing a benefit for old folks or Vietnam veterans or kids even, and some guy will grab you and say, 'Why don't you ever do benefits for blind people.' And it's just... 'Oh, Jesus, just let me play, will you.' But when people are having a good time and being moved by the music, you can feel

them all becoming unified behind one force, and that unity continues when the music's over. That's what happened at Woodstock. And that same energy is returning now, I can feel it."

Nash believes that the Bob Dylan/Band tour is an indication of the new non-cynical renaissance that he claims is taking place. "It's a cycle that's gradually completing itself," he says. "Who would have thought that Dylan would ever go out on the road again? I hope The Beatles get back together again. You don't think they will? Well, I never thought that CSNY could work together again."

It's a different situation, surely. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and Bob Dylan can both play material that hasn't dated over the years, that has a timeless quality to it. Yet The Beatles always seemed like a mirror for whatever was happening then. They can hardly come back and sing "She Loves You" and "I Wanna Hold Your Hand".

"That's not true, man. I'd love to fucking hear them doing 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand'. Can you imagine it, them coming on and opening with that? I would freak completely."

But more to the point, what are CSNY going to open with?

"I wanna start with Neil's tune 'When You Dance I Can Really Love'. I can't wait. Those four-part harmonies. Oh boy, that's exciting music. Those goose pimples that I just felt down my back thinking about the first time I heard us on stage together is the reason that I'm here now, and the reason why I left England in '68, and even the reason why I started rock 'n' roll."

Conversation shifts to The Hollies. Did we know, he says, that Eric Haydock is a professional footballer with Stockport County these days? And why is Bobby Elliott wearing a long blond wig, he asks. Bobby, says Nash, was without hair even before The Hollies started. He was always a good-looking bald kid.

"The reason I left The Hollies," volunteers Nash without persuasion, "was simply that I was smoking a lot of dope and they weren't. I swear to God it was as simple as that."

We chuckle about flower-power publicity photos of The Hollies' Allan Clarke never looked right with a perm, a kaftan and a budgie bell somehow. "I was into all that too, y'know. I can't criticise them there. But," he adds, "I gave back my white suit. They've still got theirs. Think about that one."

Did the pre-CSNY Nash know exactly what he was heading for when he quit in '68?

"Are you kidding? Do you know what it took to leave my wife, my family, my money, my band and my country? I knew instantly, the first time I sang with David and Stephen, that I had to leave."

Nash had first met Crosby when The Byrds toured here after "Tambourine Man" hit. They struck up a friendship back then, he recalls, at the time when The Byrds got systematically slated in all of the music papers every week, without fail. With typical drama, Graham claims that Crosby "saved my life". Here's how:

"I was writing all these tunes that, for me, were self-expression things, and I was happy with them. But The Hollies didn't want to know. And so I really began to doubt my ability to communicate on that level. It was Crosby that said, 'Hey, play that thing again. You mean you have another song like that? It was Crosby that reawakened my faith in myself.'

Later in the States, The Hollies threw a party for their friends at the Whisky A Go Go on Valentine's Day, friends including the Buffalo Springfield and The Byrds. After a performance by the English group, Stephen Stills and David Crosby took Nash for a drive round the area. Plans were discussed.

"The next day we got together and David and Stephen sang 'Helplessly Hoping' with two-part harmonies," recalls Graham. "They sang it through twice, and the third time I was in there. And ha! I couldn't believe that I could get subtle vocal harmonies with a band that I didn't know. CSN sang as good as on the first day we started together.

"Sometimes I don't think that any of us had anything to do with it. Does that sound strange? To me, CSN sounds as if it would have happened if it was CSN or ABC or DFT or whatever. I'm really proud of that first album. I think it was the best thing we ever did."

*Déjà Vu* sounded more contrived. Less fun, somehow. What happened?

"I'll tell you. When we started the first album, we were all in love, and everything was sunny. And then just before the second album, Joni and me split up, Neil got divorced from his wife, Stephen hadn't seen

Judy in months, and the week before we were due to start, David's lady Christine was killed in a crash. We were bombed out. We were totally wiped out. That's the difference between CSN and CSNY. It started out really weird."

Similarly weird to those outside a small circle of friends is the willingness with which the Laurel Canyon mob spell out the details of their love lives before the mass audience. We all know that "Lady Of The Island" and "Our House" were written for Joni Mitchell. How does it feel to have those songs still floating around four and five years later?

Graham thinks hard about this one, brow furrowed in concentration.

"I think," he says finally, "that that isn't really so different from you reading an interview you did a couple of years ago. You'd probably think, 'Yeah, I believed that then, but that's not where I am now.' We can all say that about our old work. But I've never felt hesitant about opening myself up in that way. It's painful sometimes, sure. I don't think I could sing 'Our House' now."

He laughs at his own seriousness.

"I don't know, though. Maybe I could sing it. I'm supposed to be doing a TV show while I'm here and I don't know what I'm going to do on it. They keep asking me, but I can't tell them. I won't know until I get there and feel what the format of the show is, who else is appearing, whether it's a teenybop show or whether there's going to be some interesting rapping."

Speaking of TV shows, one of the most bizarre things ever screened has to be the performance CSNY once gave for a Tom Jones show. Neil Young was scowling viciously as the Welsh bump-and-grind merchant made nonsense of Crosby's "Long Time Gone", with Nash and the song's author

singing harmonies and a keyboard-playing Stephen Stills wailing an additional soulful vocal line.

"Hahahahahahahaha, I have some tapes of that, and it ain't that bad, y'know? Surprisingly enough.

"The point of the exercise was originally to try to get across to a whole audience that wouldn't otherwise hear us, but I'm not sure if it was worth it. They treated us badly. In rehearsals we'd just be getting up to the three-part harmonies and they'd shout, 'Cut! Hold it! More lights!' And we were furious - 'DON'T EVER DO THAT TO US AGAIN' - but they just thought we were crazy."

Graham Nash is going dreamy again,

sounding like he's missing the stimulation of the San Francisco community after a mere 24 hours separation. It's the most European, cosmopolitan place in America, he says. Nowhere else do artists from all idioms communicate so freely and so totally.

Is there not a danger, I asked, of the LA/San Francisco scene stagnating with all the cross-fertilisation that's happening between the California bands? Everybody playing on everybody else's records. David Crosby's *If Only I Could Remember My Name* seemed symptomatic of this malaise, apparently incorporating the services of everybody that had ever wielded a guitar within a 100-mile radius of SF.

"There's no stagnation. It's a means to keeping the music alive; in fact, I think Californian musicians have consciously devalued the old solo artist and band recording formats. They're redundant. That's one of the reasons why I left England, everything was so regimented. You had to be 'in', or you had to know George personally. In American studios it's totally different.

"If you're there, and you hear a part and you've got the balls to say so, then you've got a good chance of playing it. Over here you wonder if you're going to blow your cool by saying, 'Hey, I hear a maraca there.' There's really no boundaries in the Bay Area any more; I can sing with everybody and anybody can come and sing with me."

We walk out into an open quadrangle in the hotel as I prepare to leave. Graham stops in his tracks suddenly.

"That's amazing."

He stares at a washing line, hung with undies.

"Look at that woman's underwear!"

I'm puzzled; Graham sure doesn't seem like any sort of fetishist.

"In America people don't hang out washing," he explains. "It gets stolen."

I wanted to say, "What? While you guys are all harmonising together?" But I hadn't got the heart. *Steve Lake* •

## "Do you know what it took to leave my wife, my band and my country?"

# “I have to assimilate it all”

— MELODY MAKER MAY 25 —

**T**IM BUCKLEY IS a singer-songwriter with a difference — he forever changes direction. There's a line in “Café” (side two, track two on *Blue Afternoon*) which runs: “I was just a curly-

haired mountain boy, on my way passing through.” But Tim Buckley, author and utterer of those words, has never been just anything.

Any kid who at the age of 11 is preoccupied with expanding his vocal range, and at 14 and 15 is hustling to be allowed to sing in folk clubs, has to be something out of the ordinary. Buckley was, and of course, still is.

While most singer-songwriters are one-dimensional characters who after initially arousing interest continue as mere parodies of their public's impressions of them, Buckley, in nine years as a recording artist, is consistently changing direction.

Using only his inspired artist's intuition and his sense of irony as a guide, Buckley will set sail fearlessly for uncharted waters. Hence *Starsailor*, his 1970 masterpiece that left many of his original folk-oriented fans totally confused, while many jazzers welcomed him as a rightful heir to Leon Thomas. But even that favourable pigeon-holing would've been too comfortable for Buckley's far-reaching imagination. Yet at one time it looked as though *Starsailor* was to be his final statement. »

REX FEATURES

**TIM BUCKLEY** has alienated the folkies, but is delighting the jazzers. In London, he opens up on his recent “orgasm suite”, and how his eccentric career has been influenced by Cleo Laine, pornography and gamelan. “Sex symbols never said anything sexy,” he says. “I decided to do it.”

“I've written two scripts... I'd love to do some parts”: Tim Buckley in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 1974



After its release, Buckley hung up his 12-string for 18 months and took stock of what had been going down. He got himself married, and is now foster-father to an 11-year-old boy named Taylor. The implication being that wild Timmy had finally settled down.

No chance. The rock'n'roll circuit might be a painful business for a child prodigy turned misunderstood creative genius, but being away from the stage was more painful still.

So Buckley roared back with a new band and a new album, *Greetings From LA*, and brought with him fresh shocks. The fragile 19-year-old who had sung, "In the scarlet light of Valentines, our paper hearts are blind," back in 1966 had been superseded by a bellowing, super-virile stud hollering, "Whip me, beat me, spank me! Oh mama make it right again." And it's this stud persona, albeit slightly tongue-in-cheek, that Buckley seems hell-bent on promoting.

Last week, Buckley and manager Herb Cohen arrived in London for a couple of days to attend a Warner Brothers party given to launch DiscReet Records. Warners will be distributing Tim's *Sefronia* album over here later this month.

I found the man perched forward on the edge of an armchair in a Kensington hotel room, gazing longingly down at the suntanned, glistening, widespread thighs of a foxy young lady, splashed across a gatefold spread in one of those Paul Raymond glossy mags.

"I just adore pornography," he moaned. "I mean, will you just look at her? Isn't she just the loveliest little thing you've ever seen..."

It seemed like an apt moment to air a personal fantasy. From the track titles, rhythms and arrangements of the first side of *Greetings From LA* (the tracks are "Move With Me", "Get On Top" and "Sweet Surrender"), it struck me that the whole had been conceived as a linked trilogy, a kind of Orgasm Suite. Would that be reading too much into the songs?

"Not at all. That's just what it is. It occurred to me that all of the rock'n'roll sex symbols, like Jagger, Jim Morrison, had never actually said anything sexy. So... (long pause) I decided to do it."

His face creased into a dirty laugh. Facially, he looks very different from the Dylan-esque romantic poet gazing melancholic from the sleeve of *Happy Sad*. The outrageous curls have been severely chopped, and his current trimmed, hip hair emphasises his film-star good looks. Now he looks more like Paul Newman than Bob Dylan, a state of affairs that clearly appealed to more than one young lady at the press reception later, where his every move was observed by a semi-circle of silent admirers who stood transfixed.

But the sex-appeal trip isn't Buckley's *raison d'être* by any means, merely one facet of a complex personality. His current activities embrace non-rock aspects of art and music, and his future plans indicate further divergence of his talents and energies.

However, Buckley's future is best explained in terms of where he's already been. He knew the poet Larry Beckett from his schooldays, and Beckett and Buckley were always particularly close, sharing the same highbrow interest in literature: Kafka, Sartre, the metaphysicals and Lorca (later commemorated in Tim's album *Lorca*).

Both Larry and Tim were writing poetry at this stage and experimented with putting their words to Tim's tunes. Early efforts were pretty unsatisfying, but they persevered and Tim began working self-penned material into the sets he was playing in country clubs, the only places he could get gigs in his early teens. He was never totally country, of course, but... "As long as you could play the "Tennessee Waltz", you were OK. I had a lot of fun."

But it was in New York that Buckley first began to attract attention. And even now, he feels that his roots are firmly in Greenwich Village. "Apart from The Doors and the San Francisco sound, all of the worthwhile music out of the States in the past decade has come from the East Coast, and specifically New York."

However, it was back in Southern California that Buckley first got a recording break, playing uncredited guitar on The Byrds' first album, and it was during these sessions that he met Van Dyke Parks, Jim Fielder and then Mothers drummer Billy Mundi. With these notables plus Lee Underwood, an aspiring young jazz guitarist, and with fine string arrangements by Jack Nitzsche, the young Buckley cut his own debut for Elektra. Nine years on, it's as fresh and unique as ever.

The same isn't quite true of *Goodbye And Hello*, his second album, produced by Jerry Yester, which, while excellent by any standard, is very much a product of the era in which it was made, that euphoric "Summer Of Love", California, 1967. Still Buckley was already stretching out, experimenting with his amazing vocal tubes, actually managing to affect at least half a dozen different voices for the labyrinthine complexities of the album's title track.

And all the time, reflecting and playing off the innumerable influences that he'd absorbed in his formative years. "Ray Charles, Hank Williams, Clapton, Hendrix, Morgana King, Cleo Laine, Little Richard, Nat King Cole, Roland Kirk, Peggy Lee, Duke Ellington, strippers, classical music, avant-garde, from Stravinsky on, Messaien, Penderecki, Balinese music... I respond to anything that's done well, and I've been influenced by all of it."

After the recording of *Goodbye And Hello*, the Buckley-Beckett collaboration ceased to function for three years, during which time a further three Buckley albums were issued - *Happy Sad*, *Blue Afternoon* and *Lorca*.

"Larry got very involved in what he was doing at the time, which was writing an 80-page poem about Paul Bunyan, and he moved to Portland to do research. It's an American epic, and really brilliant."

*Happy Sad*, a reflection, presumably on the depressive side of Tim's character, marked a move towards lyrical economy, but backings became ever more subtle and jazz-like. With Lee Underwood and vibist David Friedman achieving a quiet empathy, the music often sounds like the Larry Coryell period of the Gary Burton Quartet, playing ballads.

Tim's vocal improvisations were beginning to upset a few folk club clients, however. One report, from Hollywood in late '68, records Buckley scat-singing trumpet parts, which went over like

a 9pm curfew with most of the folkies that had followed him through the first two albums.

"It's very easy to confuse people in Hollywood," Tim observed. "Hollywood is like England. They're still totally preoccupied with image there. And they're so insular. They really have no idea what's happening musically in the rest of America."

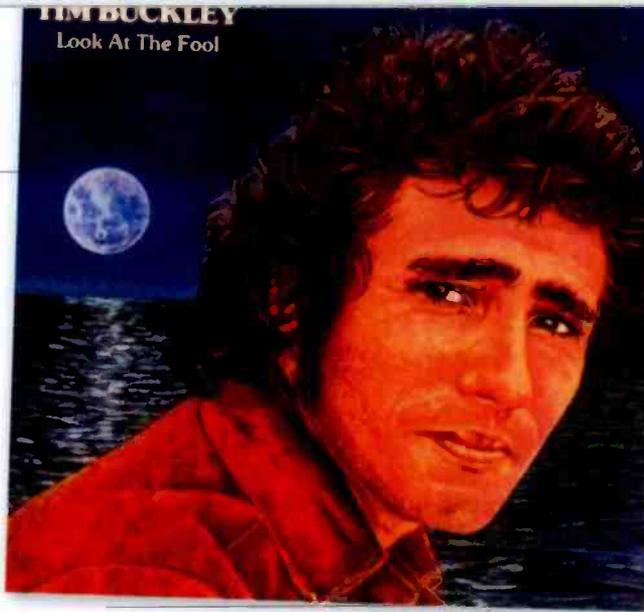
It's not generally known that *Blue Afternoon*, *Lorca* and *Starsailor* were recorded in a burst of creativity that lasted for a couple of months in late 1969. And it's generally supposed that *Lorca*, being Tim's final album for Elektra, before signing with Zappa's Straight label, was made prior to *Blue Afternoon*. In fact it wasn't.

"That was a complicated time, between labels. But *Blue*

GETTY

July 20, 1974: Buckley and his Fender Electric XII join The Allman Brothers Band, Doobie Brothers and more at The Bucolic Frolic, the first festival at Knebworth House, Hertfordshire





*Afternoon* was done immediately after *Lorca*."

And "Lorca", the song itself, which Buckley had tremendous difficulty in compressing into anything less than a 17-minute epic, was a pointer towards the cataclysmic *Starsailor*.

An astonishing collection of styles – Latin ("Down By The Borderline"), new-jazz-aligned ("Monterey, The Healing Festival"), European-influenced, Ligeti-esque ("Starsailor"), 1966-type Buckley ("Moulin Rouge") – and a number of other things that defy any classification. The album featured Buckley alongside the dynamite horns of Buzz and Bunk Gardner, and also marked the return of Larry Beckett and more obscurantist lyrics. (Incidentally, Buckley's voice isn't doctored, altered or treated in any way on *Starsailor*, the only "trickery" of any kind is the common-or-garden overdub. On the title track there're no less than 16 Tim Buckleys.)

I asked about the sleeve of *Greetings From LA*. The front depicts the town of Los Angeles, all but invisible beneath a disgusting brown blanket of photochemical smog, and inside there's a grim photo of a very serious-looking Buckley clutching a gas mask. All very ecological, but somehow it doesn't quite ring true. Buckley doesn't seem like any fresh-air-loving nature fiend.

Concern with pollution doesn't suit a guy who can say, "I can't stand animals, so I adopted a kid", and indeed the album cover was intended as an ironic statement.

"See, in LA you can't even get through the day without a sense of irony. And the message that the sleeve was intended to impart was that even in this horrific atmosphere there can still be a lot of musical activity going down. But of course, nobody picked up on that. I like the album a lot, though. We made it all in two days, and it has a kind of immediate energy about it."

*Greetings From LA* was the first of Tim's albums that didn't feature Lee Underwood as lead guitarist, the jazzier being replaced by Joe Falsia – a New Yorker. More rock-oriented, Falsia also produced *Greetings* and took most of the lead action on *Sefronia*. Underwood, apparently, has made the move from artist to critic, and is now a jazz and rock writer for *Down Beat*.

With *Sefronia*, Buckley seems to be attempting to reach a wider audience, or at least to pick up old fans that have fallen by the wayside. For while the groin-rock and oblique elements remain, most of the album is direct and conventionally melodic enough to convert folks that have never even heard of Roland Kirk or Franz Kafka.

The record even includes three songs that Buckley didn't have a hand in composing, among them Fred Neil's beautiful "Dolphins".

"A lot of people prefer the older-type songs, and I'm happy to do them, as long as I can continue to experiment simultaneously."

Experimentation, innovation and invention are words that occur frequently in Buckley's conversation. His is an alert and inquisitive mind. For example, it's no accident that he chooses to play and compose on the 12-string guitar: "With the 12-string there aren't any cliches that you have to try to consciously avoid, except maybe the old Leadbelly licks."

So Buckley has worked at developing his own guitar style, and is now almost as individual instrumentally as he is vocally. The concerted energy that has got him to this point is currently sustaining him through the planning and execution of three albums – a regular studio album, a concept album and a live double album.

He's already written more than enough new material for the studio record, and the concept album is well under way. It's a song cycle, another collaboration job with Larry Beckett, and is based on Joseph Conrad's *An Outcast Of The Islands*, further reflecting his literary fascinations.

The live album seems destined to produce rather more headaches. He intends to re-record all of his personal favourites from earlier albums, but is going to be restricted by time limits.

"I'm happy to do older songs, as long as I can continue to experiment"

"I intend to use every musician that I've ever worked with somewhere on the album, though I'm not sure of specific songs yet," explains Buckley. "I'll definitely include a lot of *Blue Afternoon*, however. That album was only half-finished, and I particularly want to update and complete 'Cafe' and 'The River'. That album got kind of lost while I was changing labels."

Whether or not this nostalgia for older songs has anything to do with Jim Fielder, who has now rejoined Buckley after some years with Blood, Sweat & Tears, is an interesting point. But irrespective, Fielder will be playing with Buckley when the

singer's band tours here in the autumn.

Further evidence of Buckley's passion for music is revealed when he speaks of his activities away from the concert rostrum.

"I work in the ethnomusicology department of the UCLA in California, and my main premise is with Japanese and Balinese music. I do notation and translating from the Balinese musicians to the kids that are there studying.

"The programme was started years ago by Pete Seeger's father, and that's how I found out about it. Right now, that's my main source of new music and inspiration in the world. The

courses aren't set up as a student/professor type thing. What you have is a group from Bali actually there, dancers and musicians, gamelan orchestra, the whole situation. What I have to do is to assimilate it all, and figure out how exactly to play the instruments.

"It's a near-impossible feat, but you try to understand about the people, the culture and the whole thing."

Speaking of unusual instruments prompted Buckley to ask after The Incredible String Band, with whom he played here briefly back in 1968. He grimaced on hearing that Messrs Williamson and Heron were now heavily into Scientology.

"What? See ya, boys! It's hard enough to get along without signing your shit over to something like that. Religion is the ruin of a great many good musicians. You won't find me falling for any of that kind of stuff.

"But the Scots are nuts, aren't they? I mean that's not just my opinion, is it? I mean they really are crazy. They'll argue about anything, and somehow they always seem to know more about what you're doing than you do. And you always end up buying them a drink because they've argued you into the floor."

The light-hearted turn that conversation had taken seemed agreeable to Buckley as he launched into a lengthy monologue, totally unsuitable for publication in a family magazine like this, on the sensual delights of young ladies from Oklahoma to Mexico and the liberating effects of Elizabeth Taylor, Brigitte Bardot and the Pill upon the same.

OK. You got any ambitions, Tim?

"Yeah. I wanna get paid. No, seriously, I'm writing a book, my impressions of America, that I'd dearly like to see published..."

Tim Buckley, ladies and gentlemen.

"Interior war drives him, shorn of sleep... he takes the clear risk in new dance... crusading upwards from dearth. He will sing you his 10 tales and then wander till spring" – Larry Beckett, 1967.

Cliches notwithstanding, if ever the title New Renaissance man was applicable to anybody in rock music, then Buckley's the artist to merit it.

Steve Lake •

# Star Sailor

plans indicate further divergence of his talents and energies. excellent by any standards is very much a product of the era in which it was made, that euphoric "Summer Of



— SINGLES —  
**REVIEW**  
— 1974 —

## SINGLES

### Sparks

**This Town Ain't Big Enough For The Both Of Us** ISLAND

Even the press handout says it: "Without drawing overworked comparisons, we believe that Sparks, with their music and unique visual identity, will capture the imagination and affection of roughly the same audience sector which has made Roxy Music such a success." Or to put it another way: Sparks sound not unlike Roxy Music. This is a totally bizarre record crammed with synthetic sounds - Mellotrons, Moogs and backward tapes - building from one delicious crescendo to another. And it's all rather charming. The lyrics, sung in a freshly castrated shriek, are totally inaudible apart from the title phrase. It's not the kind of thing you'd expect producer Muff Winwood to get himself mixed up with - as rumour it has he's none too enamoured by the Roxies. Not the sort of record you half-like. On the basis of this, Sparks could cause wars. *NME* Apr 6

### David Bowie Diamond Dogs

RCA  
Lycanthropy for the masses. Wonder if darling David's been

reading Richard Matheson? If not, he should, they'd get along, especially over Matheson's classic *I Am Legend*, which is all about post-holocaust vampires. There's a certain affinity. The B-side, "Holy Holy", is heavily phrased and brief, but interesting. A fair package. *MM* Jun 15

### Brinsley Schwarz (What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace Love And Understanding

UA  
A good question that. There's nothing funny about it at all really. A dawn dew sound from the Brinsleys, as fresh as daisies, with some good strumming and

drumming that reminds you not a little of the 'Oo. A tasteful song by bassist and singer Nick Lowe. Dave Edmunds produced and he's now going on tour with the band. *MM* Jun 15

### ABBA Ring Ring

EPIC  
You can't blame 'em for trying, so ABBA 'nother one, albeit the epitome of blandness and mediocrity. Don't know where it came from; don't know where it's going. Don't care a swede. Back to the production line conveyor belt, boys and girls. Wait, the wall to wall's calling... *MM* Jun 29



All rather charming: Sparks' Ron (left) and Russell Mael

## ALBUMS

### Cockney Rebel The Psychomodo

EMI  
One thing you gotta admit about Steve Harley, and that is that he does the funniest interviews since Marc Bolan. He even opens up Cocky Rabble's new album with a track entitled "Sweet Dreams", in which he lays down this riff about how he can't keep up the pace that he's made when all the pop paper people keep putting him down.

"Maybe I'll settle in the country and fade," he sighs theatrically before retreating into his private fantasy world of "Loretta and Lorraine and Louise" - icy, mysterious glitter kids who roam Harleyland, pouting and withdrawn like the band on the front cover.

No, but there's more to Harley and his gang of mincing Biba dummies than a fast mouth and a good costuming job. Not that much more, but sometimes Harleyland comes into focus and assumes some kind of self-contained reality. Usually it's the band's arrangements (uncredited) and production (by Harley and Alan Parsons) that do it rather than Harley's overblown and inept lyrics, but it gets done just the same.

Your best bet would be to ceremoniously burn the lyric sheet before you play the album, because knowing what Harley's singing about will seriously impede your enjoyment (if any). The best lines generally emerge unaided, and Harley's intonations generally get the point over by themselves. At times he manages to evoke Ferry, Bowie, Hunter, Dylan and Bowie by skilful mimicry.

Most of *Psychomodo* is disposable, but three of the tracks on the first side work spectacularly well, which leads one to the conclusion that either you can fool some of the

people some of the time, or else Harley has a workable, if fragmented, vision of what he's trying to do. "Mr Soft" succeeds primarily on the strength of the arrangement, a kind of modified Brechtian cabaret vamp of the kind that Bowie tackled

on "Time". What makes this one work is a '50s doo-wop bass backing vocal which maintains interest for most of the track's 3:17 minutes.

"Singular Band" has another good arrangement, mainly down to the way that the drum breaks are slotted in between the lines, but it's "Ritz" that's the track that basically justifies the existence of the album. It may even be rock's first equivalent to *Last Year In Marienbad*, as Harley wanders the mirrored corridors of his phantom hotel, alternately the only human being in the place and just another phantasm.

Jean-Paul Crocker's elegantly mournful violin collides with its own dark side before the whole thing erupts into a nightmare party sequence that freezes into a rictus of insane merriment on the roll-off groove. It's "Ritz" that is the most convincing piece of evidence that Cockney Rebel know what they're doing, and that track seems more the responsibility of the instrumental Rebels than of its leader.

*Psychomodo* is an intensely flawed piece of work rescued by one imaginative masterstroke. Whether "Ritz" was a fluke (as about three-quarters of the rest of the album suggests) or whether it's a presaging of what we can expect from the band in future is a matter of conjecture.

One good track don't make a star, but Harley has proved that he does have something going. Whether he's in sufficient control of what he's doing to hit the target every time is a different question again.

Charles Shaar Murray, *NME* June 8



## Bill Wyman *Monkey Grip*

ROLLING STONES

Mostly everyone in the Rolling Stones has, at one time or another, talked about doing their own album: none other than bassist Bill Wyman with a portfolio of nine songs, most of which are so bloody commercial, it makes you wonder why the hell his writing ability hasn't been utilised before. (He says they won't fit, but that's open to debate.)

Crooning in what can be best described as a laconic throwaway voice that fits neatly between that of Harry Nilsson at his most flippant and Gilbert O'Sullivan, Wyman once and for all puts paid to the theory that he's just a poker-faced mute, albeit one of the two best rock bassists. However, he doesn't push himself to the fore as much as most people in his position, preferring to integrate his sardonic wit and whimsy observations into the diverse backing, which are skilfully put together by a bunch of highly professional American musicians.

On the other hand, don't expect a selection of near-beer Stones shuffles, for Wyman leapfrogs quite freely through familiar territory. He goes for some droll New Orleans funk on "I Wanna Get Me A Gun", complete with Dr John doddlin' away merrily among the potted palms; cooks up some sniggering double-entendres on the shit-kickin' "Pussy"; comes up with pure unadulterated Top 20 pop-rock on "Monkey Grip Glue"; tries his mojo hand at gumbo-rock on the evil-smelling "What A Blow"; delivers some fine country hoke on the catchy "White Lightnin'" (which someone like Waylon Jennings or George Jones would be a redneck schmuck not to cover); prior to giving way to a plaintive ballad, "I'll Pull You Thro", and stomping out with some jerky black soul on "It's A Wonder".

A lot of people will undoubtedly use Rolling Stones albums as the only yardstick with which to measure either the success or failure of this solo escapade. This would be grossly unfair, because in no way does *Monkey Grip* bear any relationship to what the Stones crank out in a recording studio.

OK, Bill Wyman might have his name and face on the cover, but it's very much a co-operative venture.



JJ Cale: gravelly whisperings and perfunctory rhythm noises

Everyone's allowed their head whenever the spirit moves them.

Here are a few commendable examples. On the truckin' "Crazy Woman" George Terry steps out to perform some amazing feats on steel guitar, while on "It's A Wonder" guitarist Danny Kortchmar plays better than he's ever done. Nitty Gritty Dirt man John McEuen strokes some nice banjo phrases on "Pussy" with great support from country fiddler Byron Berline.

Lowell George grabs the spotlight on "Monkey Grip Glue", during which the permanent drum beat of Dallas Taylor and Joe Lain rattle away in fine style.

Dr John again makes his presence felt as he gurgles away on organ throughout "What A Blow", and keyboardists Hubie Heard and Duane Smith come across as potential killers whenever they're within earshot. And let's hear three cheers for the Bonaroo Horns, who inject plenty of vigour into most cats.

Having listened to this album at length, I realise that this album is very radio-orientated, with each cut having a separate identity. It's a very listenable collection of songs. For those without any preconceptions there are a number of pleasant surprises. When you see it in the browser box, smile nicely at the assistant and ask if she'll play it for you. Bet you come out of the shop a couple o' quid lighter. Roy Carr, NME Apr 20

## JJ Cale *Okie* A&M

Yeah, King of the Laid-Back and all that bananas, but it goes a little deeper than that - 'cos, even though he probably spends more time on his backside rolling joints than a three-toed sloth gets to

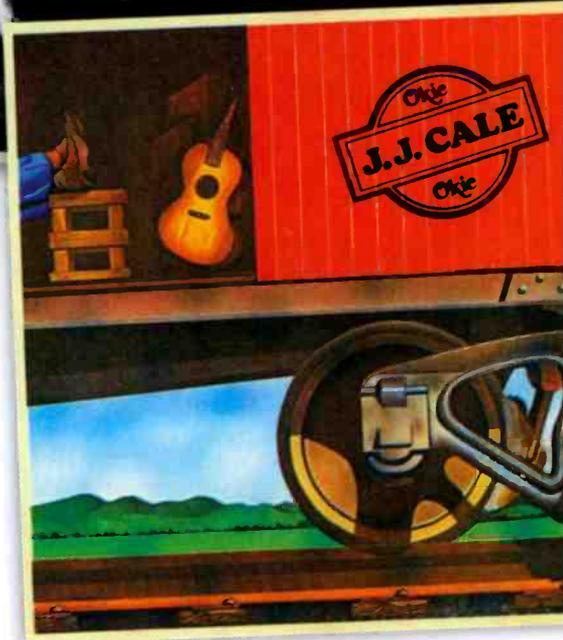
loll over a branch (and, as if you couldn't guess, the title track was recorded "on the back porch" of his Oklahoma home), JJ Cale is, spiritually at least, a genuine highway chile.

*Okie* is just perfect soundtrack music for lazily hitching down the Pan-American highway in search of Don Juan, the actual tracks more like notes-towards-songs scratched ruminatively on the margins of *The Road To Ixtlan* (which, naturally, he's been reading a page or two of every now and then between plucking out the odd chord and watching the sun go up and down).

But enough of this romantic garf. Cale's music may be the most consistently stoned ever to leak out of your speakers since *Gris-Gris*, but he's still a Southern white in his thirties and doubtless couldn't give a goddam about the dreams of Ye Olde Smashed Hippies. "S'long as they jes buy ma records, man..." And why not?

Two sides of gravelly whisperings and perfunctory rhythm noises from some beat-up geetar with a little understated help from a bunch of the boys may not sound too galvanising, but... Well, actually it isn't galvanising at all. It's more... zzzzz...

Cale's into Downhome Doze-Out, a trick Dylan and Beefheart appear to have been striving after on their last albums, without realising that striving in the first place ain't where it's at. *Okie* just lays there, flies buzzing round it, growing approximately a quarter



of an inch a year like an old cactus out around the back of the shack. And it makes *Planet Waves* and *Unconditionally Guaranteed* look like a truckload of badly damaged tomatoes in the process.

It would fight against the inconsequentiality of the whole deal to select individual tracks for attention, seemingly - but there are at least two crackers which you might like to sample before purchase: "Cajun Moon", which actually rocks out, and "Starbound", which doesn't even make it past the two-minute mark before fading away like the smile of a particularly hallucinogenic Cheshire cat. They grow peyote down there in Tulsa, JJ?

*Okie* is a warm, unfocused masterpiece in intermittency. It probably won't climb onto one of the 10 pedestals reserved for the best albums of '74 (jeez, it'd have to stand up to do that!), but it'll be lying around in the near vicinity. Just passing the time...

By the way, A&M, my copy was full of surface crackle'n'crunch. Care to check the pressing?

Ian MacDonald, NME Jun 8



# “I’m not interested in showmanship”

**Sometime YES man RICK WAKEMAN is also a solo performer of his own fantastic, quasi-historical works. Choirs, actors, orchestras... it’s a lot of plates to spin. “Someday,” he says, “something will be a disaster”**

— MM APRIL 13 —

**I**T WAS UNFORTUNATE that Rick Wakeman fell prostrate with a severe bout of influenza only hours after his MM interview this week. Because the last time we saw him, he was on the verge of collapse after his sensational Royal Festival Hall premiere of *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*.

They say everything Rick touches “turns to gold”, but the fragile state of his health shows how hard he has been working of late. And there’s much more to come.

The cheerful, friendly giant, apart from being one of the most popular musicians — among musicians and public alike — is in great demand, not only for his full-time work with Yes, but for his outside activities.

At 24, Rick feels he has earned and learned much from the music business, and now wants to put more back. There is much for him to do, and in some ways he’s only started to tap his potential, but he also wants to help others with their careers.

It’s a refreshing attitude and a change from many musicians who, on achieving success, seem only too anxious to retire with the booty at all possible speed. He reflected first on the epic concert he gave at the Festival Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra, choir and group, shortly available on his second solo LP.

“I’ll never do two shows like that in one night again,” he vowed. “If *Journey* went on tour it would have to be one performance a night. At the premiere, the first concert was really good. It had a few mistakes, but it was fresh. For the first time in my life, I was nervous as hell. I suddenly realised I wasn’t sharing the responsibility.

“It was all down to me. I thought the rest of the boys in the group would have been nervous, but just before the show they were chatting away, and drinking, and there was me... a gibbering heap.

“The audience were great — they really came to enjoy themselves. London crowds can be critical, but they were warm and we could feel them willing us to succeed.

“I thought the silent movies would be a disaster, because they only arrived five minutes before the first show, and I had to improvise the piano accompaniment, without knowing what they were like. I used the movies and old-time backing because the second number of a show is so important. It can be a downer or just more of the opening number, and I wanted to give the people something completely different, to relax them for *Journey*, which is 42 minutes long.” »



October 22, 1974: Rick Wakeman during a 20-date tour of North America with the National Philharmonic Orchestra, the Choir Of America and his band

**Wakeman:  
quitting  
was an  
obvious  
move**

"The concert was recorded live on Ronnie Lane's mobile truck, but there were a few problems when it came to preparing the tapes for the LP. We had to change tapes in the middle of David Hemmings' narration, and he flew back from filming to record a bit more in the studio. He had us in stitches, doing it in a German accent, Welsh, Irish, African - he's a clever lad. It took us nine days to do the mixing.

"Someone in the street had accidentally kicked out the vocal mic cable just before we started recording. So we boosted up the vocals that were picked up on the other mics.

"We had another problem too - the snare drum broke and one of the drum mics failed. There were also four bars of complete shambles between the orchestra and the group. Fortunately an identical passage occurred later and we just used that one twice."

The album is now due out on May 9. Another factor in its delay (it was supposed to be rushed out immediately after the concert), was the paper shortage. It has a gatefold and eight-page booklet, and the designer refused to re-jig it as a single sleeve. The designer won, but in the meantime Rick had to go to America with Yes. He heard, and rejected the original cuts of the album while on tour.

"I just didn't like the sound, and it was worth doing it properly for the sake of a few extra days."

The last Yes tour was something of a marathon, and said Rick: "I can hardly remember the individual performances now, except that it was an improvement on the British tour - thank God. We had a few amusing ones. In Memphis they had a union strike and couldn't finish the building, a new hall, in time.

"There was no seating or curtains and there were eight separate echoes, every time you hit a drum or clapped your hands. We couldn't play for long. What a terrible place - and this was in the home of music. Steer clear, all groups!

"On the last night the roadies sent seven streakers across the stage. With 18 tons of equipment to lug around, it was physically and mentally difficult for us all. You just can't sustain it. My gear was just falling apart towards the end. It was all held together with gaffer tape.

"Yes, you can safely say this was the last of the long tours. We'll never do that again, we're all agreed. I want to spread the work out more, so we can do our own individual things, go on the road for a bit, record, and so on."

How had the mighty *Topographic Oceans* fared during the tour?

"We had a meeting and after a couple of weeks, dropped side two from the programme. I thought side three was very messy, but as a compromise we dropped Two, and that actually helped to improve Three. I firmly believe that Yes is an amazing band, and hopefully we'll be going back on the right path once again.

"I was on a plane the other day and they played *Fragile* on the eight-track. I'd not heard it in over a year, and it stood the test of time. It was tremendous, and I got more out of it than when we had first recorded it. We all heard it, and I think it put a glimmer into everyone's mind."

Yes are off on a European tour until April 25. "Then I come back to finish off producing a band called Wally with Bob Harris. They're a really great band. They remind me of Yes in the beginning. They are very fresh and dedicated, but playing their own ideas.

"They've got two tours supporting Dave Mason, who's coming over later this year, and Lindisfarne. They're the first new English band with a spark of talent I've heard for a long time. They got to the finals for the MM rock/folk contest last year. They'll surprise a lot of people.

"I'm producing their LP and also I'm helping Mike Quatro, Suzi's brother, who plays keyboards. He's into the Keith Emerson showmanship syndrome. But I'm not interested in the showmanship; I'd like to help his music.

"There's so much I want to do... it sounds funny, but there is an incredible gap in music at the

moment. There's no influx of exciting new bands coming up. There used to be Genesis just waiting to break, and groups like that, but now there's nobody to bridge the gap between the workhorse bands and the top, established groups.

"And I think the established bands should help the new ones come up. That's why I want to help Wally. I've been very disappointed with the LPs in the past year by the established bands. My favourite band are The Who, but to me *Quadrophenia* didn't have the magic of what they had done before.

"And Jethro Tull's *Passion Play* I didn't like at all. British groups seem to have gone over the top, not deliberately. They're just trying too hard. The music business has got incredibly into money - and promoters, agents and managers aren't all that interested in promoting new talent when they've got established bands. The best new band I've seen were a group called Tubes in San Francisco, who are just like the American Bonzos."

One of Rick's ambitions for 1974 is to take his *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* entertainment on the road. "I'd like to do some more concerts. Happy as I was with the first, I'm convinced the more we did, the better it would get.

"I got a tremendous buzz from the show, and everybody involved wants to do it again. It depends how well the LP does - but it's got a 50,000 advance. Simple as the work might sound, the score is bloody difficult, and David Meacham the conductor says there are three other orchestras in England capable of playing it.

"They are the Bournemouth Symphony, the Hallé and the Scottish Radio Orchestra. If we

did it with them we could cover most of the country that way. There's talk of doing it in America, but the cost would be phenomenal. I only want to break even, but if we did it for 10 days in America, it would cost around \$22,000 a night.

"In England it's not so bad, but even here it costs a thousand pounds just to rehearse the orchestra.

"Do you know - I've been offered the chance of playing a Mozart piano concerto with the LSO at the Festival Hall?" Rick lit up with quiet pride. "I'd dearly love to do it, but there are concert pianists about who could do it better than me and would give their right arm for a chance of playing with the LSO. I'd feel guilty because those people were not getting the chance.

"I could do it... but I'd need to practise eight hours a day for a month. David Meacham and the LSO have made me the offer, and I'm very flattered. A solution to the problem would be if I wrote a keyboard concerto of my music. My musical heart is in so many places, and in fact I was a better classical player seven years ago than I am now.

"I've got a lot of material for a new solo studio album, and I'll stay away from orchestras for a while. I've got a lot to learn, but I've gained so much from Yes.

"The big downer to come is if I help produce other bands there will be a percentage of failure, and it's going to upset and disappoint me. It'll be something I believe in and I won't understand why nobody else digs it! Things are going really well for me at the moment. Up at my local pub

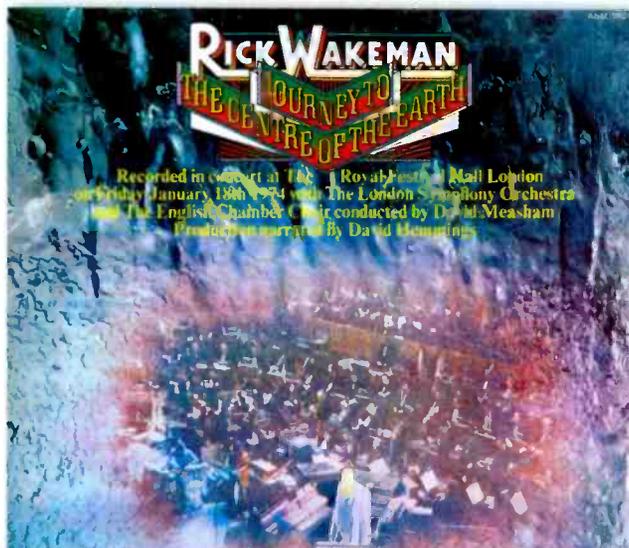
they say, 'Everything he touches turns to gold.' But someday, something I touch will be a disaster, and I've not experienced that yet. Most musicians go through a period of disaster, and either they get through, or it destroys them.

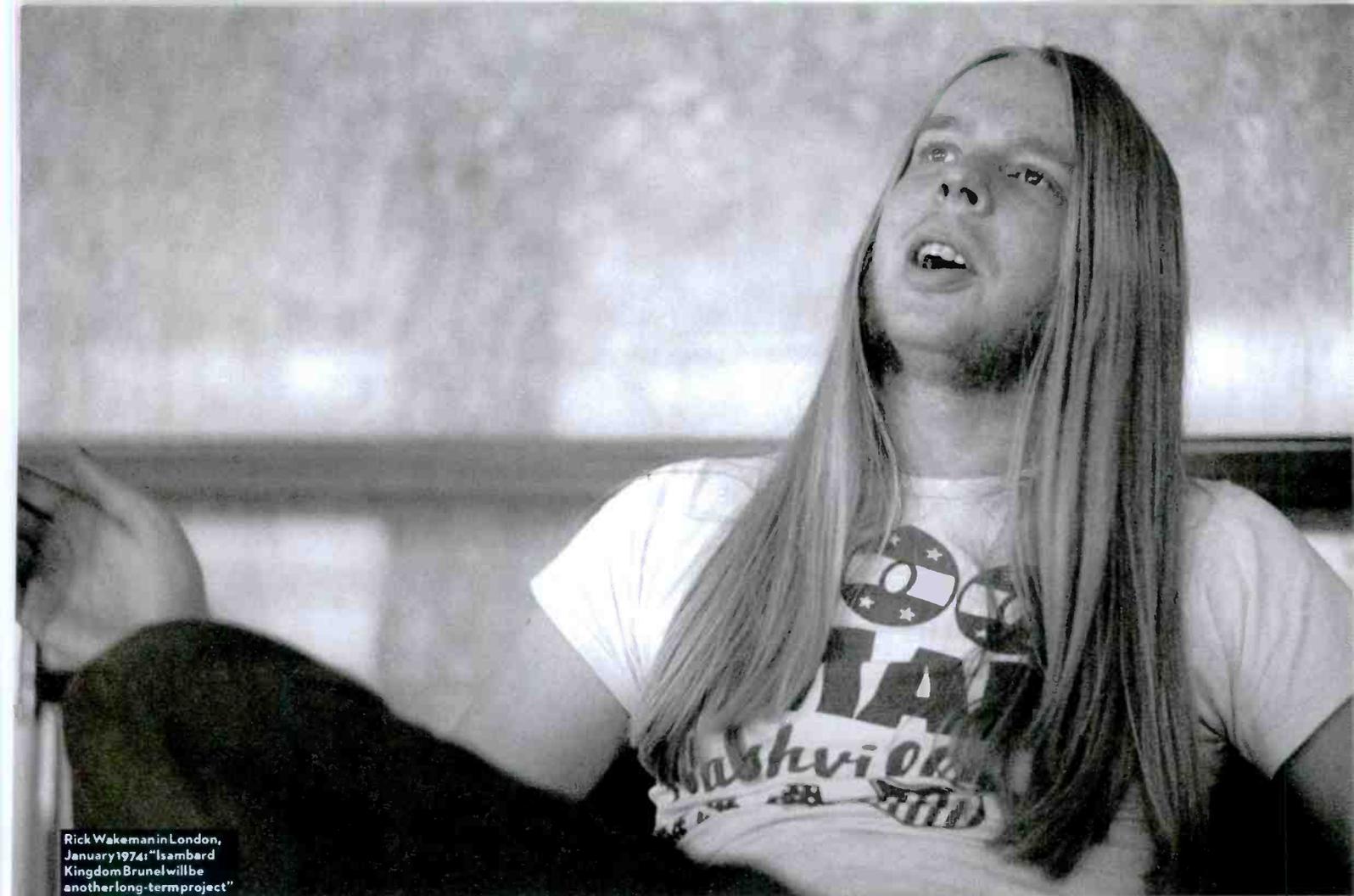
"I'm very lucky, because things have developed nice and slowly, right down to good management and musicians to work with. It helps a lot. You have to try and keep your head in this situation and keep a balance."

If Rick Wakeman stays the way he is, come success or failure, then he won't have much to worry about.

Chris Welch

"The *Journey...* album is how I would have liked Yes to have gone"





Rick Wakeman in London, January 1974: "Isambard Kingdom Brunel will be another long-term project"

— MM JUNE 29 —

**R**ICK WAKEMAN HAS a grand design afoot that could result in one of the most extraordinary, epic concerts in the history of popular music. In fact he has TWO grand designs. Apart from plans to base his next album on the Arthurian legend, there is also a scheme to set the saga of Victoria engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel to a rock'n'roll beat.

These are his first plans since leaving Yes. Had the split with Yes been friendly and had there been any changes in Rick's playing since? "Well, I hope there haven't been any changes. The lads wouldn't let me cock things up, anyway. Yes, the split was very amicable. In fact, Jon has been ringing me up to ask if there was any way he could help. After two years with The Strawbs, and three years with Yes, it sounds funny... and I'll never be in Yes again... but it does get in your blood, that band.

"It's their whole attitude towards music that instills a belief in what you are doing. It's their precision and integrity that counts. The band taught me an awful lot, and in a strange way, hopefully, my music will develop in the way Yes would have developed. In fact *Journey* is how I would have liked Yes to have gone."

All this week Wakeman, who is beginning to equal Elton John for consistent hard work and energy, has been rehearsing with his new band, in readiness for this weekend's *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* concert at London's Crystal Palace.

And after that is a tour of America, which began life as a few promotion dates, set when Rick was still a member of Yes. The band are still somewhat dizzy from the events of the past few months. Consisting of old friends and some newcomers, they are used to life scuffling for gigs in clubs, pubs and holiday camps. The news that they were playing Madison Square Garden on September 14 was a bit like winning a substantial sum on the pools.

The lineup consists of Jeff Crampton (guitar), Barney James (drums), Roger Newell (bass), John Hodgson (percussion), and Ashley Holt and Gary Pickford-Hopkins (vocals). Between playing darts, bar billiards and sinking pints of bitter in the nearby Valiant Trooper, the band have polished up the complex arrangements to *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* and *Journey*.

"Jeff is so clumsy, he keeps falling over things," said Rick in a break in rehearsals, "but he's really come out of his shell as a guitarist. He's an outstanding player—one of this year's finds. The band desperately needs

to get on the road. After the first concert we did together at the Festival Hall there was an incredible affinity between us.

"Once they have had a good, hard American tour, they will be so tight. We were intending to play just a few dates in America, but the album sold quicker and more copies than we expected.

"It's so exciting the way things are going at the moment. The band are playing 100 per cent, and they're pulling all the stops out. I'm lucky, because I didn't want to poach them from their regular bands, but Gary rang me up and asked what was happening, and said that his band [Wild Turkey] had broken up.

"I was going to ask Glenn Cornick anyway if he didn't mind if I pinched Gary for a few concerts, when I made the decision to leave Yes down in Devon, and sent the telegram to our manager. There's not a lot of singing to do anyway at the moment, and he gets on really well with Ashley.

"The band knows all the arrangements now, and we're just improving on the chords and tidying things up for our own egos' sake. We did a potted version of *Henry* and *Journey* at the local club we play at, and the audience went mad. They were expecting the usual rock'n'roll night. It's important for us to keep playing all the time—anywhere.

"I want to do one more English date before the American tour, and it looks like it will be in Manchester with the Hallé Orchestra. There's an offer from Granada TV to screen the show live, which would help a lot with the cost. I don't mind losing a bit, but I could go bankrupt if I'm not careful. On the American tour we're going to charter one plane, a Boeing 727, and travel with one orchestra and choir.

"I don't know which orchestra we'll be using yet; Brian only just told me about it. Apart from Madison Square, we'll be playing at the Philadelphia Spectrum and the Hollywood Bowl, which was built for orchestras. I don't give a monkey's where we play as long as the acoustics are OK!

"I was going to do the King Arthur story anyway, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel will be a long-term project. I'd like to do the music for a cartoon on his life story, and if I start it now, there should be an LP out in a year and a half.

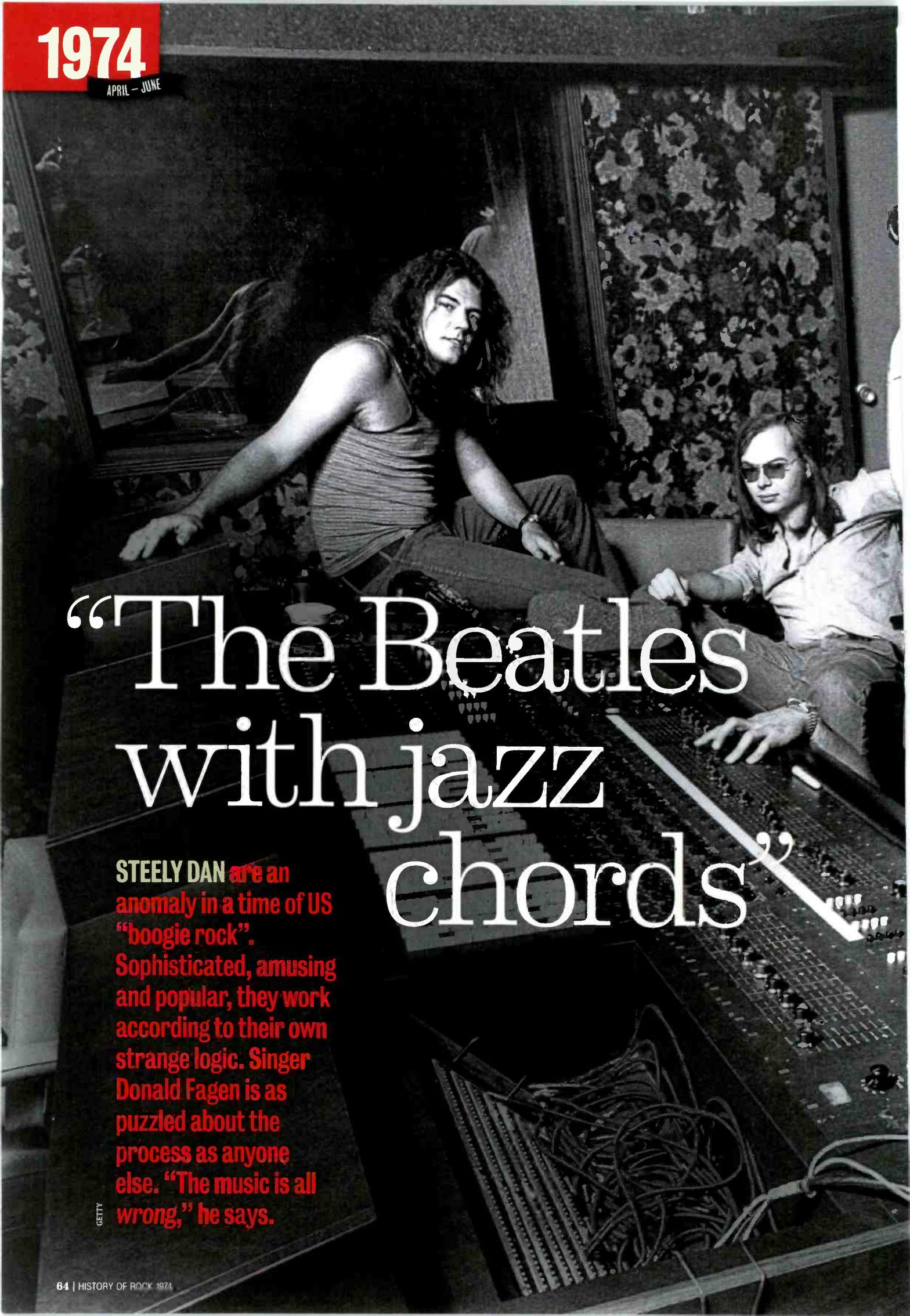
"The King Arthur story is marvellous, with all the legends and all the characters. Lots of the places and people actually existed, like Tintagel castle. I'd like to hold a day of pageant there with jousting tournaments and people in armour and costumes.

When will Rick record his next album?

"We'll do it in November or December to get an LP out in March. We'll probably record in Brussels for tax reasons." *Chris Welch* •

1974

APRIL - JUNE



# “The Beatles with jazz chords”

**STEELY DAN** are an anomaly in a time of US “boogie rock”.

Sophisticated, amusing and popular, they work according to their own strange logic. Singer Donald Fagen is as puzzled about the process as anyone else. “The music is all wrong,” he says.

GETTY

Steely Dan in 1974  
(l-r) Jim Hodder,  
Walter Becker,  
Denny Dias, Jeff  
"Skunk" Baxter  
and Donald Fagen



# Steely Dan

Donald  
Fagen



Jim Hodder

JIM HODDER'S drumming has been aptly described as metronomic, and he is indeed a perfect foil to the more ambitious approach of his partner in the percussion section, Jeff Porcaro. Jim is an original member, one of "the five," and doesn't seem to mind too much the additional drummers. In fact, he says he finds it stimulating, and their drum line is one

## — MELODY MAKER JUNE 1 —

**S**TEELY DAN, IN their short time together, have been hailed as one of the best bands to emerge from America in a long time. They have set the US rock scene back on a road to musical creativity, and helped free it from the dominance of British bands, established over the past six years. And they have done all this within the framework of pop songs – no more, no less.

The main members of the band are Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, who write all their material and started out their career as staff writers for a record company. Steely Dan is really their orchestra, designed to present the songs on stage and record in the best way possible. As a result they have been through a few personnel changes, but the basic five are still together as they were on the first album *Can't Buy A Thrill*.

They have built something of a cult following in Britain since the beginning of last year, with DJs playing great compositions like "Do It Again", "Reelin' In The Years" and more recently "Rikki Don't Lose That Number". The songs have a depth and "finished" quality that gives Dan the edge over other bands. The band also sport some fine instrumentalists, Donald Fagen being an accomplished pianist with a sophisticated jazz and classically trained background, whose introductions to some of the numbers provide one of the highspots of their show. And there is Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, who has been received on the band's recent tour of England as a new guitar hero. Jeff also plays pedal steel guitar and conga drums, while Donald's co-writer, Walter Becker, is usually found at the back of the band, hidden away playing bass guitar.

Denny Dias plays a lighter guitar style to Baxter's funkier approach, while Jim Hodder is the original drummer, joined on stage by Jeff Porcaro. Other additions to the stage act have been Royce Jones, a soulful balladeer with an appealing style, who helps out on percussion, and Mike McDonald on Fender Rhodes piano.

One of the reasons for the various additions – two drummers, two guitarists – has been the quest for a powerful stage sound to match the albums, which have incorporated session musicians from time to time. For example, on the first album, Elliot Randall, the blues guitarist, was added and played lead on "Reelin' In The Years", and there were seasoned jazzmen like Victor Feldman, Jerome Richardson and Snooky Young involved. Also Donald was not happy at being the main lead singer, although he has an outstanding voice.

Steely Dan (the name comes from some strange New York phallic device) are a fairly hard-bitten bunch, capable of being sardonic and demanding offstage. They give the impression of being used to the pressures of hustling in the big city for a long time, before success came their way, and there is less of the *laissez-faire* to their personalities that one might expect to find in the average English band. But once they have relaxed, they are amenable and talkative. The future will probably see more changes in the lineup and they are cagey about a next album. But whatever they do next, they have in a brief career produced some satisfying and memorable music. You can't ask for more.

**D**ONALD FAGEN IS a dark-haired, serious young man for whom Steely Dan is his orchestra – and life. But he has a sense of sardonic humour that is reflected in his oft-quoted remark that "our songwriting process is not unlike the creation of junk sculpture".

Like his cohort, Walter Becker – they went to college together – he is quick-witted, sharply

spoken and keen to talk in pungent and forthright fashion. At the fashionable Blake's Hotel in London, where the hippest musicians tend to congregate, Donald was deep in conversation with Jeff Baxter about the mysteries of the Third Reich. And both had been fascinated by their visit to Radio Luxembourg's studios, which were Gestapo headquarters during the last war. Black magic aspects of the Nazi creed were also under discussion, but it seemed healthier by far to talk on the subject of Dan, Steely, and their many compositions. What, by the way, had led them to record Duke Ellington's "East St Louis Toodle-Oo" on the *Pretzel Logic* LP?

"There are about four recorded versions of 'East St Louis Toodle-Oo'," said Donald, crouching in a settee over a cup of tea. "We took the best part of each and made a composite version. We changed horn parts to a piano solo, but we didn't change it very much. It was Duke's birthday recently and I sent him a copy of the record, and I would have been very flattered if he had heard it. But I don't know if he did."

"Walter and I are both jazz fans, and as a composition this one stood up so well, we wanted to hear it with all the expertise of modern hi-fi. Most of the great jazz compositions have been neglected. There is no jazz in America now. There is a considerable amount of electric experimenting, but that doesn't interest me, and their improvisation is strictly modal – and boring."

"John Coltrane was a fantastic player, but he was responsible for leading people into making a terrible mistake. I like more changes in music, and anyway, I preferred John before his modal period when he was with the Miles Davis Quintet. So there is no jazz of note in the States now. Most of the stuff played is nostalgic '50s arrangements with good soloists. And of course Miles Davis has gone over the edge. I like to think we are a rock'n'roll band – with class."

"My bass player and I write all the material, but the solos and arrangements come from the group. Walter and I think it out in advance and then we go into the studios and work on the tunes from there. I think of them as compositions rather than songs. They are structured, but there is room for improvisation."

"We're a strange band, y'know. The music is all wrong. We all sat around in our living room and came up with this way of playing. It's all very weird."

"Then there is the 'imminent break-up'. Quote, we're about to break-up, unquote. That's all ridiculous bull. We're more or less fairly stable now as the five humanoids that started this thing."

**W**ALTER BECKER, THE mystery bass player, who keeps well hidden at the back of the stage, usually perched in the shadow of Jeff Porcaro's drums, is a cheerful jester with a quick line in verbal badinage. But despite his public reticence, he is a vital, founder member of the Dan, who co-writes those amazing songs with Donald Fagen, and for whom quality rather than commercialism is the most important factor.

"Our sound system is designed for small halls like the Palace Theatre at Manchester, and we'd rather work in those situations than sacrifice the sound quality in a bigger venue. Dinky Dawson designed our sound system and he's brilliant. He's worked with us from our first gigs when we used to support The Kinks and The James Gang."

"That was terrible – bands used to play tricks on us in those days. Like not letting us on stage for a soundcheck, or turning the lights off. When Dinky first joined us to do the sound, I couldn't understand a word he said, but I knew he was an intelligent, professional guy."

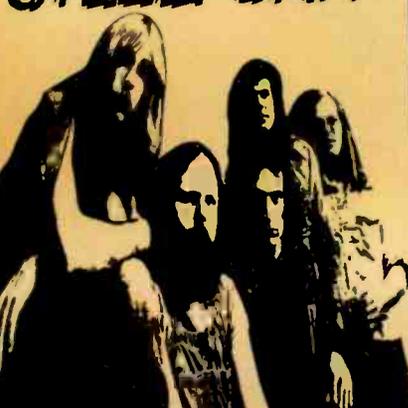
"In our early days we had some terrible disasters. I remember a press party we were supposed to play, when the equipment wasn't set up properly and nobody could hear a note, and the lead singer picked up a can of beer, missed his mouth and poured it all over himself. That was our press reception. A heavy bummer!"

"The singer was David Palmer. That was when Donald didn't want to be lead singer – no way. Now Dave is co-writer with Carole King, which shows where we were at. I didn't even know he could write. Sure, there have been some personnel changes. First there was the six, and then there was the five, and now we have three extra guys, including Royce Jones on percussion and vocals. We had two girl singers on our last tour, one of whom was known as Porky and is here with David Cassidy now."

"Ostensibly we're an eight-piece now, but that doesn't mean we won't change it. But all the main five have worked on all the LPs. Incidentally, we record every show we play 'live' on tape – I'm not kidding. If we wanted to, we could put out a live LP, but there is only one song we play on the road that hasn't been recorded before, and that's 'This Mobile Home', which is a song about a trailer. You'll have to hear the lyrics. We tried to record it for *Countdown To Ecstasy* and *Pretzel Logic*, and if it

AS CONCERTS BRINGS YOU

# STEELY DAN



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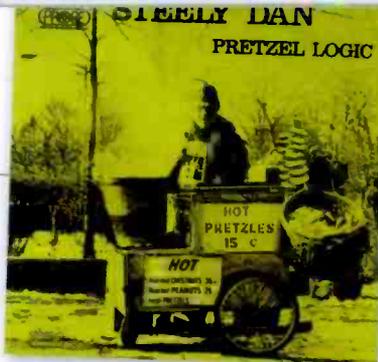
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AS CONCERTS

steely dan

## rikki don't lose that number





“We record every show we play ‘live’ on tape – I’m not kidding”

had been like it is now, we might have succeeded. We’re not that interested in ‘live’ recordings, though, because there is a gross overkill in that department.”

How did Donald and Walter get together? “We’ve always written songs together, from when we started at college. But people wanted Mickey Mouse stuff and the things we were writing were so outré. They were all four-minute songs – miniaturisation as Donald would put it – but someone compared them to German art music. When we do an LP we like to get 14–15 songs on it, without sacrificing the recording quality. We just don’t have room for any more ambitious writing, until we do LP sets, and anyway, it doesn’t do to get too heavy. The Who invented the concept LP with *Happy Jack* [A *Quick One’s* US title], right? I think that was very successful, along with *The Who Sell Out*.”

Why does Walter keep himself hidden at the back on stage? “You’ve noticed that? The reasons are it takes the heat off me and I don’t have to make my presence felt. As long as I can hear Jeff Porcaro’s snare drum and hi-hat, I’m happy. I moved up there about 10 gigs ago. I just want to hear the drums and it’s all cosy up there. I have a seat, and it keeps me comfortable and happy!”

Jeff “Skunk” Baxter is in danger of becoming one of the biggest guitar heroes since the days of Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Peter Green. Certainly his English fans have taken him to heart, and at all Dan’s concerts there have been yells for Jeff and cries of “Skunk!”. In fact, Jeff would rather drop the “skunk” bit. It came one night when he called on an old friend while under the influence of alcohol. As the friend took rather a long time to answer the bell, he decided to relieve himself against the door, just as the door opened, thus drawing forth the cry: “You skunk!”

Jeff has a zestful, enthusiastic guitar style, which occasionally goes over the top of Steely Dan’s otherwise disciplined standards, but injects into the band a sense of fun and considerable excitement. Less tutored than the rest of the musicians, nevertheless he has had more actual live experience. He has worked in a great variety of bands, and is noted for his pedal steel guitar playing which has earned him a lot of country music work. He first came to fame with the short-lived but highly respected Ultimate Spinach and has been doing a lot of touring with Linda Ronstadt. During his visit to Britain he has been thoroughly enjoying himself and is definitely responsible for the wilder off-stage scenes that accompany the band.

“It suits me fine that Don and Walter do all the writing,” says Jeff, through his moustache and spectacles. “I thought that it wouldn’t until I heard their songs. I’m not a writer, I’m a technician. Donald tells me what he needs for a solo, and I play it for him. Steely Dan for me is one of the finest bands I have played with, as far as both lyrical and musical content goes.

“Sometimes in the States the kids just shout for ‘boogie’. So we just wait until they shut up and we can start to play. Boy, is that funny! I love that.

“We want the kids to have a good time of course, and we’re not into that Frank Zappa scene, the way Frank adopts a kind of missionary attitude towards the ‘kiddies’. But we do like to think the people who come to our concerts are there to listen to the music, and not just kids who come to hear the hits. It’s true that we play more to ourselves than the audience sometimes, but we have a lot of fun. After the show we scream at each other if we have made any mistakes. But I’ve never been in a band that has played so many different kinds of music before. I used to have to be in five bands at once to get this kind of experience.”

Denny Dias cuts an impressive stance on stage, with his massive, flowing black beard and board shoulders, dwarfing the guitar strapped around his waist. Denny, in common with most of the band, is a jazz enthusiast who prefers working in rock music for the excitement and opportunities it offers. He does not feel he is compromising his music either, and looks forward to a future when he will be able to present a wholly unique style.

Working in contrast to Jeff Baxter, nevertheless, Denny manages to strike up a firm musical partnership, as a member of the “guitar section”. He has thoroughly enjoyed his first trip to Britain, and says: “I love your country. I feel I have come to a civilised land. Just travelling around in a taxi, I have met so many great people. I’m not into museums or sightseeing – it’s the people who interest me most.”

What had Denny been involved in before his work with Steely Dan? “On a professional level, not much. I was going to school in New York and

playing guitar at the same time in small clubs. I felt guilty about neglecting my school studies, and I was just really getting interested in my subjects, when I had to make the decision. So I quit school in 1969 to be a full-time musician. I was studying biomedical computer science and completed my first semester.

But I couldn’t bring myself to quit playing guitar.

“I had a rock band but it was difficult to get work, because I didn’t want to play Top 40 stuff. We didn’t have too much original material either. Our bass player decided to go back to school, so I put an ad in the *Village Voice* for a bass player and pianist. That’s how I met Donald and Walter. When I heard their writing, well I just stopped trying to write songs.”

“We kicked out the other guys in the band, and you know, listening to Walter and Donald’s songs was like hearing The Beatles with jazz chords. I was flabbergasted! If I hadn’t met them, I’d still be back at school.

“When they went to California to work for ABC Dunhill, I hung around and eventually got a call to join them in the new band – Steely Dan. Before the call, I was gradually losing faith and almost went back to school.”

Denny has a strongly jazz-influenced style and he says his tutor had been one of the finest jazz guitarists. “Billy Bauer – he worked with Lennie Tristano when he was only 16 years old. He’s getting old now but he can still play and he works mainly as a tutor. I play as if I were a jazz musician, except I’m working in a rock context with its feel and excitement.

“I never play licks off other rock guitarists, and avoid bending strings or the use of vibrato.”

How did Denny find working with Jeff Baxter in a two-guitar lineup? “There are no problems – except I’d like to play more. Jeff can play all the wide vibrato sounds and bend the strings, and he’s really good. We only met up through the band, and we’re on opposite ends of the stick, we’re so different. I play the jazz and Jeff is much more experienced as a rock player.

“It’s fun to do the unison things as well – it’s a challenge – and we have pretty nice parts.”

Jim Hodder’s drumming has been aptly described as metronomic, and he is indeed a perfect foil to the more ambitious approach of his partner in the percussion section, Jeff Porcaro. Jim is an original member, one of “the five”, and doesn’t seem to mind too much the additional drummer. In fact, he says he finds it stimulating, and their drum duet is one of the highlights of the group’s act.

“I like having the two of us drumming. It doesn’t always work in groups, and you have to forget about your ego. With us it sounds like one guy playing at times, but it makes for a better combination of sounds. From the time the band was put together, Donald wanted two drummers. I was against it at first, but what the hell, we had two guitarists and two keyboard players, so why not two drummers. And one of my favourite bands had two drummers – Frank Zappa & The Mothers. It can work like a locomotive, especially on tunes like ‘Do It Again’. It gives us both time to relax in different parts and we can concentrate more on the next fill.

“And of course you can pick your nose or drop a stick, and nobody notices! What we have to watch out for is Donald when he conducts those long endings. It’s great material to play in this band and we only clash occasionally, not so that anybody in the audience would notice.”

“That first LP we did was only rehearsed for a couple of weeks, and I didn’t even know the other guys. So it turned out remarkably well. Before Steely Dan I did a lot of session work around the Boston area and got screwed by managers – the usual thing.

“It seems everybody has to have a glitter image and I can’t stand that. Nobody in the group can stand it! But the fact is, we have been accepted without glamour and fancy clothes. The whole glitter bit is stupid – it sucks.

“It’s true we had two hit singles, and on our second LP we didn’t have any hits, so we had to be a little bit more commercial on the third one. Artistically, *Count Down* was our best LP, but for the sake of the survival of the group, we had to go more commercial on *Pretzel Logic*.

“But I think Donald and Walter are the two best songwriters since Paul McCartney and Paul Simon. You gotta have material. There are so many good players, with no material. Us and The Doobie Brothers and The Eagles all started off around the same time, and I think good American bands are coming back.” *Chris Welch* •

1974

APRIL - JUNE

# “We’re getting marriage proposals”

Or: how with the help of Albert Grossman, John’s Children and a “pushy mother”, two former child models became the pop sensation of 1974, SPARKS. “We don’t wanna be accepted as Tin Pan Alley songwriters,” says Russell Mael. “And I’m sure we won’t be.”

— MELODY MAKER JUNE 8 —

**T**HAT THEY ARE brothers is immediately clear. The same strong line of chin bone, the same dominant cheek bone, the same thin and bony frame. The one with luxurious, curly, straggly hair. The other with slicked-down strands of black and a dark blob of moustache, which sits like a full-stop beneath the exclamation mark of his sniffer-and-sneezer. Russell the pretty and Ron the witty. Russell the fast, slightly nervous talker—his voice has the same tremulous quality in speech as in singing. Ron the considered, thoughtful conversationalist who will speak slowly as though each word is being measured by a ruler to ensure it fits the meaning of the phrase.

These Mael brothers have an immense sense of style. Because their style is real, not the tacky pizzazz of the New York bars and not the voguish calculatedness of the Britisher (excepting Mr. Ferry). Though Americans, Ron and Russell have more in common with *Paris Match* than with the *New York Times*; with the Champs Elysee than with Broadway; and, to cross the Channel, with the London Palladium than with Max’s Kansas City.

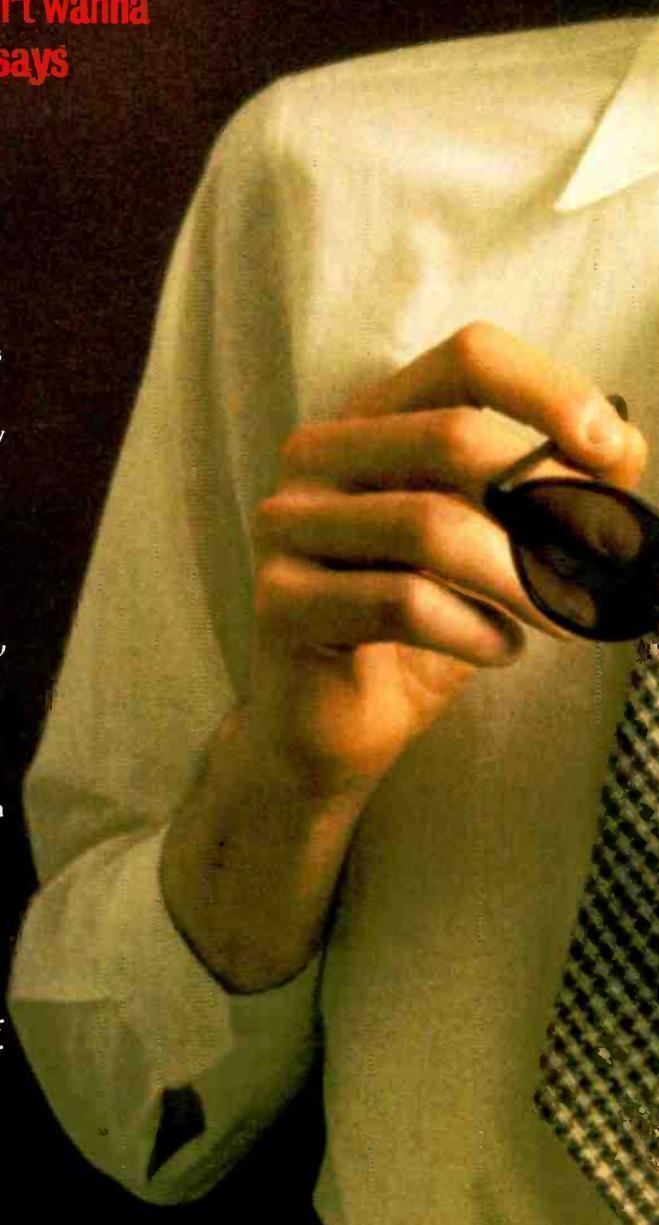
How’d the style develop? How come a dark male version of Shirley Temple and this Chaplin-Hitler face in Yves St Laurent clothing have a Top Three record and a Top Ten album? How come?

In October this year, Russell Mael will be 21. Ron will be 28 in August. “I’m his father,” says Ron. Back home in Los Angeles, young Ron Mael, who was born in Culver City, became interested in local bands. Other people would have jazz records, he says, or soul, but for him it was The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean and Richie Valens.

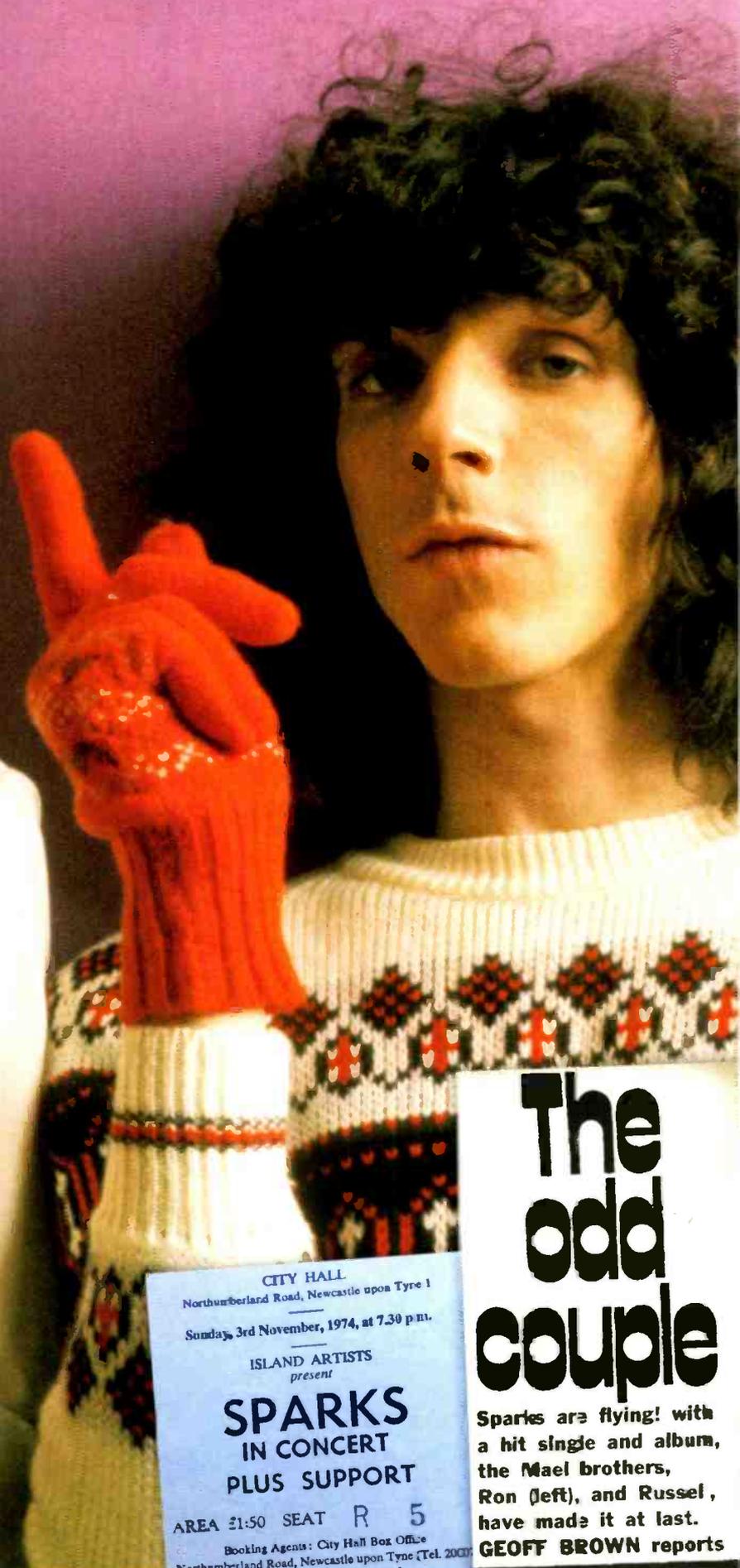
The Maels started making music six to seven years ago. They’ve had several bands, but the personnel were always drawn from close friends. The new Sparks is the first group in which they’ve played with musicians from outside their clique. One of the first groups was Moonbaker Abbey, “or something like that. It was the time you had to have a name like Moonbaker Abbey or something ridiculous or you weren’t really with it,” says Ron.

The formative group of all those Mael days was Halfnelson, which they formed with a school friend called Earl Mankey, a guitarist and wizard »

ALAMY



Sparks: Ron (left) and  
Russell Mael in 1974.  
"You had to be called  
Moonbaker Abbey or  
something ridiculous"  
they say of their first  
bands in late-'60s LA



CITY HALL  
Northumberland Road, Newcastle upon Tyne 1  
Sunday, 3rd November, 1974, at 7.30 p.m.  
ISLAND ARTISTS  
present  
**SPARKS**  
IN CONCERT  
PLUS SUPPORT  
AREA £1.50 SEAT R 5  
Booking Agents: City Hall Box Office  
Northumberland Road, Newcastle upon Tyne (Tel. 2003)

# The odd couple

Sparks are flying! with  
a hit single and album,  
the Mael brothers,  
Ron (left), and Russell,  
have made it at last.  
**GEOFF BROWN** reports

of the tape recorder. "It was only three people making tapes," says Ron. "Earl was always quite handy with a tape recorder. He knew all the things about wiring it up, so you'd get overdubs and things." A regular punk garage-band engineer, Earl is now second engineer at The Beach Boys' studio.

"We were completely kinda locked in making these tapes. We played them for other people, and there just wasn't a sort of 'band' feel to them, I guess. At that time," Ron adds, "people were performing songs by other people and it seemed just a waste of time to go and listen to a record, figure out the chords and then learn how to play and learn how to sing all the harmonies, so the part of the whole reason we sounded like we did was just laziness."

That's the way they've always worked. "It always met with disaster because we'd come up with something that everyone would say, 'Yeess, you'd be a lot better off doing the Rolling Stones songbook,'" adds Russell.

Ron: "We only learned about hooks in songs a couple of weeks ago, about how you're supposed to have hooks if you want them to be commercial."

Their musical training, you'll have gathered, was minimal. Ron had taken piano lessons. "Every Southern California lad takes piano lessons. Really what I wanted to be was a baseball player. It just seemed to me that a baseball player sort of star was more important... Micky Mantle of the New York Yankees," says Russell, "getting your picture on a little bubble-gum trading card."

Russell liked sports too. But he had no piano lessons. "I had been in various choruses, and when we lived for a couple of years in Vienna I'd been in a chorus there. That was when we were really young."

Russell, born in Santa Monica, wanted to be a sportsman too. Even more so than Ron. "Then something happened and we got distracted into other fields." Like photo modelling, so much a part of their style now.

How did that start? "A pushy mother," says Ron. "In Hollywood there are all sorts of adverts for modelling agencies - Does Your Child Have The Talent and The Appearance To Be, uh, such and such..."

"...For only three hundred dollars we can assess whether he has that talent," concludes Russell.

So they were assessed and passed. Russell was about 13, Ron, 18, and they did modelling, for the Sears Roebuck-type catalogues for around 18 months under the watchful eye, one assumes, of pushy Ma.

In *Flashes*, their fan-club magazine produced by Joseph Fleury (number-one fan and confidant), they give their own names as Dwight Russell Day and J Ronald Day, and their mother's name as Doris Day. Musically, says Russell, they came to a point where they wanted to get a "reaction" to what they were taping. "We knew it was possible to get millions of people reacting, because we heard there were million-selling records."

So they took their tapes to every record company in the land and were rejected by the lot. Still, they continued making tapes and carrying on in a generally amateurish way. "A guy who was sort of acting as our manager, who fancied he was in the business part of the music... [Which meant that he owned a suit, adds Ron] "...he sent a tape to Todd Rundgren in New York," says Russell, who then does a pretty good imitation of the Runt's voice by way of explaining that TR agreed to come out to Los Angeles and produce the band, by then called Halfnelson.

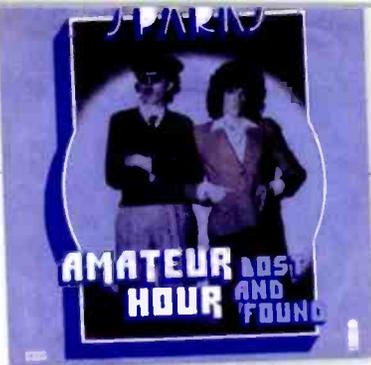
**T**HE TAPES RUNDGREN heard featured Earl, Ron and Russell. By the time he arrived they'd added Jim Mankey (Earl's brother) and Harley Feinstein on bass and drums.

"We used to beat on cardboard boxes with reverb on and run it through amps" says Ron, explaining how they got percussion on their early tapes. They'd get to play live, of course, so that's why they hauled in their friends to play in Halfnelson.

Rundgren, says Ron, was "really clever technically. It was just a problem because there was a kind of slickness to the way he worked that didn't work with what we were doing that we wanted to maintain, and Todd was very much into a lot of harmonies.

"Personally, it always worked 'cos he's a really good guy... and we're really good guys. It was the producer-artist relationship that was a bit strained, so after that album we parted ways on that basis."

They started playing live. "We got booked into a few places like delicatessens," says Ron.



"We really like to, in a way, destroy the song"

"Deli-rock, that's been our bag," says Russell. "There's always been a certain mismatching of what we are to the situations we've played in."

The first Halfnelson album had been out on Albert Grossman's Bearsville label, and it met with no reaction. Grossman, says Russell, thought the band's name was too esoteric. He thought the cover was also too clever. So he suggested they repackage the album and change the name.

They went away and thought of all kinds of names that were totally innocuous. They finally came up with Sparks - "And we thought, 'Yeah, that's so boring it's sort of good,'" says Russell.

Grossman agreed. Russell does a fine imitation of The American Stomach liking the idea, and Albert let them do their own cover.

"We said, 'We've got the concept, Albert'" - we're on first name terms with him, see -

"It's going to be A PHOTO OF THE BAND! Whaddya think of it?" Russell grunts Grossman-like: "Yeah, I like it."

No matter now they minimise and decry the effect, the name Sparks does have a very real atmosphere. Flash, electricity and, as they say, "it just sounds like a name a rock band should have".

They started work on their second album, *A Woofer In Tweeter's Clothing*. Thaddeus James Lowe, engineer on the first album, who sang lead on The Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much To Dream Last Night", produced. They also came up with an incipient hit single - "Wondergirl", for which they got a Purple Single because it sold 500 copies in one town, honest.

"Then they had this really brilliant brainstorm. 'Let's send you to England while the single is selling in America,'" says Russell.

"We wanted," says Ron, "to take a holiday, and so we said, 'Well, do we want a hit single or a holiday?' So we opted for the holiday."

Nearer the truth, we find that they'd long been complaining that they should be sent to England, mainly because they were getting fed up playing to salami and chopped liver in the delicatessens.

So, says Russell, "the time they sent us was when 'Wondergirl' was creeping up the charts. And it crept right back down the charts as soon as we crept out of the country."

They got to Europe late in 1972. They didn't only play London dates. They visited and played in Germany, Switzerland, Holland and France.

"There were two reactions. There were a lot of intellectual types who... It's like the farther away you are, the less popular you are, the more impressive you are to those people.

"So we were really impressive to those people, because in Los Angeles we weren't exactly the most popular band of the time. It became very chic, I guess, to like Sparks, especially in France," says Ron.

Over in England, there were a few gigs to play. "The ones that worked out the best were the ones after we appeared on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. The ones before, the reaction was fairly lukewarm, but after people saw us on TV and realised that we were 'legitimate', the reaction was good. There was almost complete change around from that point on. Because if they came to hear us at that point expecting just any interchangeable band then it would have been really disappointing," says Ron.

How did they manage financially? "It was really simple," says Russell, "guys just kept shelling out money every day."

"We even took back some," says Ron, "We were getting a spending allowance and all. We just couldn't spend it fast enough. Each member of the band was pocketing his money. When we first came here we said, 'We're cold, we're cold. We want coats, we want coats, and so they got in touch with the people at WEA, and before we knew it there were five leather coats.'" WEA distribute Bearsville Records, by the way.

After one gig at the Pheasantry ("in your Chelsea", advises Ron), the *OGWT* spot and a couple of Marquee gigs, they thought things were beginning to move at last.

Russell: "Right then they said..." Ron: "Time's up!"

Russell: "Telegram from USA. Come home. Come home."

**O**NCE AGAIN, WITH that impeccable timing which has been a stunning feature of their early career, Sparks were shipped out of an England now showing signs of awakening interest.

"We flew back to Bearsville" says Ron, "and recorded a song that we thought would be a single, 'cos we were still naive enough to think that we would have another release. We're real suckers. The song was never

released in any sort of form. We played the Whisky A Go Go once and a high school lunchtime concert in Los Angeles once, and that was it. So we thought, 'Uh, I wonder if we're now in the retirement stage?'"

An impasse had, clearly, been reached. The Maels decided they wanted to return to England. The two Mankeys and Feinstein had, says Russell, hated England at first. Jim Mankey especially. But when the Maels decided to return, the other three said they'd try London again.

"At the time we were trying to reassess whether everybody should come back, what the plan should be. We didn't know exactly what we were going to do. Our minds were wandering among a few different plans of attack."

They got in touch with John Hewlett, who had taken care of the band during their first European trip (John, as you no doubt have previously read, was the John of John's Children). "There was a feeling that the two of us should come on our own," says Russell.

Ron: "One problem before was that we thought that the music wasn't presented in the proper way. And we really had to find a way to present it in a way that was stronger. We always liked what we did, but we knew that it was really necessary to be just criticised for our direction and not for musicianship and those sorts of things.

"We really were tight-knit but we really couldn't see, I guess, what we were doing. There was no thought of anybody leaving at all, 'cos it would be like kicking you mother out of the band."

They got a release from Warner Brothers and went to Island Records. "When people found out we were looking around, we had lots of offers," says Russell. "We were a bit worried in case we didn't get a release, in fact."

Ron: "So at that time we were making ourselves as undesirable as possible."

Russell: "We went into their office and would say, 'We're pretty lousy, aren't we?'"

Ron: "And we're getting worse... by the day."

They had recorded a demo tape with some session musicians of an album's worth of songs.

"All the songs from *Kimono My House* were actually written after that period," says Ron. While they were working out their ideas, they kept writing. "There's kind of an unreleased album that came between the time of the second album and the new album."

In Britain, with Muff Winwood producing, Sparks spent a couple of months recording *Kimono*. There was a series of crises. No plastic, so they'd be a live band.

No, that couldn't be, because there was no petrol, so they'd be a TV-exposed band. No, that couldn't be, 'cos there were work-permit problems. "It looked like the whole world was caving in," says Russell.

The new Sparks band was pulled together. Drummer Dinky Diamond (his real name's Norman. He comes from Aldershot, now lives in Frimley, and he's 24) was found playing in a Sparks sound-alike band in a pub.

"It's really difficult finding guys from newspapers," says Russell. "We just assumed guys would be on a certain level of musicianship, so we found out first of all that a lot of guys couldn't play that well... Then it's down to fitting in ideologically and personality-wise."

On bass on the album was Martin Gordon. He's been replaced by Ian Hampton, who was in Jook, another of John Hewlett's bands, which has now split.

"We just wanted to make sure that before we started live (the tour kicks off on June 19) that we had the strongest possible lineup and we just had to reassess the situation again... We do a lot of reassessing, don't we?"

Ron: "We're about to have a reassess in about a half-hour."

They were going to be augmented by an offstage organist, Sir Peter Oxendale. He's out and there's going to be, instead, an on-stage extra guitarist who'll become a permanent band member. His name is Trevor Whyte and he also used to be with Jook.

The other guitarist on the *Kimono* album is Adrian Fisher, who was in Andy Fraser's band Toby. So that's the band.

**I**T'LL BE INTERESTING to see what kind of audience these guys draw. "Yeah, we're looking forward to that audience as well," says Ron.

"I hope," Russell says, pointing to Joseph Fleury, "that it's the kind of people that he gets letters from. We're getting lots

of marriage proposals and stuff, and people who wanna know if you'd like a, uh, honorary doctor's degree from Oxford. That's how vast the range of letters are. Yeah, it's gonna be interesting."

They're playing universities, places like that?

Ron: "No, we're playing at a delicatessen, a recreation centre in Bradford, and..."

Their set is just good presentation of their songs.

Ron: "We've always been classed as kinda theatrical, but the only kind of theatre that we like is that which is derived from the people in the band as opposed to extraneous applied theatrics. We really like to maintain the mystery of our lyrics by, say, if the song's about a horse, not having a slide projected on a back screen of a horse running. Just having to imagine something is really good, and not having everything drawn out for you."

Russell: "The personalities of the band itself should be the real strength, as opposed to the band presenting something else around them like props. We don't want a lot of dry ice and stuff."

The Mael songs are unique beasts. Clever to the point of seeming contrived, intellectual and often un-danceable. Ron writes most – a few have shared credits.

Ron: "We never write together."

Russell: "It's the solitary-confinement approach to musical writing, 'cos once you start trading off ideas things get watered down somehow. It's better to have your own idea. We found it a lot better that way... We found it a lot better if I don't even work... that really works well. I'm cutting back a bit on my writing; I'm now on a sixth-month writing plan. One classic every six months."

The Maels like the idea of writing songs which, in their demo form of just voice and piano, do not sound like rock songs.

Ron: "It's kinda forcing the making of songs that shouldn't be performed by a rock band but yet having it with a rock-band instrumentation."

So if someone hears a demo and says it'd be great with strings or clarinet or a Dixieland band, "we'll have an electric guitar playing what the clarinet or the banjo should be playing", says Russell. "Like, 'Equator' was written on a piano, and when he wrote it he never took into account that it mightn't be possible to sing."

Similarly, where a group would transpose a tune into a key which was easier to sing, the Maels would sing in the original, awkward key.

Ron: "We really like to, in a way, destroy the song, 'cos a lot of 'em could be, maybe, bordering on Your Good Song, traditionally speaking. But who needs good songs? It's better to have a thing sounding good than to be known as a Good Songwriter. Who needs another Cole Porter or something? We don't wanna be accepted as Tin Pan Alley songwriters... and I'm sure we won't be."

Russell: "When you've got a nice ballad, you've really gotta try and ruin it. 'Cos that's where the fun comes in!" Geoff Brown •



Sparks on stage at Hilversum, Netherlands, in 1974: (l-r) Martin Gordon, Russell Mael, Norman "Dinky" Diamond, Ron Mael and Adrian Fisher



1974

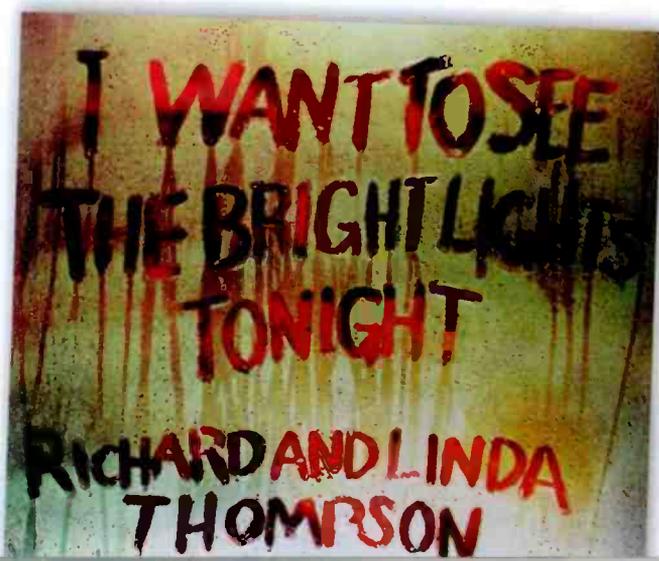
APRIL - JUNE



Linda and Richard Thompson pose for a portrait in London, January 1974

# “We’re not a doomy band”

And yet RICHARD and LINDA THOMPSON have called it *Sour Grapes*. Are they as melancholic as their *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* suggests? “I believe in contentment,” says Richard. “I want to be peaceful. That’s my great ambition.”



— NME JUNE 15 —

**R**ICHARD THOMPSON WROTE “Meet On The Ledge”, in case you’d forgotten. On that basis alone the man would be due a certain portion of immortality. But this is 1974, and Thompson, with his new group *Sour Grapes*, seemed only too willing to accept his role as support band on the recent *Traffic* tour—indeed, highly gratified to be given such an opportunity.

Past achievements apparently count for nought, and he’s once again back at the point of any new band, desperately hoping for that initial breakthrough. As founder members of *Fairport Convention*, Thompson and Simon Nicol are theoretically eminences grises of the British folk-rock scene. Thompson remained with *Fairport* through five albums; Nicol went two better, and was the last original member to leave.

Their reputations were unsullied; there’s generally an unmistakable quality about their work, and yet the achievement levels of both during life without *Fairport* have seemingly been low.

Despite the consistent and notorious ill luck that convinces Sandy Denny there’s a jinx on »

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

the house of Fairport, it nevertheless remains true that some indefinable quality of the group has always encouraged its members to excel themselves – while none of the various Fairport alumni have yet given convincing accounts of themselves outside the context of the group.

Thompson has finally come in from the wilderness, however. After a disappointing solo album a couple of years back, the new one with his wife Linda (née Peters) just issued by Island records, *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, is, I am now convinced, undeniably a masterpiece.

It triumphantly reaffirms all the high opinions we ever held about Thompson. The songs are beautiful, finely sung, with some inspired instrumentation, and each track is given a stamp of individuality.

The album was completed last July, and has been awaiting release since then, though now it is fortuitously timed in that it coincides with the formation of Sour Grapes and their debut tour.

The day I saw Sour Grapes they took a time to warm up, and strangely elected to play their trump card – the irresistible title track from the album – first of all.

But they were certainly good value as a support act – for God's sake (as though Traffic weren't value enough by themselves), and after a while Thompson and Nicol were trading licks with a confidence that recalled the finer days of Fairport. Linda Thompson sang well, though she doesn't yet have abundant confidence in her stage presence.

The rhythm section of two huddled together in self-effacing company, and generally seemed overawed and rather out of their depth. The drummer bashed away with a certain plodding competence, but the bass player was scarcely audible.

I interviewed Richard Thompson in the dressing room before the show at Oxford Poly. He said he was pleased the album had eventually come out to coincide with the tour, and added the scarcely credible explanation that, "It's given the record company a chance to get behind us, which they weren't very willing to do before."

That's right – this is the man who wrote "Meet On The Ledge".

OK, so what kind of act did Sour Grapes put on? Did they, for example, include any Fairport stuff?

"No. We wanted to do 'Now Be Thankful' – it's a good song, and we might get round to it some time – but we just thought we'd like to break into some new stuff before we went back to the old.

"Anyway, Fairport are doing a lot of Fairport stuff. There's a fair whack from the new album, and material we've raised from a year ago."

My main – indeed solitary – criticism of *I Want To See...* had been that it was too full of world-weariness and emotional deprivation, so that it was not only harrowing, but seemed contrived and designed to fit certain conceptions about the nature of English folksong. How did Thompson reply to such criticism?

"Well, I like the songs, I like the performance. It is a bit of a down record, but that was accidental. We tried to balance it, but something obviously went wrong somewhere... There are a lot of slow numbers. But I don't think that's bad – it's still enjoyable, there are some optimistic songs. We're not a doomy band – we try to cover aspects of our experience.

So they are all related to your own experience?

"Yes, they can't be anything else really."

Even, say, 'Down Where The Drunkards Roll'?

"Absolutely, yes. I'm only a potential alcoholic, but I'm working at it. 'Calvary Cross' is about a muse, or about anything. It's about a drive that you might not want, but it's there, and you're a slave to it."

Did he think that 'Little Beggar Girl' is too stylised, both lyrically and musically within the conventions of English folk music?

"No. If I thought the same as you, I wouldn't have recorded it, because I don't want to do traditional-esque songs. The song's about us. We put on this show, we squeeze money out of people for playing for just an hour."

But aren't there any class ideas in there as well?

"Well, yes, but only in so far as the musicians are the beggars, and the audience are the others – which is often true. To write about

## "If we wanted to earn money we'd have stayed in the folk clubs"

your own experiences you can use allegory, you know – it's in the rules."

At this point, Critic collapses in a heap of contumely, and wonders, for the tenth time, whether a job on *Nursing Times* might not be more suited to his limited abilities.

Thompson's cleared of all charges of wallowing in unhappiness. And yes, it is a great album.

But must carry on regardless. Surely, deflated Critic asks Thompson, you're not actually poor?

"We're not poor, but we're certainly not rich. While we worked acoustically we were earning a good living; but a band isn't the

place to earn money unless you're extremely successful."

So what's the objective in forming Sour Grapes?

"To play music and have a good time. It would be nice if money happens incidentally, and we can certainly use it, but if we wanted to earn money we'd have stayed in folk clubs – because if you're successful there you can do very well. And we did very well – both Linda and I together, and when we were playing with Simon as well.

"On the whole the club scene is still very healthy. I enjoy playing folk clubs, and I'd like to do it again sometime in the future. In clubs you have a better rapport with the audience; at a concert there's the big barrier of the stage and the lights, although I prefer playing electric guitar because it gives more scope.

"I like rock clubs, though – where you get 300 people, and it's really packed out and very hot, and the audience is on top of you. The early days of rock clubs were really the best, and provided very good circumstances for playing good music."



"You can use allegory, you know – it's in the rules": Richard Thompson on putting personal experience into songwriting

Since his departure from Fairport, then, Thompson has spent much of the time playing acoustically in folk clubs. I asked him to adumbrate the other events of the fallow years after his departure from the group. To start with, there was only one personal album — *Henry The Human Fly*.

"Yes, it embarrasses me a bit, that record. I'm surprised anyone put it out. It was done in a hurry. I'd like to do it again. The songs and the ideas were very good, but it wasn't very well executed. Nevertheless, it sold 10,000, which is very good for a record that isn't pushed and which you're not actively promoting.

"During the rest of the time — well, I played with Sandy for a while, and that was very enjoyable; then I was on lots of recording sessions."

I opined that the best album he had been involved with was Mike and Lal Waterson's *Bright Phoebus*; at which suggestion I'll swear his eyes sparkled and a look of profound happiness came over him.

"Ah, great record. For me, that's the best British record of all time. Great songs. Amazing. It was good to do as well — I had 'flu at the time, but I struggled through because it was so enjoyable.

"From a playing point of view, I think the best was on an obscure album with Gary Farr called *Strange Fruit* — with Ian Whiteman and Roger Powell and Ace from Mighty Baby in the rhythm section. It was really steaming stuff; I don't think the record got anywhere."

Are you pleased Sandy's rejoined Fairport?

"Yes — I think it will be good for Fairport. The combined force might finally do something in America. It's high time this British folk-rock sound earned the people in it a bit of money. None of us have ever earned anything. But it's not just a financial aspect; it's a recognition aspect for the whole style.

"It would be very nice if Fairport were finally successful in America. After all, we share a common musical root with America. If you think of James Taylor and The Band — their tunes are very Scottish.

"Fairport will just have to work extremely hard. They have worked hard already, but they'll have to make a concerted effort because they've had the handicap of having undergone many personnel changes.

"I think it would have been interesting had we taken the *Unhalfbricking* lineup to the States — because that wasn't too alien to American audiences.

"American people tend to be conservative and wary in their musical taste. In the beginning they used to say, 'Your music's really weird', and yet a lot of the dance tunes were not far removed from American square-dance or bluegrass music.

"There was only a slight difference, and yet Americans seem to find that slight difference very hard to take, which is a pity.

"When we first went over it was the blacks who came up to congratulate us — they'd been dancing around, and been a bit looser. But I think that Fairport Convention is something that American audiences would like.

"Of the highspots with Fairport, a personal one for me was just before *Unhalfbricking*, although even then we knew that stage wouldn't last. As far as audience reaction was concerned, the best stage was just after *Liege & Lief* came out.

"Another highspot for me was the Philadelphia Folk Festival. We were the first people ever to get an encore, which was very flattering for us; there were just 10,000 people, all dancing.

"At the time Sandy and Ashley [Huchings] left, I was very enthusiastic about carrying on. We were all backs-to-the-wall. I left as a reaction against being in the band too long. The music I was playing was stunted,

I wasn't thinking for myself. I was too aware of what the others were doing, and about that time I forgot how to write songs as well. I was only writing songs that other people could sing or like — there wasn't anything real there.

"After I left, it really helped me. I'd been in Fairport since I left school, and leaving was quite exhilarating, like leaving home. Having to think for oneself was a very novel and quite pleasant experience."

So that was the potted story. Fairport, then session work, one album, and lots of work in folk clubs.

"The three of us — myself plus Linda and Simon — were working acoustically. We'd been talking about augmenting, and then this tour came up. So we found

Willie to play drums — he's a friend of Dave Mattacks, and used to be with Kevin Ayers and Sandy — and the bassist Steve is a friend of his who actually turned up the afternoon of the first gig."

Thompson had toyed with the idea of calling his group Hokey Pokey. What happened to that name?

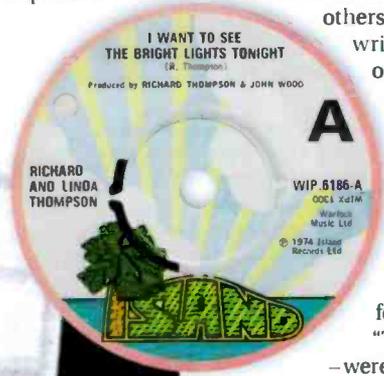
"I don't know. People in the industry thought we'd have problems with it in the States, where it's a 1930s dance. But hokey-pokey men were in fact Victorian ice-cream sellers and permutations of that are still used in various parts of the country — Scotland for example.

"Ice-cream cornets are pokey hats. On stage we do a song called 'Hokey Pokey' — which explores the possibilities of ice cream as a lewd symbol."

So Sour Grapes were formed, having the distinct advantage of the proven managerial talents of Jo Lustig, he of Steeleye Span renown. And here's to the future, and the consolidation of Thompson's fresh lease of artistic life as evidenced by *I Want To See...*

But finally, bearing in mind the admittedly doleful aspects of the album, what is Thompson's conception of happiness?

"I don't really believe in happiness — I believe in contentment. If you're happy, that presumes you're sometimes unhappy, and that means you're never peaceful. I want to be peaceful, that's my great ambition." *Bob Woffinden* •



# Life without Fairport

**IT'S SOUR GRAPES... but no, not in that sense. Sour Grapes is the new band featuring**

as the musicians are the beggars, and the audience are the others — which is often true.

"To write about your own experiences you can use allegory you know — it's in the rules."

At this point, Critic collapses in a heap of contumely, and wonders, for the tenth time, whether a job on *Nursing*



him. "Ah, great record. I think that's the best British record of all time. Great songs. Amazing. It was good to do as well — I had 'flu at the time, but I struggled through because it was so enjoyable." "From a playing point of view, I think the best was on an obscure album with Gary Farr called 'Strange Fruit' — with Ian Whiteman and Roger Powell and Ace from Mighty Baby in the rhythm section. It was really steaming stuff; I don't think the record got anywhere."

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

1974

APRIL - JUNE

"My set is amazing":  
Bowie's Diamond Dogs  
tour arrives at the  
Municipal Auditorium,  
Nashville, June 29, 1974

# Far-reaching imagination

**MM** JUNE 22 David Bowie debuts his remarkable new show, a theatrical representation of themes explored in his new album, *Diamond Dogs*. Bring on the ropes and the boxers!

MONTREAL FORUM  
MONTREAL

**LIVE!**

JUNE 14

**A FEW THOUSAND LUCKY** Canadians witnessed a completely new concept in rock theatre last weekend when David Bowie opened his North American tour in Montreal on Saturday (Toronto, Sunday). It now seems likely that Bowie was speaking the truth when he announced his retirement from the rock stage at the Hammersmith Odeon last year. For the act that David puts over on this tour has as much to do with rock'n'roll as Bob Dylan has with Las Vegas.

The one-and-a-half-hour, 20-song show is a completely rehearsed and choreographed routine where every step and nuance has been perfected down to the last detail. There isn't one iota of spontaneity about the whole show. It is straight off a musical stage - a piece of theatre complete with extravagant mechanical sets, dancers, and a band that stands reservedly to stage right and never even receives a cursory acknowledgement, like an orchestra in the theatre pit.

The show belongs on Broadway or Shaftesbury Avenue rather than on the road. The whole concept takes a complete turn around from what a rock audience anticipates, but at Toronto on Sunday it left them stunned. Perhaps the crowd at the O'Keefe Theatre literally couldn't believe their eyes. Fittingly, there was no encore and the applauding audience was greeted with the announcement 10 minutes after the show stopped that Bowie had already left the theatre. The Colonel Parker touch is forever there.

A Christmas pantomime would be an unfair parallel, but the ideas behind it were exactly the same. Bowie comes out of this show as some kind of magical being. A star above stars, as untouchable as the sky; not once does he address the audience, or even allude to their presence other than an odd grin. Each song is linked together so that no delays occur

during the show, and he doesn't even take a bow at the end. The material is a sensible mixture of songs from the *Diamond Dogs* album and assorted old favourites.

The backing band - Earl Slick, an American guitarist, Herbie Flowers on bass, Mike Garson from the old Spiders on keyboard and Tony Newman on drums, are first class, but note perfect to an almost mechanical degree. Their presence - as opposed to their music - is less important than the stage setting and the various effects that evolve from behind hidden doors. The dancers, Warren Peace and Gui Andrisano, sing backup vocals and shuffle props and mics around the stage with total precision.

The set is taken from the disintegrating metropolis, Hunger City, created from Bowie's imagination for the concept of his new album. The rear of the stage is a 20ft-high bridge constructed from span girders and forming a catwalk that rises and falls at Bowie's command. Three equally high lighting towers, cunningly disguised as toppling skyscrapers, beam down on the star of the show.

Illustrated at the left of the stage, against one of these pillars, is some kind of phallic symbol spurting blood towards the sky. The band are off to the right. Throughout the entire show, Bowie goes through a series of well-rehearsed dance steps and mimes to act out each song in the persona of the character involved. The expanse of unoccupied stage in the centre is ample for all manner of complex choreography involving chairs, ropes and sundry other props.

The Toronto concert began over half an hour late and, of course, there was no supporting act. For 45 minutes prior to

Bowie's arrival on stage a tape of odd sounds and peculiar jungle noises was heard through the PA system, placed halfway up the hall instead of actually on the stage.

Eventually, after some slow handclapping, the lights were dimmed for a roadie in blue dungarees (regulation uniform for the whole road crew) to announce that Bowie was suffering from laryngitis but would appear regardless. The opening song was "1984". Bowie was dressed in a light grey suit with blue-and-white polka dot, collarless shirt and red braces. He retained the same outfit for the entire performance, apart from occasionally removing his jacket.

He appeared without any noticeable makeup and gone was the spiky hairstyle of last year and the year before. In its place was a neat parting; it left little doubt about the masculinity of the performer. It took a couple more numbers, "Rebel Rebel" and "Moonage Daydream", before the significance of the show began to sink in. Around this time the audience realised they were witnessing something totally different from a normal

rock concert. The cheers grew louder, but few could imagine the surprises in store. For "Sweet Thing" Bowie appeared on the catwalk for the first time, dressed in a long trench coat and gazing down on the dancers below while singing and pouting.

Yellowing lamp standards up on the wall gave it an eerie but sad atmosphere. Eventually the whole huge bridge machinery swung into operation rather like Tower Bridge allowing a steamer to pass through. Bowie was lowered between the two pillars to land safely back on the ground. Next song was "Changes", with more dance routines, then

**"No David - just a gigantic, sparkling black hand against ultraviolet lights"**

"Suffragette City", "All The Young Dudes" and "When You Rock And Roll With Me", which seemed to close the first sequence of the performance. Houselights went up and for the first time Bowie bent to receive his applause. His set facial expression seemed to reflect incredible security. He knew it was good, so there was little point in pushing the inference. It was almost total arrogance - a MainMan star, indeed.

"Watch That Man" began phase two of the show, though the delay was actually less than most bands take between every number. Next David played acoustic guitar for the first and only time in the show for "Drive-In Saturday" before the second major climax. As the opening chord of "Space Oddity" thundered from Slick's guitar, Bowie appeared to have left the arena, then a door atop one of the skyscrapers swung open to reveal him in a seat on a pole - actually a hydraulic boom extending from the base of the phallic symbol.

David began the song perched up there, but as the verses

progressed and David took on the identity of Major Tom, the boom moved forward and extended diagonally outwards so that he was projected somewhat precariously out above the front rows of the audience. Complete with flashing lights everywhere, the effect was nothing short of sensational. From then on the various effects were difficult to comprehend in one short viewing. To grasp every detail one would have to watch at least three shows. At one stage (during "Diamond Dogs") David was tied up in ropes by the dancers and at another he was in the centre of a boxing ring, wearing boxing gloves to sing "Panic In Detroit".

He even had a big black dude walk on in a track suit to act as a second, towelling him down and fitting a fresh gum shield between verses. But even these effects paled compared to the Houdini-like routine during the last half hour. For this David appeared perched above a platform of mirrors, wheeled on from the rear. The platform turned out to be a gigantic square box rather like some conjurer's lavish prop, into which Bowie descended and disappeared from view.

The front doors of the box were then opened by his dancers but... no David. Just a gigantic, sparkling black hand against ultraviolet strip lights. Eventually the hand lowered to reveal a glittering staircase for

Bowie to take the stage once more. For the final medley of "Jean Genie" and "Rock And Roll Suicide", a tiny but powerful spot at the base of the stage was switched on to create giant shadows of David and his dancers looming over the painted metropolis on the back drop - another eerie but brilliantly choreographed idea.

The show was over before you knew it. Suddenly the audience were yelling for more at a stage that had emptied in seconds. The burst of applause lasted some 10 minutes before the announcement that David had left the theatre. It was the most original spectacle in "rock" I've ever seen, a complete move forward in direction for both Bowie and pop in general.

The star comes out of it as an all-round actor/singer/dancer/entertainer, leaving behind his status as a simple singer-songwriter. Equally worthy of praise are set designer Jules Fisher and choreographer Toni Basil.

### David Bowie *Diamond Dogs* RCA/VICTOR

A new album release by David Bowie is today looked on with as much awe as a release by The Beatles in the '60s. Later this month it will be with us, and by June it's guaranteed the album will have sold by the thousand regardless of musical merit.

Bowie's new album really is excellent. It's a departure in that the Spiders are no longer with him, and it's also a departure in that the whole production of the songs is far more lavish than anything he's previously attempted. For most of the tracks he's adopted a "wall of sound" technique, borrowed not a little from Phil Spector, but the richness of it all enhances his voice no end. He is accompanied by one old Spider, Mike Garson, on keyboards, and has also recruited Herbie Flowers, of Blue Mink and session fame, to play bass, and a couple of drummers in Tony Newman and Aynsley Dunbar. Alan Parker plays guitar on one track only, while David is credited with acoustic and electric guitar throughout as well as various reed instruments, Moog and Mellotron.

The theme of the album is the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, and the scene is set in the opening track, which is a recitation by Bowie over some eerie horror-movie soundtrack. The track's called "Future Legend", but any thoughts that the entire album is one of the recitations on doom through science fiction are quickly dispelled as the piece blends into the title track, a chunky rocker in the Stones tradition.

"Diamond Dogs" reflects the tone of the record, in fact. Many of the following numbers are heavy, bouncy pieces. They're commercially orientated and reminded me of the Stones' work on *Exile On Main St.* The "hot tramp" of "Rebel Rebel", for example, seems synonymous with Mick Jagger's "Bitch" and "Brown Sugar". They bite hard and have a ring of decadence that's never out of place in a good rock song.

On the "Dogs" track, David plays reeds, pushing out the riff in King Curtis style, rasping over the guitar lines. It's a long song - almost six minutes - that's left deliberately unfinished. The first side contains another two rockers in similar vein, "Candidate" and "Rebel Rebel". The latter has been taken off the album as a single and needs little explanation. "Candidate" is slotted in-between two cuts of the same song, a slower number called "Sweet Thing" which opens with Bowie singing in a deep bass voice over another space-fiction type

Their attention to detail was almost frightening. During "Space Oddity", for example, David sang into a telephone receiver rather than a regular microphone, and in "Cracked Actor" Hollywood-type movie cameras and spots were hastily set up around the singer while a makeup man arrived to splash on face powder.

Quite how much the setting, machinery and rehearsals must have cost in man hours and money is anyone's guess but it seemed doubtful that Bowie will be signing a bill much less than £50,000 for the project and this may go some way towards explaining the unusually high ticket price.

But David Bowie 1974 is not rock any more. He can only be described as an entertainer who looks further ahead than any other in rock, and whose far-reaching imagination has created a combination of contemporary music and theatre that is several years ahead of its time.

Chris Charlesworth



introduction. The bass voice gives way to a more recognisable Bowie vocal sound that's eventually caught up in a sea of voices. A soprano sax solo leads into "Candidate" and back into a reprise of the first song. "Rebel"

closes the first side - an ever-so-slightly different version from the original.

In general the second side is mellower than the first. The opener, "Rock And Roll With Me", is the best track of the lot. Despite its title, it's not an out-and-out rocker, more of a song in "Changes" vein, in a heavy, slow time signature that invites an audience to sing along. "We Are The Dead" was a disappointment, perhaps because it is over-long and didn't seem to say a great deal. Opening with a jerky rhythm backing, it's almost exclusively David singing over a Clavinet or electric piano. Somewhat anonymous.

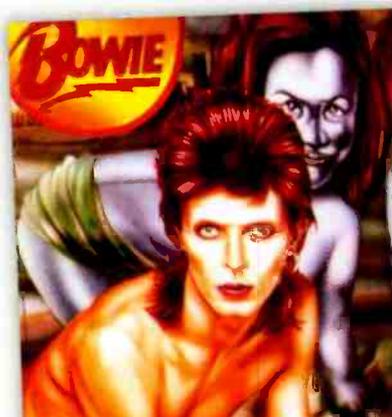
Bowie has been playing "1984" live for over a year now. Opening with some Ringo Starr packing-case drum work, it's another that builds into a wall of sound that captures the drama of the hooklines at the end of each chorus. "Big Brother" is another huge production number with a trumpet fanfare and a large choir backing up Bowie's deep vocals.

It's almost an operatic piece, and at times Bowie's voice seems to be joined in the mix with various girls' voices. The trumpet plays a marching time signature that leads into the closing music, a chant that's deliberately repetitive. Title is the "Chant Of The Ever Circling Skeletal Family", and it's really a tape loop going round and round again and again. The backing gradually disappears until the fade-out.

The overall effect from the album is that Bowie is more concerned with good production than ever before - and that he's consciously writing songs suitable for his upcoming stage show.

At least half the tracks on this set are bound to be firm stage favourites, especially if he can recreate the recorded sound. David has produced another really good record. Chris

Charlesworth, MMMay 11



1974

APRIL - JUNE



June 20, 1974: Eric Clapton on stage with ex-Bonzo Dog Band drummer "Legs" Larry Smith at the KB Hallen in Copenhagen, Denmark

# “He’s so full of energy”

Drug-free after an acupuncture cure, ERIC CLAPTON is now full of beans and full of alcohol. Live in Copenhagen, the guitarist lays waste to posh hotels, Persian rugs and some of his back catalogue. “He gets drunk with the tension,” explains manager Robert Stigwood.

— NME JUNE 29 —

“**W**HERE’S THE SLASH-‘OUSE around ‘ere?” asks Eric Clapton, sitting beside a champagne bucket into which he’s recently salivated. We’re at the Plaza Hotel, Copenhagen, a plush little number compete with first editions of Dickens in the library and antiques in the loo.

Clapton looks a little jaded. His velvet jacket, green with red trim, is split at the shoulder; a scarf hangs down from his neck, and instead of a carnation peering elegantly from his button-hole, Clapton has a cluster of plastic tulips trailing from it. The face is clean-shaven and the figure is slimmer than of late. He wouldn’t win any Best Dressed Man Of The Year awards right now, but only a rock star on the road would be sitting decked out the way he is.

Clapton doesn’t talk much – he leaves that to David English, a director of RSO Records, who entertains Clapton by telling him jokes or by making references to the antics Clapton got up to “last night”, the opening night of Clapton’s first tour in three years.

There’s talk of throwing banana skins out of car windows and of chucking glasses out of hotel windows. Tut, tut, these Englishers! But it’s all rock’n’roll – and thank the Lord, Eric Clapton’s back at it. He just laughs a dirty laugh as he chain-smokes cigarettes or knocks back the champers.

Pretty Hawaiian Yvonne Elliman – who played the part of Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar* – is now seated at the same table with another superstar. She’s a little out of it too and isn’t quite sure exactly where she is.

After a time Clapton gets up to go to the Plaza’s restaurant just around the corner – but doesn’t succeed in scoring any food. “You’d better rescue Eric,” one of Clapton’s entourage informs English. “He’s liable to get thrown out of there.”

Someone else appears and says that Eric’s under one of the dining tables singing “Band On The Run”.

At least he’s got good taste.

Eric Clapton’s mellowness – if you think he’s drunk now, wait till later on – isn’t either pathetic or sad. It’s just good, clean fun and it’s a great relief to everybody to see him back on the road after so long. As with most rock musicians who disappear for a time, Clapton’s been subjected to the usual stories, often sordid, usually fabricated, of drug problems. But in his case it’s true. Robert Stigwood, the Australian who’s had Clapton under contract since the early days of his career, isn’t afraid to admit it – and the services of a Lady Fellow Of The Royal College Of Surgeons were employed to get Clapton straight again.

“There were no withdrawal symptoms. It was all done with acupuncture,” says Stigwood, who was so impressed with the doc’s treatment that he gave her a two-year grant to continue her research.

“Eric’s just like he was four years ago. He’s so full of energy,” enthuses Stigwood. “I’d better be quiet. I’m talking just like a manager,” he adds. »

GETTY

**CLAPTON'S COMEBACK HAS** been the most long-awaited affair in British rock outside of a Beatle reformation. But, unlike Clapton, the Fabs never completely disappeared. If they weren't releasing records as a group then they were putting out material as solo artists. Clapton hadn't put out a new studio record since "Layla" – and that was at the beginning of 1971. Subsequent albums have either been compilations or live recordings.

Since the Derek & The Dominos tour and Clapton's attempt at some kind of anonymity to cope with the superstardom that was flung at him, he's only been seen on a public stage twice: once with Hari Georgeson and buddies at the Madison Square Garden concert, for Bangla Desh, and at the Rainbow last January – where most of the British rock aristocracy showed, either on stage or off, to support Clapton just in case he needed propping up. That gig was one of the rock events of 1973 and proved just how much the public wanted to see Clapton back at it.

Listening to the subsequent and inevitable live album of the Rainbow gig, it's obvious how unsure Clapton was of his playing ability, and of his role as bandleader. His friendship with Guardian Angel Pete Townshend was crucial to that gig and to Clapton's return to the recording studio and to the concert stage.

The announcement that Clapton would record a new album came at Easter after speculation regarding his return to a working band had persisted since the previous year's Reading Festival (where Clapton made an unusual public appearance – naturally with Townshend at his side).

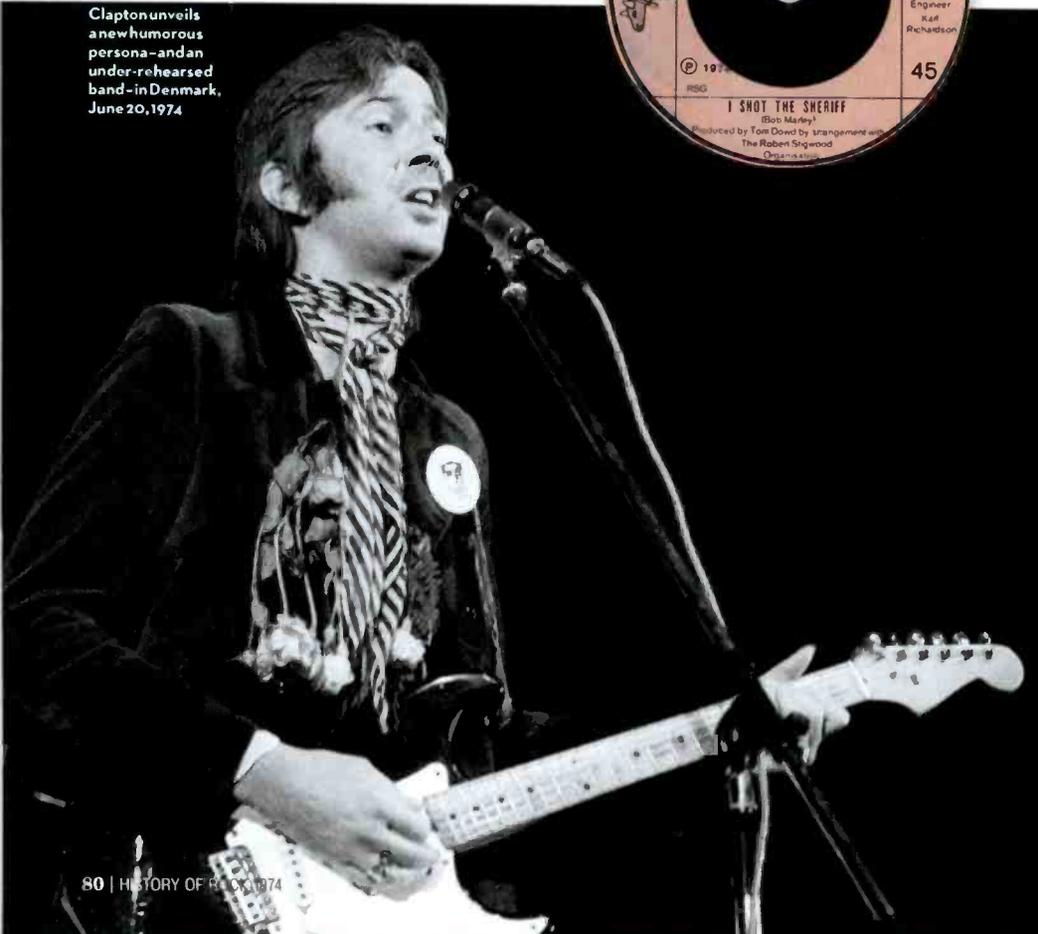
After various lineups were suggested by the imagination of the music business and rock press – Bruce, Keltner and Clapton... or a reformed Cream... or perhaps a band with George Harrison – it was announced that Eric would again be playing with former Leon Russell bassist Carl Radle. The names of the other musicians remained a mystery until after the album, titled *461 Ocean Boulevard*, was recorded.

Yvonne Elliman, incidentally married to a director of Stigwood's record company, was one moniker, but the names of the other three musicians – guitarist George Terry, keyboard player Dick Sims and drummer Jamie Oldaker – meant nothing to most people. And when those few who had actually heard tapes of *Ocean Boulevard* reported that Clapton was playing country music, the mystery of where his head was now at deepened.

A tour was announced – a full-scale trek of America with a couple of gigs in Scandinavia to kick things off. This tour totally ignored the UK. Which more or less explains what we're doing in Copenhagen.



Clapton unveils a new humorous persona – and an under-rehearsed band – in Denmark, June 20, 1974



The Copenhagen gig is the tour's second night. RSO's press lady, Helen Walters, describes the opening night (in Stockholm) as "interesting". The gig had turned out, to everybody's surprise, to be open-air – and, what's more, in a funfair complex. As the band went over the two-hour mark the funfair's owner got a little anxious: the longer the band played, the more money he lost from the big-dipper trade. And members of the Clapton entourage had to keep the guy talking in his office so he wouldn't turn off the power.

Naturally, tonight's gig is a sell-out. The Copenhagen press has been full of reports as to how George Harrison, Ringo and Townshend are going to show their faces. They didn't, of course, and as the time draws near the only celebrity in any danger of turning up is Ringo's wife, Maureen. Townshend would have been here but he's a bit knocked up after The Who's recent American dates.

**CLAPTON ARRIVES AT** the gig, the KB Hallen, a 4,500-seater sports auditorium, totally unrecognised behind a ludicrous pair of heavy-rimmed lens-less glasses, his short barnet underneath a trilby. Yes, Eric's a bit of a comic these days.

And while we're on about comics, "Legs" Larry Smith, the old Bonzo, is there to keep everybody laughing. A Danish band (who have a name something like a Buddhist chant) open the show. Perhaps it's just the heat in this large aircraft hangar of a hall, but after four numbers, they're a bit too much to take.

Large blasts of orchestral music, the kind that's played at the climax of a circus act, herald what you think is Clapton's entrance. But it's not. Instead, "Legs" appears in an outrageous polka-dot suit complete with much hand-kissing of the audience and a toy guitar hanging around his middle. The accent's on fun. This is all a bit strange. Isn't Clapton a pretty moody guy on stage? Isn't he now famous for rarely batting an eyelid, once settled with his guitar beneath his fingertips?

And here's "Legs" Larry Smith, kind of knocking the stuffing out of Clapton's guitar-hero status. The sounds of The Who's "Pinball Wizard" are played through the PA and "Legs" mimes. Very strange. And then on comes Clapton, who, dressed in a bona fide boiler suit (none of your tailored Townshend models for Eric) and the loathsome trilby hat, looks like he wandered on stage by mistake. He's clutching a black-and-white Strat. He plays the opening phase of "Tell The Truth" and the band come in behind him.

Yvonne Elliman, acoustic guitar at the hip, is the only other person upfront. The rest of the band hide in the shadows. The music is loose, free and easy, with George Terry playing the high lead breaks (Duane Allman's part in the originals); Clapton just sings in a very croaky voice and plays rhythm. But his vocals suit the overall looseness of the music. He looks happy, grinning a lot – a lot more than usual.

And he looks old.

But what about a solo, Eric? Just before the band take the volume down, he obliges. It's brief, fast and very fluid – and allowing Clapton to take all the stage, it sends shivers down the spine. Then quickly he returns to rhythm guitar and Terry plays some more on slide.

No words and straight into the blues. Clapton puts both of his hands on the mic and the vocals to "Key To The Highway" sound really frayed. Dick Sims switches from organ to electric piano and the band get looser – a little too loose. Another fine solo from Clapton.

"Layla" is the third number, and Sims' organ steams in behind Clapton's riff. Ms Elliman, who'd disappeared for the last number, reappears in floppy hat, bangs a tambourine and sings not particularly effective harmony lines. I'm afraid the band just about fall apart on this complex number. And they're obviously under-

rehearsed. Again, Terry plays Allman's part and he plays extremely well, Clapton following him with that beautiful tone that's his and his alone. But this doesn't compensate for the band's ineptitude.

"Thank you," Eric shouts cheerily. It's not the usual humble voice of appreciation but more like Pete Townshend's style of rap. Folks, Eric Clapton has become one of the lads.

Then he flings off his jacket and scarf, grabs a bottle of beer, swigs it back, mutters something about "this is what we call a pause"—and goes into the very fine "Easy Now" from his solo album. His vocals aren't too fine and he seems to have difficulty in aiming his voice at the mike. The band come in halfway through. And they're still only lukewarm.

From the way he begins all the songs himself—and from the way he conducts the band at the end of each number—it's only too clear more rehearsals are needed. There isn't one number where the band come in as a band. Bad.

The first (and what turns out to be the only) new song of the evening is revealed. It's called "Let It Grow", and although it's badly played, it sounds like a good song with a building, hymn-like quality. Terry takes another totally Claptonesque solo. It's not until two numbers later that Clapton and the band really deliver the goods: the slow blues "Have You Ever Loved A Woman?" Clapton plays the best guitar of the night—a completely furious flurry of notes is followed by a warmer phrase and the audience, as old, applaud each line.

Relief. So Eric can still play, dare I say, the best blues/rock guitar in the world. So maybe he lacks the technical prowess of a Steve Howe or John McLaughlin, but his playing in "Have You Ever Loved A Woman?" is the kind of electric guitar playing I like to hear. End of drool.

"Badge" follows. Although the arrangement is different to the original, with Clapton's introduction playing the full phrase complete with bassline, it's a good number and the band do seem to have tightened up. Clapton and Terry both solo, each taking the chorus riff at various times while the other plays opposing lead.

Then "Legs" reappears on stage in another ludicrous outfit. "A big hand for 'Legs Christian Anderson' on leader guitar," bawls Clapton, who now seems much more comfortable in his band leader role. And although his playing isn't as fine as it can be—the tone isn't quite as hard and clear—he plays with more confidence than at the Rainbow last January.

But just when the band seemed to get a little tighter, they now loosen up again for "Willie And The Hand-Jive", which starts off kind of funky with clarinet from Sims—and then gets unbearably loose. And Clapton's obviously enjoying himself: messing about, poking his Strat in-between Ms Elliman's legs (who, apart from looking pretty, doesn't really contribute to the music at all).

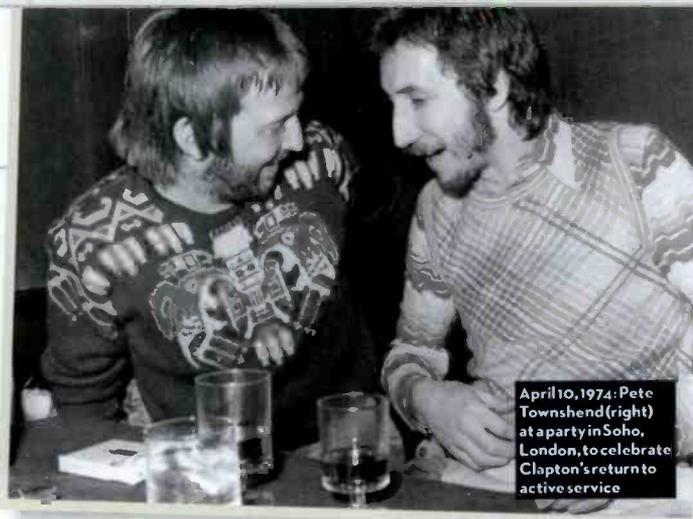
Clapton grin even more and introduces the band: "George Harrison on guitar. Mary Magdelene on vocals," he shouts. Terry introduces Clapton: "Derek Domino on guitar."

"This is one from one of my famous albums which have sold a hundred-thousand million-trillions," Clapton announces.

"Let It Rain" follows and the band really muffin it, although Clapton plays well. That beautifully sad Blind Faith song "Can't Find My Way Home" follows, and then Clapton breaks into a Chuck Berry riff for "Little Queenie" which is ridiculously loose again.

But you're past caring as Clapton starts to move around the stage. He windmills his arms and laughs. He gets down on his haunches. He points his guitar upward. Oh yeah, Eric's changed alright. A long, slow version of "Crossroads" is the encore.

And that's it.



April 10, 1974: Pete Townshend (right) at a party in Soho, London, to celebrate Clapton's return to active service

## Eric is not taken with the porn show: "B-O-R-I-N-G!"

**E**RIC CLAPTON'S RETURN wasn't triumphant. It wasn't intended to be. But he's on stage, enjoying himself and getting back into it. The band really didn't show too much potential (apart from guitarist George Terry) but obviously they'll tighten up for the USA.

It's difficult to see how Clapton will react to an American tour. Will his stage manner revert to the old style (stoned seriousness) or will he continue to adopt his light-hearted approach?

The backstage area is a series of anterooms—and Stigwood isn't allowing any journalists or photographers to get near Clapton. Carl Radle wanders through the dressing room reserved for us and, despite Ms Walters' intro, is not exactly going out of his way to talk.

But the other musicians in the band are prepared to say a little. Sims, Oldaker and Radle all come from Tulsa and have known each other for years. Oldaker had, in his time, drummed with Leon Russell, and he and Sims have

worked together on and off for the last six or seven years. It was Radle who introduced Clapton to the two musicians, and although (according to Stigwood) Clapton could have had either Keltner or Gordon in the band, he chose Oldaker for a drummer.

The brilliant George Terry got involved down at Miami's Criteria Studios, where he's a staff sessioner most of the time. He played on Bill Wyman's *Monkey Grip* album, and while working with Clapton also did some sessions down at Criteria for Stephen Stills' new LP. One of Terry's compositions, "Mainline Florida", is included on *Ocean Boulevard*, but he says the real one to listen out for is a Clapton song called "Motherless Children". There is also an old Duane Allman song included. The album took ten-and-a-half weeks to record, according to Terry. Clapton didn't have any material when he arrived at Criteria, everything being more or less worked out on the spot.

As to the permanence of the band, Terry is thinking of going on the road with Stills—but Stigwood is optimistic and sees the band lasting a long time. And about those (non-existent) British dates? Well, Terry doesn't think there's too many places to play in Britain but there are possibilities of a couple of gigs later in the year.

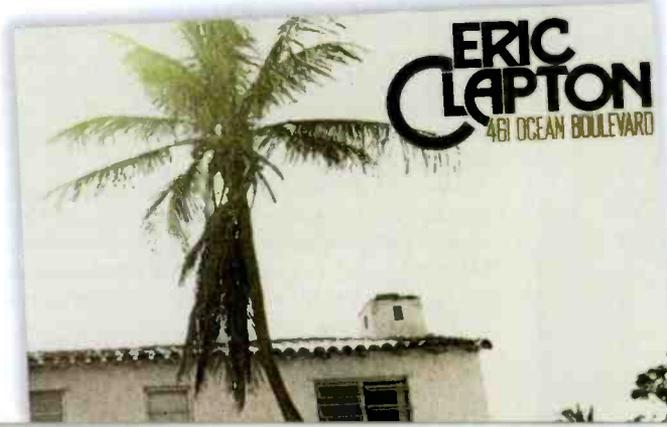
**M**EANTIME, CLAPTON'S CAUSING a bit of a scene back at the Plaza as he enters again wearing the trilby and glasses and... a duck-whistle which hangs from his neck. Now Eric has seemingly formed quite an attachment for this whistle and demonstrates his prowess on the instrument every few minutes or so between flirting with Yvonne Elliman and downing rum and orange juice. "We're all under arrest," he shouts, now sitting at a table in this rather sedate room. And he follows his statement with a shrill blast of the whistle. "Eric gets a bit drunk with the tension," comments Stigwood. To entertain the assembled throng, Stigwood has laid on a special showing at a Danish porn club some half-an-hour's drive away. But as the ladies get into their number, Clapton insists on joining in on the act by dropping his boiler-suit to waist-level.

But he's not too taken with the show: "One, Two, Three, B-O-R-I-N-G," he hollers every few minutes, his whistle accompanying the catcalls.

Stigwood has by now given up trying to keep control over his star, who had earlier nearly got the whole party thrown out when he staggered up to the stage and peed on one of the club's Persian rugs.

The rug was replaced. Other than that, Clapton spent his time either flat out on the floor or stretched out on a chair next to Yvonne Elliman.

Yep, Old Slowhand is back and it's all good drunken fun. *Steve Clarke* •





# 1974

JULY – SEPTEMBER

CSNY, LED ZEPPELIN,  
JOHN LENNON, KEITH  
RICHARDS & MORE

## “The age of cynicism has passed”

**MM JUL 6** Free music returns to a new site in Hyde Park, with Kevin Ayers and Nico providing the entertainment.

**N**ICO, REDDISH-BROWN HAIR flowing over her shoulders, gazed white-faced and impassive out at the summer thousand, as her suede boots pumped energetically at an elderly harmonium.

“Janitor Of Lunacy”, she sung, and it was as if a star of 1920s German films had been projected forward in time, to the otherwise merry proceedings at the free concert in Hyde Park on Saturday afternoon.

Nico – making a surprise appearance – contributed one of the more memorable, if slightly sinister, moments to a leisurely event. “The age of cynicism has passed,” one participant proclaimed, as the ramifications of the day sunk in. For here were no high hopes built up by massive promotion, no feelings of pressure or suspicion. This was a reality behind the endless discussion about rock – its meaning, purpose and responsibilities. The reality was not in sales talk, units sold or deals struck, but in artists making music free, the staff of Blackhill Enterprises taking a week to set up a stage and facilities, and the sun shining on a peaceful gathering that even picked up its own litter – albeit with a few inducements.

As Edgar Broughton said: “This just cuts across everybody’s ideas about the rock business. It’s hard to take it in at first.”

The stage, focal point for some 8,000 fans, whose non-disruptive presence was barely recorded by the media, was much more sophisticated than those primitive affairs of some six years ago, when the Nice, Traffic, Pink Floyd and later Blind Faith jammed on a roofless rostrum in the lake-side, natural amphitheatre. Now the site has been moved, since the historic Rolling Stones concert, to a wider, flatter plain. Harder for those at the back to see or hear, but away from other park users.

On Saturday the bill was designed to attract fans of the best in underground music. No teen idols, supergroups or pay-festival attractions, with the possible exception of Roger Chapman, who could fall into all categories at once. Instead there was Gong, Kevin Coyne, GT Moore and the Reggae Guitars, Kevin Ayers, Chapman & Whitney and Nico. And Jeff Dexter, without whom no open-air festival would be authentic. He sounds firmer these days, less amazed by events.

Gong performed an interesting and successful selection, somewhat curtailed by pressure of time. There was confusion at the end, too, when the PA momentarily cut out and Jeff could not explain why there was no time for an encore. Daevid Allen’s somewhat agonised and occasionally amusing vocals reminded us that the age of the far-out chanteur is not over, but I preferred the band’s instrumental prowess and ability at building atmosphere and excitement. In this they were aided considerably by the inventive and explosive drumming of Pierre Moerlen and the excellent guitar of Steve Hillage. Gong earned a multi-throated roar.

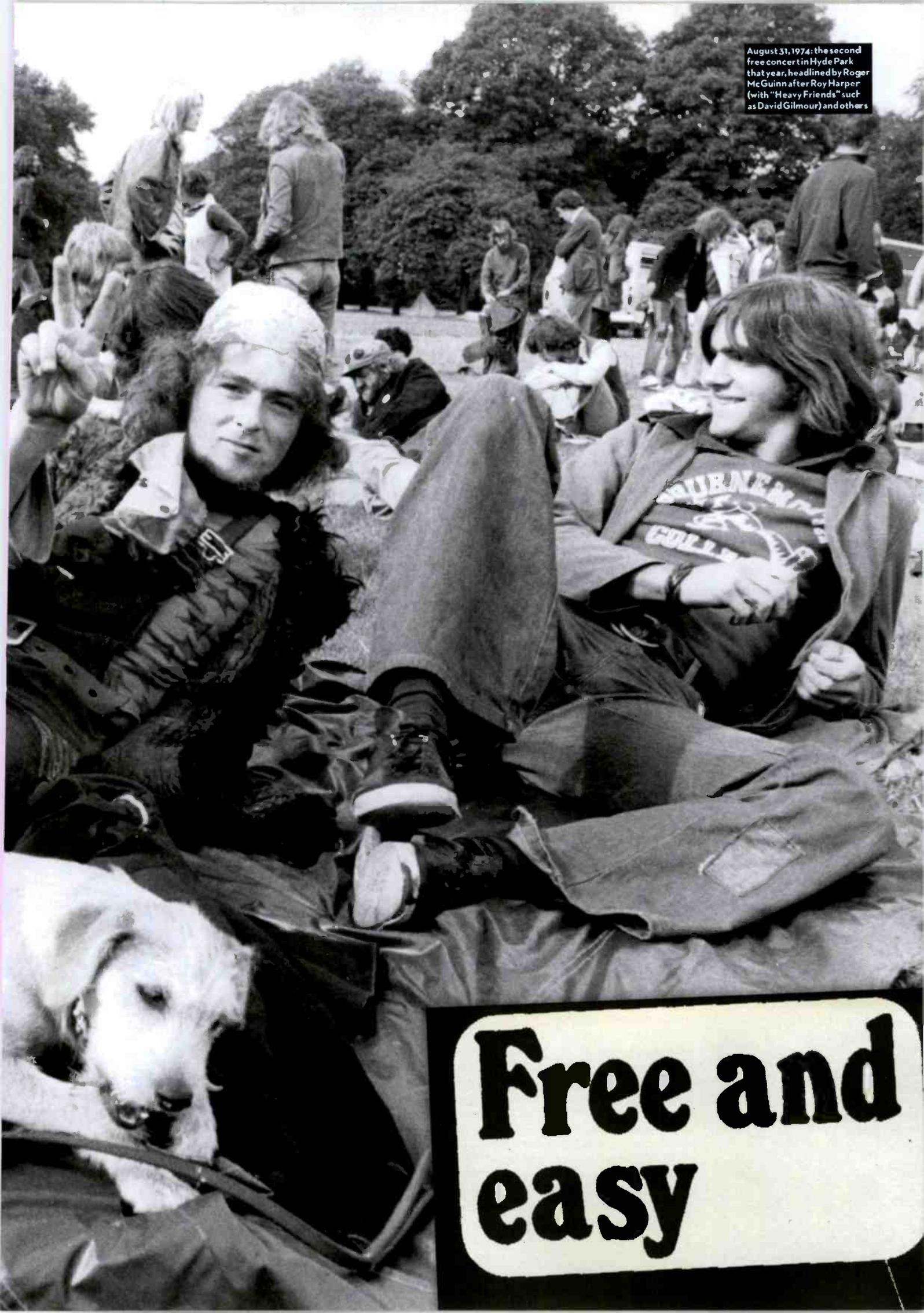
Around the back, Eno was observed and Alvin Lee, on hand to watch one of his favourite guitar players, Ollie Halsall, now with Kevin Ayers after a stint with Jon Hiseman.

In fact there seemed as many milling around backstage as there was out front, but the organisation was able to cope, and the schedule pressed ahead with Chapman & Whitney, the band born from the ashes of Family. Roger, in “Liverpool Lou” T-shirt, seemed happier and more into the music than he was in the last days of the old group. With baritone sax and double-necked »



GETTY

August 31, 1974: the second free concert in Hyde Park that year, headlined by Roger McGuinn after Roy Harper (with "Heavy Friends" such as David Gilmour) and others



**Free and  
easy**

guitar cooking behind him, he proved that he really is one of the finest and probably most underrated of the old firm of true-grit rock singers. He was at his best on "I Just Wanna Make Love To You", the rocking blues given fresh life, while new songs "Tokyo Rose" and "Street Walker Song" had a socking but tasteful backbeat that typifies the band's work.

On came Nico to sing two songs, but they had a strangely hypnotic quality that sent a chill shiver, despite the sun. Half imagined bats were wheeling overhead, and expected an owl or two to hoot. As it was, we listened in silence to her low, musical incantations. "This song does not have a title," she told us, then pumped even more furiously at the harmonium.

An organiser's bluff tones broke the spell. "John, what's the time - five to five? Then we've got an hour. We're laughing." In that hour young Kevin Ayers, he of the silver suit and boots and blond hair, entertained with a much more organised and pulsating rhythm than might have been expected.

Ollie Halsall's fleetfoot guitar (actually he plays with his hands) was a joy, while the rhythm section probed and pushed with considerable energy. Kevin's great, deep resonant voice

seemed to be intent on boring a way into the underground railway beneath our feet, as he sang of small cafes and the blues. But there was devilry afoot. Feedback could not be silenced even though a roadie dashed and scurried in search of faults. "Paul, the monitor's gone off on the other side!"

Meanwhile Kevin, slightly distraught, raised his voice a semitone. "I keep getting electric shocks from this microphone. The microphone is... alive!" Nobody took much notice of this detail, and although Ollie had played a mean solo, Kevin pronounced in an aside: "That was really horrible."

But methinks he was disturbed by the vibrations. "This one is called 'Stranger In Blue Suede Shoes,'" he mumbled, persevering. The band were at their best performing Kevin's songs properly, and loping along with an agile country feel. But they spent a lot of time jamming, not always successfully.

Two of the Chanter Sisters attempted to sing back-up vocals on The Kinks' "You Really Got Me", but retired with thunderous expressions when the tempo began to accelerate to a messy climax. Much better, though, was "I've Got A Hard-On For You, Baby", the unequivocally titled finale.

As the crowd disengaged, and filtered back into the anonymity of the streets, strange visions caught my gaze. A middle-aged Japanese man with a brown, weather-beaten skin, who had somehow forced his way to the front of 8,000 rock fans.

What strange tidings would he report back to Tokyo? And there - a man wearing a red beret, purple tights and clutching a small baby, striding purposefully in a westerly direction. "I wonder what they're all thinking," pondered Edgar Broughton, surveying the scene from a now empty stage. *Chris Welch*

## We listened in silence to Nico's low incantations

# "Nothing will happen unless you make it"

MM AUG 10 Dr Feelgood play at London's first pub-rock festival.

LONDON'S FIRST PUB-ROCK festival - at Islington's Hope & Anchor - starts later this month. The Festival Of Real Music will feature, according to promoter Dave Robinson, "all the original pub-rock bands". The first date, on August 20, will be headlined by either Brinsley Schwarz or Ducks Deluxe, depending on their respective studio commitments.

The festival will continue with Dr Feelgood (21), Bees Make Honey (22), Ace plus Gary Farr (23), Phoenix plus Jo Ann Kelly (24), Chilli Willi & The Red Hot Peppers (26), Clancy (29), Kilburn & The High Roads (30) and Kokomo (31). Other bands scheduled to appear, but not yet allotted a night, are Gonzales and Jonathan Kelly's Outside. All the gigs will be recorded for possible broadcasting on Capital Radio.

Robinson has organised the event because of "the apathy on the London scene". He told MM: "People were complaining that nothing was happening. But nothing will happen unless you make it. You've got to educate people, but first you must attract them to the venues. That's what the festival is aimed at doing."



# "I can handle all the angles"

MM AUG 10 A catch-up with Mick Jagger, soon to offer new LP *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*. "The title is self-explanatory," he says.

"SORRY I'M LATE." "It's all right Mick."

"No - it's not all right." Mr Jagger, much forehead exposed by a somewhat drastic haircut, paced into his suite at London's Ritz Hotel, looking just a shade tired. He'd been up all night at mixing sessions for his forthcoming long-player, but this wasn't going to stop him discharging his duties as our most esteemed and celebrated statesman of rock.

It's extraordinary to think how long Mick Jagger has been pitting his talent and wits against the demanding, all-devouring public. Eleven years have passed since Mick and the Rolling Stones first emerged with "Come On", the hit that launched an era, and set a lifestyle and pattern for all that was to follow.

And yet still Mick leads the good fight in the cause of outrage and rock'n'roll. But there are changes. The aggressive glint to his probing gaze, the insolent curve to his mouth and businesslike bustle involved in entering or leaving a room are still there. But occasionally the resolution slips, and you glimpse a softer, more vulnerable Jagger beneath the flippancy and cynicism.

He impressed with his desire to communicate and extend courtesy, when he of all rock stars has the most excuse for being impatient with the askers of questions. For Mick has not always been used fairly by the media, and "used" is the operative word when it comes to some of the books that have been written about him in recent times.

In recent weeks he has spent some time in the States, where he kept up his habit of attending the top concerts, and keeping well in touch with events. Eric Clapton and David Bowie's show were among his engagements, but somehow he managed to miss his brother Chris Jagger's American debut. "Chris did some shows at the Bottom Line in New York, and I heard that his band was really good. You know he did a few gigs in England to warm up, under another name. He's getting into it

now, and you've got to remember it's the first shows he's ever done. But somehow I missed him in the States. I can help him in some ways, and he's asked me for bits of advice, but he's got to do it on his own.

"I went to see Eric Clapton and David Bowie in New York, and they seem to attract the same

# Jagger: it's time for a change

but only in their stage

people to each show. They have very catholic tasted in America. Eric was playing very well - really nice. I was sitting on the edge of the stage. I saw the Bowie concert from the hall and he was very nervous, but everyone gets nervous in New York."

We hadn't seen Bowie in Britain with his new show and it didn't seem likely the Stones were going on tour for a while either. Was it now a case of bands gearing their acts for America first, while Britain came second?

"With a show like Bowie's you can mount it much more easily in America, and obviously it costs money to put on. What can you do in Britain, apart from the few big gigs and outside events which are at risk through the weather?"

There had been wild rumours of the Stones playing at Charlton. "Wild rumours! We won't be doing anything until Christmas, or failing that, early next year. And the reason is - we just didn't want to play gigs this year. I don't know why. I just felt it was worth waiting until we get a new show together. I don't know how the others felt but I wanted to wait until we had new material. We didn't play America last year and there are two LPs we've not played songs from.

"But if we'd gone out two months ago and played gigs in England, we wouldn't have new numbers, which I need to keep me at it. If we wait for the new LP then I'll feel happy. We weren't even offered Charlton. Maybe we were, and I didn't hear about it. I want to do a new show - change the whole look of it. I want to do something - I dunno - different!"

"Most bands want to just play - fine - but I want to put on a new show and of course we can't just do England. I'd rather wait until the show is together and play everywhere. It keeps me interested in being on the road and it takes a lot of energy, time and thought. So rather than just play England, I'd rather take it around, and then when we got to England it would be better anyway. It's economics, too. It costs a lot of bread, and we don't want to charge a fortune for tickets. £2.50 is enough."

What will the new show be like?

"Wait and see. Can't tell you!" Mick smiled like a mischievous boy, but doubtless there will be an extravaganza, perhaps like the foaming soapsuds that engulfed them on the Stones' recent videotape of "Only Rock 'n Roll (But I Like It)".

"Oh, that was detergent. Most unpleasant and it took such a long time to do. We couldn't have the lights and cameras inside the tent in case we all got

electrocuted and we had to be insured for quite a lot of money just to shoot the scene. We did the film for promotion. There are a lot of young people who might not have heard of us. They might never have heard the band."

Mick looked quite serious, and although incredible, it did seem possible there might be a budding pop fan, with satchel and lollipop, going about her business in Cheam, oblivious to the activities of Michael and his Stones, Rolling. And talking of activities, what did he think of Bill Wyman's sudden

"I want to do something - I dunno - different!": Mick Jagger in 1974, discussing the Stones' next stage show



lurch towards stardom? "Great - he's got it off his chest at last. No one was stopping him. Mick [Taylor] wants to do one and I'd like to do one. I've never actually started one, but we could all do bits of recording in-between working with the Stones. And not everything we record with the Stones comes out. Maybe now we'll have time to think and do what we want.

"Mick is producing somebody at the moment - a solo singer called Robin Miller - and Mick will be playing on his single, and maybe I'll do something when we've finished the Stones LP. It's finished really, and it'll be out the first week in September. We're choosing which songs to use. It'll be called *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*, and the title is self-explanatory.

"The album is a very mixed bag - there's even a bossa nova, a couple of slow ones, some ballads, a Caribbean tune... Well, you'll hear it. It's a lot different from the last one, anyway. We're aware of what's going on in the rest of rock, sure, but it's not a race."

How did Mick feel about artists who stage comebacks in rock? "It's great to see Eric back again, and the new Georgie Fame LP is good. It's hard, really. You should never get out of it. You should always stay in there. That's what I aim to do. There's never been a long period when we haven't made records. We've not missed a year since we started in 1963."

But hadn't Mick ever felt sickened by the whole rock business, and wanted to quit? "No, no. I can handle all the angles. Some people are pressurised, but I don't feel like that. If you get the feeling you can't take it any more, then you should get out. I don't feel any pressures and I'm going to stay."

But why keep at it, after all this time? "It's still exciting and there's a lot of energy in the music business. And there's a lot of music going on. That's why I want to stay in it. I'm not on the road all the time, and I just take life

as it comes. I never look at the future, because no one can see it - so it's pointless. I have to think for now, and I'm in control of that.

"If the Rolling Stones put out a single, it doesn't necessarily mean it will be a hit. We've got to be prepared for failures. We could be failures in some places and not in others. You can make movies that are not particularly successful, but they can be enjoyable, and it's all experience.

"It's funny with films. Even the biggest actor can die and the film can lose money, but he'll just go on to the next picture. No you can't talk about my film career - it was not a career, just an interlude. But they were great to do. *Performance* was not promoted, because the company didn't like the film. I've never talked to James Fox [Mick's co-star] about it, but he's never done a film since. I never saw the film myself."

If Mick was not willing to be drawn on movies, he spoke out vigorously about the books that have purported to tell his life story. He was cool, but not unemotional.

"They were mostly fictional, written by people that had never met me, and wrote them based on rumours or their imagination. J Marks' book you've got to read. It's pretty bad. I never met the guy and yet he's written some complete rubbish that's just a figment of his imagination. It's just people wanting to make a bit of bread and I don't want to see another book about me again. The less the better. But I can't do anything about them, because they are very careful not to libel you.

"I don't want to get involved in the legalities, because what do you get out of it? Just for an example, Anthony Scaduto wrote about me and Brian Jones having a sword fight which he's glamourised and just didn't happen. It sounds very romantic, me and Brian jumping about, fighting with swords, but it didn't occur. I've got no time for that kind of biography. It's not very nice - in fact it's quite vicious.

"It's all pretty sick, really, pretty bad. I expect he'll be writing a book on John Lennon next." *Chris Welch*

**"There's still a lot of energy in the music business"**

1974

JULY - SEPTEMBER

# “We’re doing it for the music, man”

After four years away, CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG return to play live - often to 60,000 people at a time. Is it just a money-making operation? Apparently not. “We missed each other,” says Graham Nash. “We missed that bounce-off.”

© JIM BRYAN



July 13, 1974: aftershows in Vancouver and Seattle, CSNY headline an all-day event—with The Band, Joe Walsh and others—at the Oakland Coliseum, California

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 10 —

**M**ILE HIGH STADIUM, as the name implies, is 1,760 yards high. That's a mile above sea level, but even so it sits at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, which are the backbone of the United States in much the same way as the Pennines are the backbone of England. The only difference is the size.

Colorado is one of America's most aesthetically pleasing states. Fresh water springs run down the mountains and fresh air is in abundance. In the summer the sun shines a lot and in the winter Denver, the state capital, becomes a ski resort.

It seemed appropriate that my trip to Denver was to watch the seventh stop-off by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young on their current tour of the USA. As Nik Cohn puts it in *Rock Dreams*, CSNY sing "highway songs, full of light and space", and that admirably sums up Colorado.

No matter what else occurs in 1974, the year will go down as the year when the giants returned to the stage. First it was Dylan, then Clapton and now CSNY, the superest of all American supergroups.

Quite why all these heavies have chosen the same year to make a comeback, no one is quite sure, but the result is a feast of music for the vast following all these artists command over here.

It has also resulted in some of the largest gross takings in the history of rock 'n' roll. Dollar figures from attendances have soared, records shattered all along the way. Many superstars will be much, much richer by the end of the summer. Stephen Stills has been quoted as saying that the first time CSN went out on the road was for art, the second time for the chicks and this, the third, for the dollars.

Quite how true that is I'm not sure, but either way the CSNY tour will become the largest-grossing tour in the history of rock 'n' roll.

Graham Nash insists otherwise. "We're doing it for the music, man, because all of us know that none of us can make as good music together as we can apart," he told me in his Denver hotel. Nash, thin and wiry, spoke so passionately that I couldn't help but believe him.

Either way, the CSNY tour, according to a press handout, will encompass 22 cities and 27 performances before an estimated audience of 1.1 million people. The average ticket price is \$7.25 (about £3), so it doesn't need a maths degree to work out that each member of the band will walk away with a fine sum of money at the end of it all. And while I'm writing this more concerts are being added, so the potential gross income is really quite staggering.

Four years have passed since CSNY performed together. In the meantime there have been solo tours by Stills and Young, and a duo tour by Nash and Crosby. All these attracted sizeable audiences, especially Young, so it comes as no surprise to learn that the CSNY concerts are all at baseball arenas holding up to 60,000 people. By English standards, that's a festival a night.

The four players on stage seem to joyously celebrate their reunion. At the first show in Seattle it was, by all

accounts, an emotional experience for all of them which resulted in their playing for four-and-a-half hours and running through almost their entire catalogue. They ended up doing 40 songs and Crosby's voice just about packed up.

Now it's been trimmed to three hours, which is still a lot of music, but there's still the feeling that they could go on all night. In Denver there was a 12 o'clock curfew, and but for this I'm sure we'd have had another hour.

The internal arguments in this group have become rock folklore over the past three years. Each one groused because they thought they were being upstaged by another, and the bickering between Stills and Young seemed to indicate that CSNY was no more.

It took Elliot Roberts (manager of Crosby, Nash and Young) to make the move, first ensuring that each artist had the summer free, then booking the stadiums with the assistance of Bill Graham and then packing the band off to Young's ranch near San Francisco for a month's rehearsal.

Of the four, Young still remains the loner figure, choosing to travel in his own caravan by road from show to show instead of in the plane with the rest of the band. Each night he packs up his guitar, wife, babyson and dog and hits the road.

After the Denver show I asked Crosby what had happened to the elusive Neil... "He's two miles out of town by now and so high on the show that nothing can touch him," he replied. "He's out there so happy. He came and did what he had to do for three hours and knows he did it well. Nothing can make a man happier than that."

Young remains quiet and somehow aloof, disappearing into the night and not reappearing until a few hours before the next stop. He's had his hair trimmed and most of the time he hides behind reflective sunglasses. Indeed the Loner.

For Stills, the Denver show held special significance. He lives about two hours' drive away from the town, up on a ranch in the mountain, and the crowd (there were 61,000 at Mile High Stadium) gave him a special welcome. His blond hair is cut short, and he's never seen without a football jersey with a large digit on the front. The Stills uniform.

Crosby and Nash remain chums. If Young is the composing talent and Stills the instrumentalist, then Crosby and Nash between them provide the vocal ability to put over the material as it was intended to be worked.

"I can't write songs like Neil, but I know his songs are so good that I just have to sing them," Crosby told me. "And I know that because they're so good I can sing them as good as I'll ever sing."

Stills seems to be the perfectionist of the group; he gets annoyed if

the sound isn't perfect, while the others seem happy if the audience are happy. "Hey, English," he shouted at me after the show. "What daya think?"

I told him I enjoyed it, especially some of his lead-guitar work. His job in the band is that of lead guitarist: he takes 90 per cent of the guitar solos and he's proud of his work. Later in the evening he had a fierce argument with Nash about the quality of the monitor speakers and it took Elliot Roberts to drag them apart.

Crosby and Nash are the most enthused, Nash especially. He seemed as high as a kite after the concert, rushing here and there and refusing to stop talking to anyone who'd listen. With some difficulty I got him away from the crowd for 15 minutes to talk. "It was a dramatic want to play music together again. A real need, man," he replied when I asked point blank what motivated them to reunite.

"We'd all done our individual trip and made our individual statements for whatever reasons we had. We'd got that out of our system and then I think we realised about a year ago that we had a really fucking hot band if we wanted and we could really

★ SUMMER JAM WEST ★

**CROSBY STILLS NASH & YOUNG**



**THE BEACH BOYS**

**THE WALSH AND BARNSTORM**

**OSSE COLIN YOUNG**

AND SPECIAL GUESTS ★★

**THE BAND** 🎵

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**ONTARIO MOTOR SPEEDWAY**

**SAT., AUGUST 3, 1974**



SO FAR



August 11, 1974:  
backstage at Rich  
Stadium, Orchard  
Park, New York -  
(l-r) Graham Nash,  
Stephen Stills, David  
Crosby, Neil Young

make this hot music. We missed each other, y'know. We missed that bounce off. When there's four of yer up there and there's Stephen at one side and Neil at the other and me and David in the middle. Just watching them converse with each other. That's it, y'know. That's it.

"Did you hear that conversation they had when Stephen was on clavinet and Neil on guitar? Mmmmm. So spacey. They're great musicians, man. You can't deny it. They got me high six times tonight in the show. Six times I just flashed out."

The show varies from night to night, and they're capable of playing some six hours of material if they want. "We just decide how we can best handle the collective energies of 50,000 people or however many there are," gasped Nash. "That changes suddenly every night and we have to change suddenly too. When we talk to each other at the end of every song, two things are going down. First we'll discuss the last song, and if Steve did a solo that was neat we'll tell him. Then we'll ask each other how we feel about the next song.

"Can you imagine what it's like to be a part of a really hot band and then not play for four years because we didn't feel that musical honesty? Now we feel it on stage, I mean this is a band. There are seven people in it, but it's a band, a real band.

"Did you see any bad vibes? Do you think we could fake it that good? I'm not into this vibe trip, but I know that we're more considerate of each other's feelings, we give each other a little more space, we'll take suggestions and not close 'em off immediately like used to happen, and that's because everyone's really secure in who they are individually.

"To me, having been involved in the original trip and now this one, it's better. I think before we didn't feel solid enough inside ourselves to be totally comfortable all the time. Now that we've grown up a little, now that we've proven that we can all move people individually, we know we want to be a band. You heard it for yourself.

"Like tonight, when we did 'Sugar Mountain', we stopped playing and heard 60,000 people sing back at us. Do you know what a rush that is? Phew! There's something different about this band." Nash can't say whether the

regrouping is permanent or not. "It's always been this way. If we get off, we'll play music together. Now we feel we'll continue it as long as it feels this good. Let's continue it while it's happening.

"We never write together, but we play together. Say, Neil will come up or Stephen will come up with a song and if it flashes us we'll do it. If we decide we love the song enough to participate, we'll give our best to the song."

Nash says he is passionately looking forward to playing in England in September, and confirms that the band will be there regardless of the cost in transporting them (and the 64 people who are required on the road with them): "I personally believe European people have kept a faith in us that has been undying. They believe we're still there and they're right. We are still here. I can't wait until we get to Wembley.

"I went to England recently and at the time I knew that what you saw tonight was going to happen, but people have heard so often that we're going to get back together that I didn't come on strong about it in England.

"I knew it was going to be great music, but I didn't really put any of the fire into it because they've been let down before. But now I have something solid. I can look you in the eye and say, 'Man, that was a great show and I was part of it.'"

And the money? Nash's eyes narrowed. "The thing most people thought when we were getting back together was the enormity of the finances of it all. Everybody was talking about the largest ever grosses and whatnot and I started to get real paranoid. If people think we're only in this for the money, then they're fucking wrong. That ain't happening, man. No way.

"We play for three hours every night at least, and at the first show we played for four-and-a-half hours. That was an amazing show, man, an amazing show. We put everything into it and we're totally wasted after every show and I get totally pissed off when people insinuate that we're only in it for the money. Man, we could have made millions over the last four years, believe me. But we didn't because we didn't feel like it. We didn't feel like playing together and if we're in it for the money, you tell me why we didn't go out and play over the last five years anyway." »

© JOEL BERNSTEIN

# Love the one you're with!

Nash knew he'd made his point. "I guess I'm just rapping too much because I'm so excited. I'm just out in space every night. Do you know we did three songs we hadn't rehearsed tonight. We did Neil's 'Old Man', and playing that for the first time in front of 60,000 people is absurd. "But we did it. We're always walking on this incredible tightrope."

The tightrope that CSNY walked in Denver was hitched up earlier in the day, with Jesse Colin Young receiving a rousing ovation at the opening act while thousands were still filing into the arena, most of them deliriously happy to be out in the sun listening to music and anticipating the headliners.

The Denver audience, unlike a New York audience, seemed to cheer everything: in the Big Apple, the "show us what you can do then" attitude abounds everywhere.

The Beach Boys followed Young, playing their usual set of ancient hits that have stood the test of time inexplicably well. New manager Jim Guercio was on bass guitar, but the change seemed to matter little: The Beach Boys will always sound the same, and their flowing harmonies seemed ideal in the Colorado sun.

At 9pm, after three-quarters of an hour's delay, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young appeared to a standing ovation, something they've got used to by now. The four principals move to the front, Stills to the left and Young to the right, with Crosby and Nash in the centre bobbing between mics and occasionally sharing.

They opened with Stills' "Love The One You're With". The show is divided into two halves, with a 15-minute break between. The first half, the longest, opens with an electric set and switches to acoustic. The second half is all electric.

Each principal gets an opportunity to solo, and all the time the combinations of musicians are changing. Sometimes it's just Nash and Crosby together, sometimes Young on his own, sometimes Crosby, Stills and Nash without Young, and sometimes all four. The numbers where all four play and sing together are undoubtedly the highlights.

Crosby's "Wooden Ships", with Young at the grand piano, followed "Love The One", and next Nash went over to the keyboard for "Immigration Man", Stills taking the guitar solo. A new Neil Young song, "Traces", followed with Young playing a huge Gretsch White Falcon guitar and Stills taking another guitar break.

Crosby stepped up next for "Almost Cut My Hair", screaming out the vocals above the combined backing. For this song, Nash stepped over to the organ, but again it was Stills' guitar that carried the weight.

Young's turn came next with "Cowgirl In The Sand" and the electric set ended with all four joining together for "Pre-Road Downs".

This early section was really an aperitif for what was to follow. Nash hurriedly explained that there would be a slight delay and they'd be back to play some acoustic music. Five minutes later an assortment of acoustic guitars (about a dozen) were set up around two stools and four mics.

Surprisingly, it was Young who appeared first to sing "Only Love Can Break Your Heart" plus "Old Man" with no accompaniment at all. Then Crosby came out alone with a new song called "For Free", and Nash followed with two songs at the piano, "Simple Man" and "Prison Song". For the latter he was joined by the whole band, who stayed in place for Young's "Sugar Mountain", one of the highlights of the night.

Stills was next to the fore with "Change Partners", sung by the whole band, and "Questions", which he played alone. The acoustic set finished with "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes". All four tore into the song, and although some of the harmonies were occasionally a little off-key, they handled this difficult piece with assurance.

The break was cut short because of the curfew and the second half opened only 10 minutes later with Crosby singing "Long Time Coming". Next it was Young with "Don't Be Denied" and then Stills with a new song called "First Things First", on which he played the congas.

Crosby came in with "Déjà Vu" before Young played a couple of new songs, "Revolution Blues" and "Pushed It Over The End". It was during this part of the show that Stills and Young were given more space to solo. The show ended with "Ohio", a great crowd favourite, but they returned for one encore, a lengthy version of "Carry On", which proved equally popular.

The band were driven away suddenly when it ended, and one hour later Neil Young was happily driving towards Texas for the next concert. Stills didn't make it home to his ranch, but had disappeared by the morning.

Crosby went out walking in the mountains and Nash enjoyed a healthy English breakfast of bacon and eggs before scouring the Denver bookshops for rare editions. It's his latest hobby. *Chris Charlesworth* •

## Actively dangerous

**NME AUG 17** One half of Neil Young plays the hits with CSNY. Meanwhile, his own new album embraces the "psychotic surreal".

### Neil Young On The Beach REPRISE

Right now, Neil Young is in kind of an invidious position. On *The Beach* is his equivalent of Lennon's *Plastic Ono Band* album in terms of being a reaction to and rejection of his earlier work, but whereas Lennon's change was both gradual (starting, really, from *Help!*) and included in its course pieces like "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds", Young has made his artistic stock-in-trade the investigation of personal pain from the very beginning.

And that's the catch, really. In our July 20 issue, Steve Clarke attacked *On The Beach* as too negative too self-pitying: "It's a downer in that depression is the mood which most of the album evokes." Steve's a devotee of Neil Young. Probably knows the man's work in twice the careful detail that I do. I'm not a Young devotee. I could never totally accept his employment of self-pity as a creative focus. Sometimes I felt it a shade dishonest or manufactured (eg, "Tell Me Why"); other times the whole thing got just a little too deliciously lush (eg, "When You Dance I Can Really Love"), like Leonard Cohen. A sugared pill just the correct distance into commerciality to be still believable. And that could be the main reason why the majority of Neil Young fans won't get into *On The Beach*. The pill is no longer sugared - either by sweet melody or by garlands of posies. Young has, quite simply, welched on the deal. Which, in turn, suggests he's Woken Up.

*On The Beach* isn't, as previously interpreted, the fag-end of Neil Young's romance with rejection, but actually a quite positive piece of work in the Merciless Realism bracket of Lennon's primal period. How else to account for the reportedly totally revived Young now touring the States with CSNY, I don't know - but it's now up to me to provide the documentary evidence from the album itself. An album that seems clearly to be Neil Young's best so far.

Steve, in his original review, suggested that *On The Beach* was the result of Young's supposed disenchantment with studio recording. He'd done *Time Fades Away* "live" and *Journey Through The Past* was a rag-bag of "live" cuts and studio outtakes; *On The Beach* was his first serious studio effort since *Harvest* in 1972. The

supposition is that Young was postponing the inevitable because he knew he couldn't cut it any more. The "postponement" guess is probably fairly accurate and it supports both cases. If he had no faith in himself any more, he'd hold off - and if he didn't quite know what he was about to say, he'd hold off just the same.

It's still supposition, though. On the other hand, if we've "supposed" so far, we might as well keep on supposing. Suppose Neil Young was getting towards his wits' end, what with all that's expected of him and fatigue and drugs and directionlessness-made-a-virtue and all. Suppose it was time to make a new album and he had the material ready, just like he

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had six times before, but somehow didn't believe in it any more - didn't believe himself, didn't believe his audience were picking out what he regarded as important in his songs. He's stymied and he's going down fast. Then something happens that Opens His Eyes. Someone says something to him, something happens - whatever. He suddenly realises where he is and what he's doing. Perspective. Reality. He writes a new bunch of songs fast. Out comes *On The Beach*. The precise nature of the occurrence which changed Young's head, will be looked at later. For now, let's keep that supposition in mind and begin looking at the album.

"Walk On" walks the album on. Gently rocking, very "live" sound, but very clear too. At once we get perspective: "I remember the good old days...". And straight after we get the reality available from that vantage point: "Sooner or later it all gets real/Walk on."

Say the person he's talking to here is his current lady, Carrie Snodgrass, and the "them" in question is Young's audience. Ze pieces begin to fit together, nein? A lyrical bitterness about "the man" (and you can take it straight as Big Business or bend it towards the Drug Connection) is reiterated constantly, from his showbiz/high society aspect in "For The Turnstiles" ("Singing songs for pimps with tailors/Who charge 10 dollars at the door") to industrialist magnates in "Revolution Blues". It's hard to say whether "Revolution Blues" is meant to be seen from Young's point of view or from that of a persona. Manifestly he doesn't live "in a trailer at the edge of town" or possess "25 rifles just to keep the population down". Manson's lot, maybe - or, more relevantly, the SLA. But not our Neil.

On the other hand, he evidently identifies strongly with that outlaw-avenger attitude, even if he's laughing about it while he's pulling triggers in his head. The mode is prime '65 Dylan. Militant psychotic-surreal.

"For The Turnstiles" is about how everybody gets nailed by the business of fame sooner or later, underlined in an

extraordinary closing verse in which Young sees all the baseball stars "left to die on their diamonds" (batting bases) while "In the stands the home crowd scatters/For the turnstiles."

On side two we get to the real meat: the tale of Young's personal experience in the last few years and the story on which this whole interpretation hangs. In successive verses, Young finds himself alone at a microphone after a radio interview and interjects the image of being "out here on the beach" where "the seagulls are still out of reach"; he resolves to get out of town, head for the sticks with his bus and his friends, and follow the road, although he doesn't know where it ends - the song closing with a repeat of the solitary line "The world turning/I hope it don't turn away"

## The pill is no longer sugared by sweet melody or garlands of posies

and a beautiful guitar solo over a slow fade.

"Motion Pictures", dedicated to his girlfriend, Carrie, star of *Diary Of A Mad Housewife*, is the work of a man who had a shrewd suspicion that The Business was doing him in, and only just found out how. It covers this ground with the impressive economy which characterises the whole album: "All those headlines, they just bore me now/I'm deep inside myself, but I'll get out somehow/I'll bring a smile to your eyes." Which has in turn been arrived at via a verse that represents the

young policy statement for the past: "Well, all those people, they think they've got it made/But I wouldn't buy, sell, borrow, or trade/Anything I have to be like one of them/I'd rather start all over again." Note the echo of the last line of "Stage Fright" and the

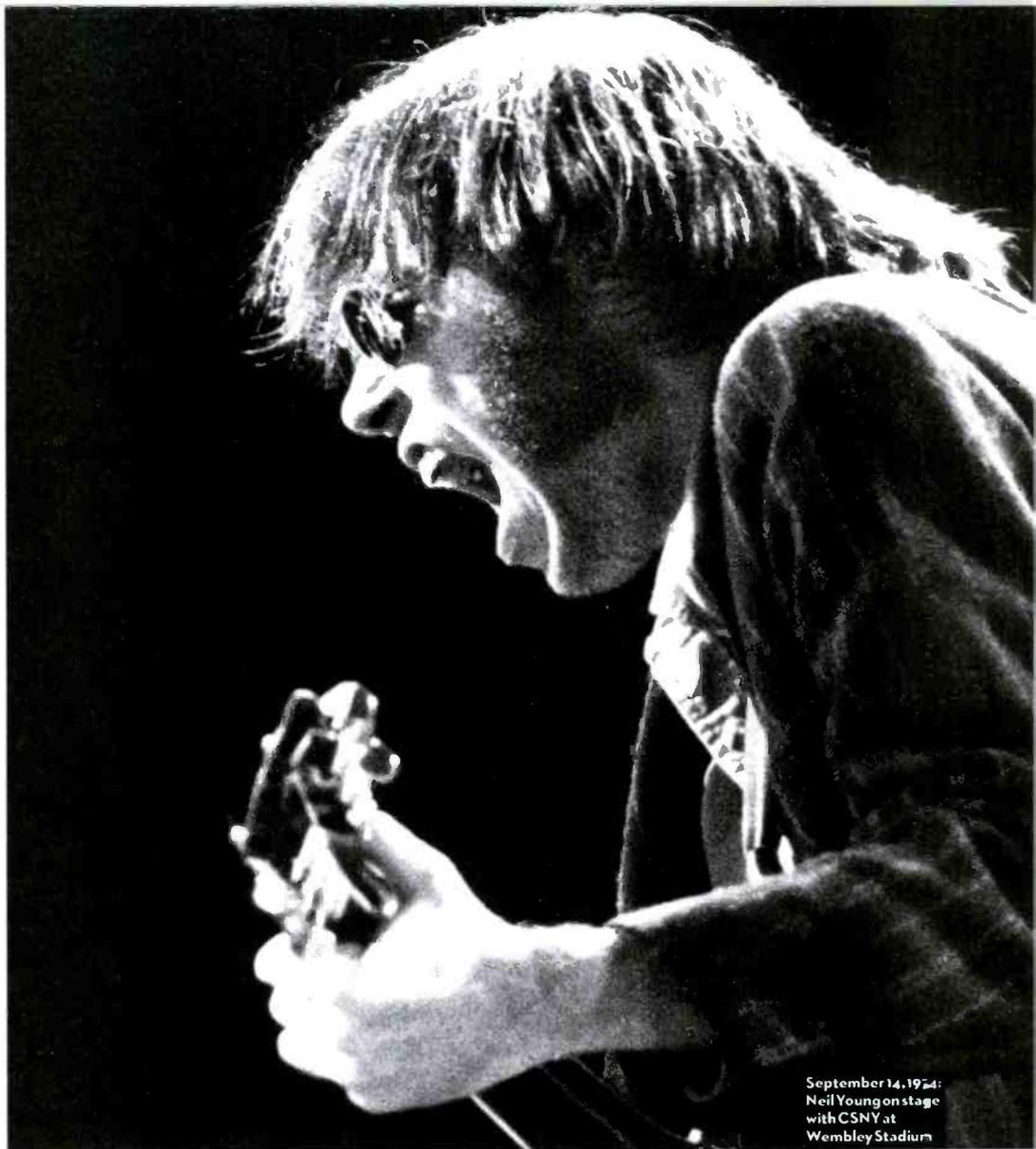
deadly seriousness of the proposition.

All the loose strands are woven together in the final track, "Ambulance Blues" - a beautiful song, possibly Young's best ever. Young picks an aged acoustic and blows smeary harp, Ben Keith slaps a bass that keeps getting its shoes caught in the mud, Ralph Molina pats hand-drums almost inaudibly, Joe Yankee chinks an "electric tambourine", and Rusty Kershaw's violin sounds like the hillbilly cousin of Robin Williamson's creaking gimbril. It's raining. Obsessively so.

The lyrics open with a direct reference to the perspective outlined at the beginning of the album: "Back in the old folkie days, the air was magic when we played..."

The verse again, and a crucial one: "I guess I'll call it sickness gone/It's hard to say the meaning of this song/An ambulance can only go so fast/It's easy to get buried in the past/When you try to make a good thing last." Which supports the case for the Traumatic Change Theory quite admirably. Now it's just a case of: (a) What caused the change?; and (b) What does the change involve? While we're mulling what this character means, Young blows some more, now rather deflated harp. Only it isn't a breather. It's a Dramatic Pause. Young slams back with the rebuttal and a clear statement of where he's at now: "I never knew a man could tell so many lies/He had a different story for every set of eyes/How could he remember who he's talking to/'Cos I know it ain't me and I hope it isn't you..."

That certainly doesn't sound like the work of a depressed, negative man to me. It sounds extremely positive, actually - and note that "Ambulance Blues" is the only track thus listed which isn't any kind of blues at all. There's scattered evidence for a Dylan experience in many tracks from *On The Beach*, but the more important thing is that, though Dylan and Young may have taken a parallel path recently, Young now sounds actively dangerous, whereas Dylan's just singing his own peculiar gospel. Ian MacDonald



September 14, 1974:  
Neil Young on stage  
with CSNY at  
Wembley Stadium

# 1974

JULY - SEPTEMBER



ALBUMS

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## “I was out of my head”

**NME JULY 6** Ronnie Wood has his own album to do. Is it another nail in the Faces' coffin? It doesn't bother Keith Richards. “He came back after a drink one night,” says Ronnie, “ended up staying here and really getting enthused.”

**I**T WAS ON the evening of the recent Charlton event that Eric Clapton gave the first indication he might have recently cashed his brain in for a new model. Towards the later stages of the evening he could be found wandering around backstage burbling something along the lines of “Everybody down to Ron Wood's house afterwards... a party, right? ... a house to wreck,” with an almost frightening lack of restraint.

As might therefore be expected, a few hours later, Wood's house had taken on some aspects of disarray with bottles everywhere, a couple of faded female gatecrashers literally crashed into an available corner and various chauffeurs/drivers playing snooker in the billiard room with a disinterested “seen it all before” attitude. Only Ron Wood's lady seemed exclusively in control as she ushered guests in and out with commendable patience and good heart. Over the previous two months she had become experienced in dealing with similar situations.

Meanwhile, down in the basement studio, Wood and Clapton, together with Keith Richards, were indeed producing some music, but the inevitable conclusion to be drawn was that if the evening's proceedings were any guide it would take until Armageddon for Ron Wood's solo album to be completed.

As it turned out, he'd already finished it, recording 22 tracks over a period of two months in his home studio, during which his house had almost become a haven for any musician at a loose end or stranded in town for the night. After starting off with a basic lineup of Mick Taylor, Ian McLagan, Andy Newmark (drums) and Willy Weeks (bass), the finished article now also includes assorted contributions from Mick Jagger, Rod Stewart, Keith Richards and George Harrison, to name but a few. Also, it appears the wayward night with Clapton was hardly representative of the real atmosphere of the recordings, even if it required a degree of leadership and discipline on Ron Wood's part.

“The last thing I wanted was a jam... everybody sitting around playing E for two days. It did happen sometimes, like if I had three drummers in and no drumkit or something, but usually once everybody got behind their instruments in the studio it was dead serious. In a way, everybody respected the fact that I had no experience in the field of leading, so the feeling was that I could sort of practise on them.”

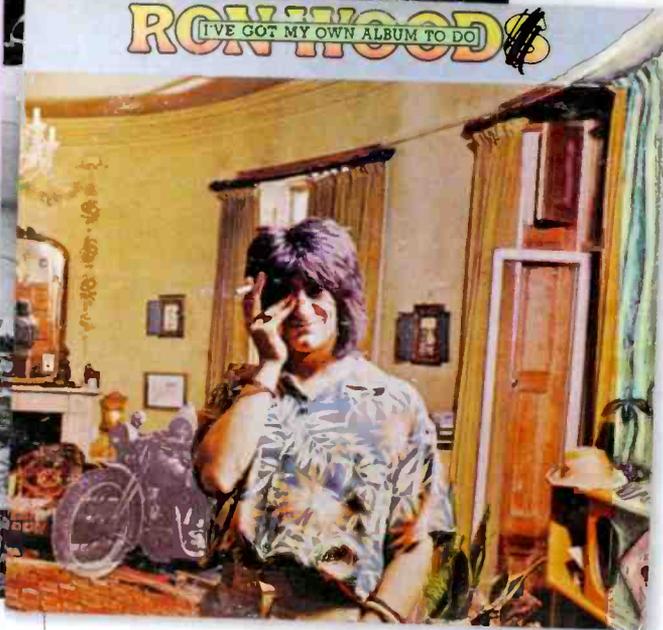
The night with Clapton was different altogether. “I was really out of my head that night and Eric was really violent and boisterous,” he recalls. “When I heard what he was saying at Charlton my heart sank and Keith [Richards] and I came back really quickly. Eric still turned up and we had a long play, but it wasn't very productive.

“Instead he was good in that I played him the album and he made me sing all the words down his ear and he'd be making remarks like, ‘You can't play that,’ or something. We just had a good time. Also he's really inspirational to play with anyway, like Keith or George [Harrison], because they've all got a lot of roots in the past and can connect immediately with an old number or something.”

**Kimono  
Ron's  
House..**

July 25, 1974: Ronnie Wood in The Wick on Richmond Hill, South-West London. He bought the house from the actor Sir John Mills in 1971

## RONNIE WOOD [I'VE GOT MY OWN ALBUM TO DO]



The artists who eventually featured most prominently on the album, apart from Wood, are Keith Richards, who stayed at Chez Wood during the sessions, and Newmark and Weeks, who've always stuck close to funky street, previously working with Donny Hathaway and Sly Stone. Nevertheless, in conversation with Wood so many other names crop up it's hard to keep them all in perspective. Every now and again he'll slip in a remark like, "Yeah, McCartney was on organ that night", and without a complete tracklisting it's hard to work out exactly who played what and when on what number.

In terms of material, it's made up of Wood originals and a few more familiar numbers like "I Can't Stand The Rain". "We've got a really funky, dirty track to that," says Woody. "Although my singing would hardly compare to Miss Peebles." Then there's "If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody" and a Sly Stoneish-style "Crotch Music", with Richards and Wood swapping guitar lines.

Last Saturday at least, Wood appeared pleased with the results, sitting behind the control desk in his studio picking a few lines from his guitar in classic rock-star pose. Two hours earlier he'd flown from the States, and in half an hour's time was due at a Faces rehearsal in preparation for Buxton. Time appeared at a premium, but despite his

schedule he looked remarkably spritely, thanks partly to a two-day stopover in Bermuda. Ron Wood without his usual death-white pallor and looking as suntanned as a lifeguard is an unusual sight indeed.

His motivations for making the album don't appear to run terribly deep, other than that he had some songs on a cassette he wanted to record properly, some time on his hands, and a studio in his basement that he presumably thought would be better used than allowed to collect dust.

It has now led to the staging of two concerts in London (July 13 and 14) featuring material from the album, with a lineup that includes Richards, McLagan, Newmark and Weeks. The inevitable conclusion is that it's one more step towards that much-vaunted Faces breakthrough that has stirred up so much gossip in recent months.

"There's none of this 'split' thing in the air at all," he said. "There's just a lot of chemistry with everybody in the band right now, and this album and show is a good outlet for Rod to sing at Elton's show, or Tetsu to play with Stomu Yamash'ta, or for the Small Faces to reunite for a couple of gigs.

"Everybody is letting off steam in different directions and looking forward to getting together again. It can't do the Faces any harm, especially if you get in a rut with the music paper-buying public who get to know a group year after year.

"The best from the Faces is yet to come. We've had some great times already, of course, but unfortunately we've maybe never quite come over on

record, which has caused a few frustrations for us in the past. With this album there's none of that kind of pressure anyway. I'm not trying to compete with Phil Spector or Richard Perry, just limiting myself to eight-track surroundings."

So was there a conscious effort to get away from a Stewart/Faces album?

"Not really, because I thought it would be different anyway because I was taking the helm. If any of us did the same, it'd obviously sound different.

"I'd always had this thing with Andy Newmark saying he'd be on it if I ever made an album. Then when I was with the group in Japan and Australia something clicked. I suddenly opened up for some reason and realised I had enough ideas to start working on. I was really proud of my playing then; I just wanted to keep in the groove.

"I mentioned it to a few people and the thing started rolling. People kept asking me 'What day do we start?' Mick Taylor put a lot in at the beginning, 'cos before I knew Willy's whereabouts Mick was going to play guitar, and I was going to play bass. Like, I'd got sick of the bass after Beck, but the feeling grew

for it again, and after keeping my hand in on Rod's albums I thought I'd like to get at it again and see if my approach had changed.

"Once I had the first lineup I was all set to go, then Mac was keen to play and Keith became involved. He came back after a drink one night and ended up staying here and really getting enthused. I never thought he would, because I never thought he would do any work for anyone else, y'know with his time well spent with the Stones. But at that time Anita was in Switzerland and Mick [Jagger] was doing a lot of the Stones' vocals at Island, so Keith was at a bit of a loose end, in limbo between here and Island."

Wood has always expressed admiration for the Richards guitar technique, and socially they obviously hit it off. All this doesn't necessarily mean that all runs smoothly in the studio: "I must admit I worried a bit at the start because of the time I thought he took in recording. Like, on any Stones' sessions I've been to they always seem to be there for days on one number, and that frightened me a bit. I thought I was going to have to build myself in a lot more studio time. As it turned out he was amazingly together. He didn't hang me up at all time-wise, and the enthusiasm he put into it gave me a good kick up the ass now and again.

"Rod also helped a lot. He was still geared to a studio mood after finishing his own album, and rather than feature his voice he gave me pointers for my own singing and joined in the chorus. I really had to jump in at the deep end with my singing anyway, not being a vocalist as such. Rod and Jagger opened me up a lot and I tried to put myself in the position where I didn't have time to think about it

"It could all get really silly some nights, though. Like Rod suggested I tried the old Jimmy Reed number 'Ain't That Loving You Baby', and he was saying it was dead easy and I couldn't fall off at any of the corners, so we'd record that. Then Keith would arrive and say, 'You can't play it like that, it changes in the wrong place', because he used to analyse all these old blues records inside out. Then I'd think I'd have to record it again, but by that time I would have an idea for a track and it'd get overlooked."

Wood's studio itself is really a fairly modest affair, if quite homely, with a plush red carpet

and assorted objets d'art on the walls. According to Wood, the fact that it was in his studio, in his home, quelled any possible clashes of ego among the various visiting luminaries.

"If I'd recorded in any of the known studios in America or London it'd have all been big announcements like, 'Eric

Clapton's here, what can we dub him on?' Instead, everybody just fell in... and fell out... of the door really. Before you knew it you had a track with a name on without anybody thinking about it. It was all just friendly vibes."

So, finally, does it concern him if it sells?

"Not at all. If it just sells to my family and to a couple of friends I can bribe to buy it, it'll be OK. There's no previous solo effort to live up to on any level, so there's no worries." James Johnson

**"Before you knew it you had a track with a name on without anybody thinking about it"**

“One broken tooth, everyone thinks you’re a villain...”

After a court visit, **KEITH RICHARDS** opens up about Brian, Mick and “the best-kept secret in the Rolling Stones”. And drugs? Keith discusses a recent appointment in Switzerland. “If you’re going to get wasted,” he confides, “get wasted elegantly.”

— NME AUGUST 31 —

IT'S A BALMY monoxide breeze that blows off the Thames across from Cheyne Walk. There's a yellow GPO truck slewed up on the pavement across from Keef's front door with two guys in overalls making marathon work of stripping bits of wire with pliers. Somewhere between there and here—Atlantic's omni-carpeted West End smoked-glass labyrinths—the man is, you might say, in transit. This, if one is to lend credence to the popularised Richards persona, being no mean feat.

Your confidant, having arrived early, is dropping cubes in anticipation. The Big K's newest exploit, as relayed to him in the cab coming over, having been the drawing of a knife during a recent altercation.

Skip lightly, then.

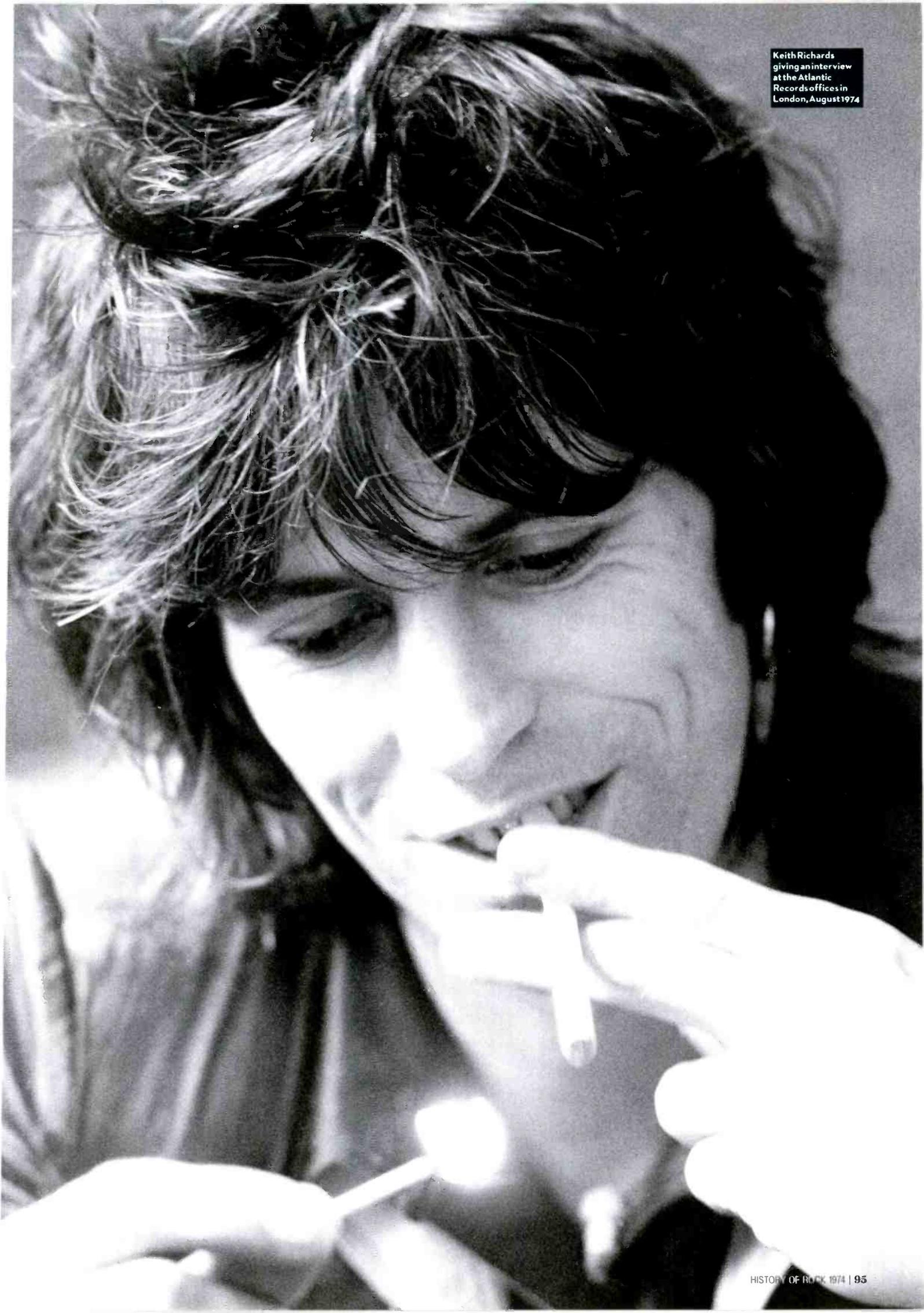
Still feel the cops breathing on you, Keith?

“Oh ho—do I, baby—I see these phoney workmen outside my front door every day; I'm movin' very shortly. Mick an' I feel it—but it doesn't bother us particularly. I mean, after every raid one just improves one's security systems, ya know?” A lackadaisical smirk and a quick glance right at Spanish Tony, a tall, chisel-faced Aramis king with immaculate grey sprayed hair, expensively cut denims, shades and a *Hawaii Five-O* whiff of neat and silent ruthlessness.

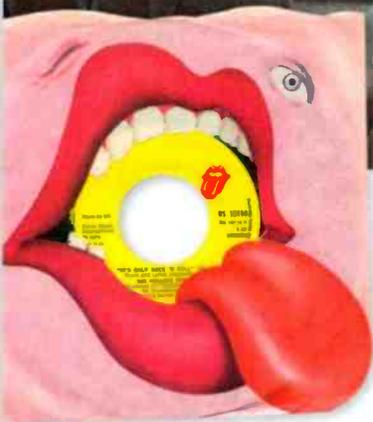
Yeah, but how about the latest one, the gun bust?

“Aw, that saga ended in Marlborough Street Magistrates Court with a very sensible magistrate who saw the way the wind was blowin' from our friends at Scotland Yard and—uh—was reasonable enough to understand that—er—because I had to plead guilty because from everything found in my house, technically I was guilty...” »

MICHAEL PITTLAND

A black and white close-up photograph of Keith Richards. He has long, dark, messy hair that covers his forehead. He is looking down and to the left with a slight smile. He is holding a lit cigarette in his right hand, which is raised towards his mouth. In his left hand, he holds a round lollipop on a stick. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Keith Richards  
giving an interview  
at the Atlantic  
Records offices in  
London, August 1974



It happened last year. The cops blew in on Keith and Pallenberg and a friend and this gun and this whole pantechinon of medicine cabinet marvels!

"There are like—uh—15 charges and with every one I had to say 'guilty'—but then I came out with my mitigation, which was fantastic because it really showed the cops up for what they were.

They even tried to string in this old Belgian shotgun that was built in, ah, 1899 or something—obviously one of those fowlin' pieces a father'd give his son when he was 12 or 11 or something. And the police tried their damndest to tell this 'ere magistrate that this weapon was a sawn-off shotgun. From that moment the magistrate saw what was happening. That I'd walked into my house which I'd rented to a lot of people who'd been very clumsy and not cleaned up after themselves."

The person to his left nods sagely; this young guy with long black hair that looks as if it's been boot-polished, and a pair of Peter Fonda mail-order shades partially obscuring a mouldering Mother's Pride complexion. Richards later claims he arrived on his doorstep to present him with tapes of his group, Cyanide. So here he is hitting into the Jack Daniel's like a recently qualified Southern barfly.

"Actually," says Richards, in his personable nasal tones, "it was a very nice gun, the new model revolver with a hammer guard. It'd been sent to me by a bodyguard on our '72 tour of America, who felt that I should never be without one—'You're never alone with a Smith & Wesson.'"

"It was a very nice gun... sent to me by a bodyguard on our '72 tour"

**C**ONTRARY TO POPULAR legend, Richards is one sharp interviewee. Anyone who's viewed the oft-quoted Robert Greenfield *Rolling Stone* interview will, if they have any kind of taste, have marvelled at: (a) his turn of phrase; (b) his humour—prancing about beneath the dry, absorbent facade. Greenfield covered it all—as Anthony Scaduto, who lifted mighty chunks for the bones of his book *Mick Jagger* is well aware. This, too, seemed like some kind of legitimate jousting point, anyway, as Himself appears to have been doing quite a few press things recently, most of which seem to ramble on about the belated critical laurels bestowed on *Exile* and a bit of junk about the new album.

The real questions you'd like to pose are: (a) How many times a year does he have his blood changed?; (b) What is the composition of the cocktail menu of congestants that supposedly necessitate this?; (c) What in the hell happened to his teeth? (viz The Charcoal Smile); (d) The validity of some of the more outrageous fracas he's supposed to have been involved in; and (e) Why each part of his body appears to function from some several unconnected information centres—thus, for example, giving him the lope of a clumsily handled marionette as yet perfected only by Nick Kent... and that after years of study.

Over to Scaduto, though, even though he probably doesn't deserve it. There are certain allegations in the book—both direct and indirect—that Keith might want to respond to if for no other reason that a whole bunch of people're gonna read it, and like most things in print, believe it.

"It appears to me," Keef says languidly, "that Anthony [Anthony??] got Marianne very, very out of it for a few days and wrote down everything she cared to memorise and—uh—



June 1974: the Stones - (l-r) Mick Taylor, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts and Bill Wyman - shooting the video for "It's Only Rock 'n Roll (But I Like It)" in London

embellish. 'Embellished Memories' I'd call it. I haven't read it, but sure I'd love to hear 'em - at least it'd save me reading the crap..."

Righto, squire. Well, firstly, Scaduto hints that in the beginning - when Mick had started doing the odd one-off with Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated - Keith was kind of excluded on account of this uncouth yobbo image - that what he was into at the time was a little - uh - rough.

Like the very first time when Keith and Jagger got up together with the band and tore through a ravaged version of Berry's "Around And Around":

*"When their single number was completed they received a polite bit of applause from some and a stony silence from many. Cyril (Davies, co-leader and singer harpist with the band) joined them. 'Good voice you got,' he said to Jagger. He pointedly ignored Keith. Dick Taylor, sitting it out as a member of the audience, felt strongly that everyone in the place had hated Keith's disruptive Chuck Berry routine and were anxious to dismiss him as a mere rocker..."*

*"Jagger swilled some beer down his throat and said nothing. He was so overwhelmed by the excitement of his first public appearance that he could not say a word or even consider the dreadful audience response to Keith's playing. Jagger had made it. He'd played in front of a hundred people and he was certain he'd pulled it off..."*

And subsequently he claims:

*"Among some members of Blues Incorporated and their wives, crew and associates, there was a strong feeling that Jagger had abandoned Little Boy Blue And The Blue Boys, that he had broken up the group by becoming a singer in Alex's band. Keith most of all appeared stranded by Jagger, Keith was always tagging along at Jagger's side, the friend with the guitar*

*who watched from a table out front but was never permitted to play because he was a rocker..."*

"It's an interestin' twist," says Richards, smiling contemplatively. "I never wanted to play with Blues Incorporated and they never wanted me to play with them. The true story about that is that Mick, myself, Dick Taylor from the old Pretty Things and another guitarist who's now an official with the Labour Party, Bob Beckwith, met Brian in this club that Alexis was playing. We'd sit in for a couple of numbers and a few weekend dates, deb dates that Alexis copped occasionally through - uh - kissing the hem of some lady-in-waiting.

"Mick would be invited along on some of these dates to sing just because he was a bit of a freak then and they loved the response... getting all these chinless wonders comin' up: 'Ay seay, cheppie, can yew play 'Mooon Rivah'?' - to Alexis and Cyril Davies, can you imagine? But I never had any desire to join that band: that band drove me crazy, quite honestly. I thought it was just a very, very amateurish attempt by a lot of middle-aged old men, ya know?

"The only period he [Scaduto] touches on with any kind of sensitivity is when there was this period of two months in '62 where Mick was doing quite a few gigs with Blues Incorporated to the exclusion of rehearsals with the embryonic Rolling Stones. Brian particularly was feeling that Mick was just after as much bread as he could get - uh, two pound ten a week - and because he

[Brian] was a stickler for rehearsals he felt that to a certain extent Mick was deserting us - which was, to any rational person, rather silly, because the Stones weren't working at all.

"To be honest I can't remember that far back, but actually I probably played really diabolically then - but I was still a better guitar player than Alexis ever was. I mean, I love Alexis and the kind of music he lays down, he's really good at it, but the kind of music we were getting into then - well, he wasn't 100 per cent behind it. He was tryin' to force somethin' that wasn't really in him. It got to the point where after three or four weeks we'd go down and Mick'd say, 'Let's do "Roll Over Beethoven", and Alexis would suddenly plunge one of his metal thumb picks through his strings and say, 'Oh sorry, old chap, I think I've busted a string - you just carry on', because he knew he couldn't keep up with that kind of beat, ya know?"

There was no kind of class barrier between the three of you? I mean, Brian and Mick both came from middle-class homes and you were working class. Scaduto, to an extent seems to play on this...

"No. That's... that's beautiful. Anthony's surpassed himself there - I didn't think he'd get down to that one. Mick and I had known each other since we were five years old. We lived in the same street. It wasn't until five or six years later that people realised that those things didn't matter. In those days it was more of an inverted snobbery; it could be used against you. One was presumed to come from the lowest part of town and play the guitar too; grammar school people were considered to be pansies and twerps."

And the suggestion that Brian was a purist and that his disillusionment stemmed from the band moving away from the original sound?

"Brian was never a purist. He used to like to pretend he was, when it was convenient. Which was great. It was a great trick he had. In actual fact, Brian used to play sax with a Cheltenham rock 'n' roll band called The Ramrods who used to do all Duane Eddy stuff - and that was his claim to fame."

And the claim that the very first studio cuts (at IBC studios with Glyn Johns) were considered by Brian and the rest of you to be superior to the rest of the initial commercial releases?

"We thought they were good for a first effort, but that was largely down to Glyn, who was an experienced engineer. They were linked to us via the Cheam crowd when we were doing all these little pub shows," he says. "Rather like you're doin' now," he adds, addressing the remark to Senior Cyanide, who meanwhile has been trying to look desperately rugged whilst wiping himself out with bourbon, losing out with gauche little gestures like knocking the bottle over and spilling the contents of the ashtray over the plate of cold cuts.

"Don't trust nobody," he advises, "and don't sign nothin'." The kid nods.

Brian's disenchantment, he says, returning to the original point, arose out of an incident in Liverpool towards the end of '63 when the band found out he'd been laying it on their manager of the time (their first), Eric Easton, that he was the leader and was thus entitled to the peeling off of an extra fiver a week. The band, with forceful aplomb, immediately redistributed this additional wealth.

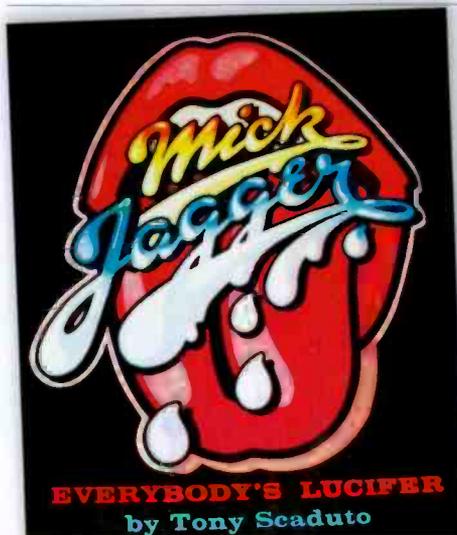
Next?

"Brian played a special role in the band, a musician's musician who seemed to be everywhere at once," Scaduto writes, foaming a little at the nib, "whose function within the band was to use all the instruments he had mastered to create the ringing harmonics that gave to the Stones' music a texture and embroidery and made them the so-called Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band In The World. Brian's music was of such a beauty that it brought the Stones together in the beginning and held the group together like glue through the trip to superstardom."

A much-contested point. Nico seemed to partly agree (so did Steve Marriott in a recent conversation) but, c'mon, he wasn't that good, surely? Just another case of Scaduto reinforcing his argument?

"To be fair to Brian..." Richards accepts a cigarette and pours himself another drink, »

"Mick and I had known each other since we were five years old"



"because he's dead I can say, 'Oh, Brian was a fantastic musician', but it wasn't true. Brian *wasn't* a great musician. He did have a certain feel for certain things, but then everybody in the band has that for certain things too. And there was a nice bit of chemistry there for a while which unfortunately didn't stay. Brian was the least capable of coping with teenybopper stardom and it made him so depressed that eventually he became a liability, and especially because of the pressure we—as a band—were under. Also Mick and I, after Andrew had got us into writing—which we'd never dreamt of doing. After the first couple got to Number One it increased Brian's antagonism towards us."

Scaduto, at this point, shifts into fifth and puts his foot down; he suggests that Andrew, Keith and Mick formed a kind of exclusive triumvirate for working up new Stones material. At one point he even has Bill complaining about it. "Brian," he says, "*felt that Jagger and Keith had been engineering his isolation from the group in an attempt to drive him out.*"

"Not true," says Richards. "Brian as far as I know never wrote a single finished song in 'is life; he wrote bits and pieces but he never presented them to us. No doubt he spent hours, weeks, working on things—but his paranoia was so great that he could never bring himself to present it to us."

"Bill wrote and we did give 'im a chance—on *Satanic Majesties*—which we even put out as a single, goddamn. Bill Wyman is the only cat in the Stones to have singles out under his own name, ya know? We bent over backwards to encourage people to write. We really do not want to have to take the responsibility of coming up each time with new material—we're really working on Mick Taylor now—because I think he could be a great writer."

Could you not have approached Brian, though—encouraged him?

"I did. Around '66 I had a change of heart because the pressure dropped off as we stopped touring; for the next year Brian and I became

firm friends again—I was living with him and Anita for two years. The thing that blew it was when we went down to Morocco and he was pulling this hard-man number knocking off Moroccan whores—uh—and being absolutely disgustin' and everything, so I said, 'C'mon, baby, I'm takin' you home', so we left and that was the end of Brian and me as friends.

"Over that year I'd developed a very strong friendship. I'd managed to break down a lot of barriers, but you see Brian always had to have an enemy, he always had an imaginary foe. He was a bit of a Don Quixote, I suppose. Brian would always manipulate people into these situations of proving your friendship to him by doing something dastardly to the other person.

"All I tried to do with Brian was bring 'im more into the groove, because he wasn't really doing anything any more—he wasn't contributing anything to the group. All I wanted to do was bring him back into the mainstream again, but Brian used that fact to create a vendetta against Mick, because Brian always wanted to be... like this whole thing of 'Who do the chicks like the most?' that started with him back in '63.

"I'm sure that goes on with Slade and The Sweet now."

Well, that's Mr S trussed up and deep-fried. One of the things I picked

up from scanning old Jagger interviews—particularly those of Messrs Kent and Carr—was that Jagger appears to exhibit this tiny twinkle of condescension towards Richards' perhaps more tightly defined R&B origins—and in particular his oft-touted love for early Chuck Berry. Like the question-and-answer thing Carr performed with Jagger this year in which he (Carr) leads through with the statement: "He [Richards] still plays Chuck Berry", to which Jagger is supposed to have chuckled and replied, "Yeah—but I try and forget about that."

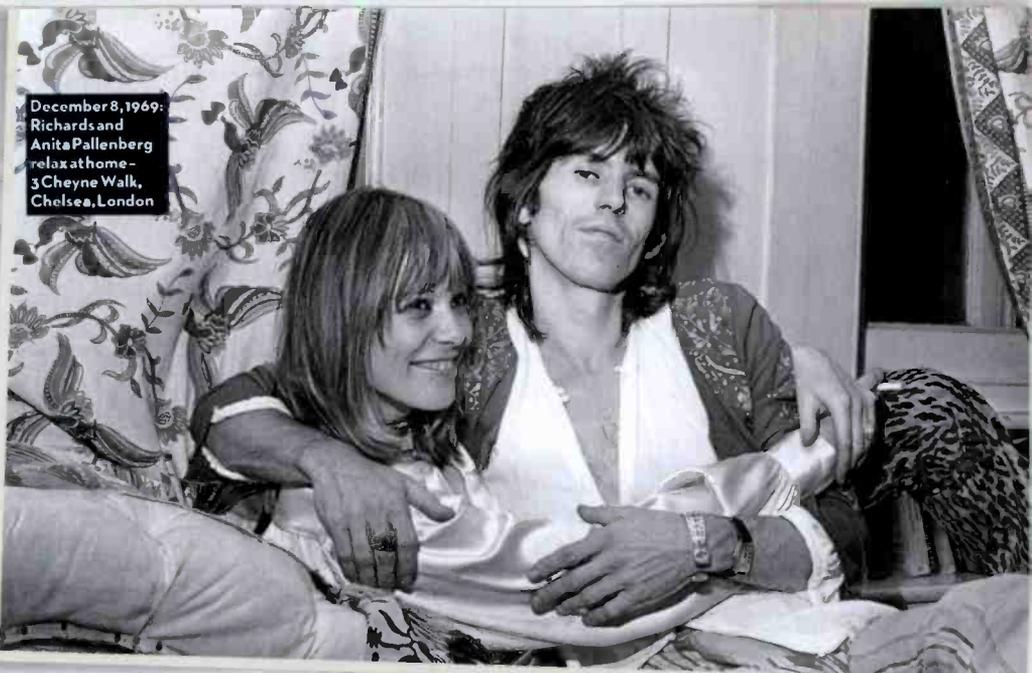
There are also hazy second-hand reports of minor irritations between the two in recording *Goats Head Soup*. Taking it a couple of stages

"Brian *wasn't*  
a great  
musician. He  
did have a  
certain feel"

MICHAEL PUTLAND

Richards, August 1974:  
"Mick is very conscious  
of not wanting to be  
associated with  
anything that might be  
considered 'old hat'"

December 8, 1969:  
Richards and  
Anita Pallenberg  
relax at home—  
3 Cheyne Walk,  
Chelsea, London



## “Bill has probably one of the biggest bladders in existence”

further, you can cast back to the beginnings of the band and Jagger's reputed concern for “making it” almost as a solo-act-within-the-act, and then project into the future where we find the man apparently achieving his ambitions in this alleged socialite stance which, you might recall, involved the inclusion of such superluminaries as Truman Capote, Warhol and token aristocracy in the form of Princess Lee Radziwill on the '72 US tour (consider, too, the band's—and in particular Jagger's—involvement with the Ormsby-Gores. “Lady Jane” was supposedly written for Jane Ormsby-Gore.)

Richards, not unnaturally, slurs off in a well-disguised sidestep:

“Mick,” he says, “plays games with every interview because Mick always has his guard up. Mick is also very conscious, to my mind, of not wanting to be associated with anything that might be considered ‘old hat’. He doesn't listen to Chuck Berry any more, but then I don't play like Chuck Berry any more unless Mick comes up with a song that calls for that treatment, and then I'll love it and blow it out like that, ya know?”

“But Chuck Berry is by no means the only guitar player I dig. There's... there's a hell of a lot of others, from James Burton to—ah—(draws breath, exhales sharply, shrugs) there's millions of 'em, goddamn, and 'arf of them you never 'eard of.”

At which point he launched into a turgid discourse on guitar players from Mac Gayden to E Clapton, whom he refers to as “a chubby bearded lad who will no doubt change into some other form within the next year or so”. (He confesses to worrying about the Big C's “current condescending attitude to rock 'n' roll”.)

Mr Cyanide, meanwhile, has lost his reins completely. The tape is punctuated by the sound of glass colliding with glass and a short treatise on liquor in which C blows a measure of cool by referring to Budweiser as “Boodwizer” during the Big K's praising of Vunderverks of Kentucky.

“Boodwizer's nice,” says the kid.

“Yeah, but that's real Milwaukee commercial stuff,” says Richards languidly. “You actually go down in Kentucky, Louisville, and they've got bourbons that make Old Granddad and Jack Daniel's look like Schweppes bitter lemon... There's one called—ah—Rebel Yell and that's—ah—dynamite shit.”

I bet, but—ah—well, Keith, what is this stuff about you and—ah—these blood changes in Switzerland?

Rod Lynton, Atlantic press officer, inhales audibly and gesticulates that this is a faux-pas. “What?” says Richards, grinning through that charred dental bomb site. “That's beautiful. I love that. I've heard about that thing and I'd love to do it just because I'm sure that eating motorway food for 10 years has done my blood no good at all. The only time I've ever been to Switzerland is to ski.”

Motorway food? Richards on skis? Richards looks as if he's on skis just walking down the street. I mean, c'mon... Well, try some light relief. Is it true that Jagger was influenced by Little Feat's *Sailin' Shoes* in the recording of *Exile*, then?

“I'll let you into a secret. I've never heard Little Feat, although I've heard of them. I'm actually quite, ah, ignorant of a lot of things that go on, mainly because I'm forced to live in these wooden huts in the forest for quite a long part of the year, ya know, in Switzerland. You don't really get to hear a lot of soul music in Switzerland.”

Spot the deliberate error, folks.

Is it true, then, that you hurled an ashtray at the altar when Mick and Bianca got married?

“Uh—well at one point I did 'eave a rather 'efty piece of metal at a

policeman; they didn't know me from Adam. I 'ad to get in somehow...”

And your involvement in the '65 Urination Bust (the Stones hit the headlines having been caught one night taking a leak against a gas station wall. They thought it was closed. It wasn't.)

“No, that was Brian and Bill. I finished mine first... The thing with Bill is—and this is one of the best kept secrets in the Rolling Stones—that he has probably got one of the biggest bladders in human existence. When that guy gets out of a car to take a pee you know you aren't going to move for 15 minutes. I mean it's not the first time it's appened to 'im...”

“In America one night we pull up in the limo—this Cadillac limo. Bill wants a pee. Everyone's gonna have a cup of coffee. Bill's used to it, he's way behind this tree or somethin'. He has a fag, reads a paper or somethin'—and he sees this policeman coming. He's powerless, right? And this policeman comes up with his torch blazing on this member which is still gushing away like a fireman's hose... and, well, what could 'e do? All 'e can say is, ‘Well, put it away and wipe it when you've finished.’ I think even he was horrified... To my knowledge, Bill has never done one in under five minutes.”

A quickie—then dart for the shrubbery. Umm... Keith how about this claim that you are about to become The Next Pigpen?

“Well... I mean, I gave up drugs when the doctor told me I had six months to live... I mean—if you're gonna get wasted, get wasted elegantly. “Now the thing is,” he says, fiddling with the shattered remains of a premolar so that a small piece comes away between his fingers (he looks at it querulously), “I'm terrified of dentists. You've only got to 'ave one broken tooth for everyone to think you're a villain—but I'll surprise you all next year. I promise you. I'm just waiting for this new technique to come out—there was a point where I could groove on it but—ah—last month another chunk fell off and since then it's fallen outta favour with me.” *Pete Erskine*

Extracts from Mick Jagger by Anthony Scaduto reprinted by kind permission of WH Allen and Co Ltd.



# You're never alone ... with a Smith and Wesson

It's a balmy monoxide breeze in my house, technically I was angry...  
—As Anthony Scaduto, who spent to \$50,000 on the bones of his book “Mick Jagger” a sell series of This, too, spend to \$50,000 that a whole buncha guns read a things in pr...

1974

JULY - SEPTEMBER

# “Very strange happenings”

The lesser-spotted **JIMMY PAGE** discusses his career to date: art school, studio sessions, even his magickal enthusiasms. **LED ZEPPELIN**, however, remain his all-consuming occupation. “When you’ve written a number,” he says, “it’s the beginning, not the end.”



Jimmy Page: "I'm terrible, sloppy...an illiterate guitarist. But every now and then something good will come through."

## — MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 7 —

**J**IMMY PAGE SAYS he'd sooner listen to Moroccan music than the Top 20, but the day that music stops sending shivers down his spine is the time he'll know that music isn't for him — "And I tell you, that day is a long way off."

He also says: "The musical situation is infinite. It doesn't matter if someone likes the New York Dolls and thinks Joni Mitchell's rubbish, it doesn't matter at all; it's just one personal opinion. Providing one doesn't start ramming it down somebody else's throat and becoming a pundit." Pause, adding to his interviewer, "the ball's in your court."

This makes Mr Page seem a very fair-minded and tolerant person, which he probably is although his reputation suggests someone with a skin as thin and sensitive as membranes. I recall, for instance, the time when he and other members of Led Zeppelin poured beer over the editor of a newspaper whose critic had in turn poured scorn over their latest album.

And in truth he has not been happy with some of the critiques offered by this paper in the past, to the point that his aversion to journalists has everywhere been marked. "It's harder to interview Jimmy Page than Elvis Presley," a PR man confided several weeks ago.

But here we are, sitting in his manager's old office off Oxford Street, London, eating kebabs off a coffee table — celebrating, so to speak, the downfall of the Greek regime. And Mr Page, who had not been interviewed by *MM* for more than three years, was being as nice as pie — the face almost cherubic, the voice boyish and somewhat gleeful, though with an edge of petulance to it when he felt suspicious of the questions.

He still remembers, for example, Nik Cohn's *Sunday Times* colour supplement story on him of a decade ago, when he was a session guitarist: "We don't call him Cohn," he says deadpan, "we call him Con, 'cos I didn't say any of that. He just interpreted what he wanted to say; he's an opportunist." A vaguely disgusted look. "That was my first encounter with journalism."

Undaunted, however, by this reminiscence, over to me with the ball resting in my court and looking for an opening, I admitted to him that I wasn't too fond of the group's lyrics.

"I see. Which ones?" he demanded. Those on *Houses Of The Holy* for one. So didn't I like any of them, he asked? Not particularly. Well, he muses tentatively, that was Plant's department on the fifth; from the fourth LP he didn't write lyrics. On the fourth LP he'd thought the lyrics were fine, because they were objective. On *Houses Of The Holy* it had become more... subjective.

We left it at that. Fifteen love. But then I tried a passing shot down his backhand side: how did it feel being one of the founding fathers, with Jeff Beck, of heavy metal and/or punk rock?

"Is that punk rock or spunk rock?" he asked uncertainly. Pause. "Well, I dunno." Sounding mystified and vaguely upset. 'Father' — what's that mean? Me and Beck? Well... I wasn't it. No one's ever come up with that one before. I dunno what you call punk rock; actually I mean, there was a record that came out in the States just after 'Whole Lotta Love' called 'American Woman,' which was a direct steal. Tell me what it is exactly."

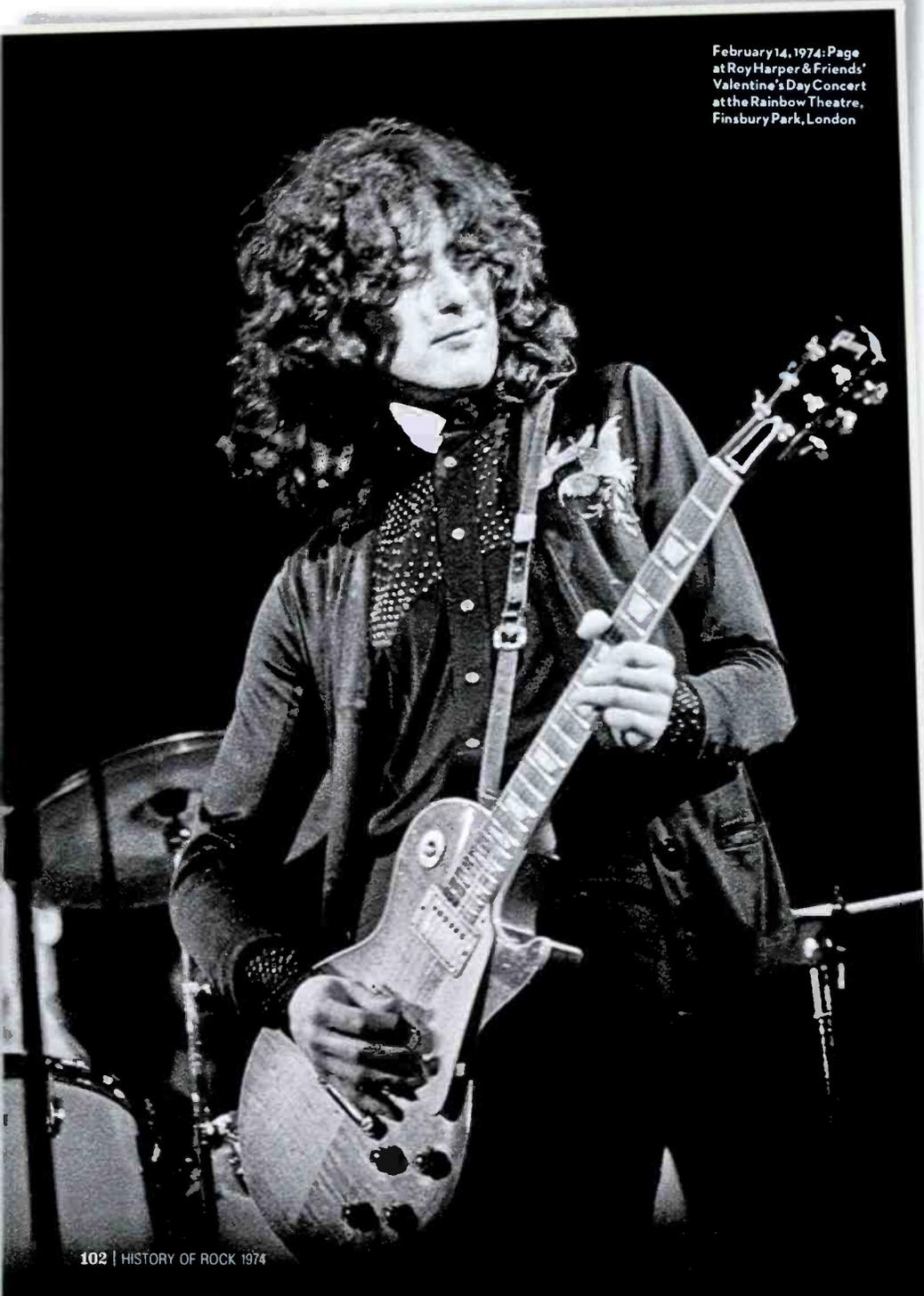
I attempted to explain. Something about an emphasis on volume and riffing, manic fuzz-tone and inarticulate lyrics: a reaction against rock music as art. Mr Page considered carefully. "Let me say one thing first: you're saying making music is an art form."

Well... "You're thinking of groups like Yes there, aren't you?" As a matter of fact, I wasn't. "Well," he pressed on. "I don't particularly hate them. I think Yes must get excited during their rehearsals, but that once the thing's recorded it must be really painful, because they've got to play it note for note. They have a relevance because they're bridging a particular gap, for it's not one that I especially like, although I know I can do it — I had to when I was playing session work, to live within the confines of something. But I couldn't do the same thing every night."

"Now punk rock" — he sat back, contemplatively — "I've never heard the term before, quite honestly. I've heard of 'heavy', and I remember the days gone by when we were equated with Black Sabbath, Grand Funk and Deep Purple, but we're nowhere near any of those."

"We're totally different. I mean, 'Stairway To Heaven' isn't a number that Grand Funk would come up with. Still, I've only ever heard one Grand Funk number, on the radio, so I dunno. I dunno." He looked genuinely puzzled. What about the criticism that Zeppelin took what Cream had and coarsened it?

February 14, 1974: Page at Roy Harper & Friends' Valentine's Day Concert at the Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park, London



"No, I've never read that, either. But whatever Cream had, it destroyed them; it hasn't destroyed us." A touch defiant, bordering on annoyed. "What are you saying, anyway? That they extended numbers and jammed on things? The Yardbirds were doing that before the Cream were even formed!"

That element of the riff, mind you. "Yeah, we play on riffs, but they're not always as straightforward as they might appear. For instance, 'Black Dog' – I'd like to see another band play the riff to that, accurately. There's riffs and riffs." Quite so.

Jimmy Page becomes positively protective on the subject of his band. Because, he says, he's always been totally committed to Led Zeppelin – "as I always will be, I should think" – he's turned down lots of offers to produce other artists, Freddie King among them. Also, he's inordinately proud that the group is still together, touring consistently, after six years, when a zillion others have folded in the meantime – an attitude that permeates the Zeppelin camp but seems to breed as well a mild paranoia about outside reactions to them.

He can't forget that two years ago all the press – so he says – wanted to know when the band was going to split up. They had nothing else to print, he suggests. Furthermore, unlike a great many other musicians within a band, who simply go out and make solo albums, there is apparently no conflict between the public's expectations of him and his own desire as a musician to develop. He never, ever writes material that isn't Zeppelin, he says, although increasingly these days he's thinking harmonically, ie harmonies with the very odd chords, which seems some way away from "Communication Breakdown".

Still, remembering the old days of twin guitarism with Beck, he thinks sometimes he's missing a second guitar on stage. There's a number on the new album called "Ten Years Gone" which he's worked all out at home and has eight guitars going at one point. How do they do that on stage, he asks himself. Then reflects aloud: "We've always managed to get over these things. The most exciting aspect of the band is that when you've written a number and it's been recorded, it's only the beginning, not the end; the number is in the bud, and it's going to blossom on stage. Whether one likes the band or not, that's definitely a fact about us."

He has another theory about Zeppelin: that its personal chemistry mustn't be tampered with, and if you interrupt the teamwork it changes the whole concept. For this reason he won't, as I suggested to him, be producing his good friend Roy Harper, who will probably be joining Zep's label, Swansong, but retaining his manager, Peter Jenner, and John Leckie as producers.

Zeppelin once wrote a song about Harper, "Hats Off To Harper", and Page appeared with Harper at the latter's solo concert at the Rainbow on February 14 ("We maybe played a few wrong notes here and there, but what the hell! The spirit of the thing was great"). He got into Harper, he says, from the first LP, *Sophisticated Beggar* – which he received from a friend who was a representative for Strike Records, Harper's label then – and he liked the way Harper spat out his lyrics.

So when he saw him at the Bath Festival in 1969, he immediately asked him to play "Blackpool" and the friendship sprang up from there. It was another of those tragedies that an album like *Stormcock* should be released and received "no real push whatsoever from EMI", and on and on and on with the LPs that came out after that and were equally as good. But he's always been "pro-Roy".

I wondered about Page's own beginnings. Of course, it was virtually folklore now that for three years in the early '60s he'd been a top session guitarist; there was only he and Big Jim Sullivan among the sessioners, we're led to understand, who could come up with the required rock licks. And he did a few jazz sessions too, with such as Tubby Hayes and Mark Murphy.

He used to be paid seven quid for a three-hour session. Then it went up to nine. In the end he couldn't wait to pack it in. The discipline had been very good, but it ultimately became very restrictive, and he didn't want to end up like a lot of those blokes appeared to be. Maybe they weren't, he adds unconvincingly, quite what he thought they were,

but all the same, he could see himself becoming a nine-till-ten man, or whatever the hours were.

Then again, it was mid-'60s and the Stax sound was moving in. Guitar solos weren't in vogue any more. It was Steve Copper riffs and the saxes were taking over. He just got fed up. He wasn't playing properly any more. So in 1965 he joined The Yardbirds.

Nobody had asked him; he'd volunteered, although there'd been offers in the past. Bassist Paul Samwell-Smith had left, and he "knew Geoffrey well", so he's just upped and joined, out of boredom, chiefly. It lasted until the summer of '68 and then he began to think about Zeppelin.

But the sessions had had their productive, or at least historically interesting, moments. It was during the session period, for instance, that he'd picked up on applying a violin bow to the guitar string. A violinist had suggested it: "I told him, 'You're out of your mind.' But I had a go, and it worked, so I started to develop it. I didn't really get a chance to get into it until I was in The Yardbirds." He tried to recall: "I did do it on one session record, but I don't remember what it was now."

Who could he recall playing for? Well, there'd certainly been the early Kinks records, despite what Ray Davies had said about him only playing tambourine. "That's bollocks! I played on a whole LP and on some of the singles, too. I played second guitar mostly, but I did do certain licks that appeared as well. It was no big deal, though. They made the big deal out of it. I wasn't shouting over it."

For some reason he could also recollect sessions with Carter-Lewis & the Southerners – who went on to become The Ivy League – with Viv Prince on drums. And a radio broadcast with them (but no live gigs). But in the beginning, before the sessions, it was Neil Christian & the Crusaders, and him not yet 16 and still at school. Imagine it: Neil and young Jimmy and the rest had once actually played at some Jewish festival – they'd booked Christian & the Crusaders! Mr Page laughs gleefully, as if it were some *Just William* prank.

Anyhow, he was with them until one day he collapsed and gave it up. Only 15, and the nights on the road took their toll – he kept getting glandular fever – and when he was about 18 it finally hit him. Plus a non-medical factor: the Berry and Diddley stuff they were doing was not being unanimously received. So he blew it out and went to art school. Most of it spent at Sutton – which was near his home town of Epsom – together with a short spell at Croydon. Thus he joined the long line of art school guitarists: Richard, Clapton, Townshend, Beck, Davies, ad infinitum, ad nauseum.

Only thing was he hit the guitar and stuck to harmonica, so his fellow students wouldn't expect him to play in the lunch hour. Could he, I interrupted, remember his first guitar?

Yes, he could. It was a Spanish, probably a real one, but steel-strung, which someone had given his parents for him; and then after that he'd had a Hofner. In fact, he supposed the reason he'd become a guitarist was that it was the only thing not taught at school, where he'd studiously learned how to be a rebel. Art school, which lasted for 18 months, was much better; a perfect education for learning why he was rebelling.

No, actually, that wasn't quite true. At Sutton he'd developed a real interest, he says, in the »

“Bollocks! I played on the Kinks LP and some of the singles, too”

INSIDE PAGE

that, accurately. There's riffs and riffs." Quite so. Jimmy Page becomes positively protective on the subject of his band. Because, he says – wanted to know when the band was going to

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way away from "Com-

Pre-Raphaelites, and from then on, art nouveau, of which he has a collection in his house down in Sussex. But he finally discovered he was going to be a better musician than artist, and here lay the rub. He quit, and went jamming around on the early London scene, often at the Marquee, where Cyril Davies was an eminence.

Even now he rates that particular London era above the Merseyside explosion, and certainly believes early Stones eclipsed early Beatles. He remembers the first London gig of The Beatles, at Leyton Baths, and they died a death; he's emphatic. He was with the Crusaders at that time, but preparing to jack it in, so it's quite clear in his mind.

"They weren't any better than any of the London-based bands at all. It was their songwriting that came through, when they stopped doing 'Hey, Mr Postman' and things like that. But it even happened in London, not up in the north.

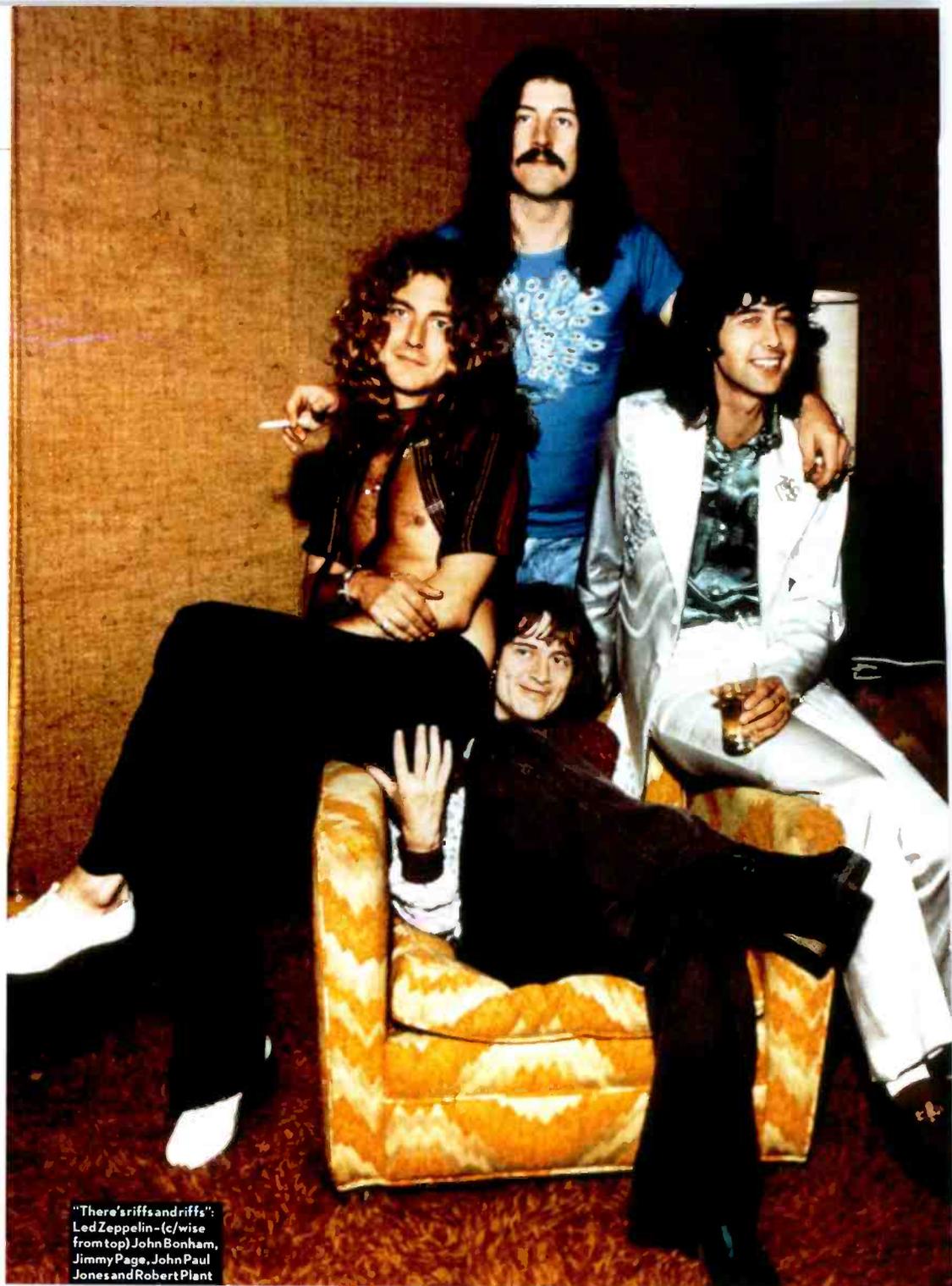
"The blues came through, and it's the blues you relate to the later stuff, the Hendrixes and the Creams and all that, more than The Beatles' stuff. But you can relate The Beatles to the psychedelic era. That's why I don't think The Beatles really became important until *Revolver*."

Notwithstanding all this excitement in the capital, young Page opted for session work, because, he says, blues and the sort of rock he liked had no chance then of getting in the charts. It was a very crafty number. Big Jim Sullivan had three times as much work as he could handle, so Page nipped in. One assumes he was feeling the insecurity of the times. Since that Marquee period, at any rate, he's never been one for just jamming around, even during the heyday of the British blues when musicians were going to clubs with their guitars. OK, but how did he define himself as a guitarist?

He permits himself a modest smile. "Terrible. Really sloppy. I'm just totally uneducated. An illiterate guitarist, really. But it doesn't make any difference, because every now and then something good will come through. I'm not a schooled guitarist, by any means. And I don't read - except for the musical equivalent of a seven-year-old. But that's how it was on the sessions: if there was any bit I wasn't quite sure about, by the time they were ready to count in I'd got it off."

I said that to me he had a good sense of the dynamics of rhythm. "Dynamics, yeah, but that's something else. I would put that more on an emotional plane"... but that Beck had a more fluid style. He shook his head slowly.

"When you see Beck and he's good - and I know he's an erratic player - then he's the best. But there's no guarantee you're gonna see him at his best, that's the trouble. I just know that you



"There's riffs and riffs": Led Zeppelin - (c/wise from top) John Bonham, Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones and Robert Plant

can see Beck and there wouldn't be anyone else to touch him. Maybe I'm attempting to be more consistent."

Duane Allman? "Well, the tragedy of Duane Allman was that he died at the point he was really starting to lift off. I wasn't too knocked out with him at the beginning, but he was getting better and better as he went on."

Page, of course, cut Eric Clapton for Immediate with "Telephone Blues" and "Witch Doctor", though the recordings, he says, weren't compiled under his jurisdiction; but Clapton, he thinks, was definitely the first one to "really get the essence".

Or maybe it was Geoff Bradford, the blues guitarist who used to play at the London blues/folk club the Roundhouse, in the late '50s and early '60s. He's not so sure, but it was possibly Clapton - the first one anyway to successfully take from the Americans the art of finger tremelo, while all around him guitarists were concentrating on bottleneck slide. He was an innovator.

And Hendrix?

Page actually beams: "Oh - he was out of this galaxy, he really was. I put his stuff on still and it's just so advanced of anything else, in my estimation. Absolutely brilliant."

"I don't think The Beatles really became important until *Revolver*"

And to think that he never ever played with him, only met him once and saw him play just on film – Pennabaker's *Monterey Pop Festival* – and that in German! It – the film, that is – reduced him to tears all the same. He adds suddenly: "But funnily enough I did happen to see a section from *Rainbow Bridge*, and the contrast between that and the enthusiasm of the other – oh boy, what a change! He just looks so fed up, as if he's been hustled into something he just doesn't want to do."

Pause. "You know, I think Chris Welch's concept of Hendrix is a bit off the beam. People always wanted to see him cavorting about the stage doing his black Elvis Presley bit, and couldn't take him when he didn't. I don't see that at all. He's wrong there."

"It's a shame he got such a hammering from the press. That time, during the economics of rock, I remember it so clearly! It was the time when we more or less began, doing our early tour dates, and he'd done a date for \$100,000 or something very large, and there was all this big thing about it. From that point on, he went through that thing of not being sure of his identity and going through the all-black group, and then chopping and changing. He didn't quite know where he was." He stopped, thoughtfully. "But I've a feeling that just at the end there, he'd sorted it all out within himself."

I mentioned Robin Trower.

"Yeah." He was noncommittal. "It's nice. But, y'know, that's just one little aspect of Hendrix's style."

He went on to say that he hadn't had any particular guitar hero, he'd liked so many different styles. Perhaps Paco Peña for flamenco, Otis Rush for blues, and James Burton in the rock 'n' roll area – he did so hate to make categories, though.

**A**T THIS POINT Mr Page was beginning to look a little disgruntled about all these references to his past, a fact borne out at the end of our last conversation when he commented that the less of the past the better. Perhaps it made him feel old.

So I started in, therefore, on the subject of Aleister Crowley, the sex-magician, that "dreadful young man" who purported to be the reincarnated spirit of Eliphas Levi. Page has a wide collection of Crowley's porn-magic books, and occupies as well the Beast's one-time home on the shores of Loch Ness, Boleskine House, where during Crowley's time there the lodgekeeper is said to have gone mad from witnessing "semi-materialised demons" (read *Confessions Of Aleister Crowley*).

Page exclaimed: "Oh, you've been reading the *Sunday Express*" (which was untrue). "Listen, they only put that nonsense in because they were in competition with Mick Jagger's revelations in the *News Of The World*."

In fact the place, which he'd had four years now, was being restored, and "some absurd little man" had told him he could help identify a certain staircase and had gone up there; the next thing he was aware of was this... article. Yes, Crowley had lived there. He'd called himself the Laird Of Boleskine and used to wait in the bushes and attack people with all his friends dressed up in Highland regalia.

He'd been full of theatre. As for the lodgekeeper, that was nothing. The house was built on the site of a kirk, dating possibly from the 10th century, that had been burned down with all its congregation. From that point on there'd always been "very, very strange happenings there". Crowley's presence had just been a small part of it.

There had been suicides there, bankruptcies, all kinds of unfortunate occurrences. A huge swindle had occurred there in the 1960s involving George Sanders, the actor, the theme of which was that one spent a pound and invested in a piglet, which was in turn fattened up and sold at a market for a large return.

What happened was that one of the directors took off to France with all the money – and close to a million pounds had apparently been invested. They'd built some of the piggery at Boleskine already, but the whole enterprise was suddenly discovered to be a swindle.

Page broke off. Sanders' dying words, he reminded me, had been that "the whole world is a cesspit". He seemed to think it was relevant.

Anyhow, so now he'd had a preservation order put on the building because the pig people had destroyed a part. Nobody else had wanted it; it was in such a state of decay when he found it, and he hadn't originally intended to buy, only it was so fascinating. I supposed there were all kinds of local traditions and superstitions.

"Superstitions, yeah. Still there. Unbelievable." He drew the word out. "But it's not an unfriendly place when you walk into it. It just seems to have this thing..."

"You see, people aren't used to total quiet, and that's what it is there. There was this guy who shot himself – described in the local scandal paper as a 'two-bottle-a-day man'. A retired colonel, used to institutional life and barracks background, people marching up and down – and suddenly he's sitting there in peace and quiet, with his sister... it probably just got on his nerves."

"But I won't get into all that. All I'm saying is that it's a really interesting house, and a perfect place to go when one starts getting wound up by the clock."

And Crowley, wasn't he a charlatan, as most considered?

A swift rejoinder. "No, I think he was undiscovered genius of the 20th century." Page began to look rather forbidding.

"I'm saying no more about him. Y'know, Pete Townshend always mentions Meher Baba, but I just don't want to go about telling everybody anything about Crowley. That's all I'm saying." Why, I persisted?

"From what I've read," he replied shortly, "and I haven't just read one or two books, I've done a lot of research – and as far as the paper's sensationalism goes it doesn't bear a ny

relevance to the man whatsoever. No, don't do any spouting."

End of that conversation. But not wholly divorced from the subject is the fact that he's been working, at home, on a score for Kenneth Anger's film, *Lucifer Rising*, a lot of which, he says, has been shot in Cairo.

"In twilight," he adds. "Dawning of the New Age, you know; Lucifer being the Light-Bearer and not Satan, as in Christian terms."

He became interested in distinction. "Let's face it, when the Church started it was out to eliminate any sort of... not just pagan gods, but anything that was standing in its way. You know the atrocities of the Church. The power of the Church today, as well. I mean, even though it's crumbling, thank God, they're still knocking down Chelsea and bugging things up." He was referring to church-owned land in that particular borough. What else had he been working on?

Well, there was a film of the band, shot mostly in the States during their last tour, and the new album, a double – "There's quite a lot of long numbers on it." They'd hoped the album was going to be out in September, but no way now; it and the film kept cutting across each other.

The film was a documentary?

"Oh no, only in that it documents a moment in time. It's a musical. Fantasy sections are included as well – some tongue-in-cheek, others more serious."

The bit on Bonzo, apparently, was all action-dynamite stuff, with rolling drums, dragsters – that kind of thing. But that section had been done by a director whom they'd since replaced – "He'd go the priorities a bit mixed up, and he missed a lot of stuff as well." So they'd brought in an Australian, Peter Clifton, who'd worked with the Stones, Floyd and Hendrix, he believed.

The film, he said, would define the characters of each member of the band: "You know, actually present the more human side of Zeppelin, because nobody really seems to know that much about us as far as offstage goes."

I said that to me Zeppelin always appeared as four Dervishes, looning through the American continent raping women and plundering hotels.

The whirling Dervish! He screamed with laughter. Actually, he mused after the laughter had subsided, their last tour had been really tame. But their reputations far exceeded them, to the point where they were banned from the Speakeasy for others' actions.

But living out of a suitcase, you know, inevitably brought on road fever, and that's when the damage was done. Everybody had been through that madness, from rock musicians to the Rugby Lions.

And the present?

Well, his personal plans were to get every energy going into Swansong; he'd given us a run for our money. And the album and the film track, of course. "And then I think I'll start my search for an angel with a broken wing." He smiled his cherubic smile.

What did that mean?

"What it says," he answered mysteriously. *Michael Watts* •

## "Crowley was the undiscovered genius of the 20th century"

# “I’ve got perspective now”

A new album. UFO sightings. Hanging with Elton and Harry Nilsson. How does **JOHN LENNON** have time to record, much less contemplate a Beatles reunion? “I’m going to be an ex-Beatle for the rest of my life,” he says. “I might as well enjoy it.”

— MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 14 —

**I**N THE RECORD Plant studios in New York, John Lennon is putting the finishing touches to his next album. Reaching a track called “Scared”, he suddenly decides there’s something missing. “Sound effects! Let’s get a creaking door! Or a dog barking. No—wolves howling. It’d sound great if we could kick it off with a lonely sort of cry from a wolf...”

A messenger leaves and within 15 minutes is back with two albums. From *The Chilling Thrilling Sounds Of The Haunted House*, John listens to the eerie creaking door, and decides that both this and the sound of thunder and lightning crashes are overstated. He moves on impatiently to the second album, *The Music And Language Of The Wolves*.

“Great, that’s it. Put that at the start of ‘Scared’, then,” he tells an engineer.

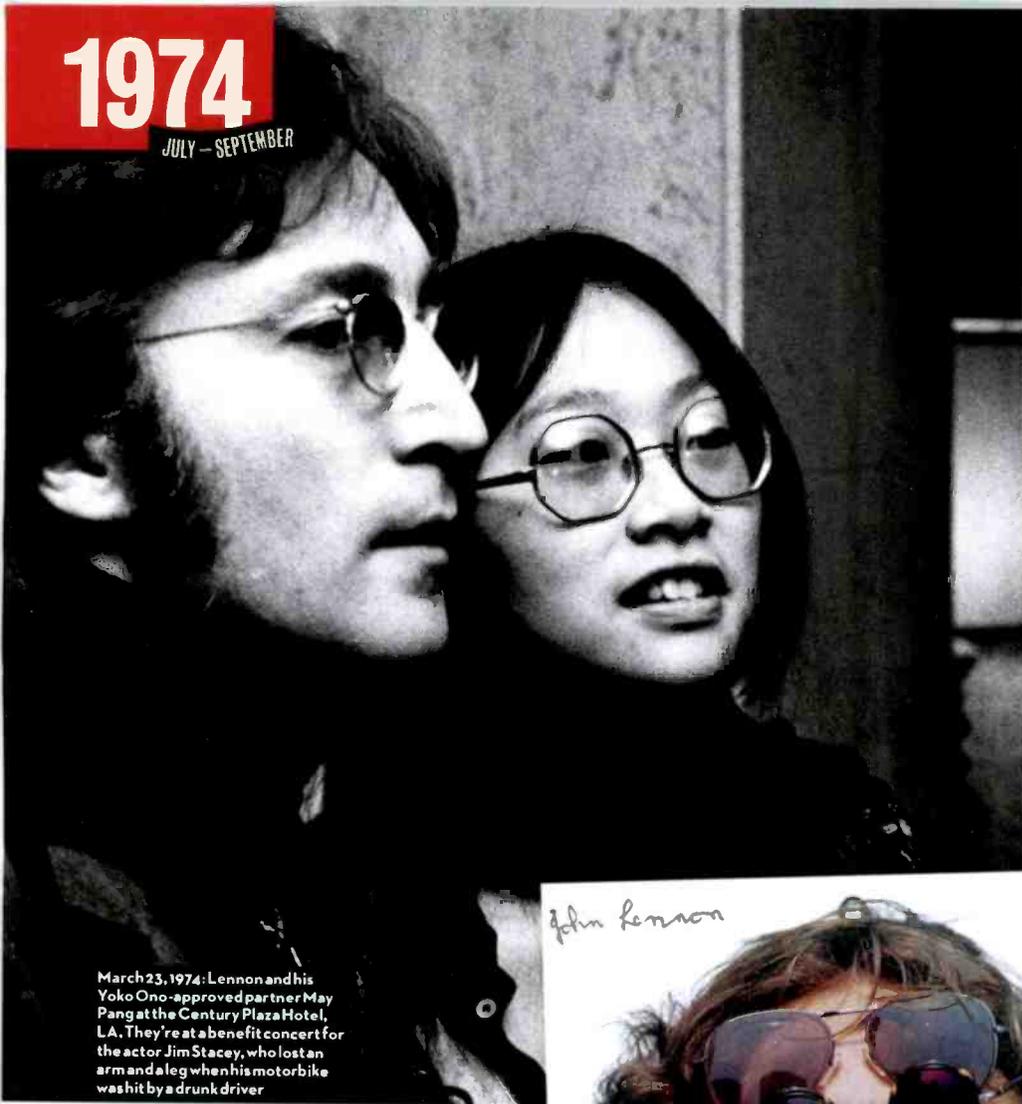
Three hours later, and we are listening to the playback of the track with the howling wolf thrown in at the start of “Scared.” It’s the first time John had heard the new album played right through. He’s apprehensive, but the wolf gimmick has clearly knocked him out, and placed as it is at the start of the track, it’s a winning move.

He smiles, for he seems to realize that here is an album that will please even the cynics who bashed *Mind Games*. It’s a beautiful »

© DAVID CLAY



October 24, 1974:  
John Lennon  
photographed in  
Hell's Kitchen,  
New York City



March 23, 1974: Lennon and his Yoko Ono-approved partner May Pang at the Century Plaza Hotel, L.A. They're at a benefit concert for the actor Jim Stacey, who lost an arm and a leg when his motorbike was hit by a drunk driver

production, completed in six weeks' studio work – "That's fast. I've been working at the speed of light" – and it's due out in America and Britain on September 16. The album is called *Walls And Bridges*. Why?

"Walls you walk into and bridges you can cross over. Deep stuff, huh?"

Three years after his self-imposed exile in the US, John Lennon is as unblemished a character as you'd expect to find in a man who has been through more personal changes than a mad chameleon. He's been through a severe de-Beatling process, to the point where now he can reflect on the past and he enjoys talking about the old days. Yet for all the mellowing of this erratic genius, there are still flashes of wry or scathing wit that will forever make him unmissable. Lennon has never been known to provide questioners with a stock response.

He's 34 next month and rather aware of his age. Older, wiser, but with no real change of stance. His ideals are the same as they were, but he has learned more tolerance of people, if not of the system. And as it has been evident through the years, whatever it is that's needed to be a fully qualified rock'n'roller, then John Lennon has it. A tortured life and a brain like a waterfall, two rocky marriages, grit, a loud mouth, remorse after his drunken behaviour – it's surely all the very stuff rock stars are made of.

This had been a hard day for John. "Notice I've got me suit on? I've been to court this morning for another round in the ritual" (his long fight to get a green card which will allow him free access to the States, for residence or visits). "It's crazy, y'know, if they weren't making it so hard for me to stay here, I'd be off. They're just MAKING me dig in and win. That's what I'm like, a young kid. If someone says you can't do something, I just want to do it. Probably as soon as they say I can stay, I'll go."

John Lennon

Walls and Bridges



then to Caribou and sang on his song called 'One Day At A Time'. It turned out so good that he said he might put that and 'Lucy...' out as a double A-side, but I can't see our track beating 'Lucy...'"

John is wearing a neat brown suit and his lapel bears a badge given to him by ace shopper Elton. It's a motif of an open sandwich with half an apple between bread slices, and Lennon is amused at the people who keep asking him for the hidden meaning.

"It's just Elton who found it and gave it to me. It's just nothing, but you know what they're like – people keep saying daft things like they always did, like: 'Do you own half of Apple, then?'"

We talked of the imminent Beatles fans' convention in New York, for which hundreds of people are going from all over the world to a two-day festival of talks and films and selling of Beatles bits and pieces at the Commodore Hotel. Do you regret being a Beatle and having to live with it forever, John?

"No, no, no," he answered and he meant it. "I'm going to be an ex-Beatle for the rest of my life, so I might as well enjoy it, and I'm just getting round to being able to stand back and see what happened. A couple of years ago I might have given everybody the impression I hate it all, but that was then. I was talking

Lennon is being refused a green card by the US government because he was convicted of possessing drugs in Britain. But the great groundswell of American opinion is in favour of granting him permission to stay. The turbulence of a life like this, living in a country which officially says, "Get out," has naturally worked well on Lennon's artistic sense. We walked outside Studio C while the engineers sorted out his tapes, and John sat down to contemplate the day's courtroom show, and the press and TV cameras that met him on his exit from the court.

"Funny thing, I almost enjoyed it. Just like the old days, cameras and questions and things. It's quite good for me – the more unsettled I am, the better I like it. When I feel settled down, there's nothing to say, can't write a word. I need to be on edge to work."

He's impressed with how well he's put his new album together.

"I got the musicians down here two days before recording for some run-throughs, and it made a colossal difference. Who's on it? Well,

Elton John came in and sang on one and played piano on another. There's Jim Keltner, Klaus Voormann, Nicky Hopkins, Ken Asher who produced Paul Williams, and Jesse Ed Davis, on guitar. The percussion guy is Arthur Jenkins, and there's the horn section: Bobby Keys, Steve Madaio, Howard Johnson and Frankie and Ronnie and the string section, and Harry Nilsson. He sings with me on 'Old Dirt Road'.

"Elton was great. I like him and what he does. He came in here on his way to Caribou and said he was going to do 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' for his next single. Christ, he pours the stuff out. He's working now on his album that's coming out next May! I went down to LA and

"If they weren't making it so hard to stay here, I'd be off"

when I was straight out of therapy and I'd been mentally stripped bare and I just wanted to shoot my mouth off to clear it all away. Now it's different.

"When I slagged off the Beatle thing in the papers, it was like divorce pangs, and me being me it was blast this and fuck that, and it was just like the old days in the *MM*, you know, 'Lennon Blasts Hollies' on the back page. You know, I've always had a bit of a mouth and I've got to live up to it. *Daily Mirror*: 'Lennon beats up local DJ at Paul's 21st birthday party'. Then we had that fight that Paul and me had through the *MM*, but it was all a period I had to go through.

"Now, we've all got it out and it's cool. I can see The Beatles from a new point of view. Can't remember much of what happened, little bits here and there, but I've started taking an interest in what went on while I was in that fish tank. It must have been incredible! I'm into collecting memorabilia as well. Elton came in with these gifts, like stills from the *Yellow Submarine* drawings and they're great. He gave me these four dolls. I thought, 'Christ, what's this, an ex-Beatle collecting Beatle dolls?' But why not? It's history, man, history!

"I went through a phase of hating all those years and having to smile when I didn't want to smile, but that was the life I chose, and now I'm out of it, it's great to look back on it, man. Great!

"I was thinking only recently – why haven't I ever considered the good times instead of moaning about what we had to go through? And Paul was here and we spent two or three nights together talking about the old days and it was cool, seeing what each other remembered from Hamburg and Liverpool.

"So 'see, all that happened when I blew my mouth off was that it was an abscess bursting, except that mine as usual burst in public.

"When we did a tour as The Beatles, we hated it and loved it. There were great nights and lousy nights. One of the things about the therapy I went through a few years ago is that it cleans you by forcing you to get rid of the negatives in your head. It wasn't all that pie and cookies being a Beatle, there were highs and lows, but the trouble is people just wanted bigmouth Lennon to shout about the lows. So I made a quick trip to uncover the hidden stones of my mind, and a lot of the bats flew and some of them are going to have to stay. I've got perspective now, that's a fact."

**T**O SOME OF us who have enjoyed the irrational madness of a less balanced Lennon, the new one might come as an unnerving experience. But out re-entry to Studio C proved that, above all, his music is intact and even richer from the years of turmoil.

"This is an unconcept album. I'll never make a concept album. I just like records," said John, and the engineer played back a raunchy instrumental track called "Beefy Jerky" [sic] which John named as a spoof on Booker T's "Green Onions". Half an hour passes and at last the record is ready for a complete play-through, ready for John to decide on the order of tracks.

"This is always one of the hardest parts of it for me," John says. "Getting them in sequence for correct contrast is vital. "Like with you and the *MM* – if you don't put this article on the right page, like the front page, then it's all lost. Well, with these songs, they've got to be in the right order."

The album has on it "Number Nine Dream"/"Beefy Jerky"/"Scared" – with a great tune and the sounds of crying wolves before these immortal words: "You don't have to worry/In heaven or hell I just dance to the music/You do it so well..." – "Bless You"/"Surprise Surprise (Sweet Bird Of Paradox)" with Elton on vocal/"Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out" (no relation to the Bessie Smith classic but equally spinechilling, a majestic track)/"Going Down On Love"/"Whatever Gets You Through The Night" (with Elton on piano)/"Steel And Glass"/"What You Got"/"Old Dirt Road" (with Harry Nilsson on vocal and co-writer).

Topping it off is a short burst of "Ya Ya", featuring John's

11-year-old son Julian on drums. Julian was visiting his father in New York and dropped by to lend a hand, and they chose this old Lee Dorsey track.

There's a beautiful, singing guitar break by Jesse Ed Davis on "Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out", and as the standout track it will close the album. Lennon listened intently to all the songs and we totalled the playing time to 42 minutes, 32 seconds.

"Great – I've only got just over two minutes to cut. No trouble. I was really worried that it would be too long, and I just like albums, not triples or double albums. One album's long enough for me to do what I can."

The engineers said the record was a beauty, John collected the tapes to go home and place them in order, and we were out into the hot New York night air at 9.30.

**T**AXI! WE'RE OFF to John's flat, and it strikes me as a bizarre contrast with the police-protected limousine rides we shared 10 years ago in various parts of the world, when Beatlemania ruled. Do you get cabs often in New York, John?

"Yeah, all the time. I used to get paranoid about going out, but then I found out all the paranoia was in my own head – nobody cares much. There's no hassles here in New York; I get 'em all the time. Not in California so much – they're still looking for stars there."

One cabbie said to John: "Hey, aren't you John Lennon?" and Lennon replied: "I wish I had his money."

He looks around at the flickering city lights as our cab drives off, and tells me what it is about aggressive New York that he finds so compelling: "It's all here. It's just alive. There's a buzz here, and I like the way you can do anything or get anything you want at any time. It's ALIVE, y'know. It's where the world's at just

now and I want to be here. I mean, years ago it was Rome, and if I'd been around then I'd have wanted to be there when it was falling.

"New York may well be falling right now – it sometimes feels like it – but I know it's the right place at this time. I think if I couldn't live here I'd have to make it Paris. I love the French; they're so bloody rude. But New York's right – we'll get home now and have the TV on and cable TV films for hours and hours. Better than the BBC Light Orchestra, eh?

"Oh, and Christ, then there was Watergate! Any country that produces that has got to be number one. I sat watching every bit of it on TV and couldn't believe it. When they kept asking questions and the guy kept replying, 'That is inoperative.' Everything they were asked that was meant to make 'em tell the truth, they said, 'That is inoperative.' I'm gonna try it when they start asking me hard questions. 'Sorry, but that's inoperative.'"

John cherished the fact that he had remembered this crucial line. "Yeah," he whispered, "I've gotta remember that! Inoperative!"

Just before we arrived at John's flat, he told of his split with Yoko. "Yoko and I, we had this little... thing. She's still living in our house, but I've »

## "When I slagged off the Beatle thing, it was like divorce pangs"



# LENNON ~ a night in the life

moved into this flat. I still love her, but we're two artists and we found it hard living together. We'll see what happens. I still speak to her on the phone most days. She phoned me from London the other day and said, 'Hey, it's nice here. Remember the autumn with all the leaves? It's nice.' I said, 'What are you trying to say, Yoko? I know it's nice, but are you trying to unsettle me in New York? It's nice here – remember this noise?'"

**A**RRIVAL AT JOHN'S penthouse flat, to be greeted by white and black kittens, named Major and Minor. John's friend May Pang is there, and in yet another time-warp, the record playing is The Beatles singing "How Do You Do It?". They made it before "Love Me Do," John explains, but decided on "Love Me Do" as their first EMI single and gave "How Do You Do" as a song to Gerry & The Pacemakers. Sounds oddly primitive.

On the way up in the elevator, Lennon had warned me that he had a strange experience to relate. Being of sound mind and judgement, he had, the other day, seen a flying saucer while standing naked on his roof. "Yes, I know what you're thinking. I'm as crazy as my publicity always said I was? But no. Listen. This is true."

He then described how he was standing, starkers, by the window leading on to the roof when the oval-shaped object started flying from left to right. He had called May, who confirmed that he was not seeing things, and they saw a red light on top of the flying saucer. They rushed inside, phoned the cops, and police said others had reported a sighting, too.

John and May got their telescope out, took pictures, and after about 20 minutes the object disappeared over the East River and behind the United Nations building, over which it might be supposed the "visitors" were carrying out some sort of research.

I didn't say much and Lennon threw his hands up in despair. "They all think I'm potty. It was there. I didn't believe it, either. It was THERE." May nodded. And you'd not been smoking or drinking, I asked?

"No, God's honest truth. I only do that at weekends or when I see Harry Nilsson."

John was tired and hungry after a non-eating day in which he had been in court, held a press conference, and then completed his album. But he was still visibly "up" in mood and wanted to do things, talk, play records, watch TV, eat. He changed out of his "court suit" into casuals and lay on the bed of the spartan, one-roomed flat.

Well, here comes the million-dollar question the world keeps asking. Are The Beatles ever going to reform, John?

"No," he said quickly. "What for? We did it all. Christ, we can't even get the four of us together for a meeting, let alone play! The other month, Paul and Ringo and me met in LA, and we wanted George there but they wouldn't let him in at that time. He still had some trouble getting in and out of the States because of his bust years ago."

"So there were three of us and everybody says, 'Beatles getting back, hey hey!' We can't even MEET, man!"

Why had they wanted to meet?

"To settle all the money thing. We all agreed how to do it; now it's up to the lawyers to sort it out and tell us whether what we agreed is practical. That's all. We just want to make sure we all get paid. What a fucking mess."

All four ex-Beatles, he said, were destined for a life of ups and downs in battles with authority. "We're in, then we're out. It's my turn while I fight New York to be out. George will be OK soon – he's doing a tour of America [the one with Ravi Shankar in the autumn] and he'll be OK for a while. You know, people'll want his autograph and they'll smile at him and so it'll be OK."

"It goes like that for all of us. In waves. Y'know when some critics panned *Mind Games* they were really knocking *Some Time In New York City*, reviewing me and Yoko, who they've always hated. Well, *Mind Games* wasn't the best album in the world, but it went gold! And it wasn't all bad. Hey, I'm hungry. Let's get some food in."

Photographer Bob Gruen has arrived now, and a Chinese dinner is agreed upon. Bob phones a restaurant called Jade East, and within about half an hour the splendid meal has arrived. Lennon, a true media freak, has applied himself to watching TV, and whizzes through the channels quickly all

the time with the hand controls while he's lying on the bed and eating.

It's easy to see what it is about New York TV that John loves. It's all there: umpteen channels all pouring out good material, musically and otherwise. During the night, we flicked from channel to channel and saw act after act, including The Hues Corporation, The Temptations, O'Jays, Flash Cadillac, whose old-fashioned rock theatrics made John laugh out loud (rare), and the act John kept wanting to see, Chris Jagger.

"It must be awful," said John when Jagger junior eventually hit the screen. "Living with being a Jagger for the rest of your life and trying to make it as an act. He's OK, though." Chris' band and his playing were indeed good, though the mouth shape and postures demanded comparison with Mick. "Must be awful," John kept repeating.

But he has the choice of changing his name if he didn't want to cash in on who he was, I said. Like Mike McGear did.

"Ah," John countered, "but if he did that he probably wouldn't get a booking in the first place."

Lennon is very anxious to see his TV appearance outside the courtroom, filmed earlier that day. Watching Lennon watch himself on TV was weird. As he lay on the bed munching Chinese beef and mixed veg, watching himself on TV coming out of court, he said: "Now that seems a sane young man to me. Should definitely be allowed in to stay in New York."

His TV news clip was really quite amusing and his performance rated five stars. Journalists asked him lots of questions:

"What the odds are of you winning the fight to stay in New York, John?"

"Ninety-nine to one in favour."

"Why?"

"Because I'm overconfident, as usual."

"Why do you want to stay in New York?"

"Because it's NICE here, I LIKE it here. Don't you?"

"What's wrong with Britain, then?" asked a British reporter.

"Nothing's wrong with Britain – typically British question! If they gave me a green card, I can go and see it again, visit my family." (Earlier in the evening there were signs that John had become an enthusiastic father, showing me with affection a picture of his son Julian and recounting how he had taken him round New York showing him the billboards.)

When the TV clip is over, John amplifies on his need to get that green card from the US government.

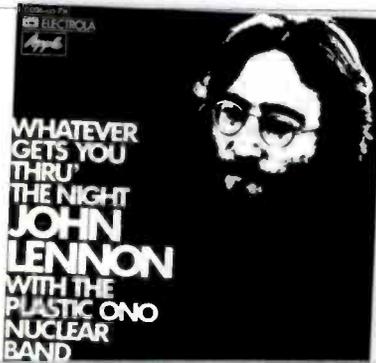
"It's not the tax – you pay only a little less here than you do in Britain. If it was the money I'd move to Switzerland. I want to be able to move around. LA, Paris, London, New York – I like change. I'd like to go to South America, that's somewhere I've never been to. New York is now, that's because it's in the air. I've got nothing against England – no, make that Britain. I've

heard it's in a bit of a mess now, but it was still pretty healthy when I left it, so don't let them come all that 'leaving the sinking ship' stuff. It was a float when I left! Anyway, there's still great music coming out of Britain."

The TV newscast ended with John giving the two-fingered peace sign and saying: "Amnesty. Amnesty!" He came over well, and he seemed quite happy about his performance. "First time I've seen myself on TV for three years."

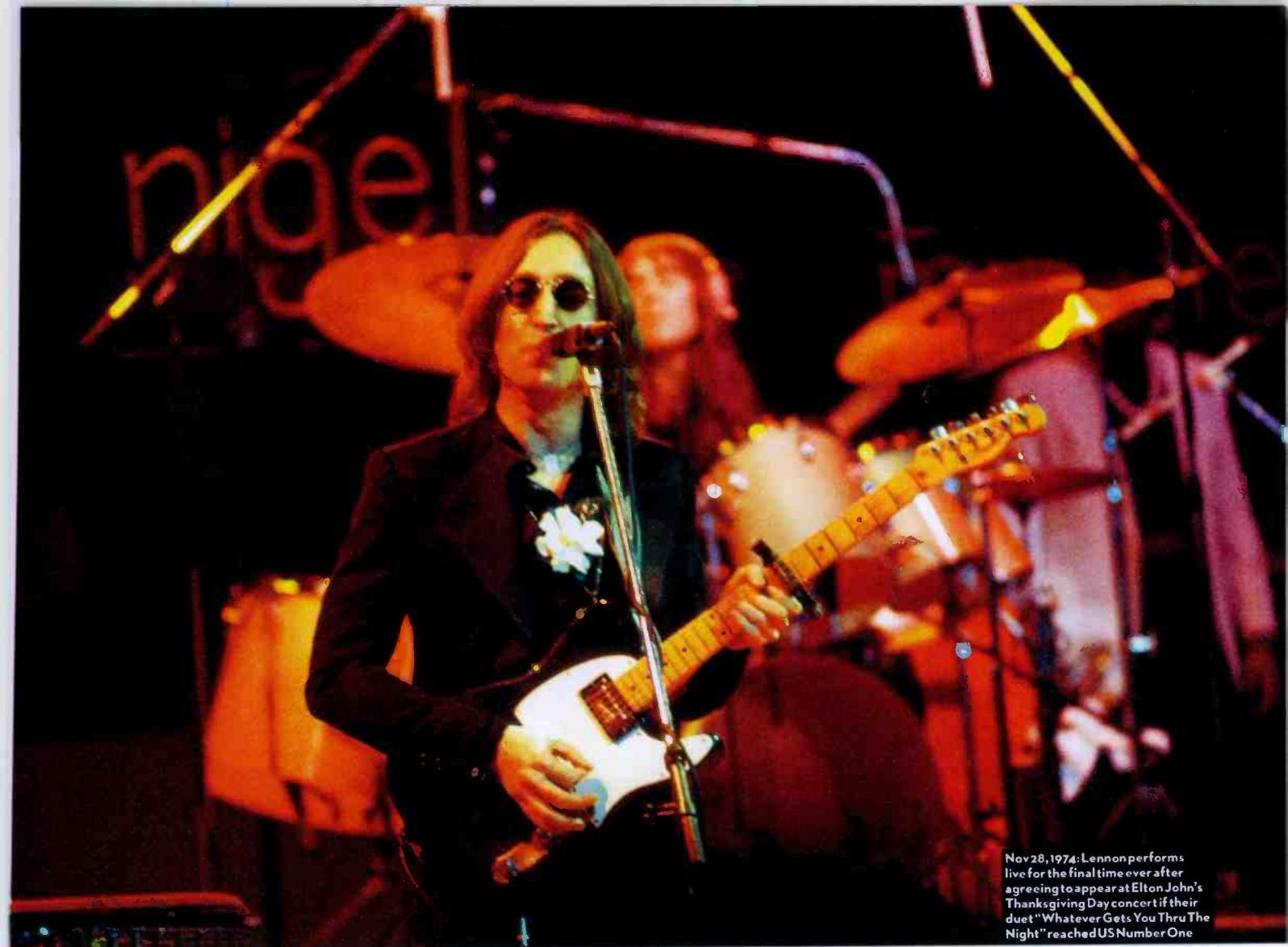
His lawyer, incidentally, believes that Lennon can stay in New York for two years fighting the deportation order.

"*Mind Games* wasn't the best album in the world, but it went gold!"



WHATEVER GETS YOU THRU' THE NIGHT JOHN LENNON WITH THE PLASTIC ONO NUCLEAR BAND

**W**ETALK OF the Beatles fans' festival planned for New York, and the possibility of his attendance, or about sending a life-size dummy of himself. He intends to send a few things along as mementoes, and he wants May to go and buy him a few things, too, as his collection of Beatles paraphernalia isn't as strong as he would like. Boot legs, for example. Lennon has a few Beatle bootlegs, and though he sees them as a rough deal for the record business,



Nov 28, 1974: Lennon performs live for the final time ever after agreeing to appear at Elton John's Thanksgiving Day concert if their duet "Whatever Gets You Thru The Night" reached US Number One

he loves them as a fan. "Keeps the industry on its toes, I think. The one of The Beatles in Sweden, I think it was – it's better than some of the Beatles records, in parts."

The two-day Beatle fans' convention, held to mark the 10th anniversary of their invasion of America, really fascinates John. Apple is sending two films never before seen in America – *Magical Mystery Tour* and *The Beatles At Shea Stadium* – that The Beatles made for TV.

But as for all four Beatles going to the Beatlefest – no. "Sometimes," said John, "I think it would be nice for us to do something like that, but when you can't even get all four of us together, for a meeting, what chance is there? It's like a hangover from the '60s: the Blue Meanies are still trying to beat up Sergeant Pepper. They don't seem to want us to be happy or together. The other draggy thing is that as soon as one or two of us meets, people say it's a Beatles reunion and they're all broke or something and they need the money and they say we hate each other!"

Lennon has been living in New York for three years, occasionally driving to Los Angeles and seeing, as he puts it, a hundred different countries en route. "America is so different from state to state, I can't get bored," he continued. "I'd like to see China – all over the world, in fact, but all that's out and I can't leave here until I win the court case. So much to DO here. I still haven't seen Elvis. I had tickets once, but I was on the wrong coast. Crazy. I'd like to see the Stones, Bowie and Elton – but I get nervous of going to these shows when I think of standing around backstage sprinkled with groupies and all the terrible hangers-on. The only time I'd willingly do a backstage number is if somebody I liked said he wanted me to be seen there to help him. I'd go through it for a friend."

That admission seemed to typify the new-found softness of Lennon. During his wilder years, he'd hardly admit to having a friend, still less own up to caring for one. John has more heart now.

On to his flickering TV then came one David Peel, with whose group, The Lower East Side, Lennon had been linked on record and in person three years ago. Peel is an old-fashioned champion of the underground, and he was in blisteringly articulate mood as he spouted to a TV interviewer about how the underground should carry on in its campaign to overthrow the rock establishment and the music industry.

"The Beatles were and are pigs," Peel snorted. "They took our money..." John muttered: "Well gimme mine." Peel's speech, full of hyperbole and sweeping, wild generalisations about the baddies of music's big business, was entertaining to Lennon, who said he'd heard it all before and wasn't it a shame that the personalities of the underground had always been their own biggest enemies?

On TV next came a group called Television, and Lennon sat fairly transfixed. Television are so bad they're good. They can barely play their instruments and they are very short of money; they're young and dressed in rags. But they have a spirit that's irresistible, and John immediately identified them as a parallel with The Beatles in their Hamburg days.

"Yeah, I can relate to them, they're exactly as we were. Skint and loving every minute. They sound terrible but they're OK!"

And then, obviously their tatty dress: "Hey, they've outdone Bowie! Bowie went crazy and they've gone the other way."

Er, no, John. It's just that they haven't any loot and they can't afford anything better! "Oh." He liked their name, too.

Photographer Bob Gruen, who takes the *MM*'s New York pictures, and seems an ardent Lennonologist, shows John some colour snaps for John to choose for his new album sleeve. Lennon, whom we should recall as an art college enthusiast, is obsessive about pictures and TV and drawing, and he inspected the dozens of colour shots of his face carefully. "Christ, is that what I look like? No wonder America's trying to get rid of me!"

May gets ginger beer from the kitchen, and it transpires that they had found a store which sold it, but only after a very long search. "It's not so good as English, but it'll do," says John.

And after years of having British friends flying into New York with a few black puddings, John has now found that these rare delicacies, too, can be bought in New York. "Any country outside England – sorry, Britain – that lets you buy black puddings has got to be a winner, right?"

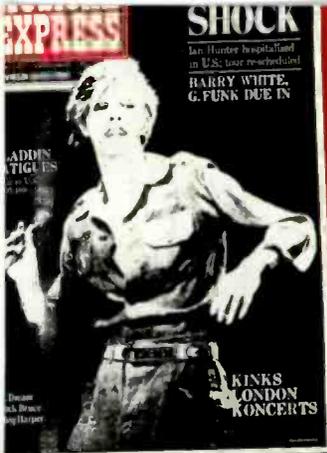
"You shouldn't eat them," said May. "They make you fat."

"Hey, yeah, I've gotta watch that," said John.

"Yes," I said.

"Do you mind? That's all we need – a headline like 'Former Beatle Growing Fat'." Ray Coleman •

GETTY



# 1974

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

ROBERT WYATT, QUEEN,  
PINK FLOYD, THE FACES,  
SPRINGSTEEN & MORE



## Blue-eyed soul

**MM OCT 12** David Bowie takes a break between tour dates and stops off in Philadelphia – to change sound and record a new album.

**B**LUE-EYED SOUL! THIS is David Bowie in Philadelphia's Sigma Sound Studios – home of the hottest soul producers in the world, Gamble & Huff.

Bowie booked the studio for two weeks just before he started the West Coast part of his Diamond Dogs tour of America.

And the result is Bowie's first soul album, provisionally called "Somebody Up There Likes Me", out in the New Year. Later this month, however, Bowie is releasing another album, simply called *David Live*, which was recorded during the early part of his US tour.

The Philadelphia album, produced by Tony Visconti, features a vocal back-up chorus, led by Ava Cherry (pictured here with Bowie).

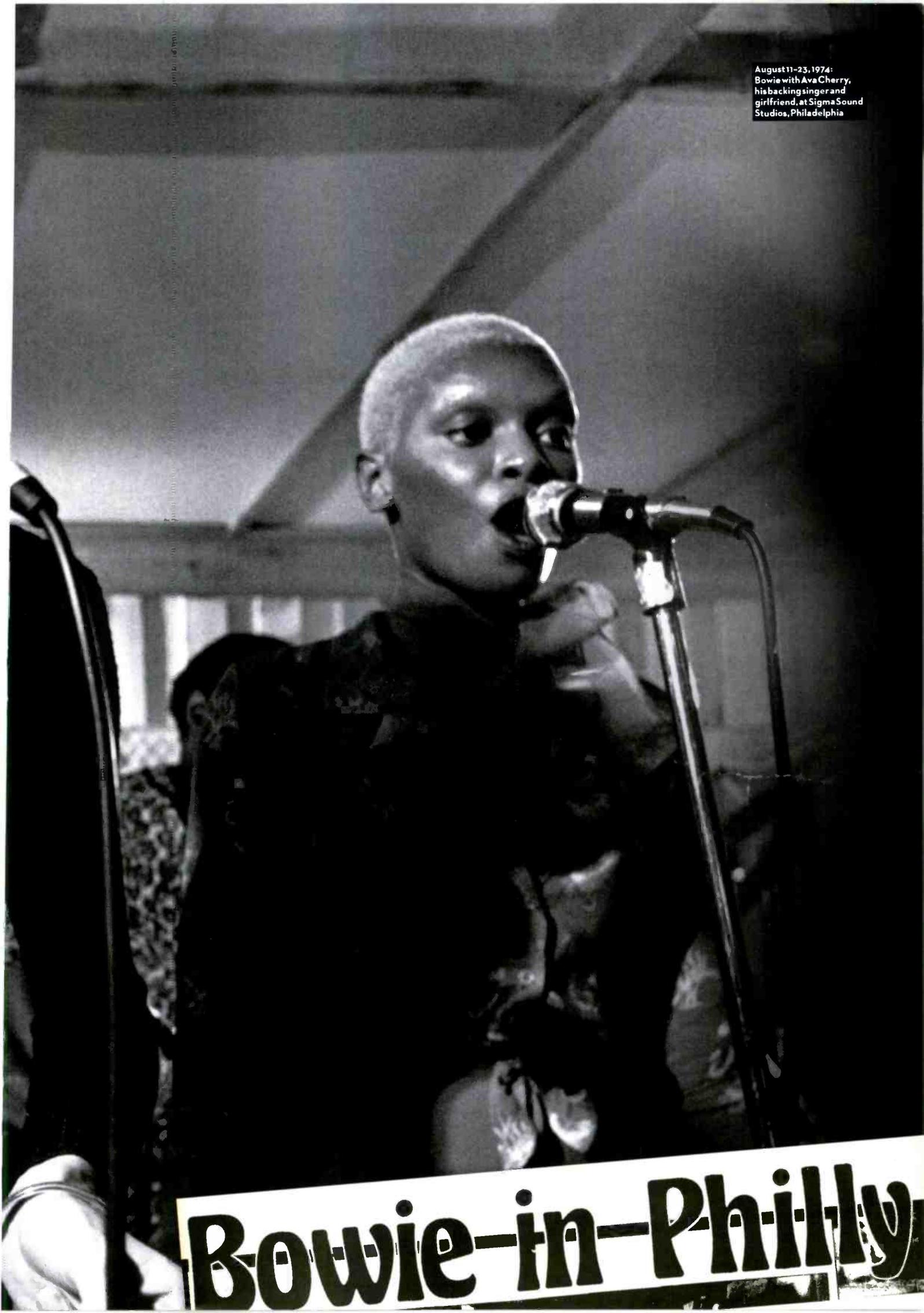
The album includes a new version of "John, I'm Only Dancing", together with "It's Gonna Be Me", "The Young American", "Right!" and the possible title track, "Somebody Up There Likes Me" – all of them new.

Bowie originally wanted to use MFSB, the Gamble & Huff house band, for the album. But they had other commitments at that time, so Bowie settled for a band which included Carlos Alomar (guitar), Willie Weeks (bass guitar), Andy Newmark (drums), Larry Washington (congas), David Sanborn (saxophone), Mike Garson (piano) and a back-up chorus with Ava Cherry, Robin Alomar and Luther Vandross.

The sessions were produced by Tony Visconti – who is also responsible for Bowie's *David Live* album, due for release at the end of this month.

TERRY O'NEILL

August 11-23, 1974:  
Bowie with Ava Cherry,  
his backing singer and  
girlfriend, at Sigma Sound  
Studios, Philadelphia

A black and white photograph of David Bowie singing into a vintage microphone. He has a very short, buzzed haircut and is wearing a dark, patterned jacket. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a studio setting with some equipment visible. At the bottom of the image, there is a white banner with the text "Bowie-in-Philly" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Bowie-in-Philly**

1974

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

October 31, 1974: George Melly comes to the sabbat at Chislehurst Caves

# No one escaped unmarked

**NME NOV 9** Led Zeppelin hold a riotous party to launch their record label.

**I'VE BEEN AROUND.** And believe me, I thought I'd seen it all. I mean, after you've watched Stacia disrobe on stage at a Hawkwind gig you have seen it all.

So perhaps you'll appreciate that in my profession, I'm not easily shocked. Lord knows, it takes a lot—a helluva lot—to sicken me, but the apparition of George Melly gleefully crooning, "Empty Bed Blues" while dressed as a nun was something I just couldn't handle. Or so I thought.

That was until I became transfixed by the unholy sight of an innocent Bob Harris defiled into drinking the Devil's own brew from a bottle being held to his lips by a young, fresh-faced novice who, beneath her vestments, later revealed that she was wearing absolutely nothing but sheer black nylons held up by an equally black lace suspender-belt.

This was to be one of the many horrific manifestations that were to chill me to the marrow on this evil night in Chislehurst Caves. Hallowe'en—one of the four Witches' Sabbaths—stems from a pagan belief that on this specific night the Dead rise to roam among us. All Souls Night (as it is also called) was the time when the Devil's advocates—arriving in two privately

hired coaches—came to disturb the sleepy hamlet that surrounds Chislehurst Caves.

Menacing, cigar-chewing monks dispensed food and drink, professional entertainers ate fire, swallowed swords, jumped barefoot on broken glass, decapitated unsuspecting onlookers or behaved in a remarkably silly manner while Bob Kerr's Whoopie Band and John Chilton's Feet warmers provided

primitive devil rhythms. It was sin-drenched music that was to fire the blood of many a lion-hearted English squire and drive sane men to the verge of madness, I tell you.

As wild-eyed revellers gathered around a candle-lit altar—upon which blonde, naked virgins reclined—the fact that this orgy was being laid on to inaugurate Swan Song Records was forgotten—as "honoured guests" Led Zeppelin, Bad Company, The Pretty Things, Maggie Bell and Roy Harper were jostled in an attempt to gaze upon many of the young nuns frantically displaying their dirty habits. One didn't dare to even begin to hazard a guess as to what order they belonged to as

they flung their garments aside in gay abandon. It was disgusting, I tell you.

"You don't look like Audrey Hepburn," shouted an excited onlooker. "Well, aren't you going to give me a clap?" asked a statuesque nun as she stood before us naked. "Darling," replied

a wag, "if I had it, I'd gladly give it to you."

As the bewitching hour approached (and my senses reeled), the soiree became even more bizarre. During George Melly's recital, a naked lady covered in jelly, grapes and fruit was carried on stage in an open coffin.

As the macabre Melly leered into a version of "It Must Be Jelly 'Cause Jam Don't Shake Like That", the divested damsel began throwing handfuls of grapes and jelly at the audience—then, to her horror, the revolting spectators retaliated and a disgusting jelly and fruit fight ensued. Virtually no one escaped unmarked.

Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, I was confronted by a dewy-eyed young nun who, after asking me to light her cigarette, inquired if I would like to buy a ticket for the Monks Ball. I told her I didn't go dancing. She replied, "It's not a dance, it's a raffle."

I made my excuses and left. Actually, the music wasn't bad.

Roy Carr

**"Aren't you going to give me a clap?" asked a statuesque nun, stood naked**

# "We are most sorry he is going"

**NME DEC 21** Mick Taylor announces his departure from the Stones.

**M**ICK TAYLOR HAS left the Rolling Stones, the band he joined in 1969 as replacement for Brian Jones, and has joined a new outfit currently being formed by Jack Bruce. The Stones, at present recording as a four-piece in Munich, will engage a new guitarist in time for a major tour of America in May.

News of Taylor's departure broke when it became apparent that he was not working with the band in Munich. Reports from Germany last week suggested that he had been sacked, but Jagger quickly squashed these rumours in a statement saying: "After five years, Mick wishes a change of scene and wants the opportunity to try out new ventures, new endeavours. While we are all most sorry that he is going, we wish him great success and much happiness."

It was widely believed that Taylor had become restless due to the Stones' lengthy periods of inactivity, but on Monday of this week Taylor put out a statement saying: "The last five years with the Stones have been very exciting, and proved to be a most inspiring period. [...] I have nothing but admiration for the group, but I feel now is the time to move on and do something new."

The "something new" to which he referred proved to be membership of the new Jack Bruce band. Also in the lineup are noted US composer and keyboard player Carla Bley, who has worked with Bruce on many occasions, notably on the *Escalator Over The Hill* album—and pianist Max Middleton, who was most recently in Jeff Beck's group. A drummer has still to be signed, but in the meantime the four confirmed members are working out ideas in a London recording studio.

The Rolling Stones are to undertake an extensive US concert tour in May, and *NME* understands that selected concerts in Europe are also in the pipeline for next year.

The Stones' 1975 tour will be a "new-concept show", said Mick Jagger this week. "We shall be playing very few old numbers and the act will mainly be a showcase for new material."

Meanwhile, the Stones continue their recording sessions in Munich as a four-piece. No stand-in musician has been brought in to replace Mick Taylor, and Jagger and Keith Richards are playing all the guitar parts between them.

An attempt was made to secure the services of Ron Wood, but he was involved in the Faces' British tour.

# TAYLOR QUILTS STONES, JOINS JACK BRUCE BAND

MICK TAYLOR has left the Rolling Stones, the Stones have been very excited and proved to be a most inspiring period. [...] I have nothing but admiration for the group, but I feel now is the time to move on and do something new."

PA PHOTOS

Do what thou wilt... but know by this summons at on the night of the Full Moon of 31st October, 1974

**Led Zeppelin**

request your presence at a Halloween Party to celebrate Swan Song Records' first U.K. album release "Bik Topped" by

**The Pretty Things**

in Chislehurst Caves, Kent. Celebrations will commence at 8.00 p.m. ...



Swan Song Records distributed by Atlantic Records



## "Some guy gave me the third degree..."

**NME DEC 7** How McCartney's Wings go about recruiting a new member.

**T**OOK HIS TIME, McCartney, announcing the fact, but last month Geoff Britton and Jimmy McCulloch were both officially confirmed as new members of Wings. Strange, really. McCulloch had been rumoured to have been with the band for months, and, though there was evidence that he had worked with Macca, no one in the McCartney organisation could be drawn into corroborating the story. Britton also, it had been suggested, was a part of the new Wings set-up.

Still, it's fact rather than speculation now. And though McCulloch is still contracted to the Robert Stigwood Organisation (because of earlier associations with Blue), he's now confirmed as a working member of the band.

McCulloch's led a somewhat chequered career: at 13 he was main feature in a band named One In A Million; later he worked with Thunderclap Newman, John Mayall, Stone The Crows and Blue.

Britton, on the other hand, is comparatively unknown, despite having worked with East Of Eden and Wild Angels. He's also quite a goldmine, a natural in the best possible way – delighted he's working with Wings and a dab hand at this media communications business. How did he come to be picked for Wings?

"Well, sweetheart, it was a fluke that I happened to ask someone there if they knew if McCartney had got a new drummer..."

Britton is a keep-fit fanatic – when he's not drumming he's running round the block or teaching karate. In fact, last weekend he turned out as part of the English team who met Japan in a karate championship in North London.

"So anyway, I phoned up the McCartney office and this guy gives me the third degree and puts me on a list. Get another phone call, a date and time, and I go along. Well, they've got a big roll call, names, credits, and my spot was after the lunch break. Got there and there were five session guys on the stage and it was really programmed, like sorting out the boys from the men, because the music they were playing wasn't just rock – it covered the whole spectrum."

A few days later, Britton received another call telling him he was on a short list of five and would he like to go back and this time get to play with Wings.

"So, suddenly, I'd gone from no chance to 25 per cent chance. Anyway, had this audition, met the boys for the first time.

Few days passed – another phone call. Scene is: come for the day, practise with them all, go for dinner. Now we're down to two people.

So I'm on trial, right? They are going to suss me out. So I go along on the Monday, everybody is charming to me but nobody gives away a thing. I go away on the Monday night and Tuesday goes by, and I know the other guy is seeing them on the Tuesday. Couple of days go by and then Paul phones and tells me I've got the gig."

Even now, the way Britton tells it, he's still kept on his toes. "Well, this group has got a good drummer in him (*he points to McCulloch*), Denny's not a bad drummer, Paul's a good drummer and even Linda can have a bash at the drums. So they all know what I'm doing and how I'm doing it, and if I'm doing it well."

Contractually, McCulloch is still tied to Stigwood. But, he says, "I hope within the next couple of weeks to be free. I've really been with Wings for about nine months but it wasn't announced before, probably because they anticipated hassles. But now Wings have decided to drop all that contract business."

### "There were five session guys on the stage"

Drop all the contract business?

Britton: "There was talk of contracts in the beginning, but we decided it was better if nothing was contracted. If you're a real pro and you've got a tour booked, you don't phone up and say, 'I'm not going', that's just not on."

Julie Webb

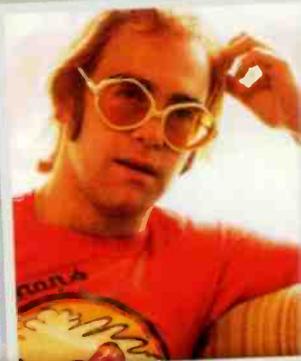
## "I couldn't face it"

**NME DEC 14** Sorry, USA. Elton John is to remain in the UK.

**E**LTON JOHN HAS decided not to quit Britain after all! It had been widely expected that, due to excessive taxation in this country, that he would become a US resident in 1975. But Elton arrived back in Britain, following his extensive American tour, with the news that he is "staying put" here. He said: "I thought seriously about staying in the States, but I soon had to accept the reality – that I simply couldn't face it. Anyway, I've now made enough money to live happily in Britain, whatever the taxman may take from me."

It is now expected that, as a result of his decision, Elton will undertake a British tour fairly early next year – although nothing has yet been set up. A tour had been pencilled in for him in January, to follow his five days at London Hammersmith Odeon (December 20–24), but this was scrapped when it appeared that he would be spending most of his time in America.

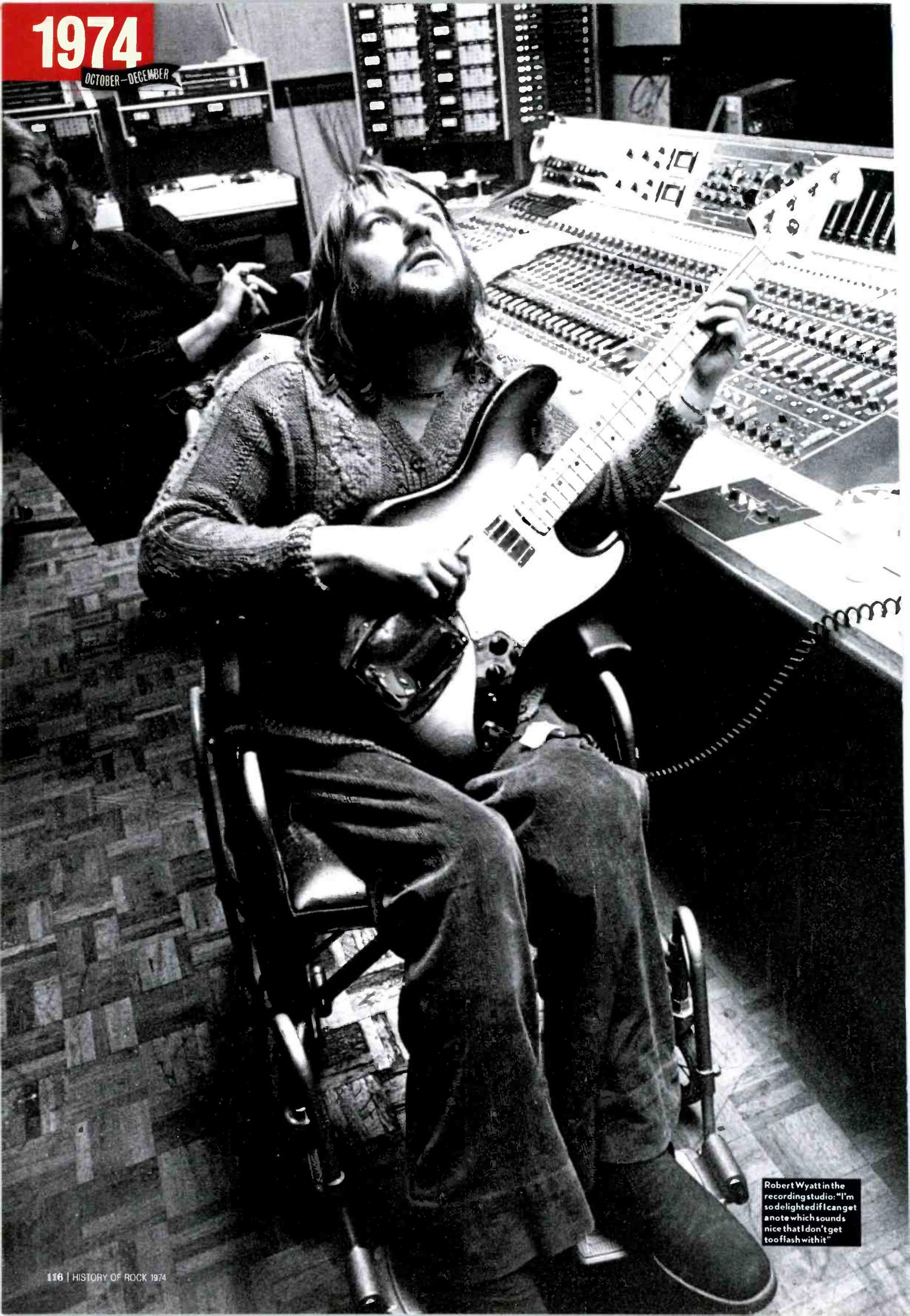
A spokesman for Rocket Records said this week: "We are now hopeful that something will soon be set up for Elton around Britain."



'I stay put in Britain'  
SAYS ELTON

1974

OCTOBER-DECEMBER



Robert Wyatt in the recording studio: "I'm so delighted if I can get a note which sounds nice that I don't get too flash with it"

# “I’m not concerned with whining”

**Post-accident, ROBERT WYATT unveils his album *Rock Bottom*, and a chart hit, “Daydream Believer”. “The accident didn’t in fact haunt me or have half the effect on me that people might suppose,” he says. “You’ve got to think of something to sing.”**

— NME OCTOBER 26 —

**T**HERE’S SOMETHING EXTRA special about green suede boots. A certain devil-may-care attitude, a touch of fearless dandyism combined with a sense of the earthy and an instinct for style that just don’t quit.

Robert Wyatt weareth green boots. They go very nicely with the blue plastic stopwatch around his neck.

Nick Mason, very famous drummer and producer deluxe, peers eloquently through the plate-glass barrier between the zhop floor and ground control at CBS studios. On the other side, Gary Windo (fetchingly ceilinged by a little white cap) and Mongezi Feza are adding the horn lines to Mr Wyatt’s Next Teenage Smasheroonie.

“Great,” opines Wyatt from his mobile command post at the doorward end of the console.

“It does a bit, doesn’t it?” replies Mason.

Wyatt groans elaborately. “You and your Pink Floyd in-jokes.”

The song is another golden great from the sizzlin’ ’60s, Chris Andrews’ “Yesterday Man”. Where Andrews’ original was aggressively petulant, Wyatt’s is wistfully surreal. He performs on assorted bits of percussion (including a bass-drum whomped by hand) and what sounds like a harmonium, but »

REX FEATURES

**I played Robert Wyatt at 78rpm and saw God**



there's a few things that I've built myself for if I didn't mean them  
 "ONE OF WHICH is the growing antipathy among NME readers — and writers — towards boring old snobs like me"

plays around the beat while the main rhythmic push comes from Windo and Feza.

A modestly clad young man with an air of amiable vagueness that instantly pegs him as a member of Henry Cow wanders in, identifies himself by the highly improbable name of John Greaves, overdubs a positive humdinger of a bassline, inquires how long it takes to get from here to Liverpool Street, and wanders out again.

"Yeah, but could Pan's People dance to it?" inquires Windo.

It looks as if they may have to, because after a minor fracas with *Top Of The Pops'* resident plenipotentiary Robin Nash, Wyatt will probably not be gracing their studios for some little time to come.

It seems that Nash considered Wyatt's appearing in his wheelchair to be somewhat "distasteful", both to the audience and to the production team. Wyatt retorted, with ample justification, that if being in a wheelchair didn't hang him up, he saw no reason why it should offend anybody else. Exeunt fuming in opposite directions.

Meanwhile, there's a groovy little ditty entitled "Sonia" to go on the B-side, and for this one Wyatt whips it out on a specially prepared Mellotron programmed with sound effects, tuned percussion, voices, xylophones and a whole circus of other foolishnesses. As he gets to work on the track (which already features him on piano and percussion), jaws sag and people run serious risks of falling off their chairs.

"He could do a show by himself with two or three of those," murmurs his wife Alfie.

"Can we hear the other one again?" asks Windo.

Mason spins around in his chair, face frozen in well-simulated disgust. "What do you think this is?" he asks icily. "A bleedin' discotheque or something?"

As the studio disintegrates once more into cackles of brain-damaged hilarity, we fade out into a different time phase: two weeks previously in Twickenham, playground of the Elder Deities. We'll give Wyatt one paragraph's start to make it back to his residence in time to admit the writer.

OK, Robert—go!

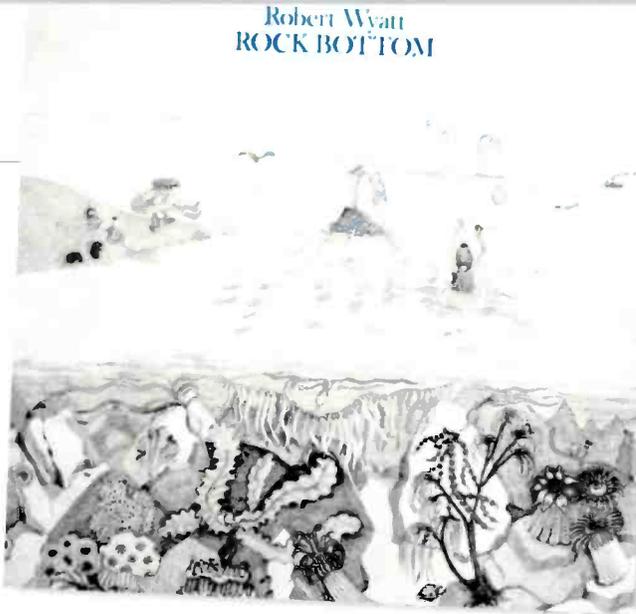
**W**HILE WE'RE WAITING, let's sling in a few thoughts on Mr Wyatt's album *Rock Bottom*, which is being received in the nation's record stores with the proverbial storm of indifference. First of all it's an easy album to listen to and a hard one to come to terms with. (Jeez, two clauses ending in prepositions. If my English teacher could see me now.)

As Ian MacDonald pointed out in his original review of the album, rock-star-as-paraplegic is a whole different ball game to the flood of spiritual hypochondriacs currently laying their bummers on paying customers, especially when Wyatt has triumphed over his particular slice of adversity, leaving others (like John Lennon, Lou Reed and pre-*Beach* Neil Young) staggering under comparatively featherweight burdens.

I don't want to pull any sanctimonious Oxfam there's-a-lesson-to-be-learned-by-all-of-us routines, and never theless, the point does have to be made. Not to dwell overlong, either, on the fact that the music and lyrics are a prime vindication of the theory of lateral thinking as applied to rock music (ie, many of the conventional criteria of what constitutes a "good rock lyric" or a "good rock melody" are effortlessly short-circuited).

There, now. I've gone on for five paragraphs when I only meant to write one, and poor old Robert's waiting for me two weeks ago in Twickenham—so into the conveniently located time/space reducer (cleverly disguised as an ordinary London taxi) and...

Lo and behold, here we are at the Wyatt residence, a large, airy house—reputedly donated by admirer Julie Christie—and here's Mr Wyatt himself to open the door.



"Everybody's got an equally good voice. It's just a question of using it"

The living-room window is adorned with a Communist sticker (you just knew that he was a dirty Red, didn't you? Now he'll definitely never get back on *Top Of The Pops*). Beaming and kaftan-draped, he skids around the kitchen organising coffee ("We don't have any sugar, so is condensed milk all right? You don't look like a hippy, otherwise I'd offer you honey"), before transferring the discussion to the Principal Living Area, which, he claims, "has a totally spurious and extremely temporary air of tidiness".

He produces a reminder list for himself of things that he specifically wanted to talk about. A remark made by the author to the effect that he never listens to the radio because he likes to programme his own listening sparks Wyatt off on one of his ready-made topics.

"But the logical extension of that is why not get a piano so that then you can programme your own notes. It's like singing—everybody thinks that it's a case of some people have a voice and some people haven't. Everybody's got an equally good voice. Just like everybody's got two arms and two legs. It's just a matter of using it.

"People who get praised for doing it are the people who actually bother. It's incredible cheek, actually. There's nothing easier than putting on layer after layer of any instrument that you find lying around."

Take that, Mike Oldfield. Still, that does presuppose that you can actually play the goddamn things in the first place.

"No, not assuming that you can play it. In fact, Dave MacRae had a much harder time putting down Mellotron than I did, because he knows much more about possibilities. I'm so delighted if I can get a note which sounds nice that I don't get too flash with it. Dave can do so much that it's almost a drawback. The people who make the best rock records are the people who can't really play that well at all."

"It must be very tantalising for someone like Keith Jarrett, because he can do so much. It's like an athlete: there's such a real joy in doing it. His fingers are so fast that his brain can't keep up half the time.

"People with a fantastic amount of facility have a hard time controlling it for a specific musical event. In fact, amazing soloists tend to play different versions of Their Solo in everything they play. Jazz guitarists have a much harder time playing solos that are relevant to a particular tune than, say, George Harrison would, who can't move that fast. This is my theory, which is my theory and which belongs to me.

"Now what else is on my list... there's a few things that I'd kick myself for if I didn't mention. One of which is the growing antipathy among *NME* readers—and writers—towards boring old snobs left over from flower-power, such as myself being given precedence over... No, not precedence, but... taking music away from the people or something... If I'm wrong I'll apologise... actually, I think I am wrong.

"Anyway, I'd just like to say that I heard Noddy Holder this morning, and I think he's one of the best singers I've ever heard. He's one of the only singers I've ever heard who's consistently done amazing vocals on everything since the first record his group did. I think he's an absolutely... fantastic singer.

"Now, what else do I think?"

What else does he think?

Heavens to albatross, gentle reader, the foregoing represents about four minutes of a four-hour conversation. The ideas-per-minute quotient of a Wyatt conversation rivals that of Groucho Marx in his prime. You'd need a "Wyatt Remembers"-type paperback to do justice to it all.

Anyway, let me just sling in a few random excerpts from our extravarapperama:

"Oh, another thing that I think is... see, Alfie liked the Sparks single straight off an' I didn't and she suggested that a lot of blokes miss the point that rock's based on. All us blokes claim Mick Jagger, or whoever it might

be, as our sort of male hero, but in fact the basic reason that a lot of these geezers get famous is because they're sex symbols for girls.

"The male rock fan takes over in terms of who's supposed to be good and who isn't—and I was wondering about this tendency towards sourness on the part of all blokes when they talk about rock'n'roll and the disillusion that they feel about rock'n'roll.

"It's because they don't like to admit that a large number of the heroes actually became heroes not as earthy rock-music-for-the-people people, but simply because an incredible number of girls fancied them.

"I reckon you ought to have Elkie Brooks and Lyndsey De Paul and people doing singles reviews, because as far as I can remember it's been all blokes doing 'em. A lot of singles are to do with male sex objects, so it's very odd that it's largely men writing about it."

Two more minutes and counting...

**A**NOTHER BIT, MAINLY about that Drury Lane gig of a month or so back. Gonna do any more?

"No. I knew it was gonna be quite good, because Laurie Allan, Hugh Hopper and Dave Stewart are basically my dream rhythm section. I felt that no matter how bad it was, those people and Fred Frith and so on would be able to pull something out of the hat.

"There's some misleading things put out about me, actually, about my dislike of live performances. All I'm talking about is me and what suits me.

"I get things together in live performances that I wouldn't get together normally and there's certainly a certain magic to it if it's working right, but the sheer cost and the whole organisation of getting a live group working and the solid responsibilities of getting other people paid—there's just so many things that can go wrong that the percentages are all against you.

"But people like me aren't basically quick thinkers and we work best without people... staring at us.

"I've got a sort of composer mentality—not that I actually do much composing. If I wasn't watching telly I'd be composing most of the time, and this is how my brain operates.

"Performance is something else altogether. Performance is taking on people who've come out for a lift after their day, so that they feel good for a couple of hours, and there's therefore a temptation to get into the exciting bits. Whereas most of the music I like is... pretty boring, actually! Performing live gives you a cheap-thrills consciousness."

On to the album, and its graphic depiction of Wyatt's life before, during and after the accident.

"The accident didn't in fact haunt me or in fact have half the effect on me that people might suppose. It was a useful bunch of symbols of what I think life's like anyway, but even then I'm not really concerned with whining.

"You've got to think of something to sing, and something that comes off the tongue quite easily, so obviously you draw on what's around you, just like a person who's going out to sketch. The sketch is just the sketch.

"What they are interested in is their control of their fingers. The subject that they use is really quite incidental. It's just one of the tools, part of the stimulating stuff that sets things off. Nothing to do with the quality of what comes out. It doesn't matter if at the end you know nothing more about houses or trees. The words are just tools for me to make pleasant-sounding songs out of."

Charles Shaar Murray •

## "Opportunity knocks!"

**NME SEPT 14** Along with some Canterbury pals and sundry stars, Robert Wyatt takes to the stage.

**E**VEN THOUGH THE gig was due to start at 8.30, Drury Lane had started to clog up with earnest-looking hippies nearly two hours before the event. It all adds to the sense of occasion, but the regrettably prosaic explanation was that someone had neglected to inscribe the precise time of showing on either the tickets or the ads. So it goes.

Things kicked off with a brief monologue by the newlywed John Peel, clad in his most glam rock outfit. He intoned for a few moments and then vacated the stage to Ivor Cutler and Phyllis April King, who provided a highly amusing interlude of deadpan poesies and brief songs, which were received with great merriment by the assembled company.

So it goes. After a discreet intermission, Peel cartwheeled dynamically back onto the stage to enunciate, "For Robert Wyatt of Twickenham, Opportunity Knocks!"

Mr Wyatt perambulated rapidly to a strategic area between a small mixer ("These knobs don't actually do anything—they just give me something to do with my hands") and a keyboard set-up ("At rehearsals I couldn't find a position from where I could play these, so I probably won't play them. Still, they look good").

He ran through a good-naturedly rickety version of Hugh Hopper's "Dedicated To You, But You Weren't Listening", backed up by Hopper himself on bass, Laurie Allan on drums, Fred Frith on violin and Dave Stewart on keyboards, the first trickles of the mighty wave of superstars that was soon to swamp the stage.

Most of the material from Wyatt's *Rock Bottom* found its way into the front half of

the set (and in case you need to be re-told, it's a wondrous album indeed). Towards the end of "A Last Straw", a diffident young man wandered on, played a bit of synthesizer and wandered off. It wasn't until he reappeared half an hour later, with a Gibson SG strapped around him, that the audience sussed that this dynamic figure was in fact none other than Mike Oldfield, the man with Britain's two best-selling albums to his name, one of which had been blasted through the PA during the intermissions. However, it was undoubtedly Wyatt's show, despite the superstars who wandered on and off—y'know, yer Nick Masons, Gary Windos, that bunch.

Swaying in his wheelchair playing ghost drums, fiddling with the dials of his mixer with one hand, clutching a mic with the other and his eyes squeezed tight shut, he was unquestionably the focal point of the proceedings, and folks, he's singin' better than ever.

Unfortunately Julie Tippett's contribution to the festivities rather derailed things. After joining Wyatt and co in one song, she was left alone tooting merrily on a recorder and humming into it occasionally.

This was followed by two songs at de piano, performed extremely nervously, and a number with Wyatt, Windo and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, which could well have been called "Dedicated To You But You Ran Out Of The Room Screaming for Aspirin". Ms Tippett's voice is still as compelling as ever, but her stiff, uncertain piano playing and the lugubriousness of her songs provided a rather dead area in the middle of the set, which eventually climaxed with a thoroughly berserk version of "I'm A Believer" with some singularly dirty rhythm guitar from Oldfield.

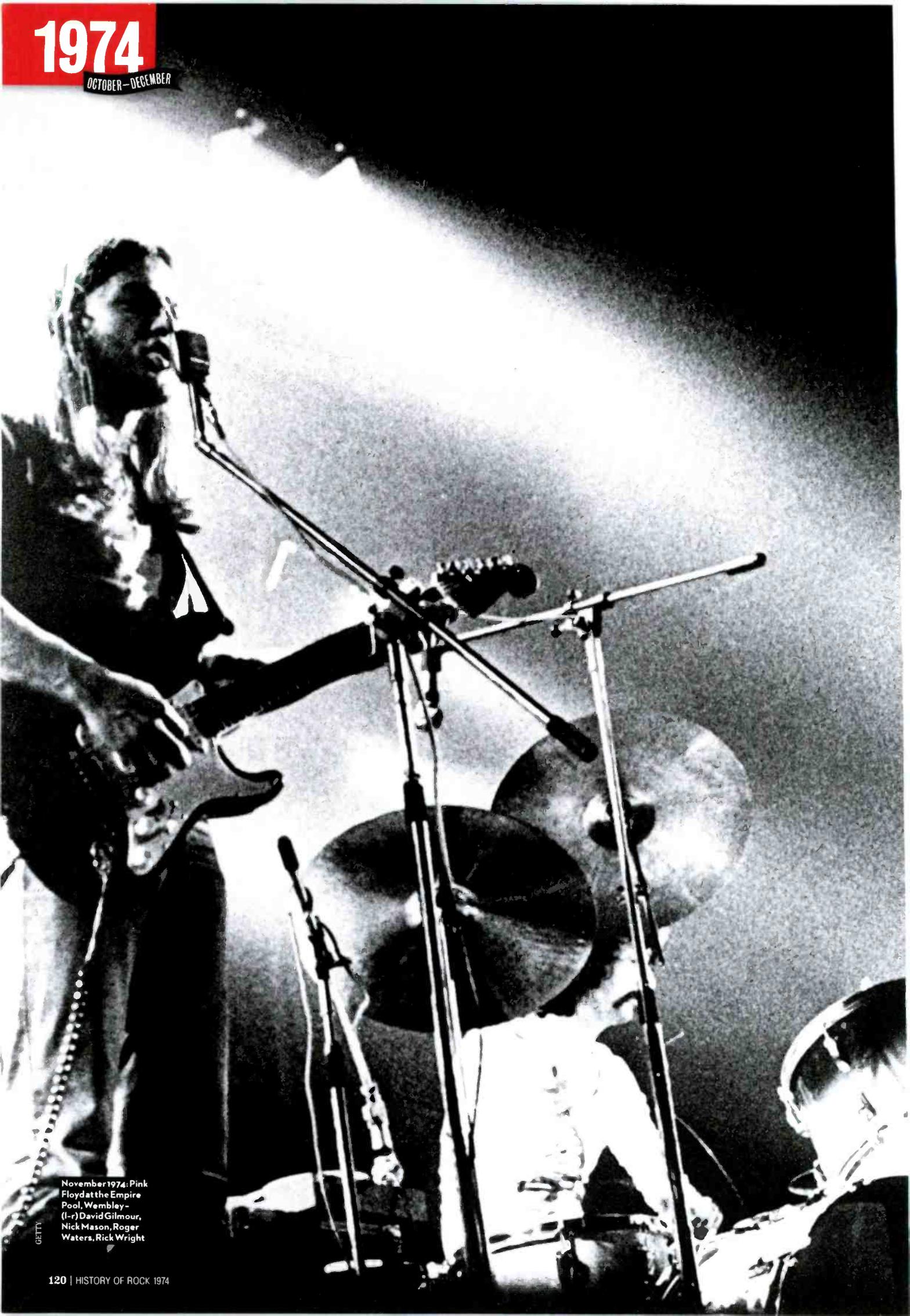
Generally, the show veered from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the sublime firmly in the lead. Eighty per cent of it was very fine indeed, and the more gigs Robert Wyatt feels like undertaking the better. Wheel meet again.

Charles Shaar Murray



1974

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

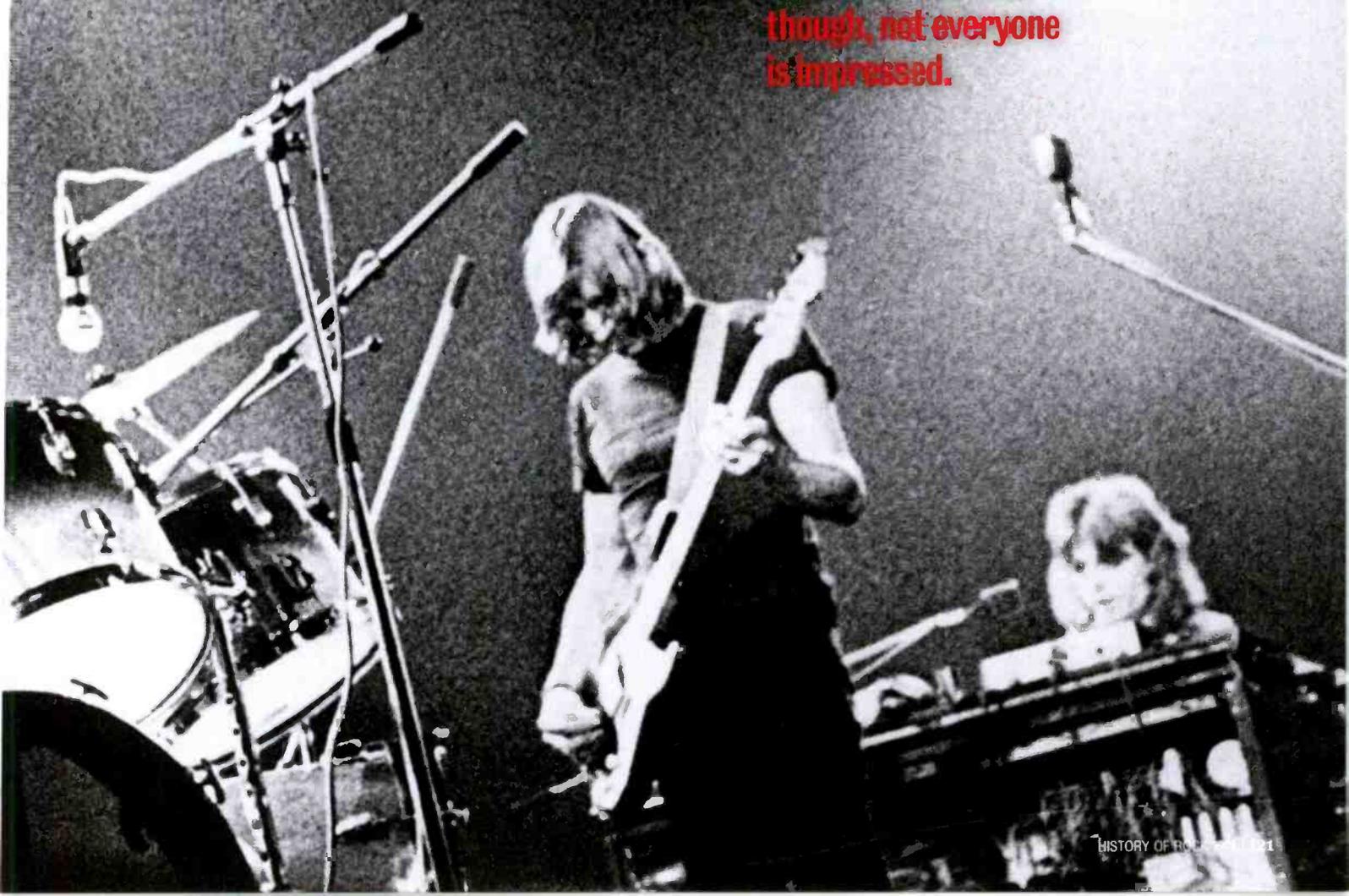


November 1974: Pink Floyd at the Empire Pool, Wembley - (l-r) David Gilmour, Nick Mason, Roger Waters, Rick Wright

GETTY

“Thank  
God we’re  
not the  
same”

**PINK FLOYD** tour *Dark Side*, and debut new material from their continuing musical evolution. “Did you realise that ‘Shine On You Crazy Diamond’ is about Syd?” asks Rick Wright. As David Gilmour discovers, though, not everyone is impressed.



## — MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 16 —

**I**N THE CURRENT era, when groups and artists come and go with alarming regularity, the continuing success of the Pink Floyd is a peculiar state of affairs. For the Floyd are rock's hermits, and rare indeed is it for them to emerge from their caves to tour or make records. It's well over a year since they last played in this country and their only bow to a live audience during that time was a short French outing in June. They didn't even tour the States to reap the rewards obviously in the offing following the success of *Dark Side Of The Moon*.

It's a good 18 months since that album was released, and by the way Floydian matters are shaping up, it'll be another six months before their next record reaches the shops. Throughout this period of lengthy inactivity no word is heard from the Floyd. There are no solo albums forthcoming.

They keep their private lives very much to themselves, and little is even forthcoming about the musical thoughts of Messrs Waters, Wright, Mason and Gilmour, other than the fact that they dislike being probed.

Roger Waters' love of football is well known. He is also pretty fanatical about golf and thoroughly enjoys a game of squash. Nick Mason spends many a happy hour messing about in boats and was recently seen on *Top Of The Pops* playing his drums behind Robert Wyatt on "I'm A Believer". Dave Gilmour likes riding motorbikes and enjoys a life in the country, very occasionally turning up to play with a local band when the mood takes him.

But Rick Wright, the keyboard virtuoso, remains a complete mystery, a face guaranteed to warrant not a spark of recognition should he choose to board a London bus or creep silently into the stalls of the Rainbow Theatre in the unlikely event that he wants to catch an up-and-coming act. His efforts with the Floyd earned him tenth place in the keyboards section of this year's *MM* poll, a position hardly worthy of the talent he displays on stage with the group.

According to the excellent programme available on the current Pink Floyd UK tour, Wright is pictured as a glamour-seeking playboy, surrounded by Hugh Hefner, Charlton Heston and a bevy of naked girls. In effect, though, nothing could be further from the truth. Wright is a happily married man who lives in Cambridge and spends most of his un-Floydian time pottering about in his home studio.

It was, then, with some reluctance that he agreed to be interviewed in the Caledonian Hotel in Glasgow following the opening of the band's tour last week. Settling down with a packet of Piccadilly tipped cigarettes and strong coffee, he nevertheless proved a fine spokesman for the Floyd.

We began by talking about the three new pieces the group are performing on the tour. "Raving And Drooling", it turns out, was written by Waters about two months ago; "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" was written about the same time and worked on during rehearsals at Elstree; and "Gotta Be Crazy" began as a Gilmour riff. Roger Waters wrote all the lyrics, and none of the songs have been recorded yet.

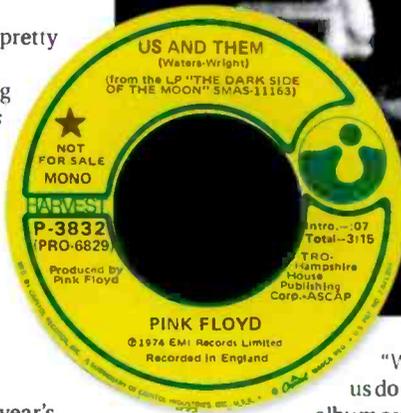
"We always like to write numbers, go on the road with them and record them later," said Rick. "We did this with *Dark Side Of The Moon* and we think it's easily the best way to go about it. A number changes so much when we do it live over a long period; 'Shine On' has changed a lot since we started already.

"I can't think of any other bands that work this way. Usually bands record songs and then play them, but we feel that if you do a few tours with a number, then that number improves immensely.

"We will probably record them after the tour. There's enough material in the three songs for an album, but I don't know yet. We may do something else as well which we haven't actually played yet. There are things I am working on in my studio that I would like to put on the next album."

A new Floyd album can be expected in March. The time between Christmas and then will be spent in the studio and next year the group will embark on two US tours, their first for two years.

"It'll be a two-year gap between *Dark Side* and the next one, and that's too long in my opinion," said Rick. "We have never been a prolific group in terms of records. We average about one a year over our whole career. It's not a policy to work like that—it's just the way it happens.



"We have a deal with the record company that makes us do about seven albums in five years, which is one album a year and maybe a couple of film scores. It's very easy to make that deal."

The immense success of *Dark Side* has taken the band by surprise, although they all felt it would do well at the time it was released.

"It's been in the English charts ever since it was released, which is quite amazing," said Rick. "We all felt it would do at least as well as the other albums, but not quite as well as it did.

"All our albums have done well in this country, but *Dark Side* was Number One in the US and we never dreamed it would do that. It was probably the easiest album to sell in that it was the easiest to listen to, but it's success has obviously put some kind of pressure on us, and that is what to do next.

"We have always tried to bring out something different with our next release, and it would be very easy now to carry on with the same formula as *Dark Side*, which a lot of people would do. It's changed me in many ways because it's brought in a lot of money and one feels very secure when you can sell an album for two years. But it hasn't changed my attitude to music.

"Even though it was so successful, it was made in the same way as all our other albums, and the only criteria we have about releasing music is whether we like it or not. It was not a deliberate attempt to make a commercial album, it just happened that way. Lots of people probably thought we all sat down and discussed it like that, but it wasn't the case at all. We knew it had a lot more melody than previous Floyd albums, and there was a concept that ran all through it. The music was easier to absorb, and having girls singing away added a commercial touch that none of our other records had."

Rick has no idea how many copies *Dark Side* has actually sold, but it's well into the millions. Around 700,000 copies have been bought in this country, and at least three times that amount have been sold in the US.

"I never know about things like sales," said Rick. "I know that it was the first gold record we had in America and since its release our other albums have picked up in sales over there. We have made a lot of new fans as a result, because it was the first time we ever had an AM airplay in America. 'Money' was played on AM radio, and for a lot of people it was the first time they'd heard us.

"I like to think this hasn't put a pressure on us in terms of what we write next, but for a whole year we never did anything. We all sat around and got heavily into our reasons for being and our group. We got into a bad period



"We've improved immensely since Syd left": Rick Wright at the Birmingham Hippodrome, December 1974

when we didn't do anything at all creatively. We all still enjoy playing *Dark Side* and any time one of us didn't enjoy it, we wouldn't do it again, ever. The first time we played it at the Rainbow, it was totally different from today, but it's remained virtually the same since we recorded it.

"There's a solo in 'Money' which varies according to how Dave feels, and 'Any Colour You Like' is just improvisations, but various parts are very arranged and it's almost like a score."

The accompanying film isn't Rick's territory, but he feels there's still room for improvement in the visual aspects of their show. "It was hard work for Roger, Nick and Arthur Max, the sound engineer, but it's still not right. I think we are still at the experimental stage in finding out what visuals work and which don't—even after all these years.

"It's so easy to have a film that is distracting, and of course, I've never any idea what the effect of the film is—I'm always on stage playing. People always expect the Floyd to come up with something different, new and better when it comes to visuals, and it's very difficult to keep thinking of new ideas.

"The projector for the film was incredibly expensive and we got a new mixing desk too, which was also expensive. Buying those will probably mean we lose money on this tour, but that doesn't matter because we'll recoup it on later tours. We can never make money in England with 25 in the crew.

"We have got a new guy mixing the sound and he is used to working in a studio. Last night was the first time he's worked with a live band and that's why the first half of the concert wasn't right. The second half was easier because he'd got to know us and the board by then.

"We spent two weeks rehearsing at Elstree before this tour, but in the end we couldn't spend one whole day playing because of problems fitting the new system together. Also it demanded a lot of attention getting the notes for the first half of the show, which we hadn't played much before this tour. Dave had to have the words of the songs stuck on to the top of his guitar."

I commented that I thought the three new songs were harsher, heavier numbers than the Floyd usually played and Rick agreed.

"Yes, it's the way the numbers have been written and it's the way we played them. We always play heavier when we don't know songs so well.

When we first performed *Dark Side* it was heavier and harsher than it is now. As we get to know a song better, we tend to play it quieter.

"Did you realise that 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond' is about Syd [Barrett]? We don't see much of him now since he left and we're definitely a different band since his day. Thank God we're not the same. I know that it's very fashionable to like Syd these days, but I think we have improved immensely since he left, especially live. He was a brilliant songwriter and he was fantastic on *Piper*, but he was in the wrong state to play any music.

"I am all for people trying to keep his name going, but... he hasn't written anything for years. His two solo albums show the way he was going. The first album was better than the second, and since then no one has been able to get him into a studio."

Rick seemed anxious to change the subject from his former colleague, so I inquired why it was the Floyd played live so infrequently.

"We all differ in opinions about how much we should play live. Dave and I would like to do more live work, but Roger and Nick are happy with the way it is.

"It's such a headache going on the road, and all of us except Dave are married with kids. I believe it's very important that I am a good father and I am around with my children.

"We limit ourselves to three-week tours and this has saved us from going mad. I feel that if we worked for weeks and weeks on the road all the time we wouldn't be producing such good music.

"Bands who work live all the time do it purely for the money, I think. No band can really enjoy playing one-nighters week after week, so it must be a financial rather than a musical motive.

"Last year, apart from a French tour, we didn't go out on the road at all, and we had a Number One album in the States. We could have gone over then and made a fortune, but we would have made ourselves mad at the same time. We will probably do

two three-week tours of the US next year and take a two-month break in-between. But even so, I don't think we have played enough recently. You get to the point where you don't play and then you lose the whole reason for being in a band in the first place—and that, after all, is to go out and make music for people.

"I would like to reach a situation where we devote six months in a year to the Floyd and six months to whatever we like. If for one of us this meant going on the road, then he could play with another band, and I think we might be reaching that stage now.

"There are many things I would like to do which would not involve the Floyd, and this attitude could well save the Floyd in the long run. Everyone of us wants to do other things, but at the moment we don't have the time.

"I feel this would be a good idea. Any band is a compromise between four individuals, but a compromise for a whole year isn't a good thing.

It's only time that has prevented us doing solo projects, and if I had six months away from the group I would certainly make an album of my own. The others feel the same way.

"I couldn't visualise going out with my own band on the road, but I would probably do a film score or maybe produce another artist. I know I would like to try playing with other musicians for a change."

Conversation switched to the low-key approach the group has towards the media, and Rick agreed that this was a deliberate policy.

"We are not trying to sell ourselves, just the music. Right from the start we adopted this policy. We have never had a publicity agent and we've never found one necessary. We don't go to

all the in parties and we don't go to the 'in' clubs in London.

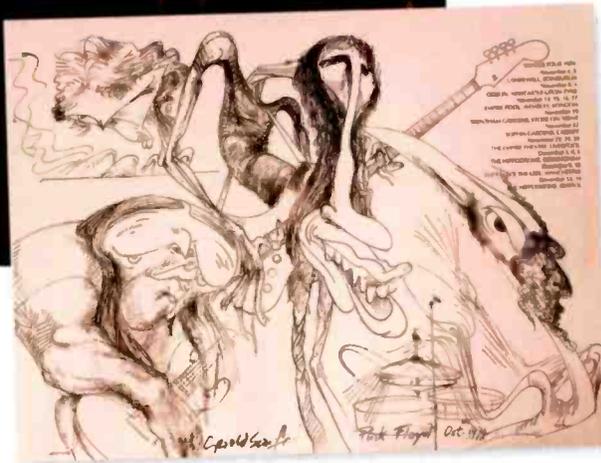
"People don't recognise us on the streets, and even if they did it wouldn't be a problem. That kind of thing has changed since I moved out of London to Cambridge where people don't know anything about the Floyd.

"Sometimes I get people tramping through my garden and asking for an autograph because they've heard I'm in a pop group, but they don't know what the Floyd do. They probably think we're like Gary Glitter.

"It's a very nice situation to be in. Rod Stewart has the kind of personality that encourages all the fan worship, but we don't. We're just »

"Dave had to have the words stuck on the top of his guitar"

Footage of Edward Heath, who resigned as prime minister in March 1974, is projected behind the band during Dark Side's "Brain Damage"



out every concert hall and your album goes to Number One. No, the Pink Floyd can't claim to be underground any more." *Chris Charlesworth*

— NME NOVEMBER 23 —

**D**AVID GILMOUR IS almost by accident probably the most proficient musician in the Floyd – without, in terms of his guitar work, ever imposing any kind of “personality” on the group. Past history reveals his style and approach as being, to say the least, malleable.

Gilmour joined the band in '67 as replacement for Syd Barrett. They'd all known each other from the band's embryonic Cambridge days. Prior to this Gilmour had been gigging in France and was, on his own admission, a fairly stock rock guitarist whose roots extended no further than Hank Marvin.

“At the time,” reports the Floyd's then co-manager, Pete Jenner, “Dave was doing very effective take-offs of Hendrix-style guitar playing. So the band said, ‘Play like Syd Barrett.’”

The familiar slide and echo-boxes were purely of Syd's invention. Subsequently, in an interview conducted last year, Gilmour stated that his joining such an apparently disparate unit as the Floyd was in no way anything more than a minor wrench for him. Which is possibly why he finds it so easy to fit in with such other apparently disparate elements as Unicorn, Sutherland Brothers, Quiver and Roy Harper. Hence the term “malleability” may also imply (a) a lack of personality in musical style and therefore (b) a suspicion of an “it's only a gig” philosophy.

In a way, you could say that Gilmour was a geezer who struck lucky – which is why, I've always felt, he's regarded the band – and his role within it – with a certain tinge of cynicism.

It's almost as if the Floyd, having loafed about half-seriously in the beginning as “The Architectural Abdabs”, garnered their persona from Barrett and when he dropped out, for want of anything better to do, clung on to the momentum he provided. Until – in a manner of speaking – success crept up from behind and goosed them.

Sometime in-between, of course, they must have realised, that they were On To A Good Thing. The Floyd are nothing if not shrewd. More, even, than Brian Eno, they're well aware of the benefits of concocting a low-profile Emperor's New Clothes' syndrome – which is why, I'd guess, Roger Waters makes no little show

onstage of his apparent disdain for their audiences. And why too (you'll have noticed) that the band do few interviews, and when they do, try and avoid discussing the intrinsic grits of their music too much...

They like, you see, for you to make your own deductions – and with intellectual paranoia in the ascendant (possibly as a result of The Rise Of The Reefer) how can they fail? Thus confronted, Gilmour's attitude remains uniformly laissez-faire.

“Cynical?” he says querulously. “So, I mean, last night onstage I was just so hung up. Because it wasn't very good.”

At one point – the night before the Thursday gig – the first of their Wembley gigs – he'd raised his eyebrows as if to say, “Let's pack it in and piss off home.” But now it's Friday morning and we're camped down in the bedroom of his recently renovated Notting Hill townhouse.

Concert ticks first, please Dave. How about the gaps between numbers – Roger stalling over lighting a cigarette with his “well, we can do this, we're artists” attitude?

“Oh yeah. But I don't really think that's what it's down to. It's just... ah... I dunno... Roger likes smoking cigarettes. He can't get through a gig without a few straights.” He is, however, more than willing to admit that Thursday night's gig was “probably the worst we've done on the whole tour. The first half...” he continues languidly “...when that wasn't very good it didn't particularly worry me because they're all new things and

not that kind of band. Incidentally, I think Rod Stewart makes great music too.

“I like all sorts of music myself. I listen to my old favourites and I listen to records that people bring to me if I respect their taste. I ignore the way pop is going. I have completely lost touch with the singles charts. I don't listen to what is being played on the radio, I don't watch *Top Of The Pops* and I don't watch *The Old Grey Whistle Test*.

“I don't even know how the rock business is going, except that I think the bubble will burst fairly soon. It's already burst in the States, where Joe Public has decided he's not going to pay such enormous ticket prices any more. I don't agree with these huge shows in front of tens of thousands of people. Wembley Empire Pool is the biggest place you can play before you lose the effect.”

And how long could Pink Floyd last as a band?

“It could last forever,” he said. “There's no reason why it shouldn't, but then we could have a fight tonight and split up tomorrow. If we carry out that idea of being a group for six months and individuals for the next six months, then there's no reason why we can't carry on for a long time.

“As a group we still have much to do and much to do together. We probably do things much better with each other than we ever could with anyone else.

“We are basically happy with the situation at this time. Roger is very keen on sports, which suits his competitive spirit, and Nick is keen on sailing, and that's another thing that helps us survive.

“We're not underground any more, despite what people say. At the UFO it was underground, but you can't be underground when you sell

we're not doing them very well yet. But we have done them better than that. I thought the second half would click into place because it has done on a couple of other nights when the first half wasn't good."

The standard of musicianship was very low – for example, Rick Wright's solo on the end of "Us And Them", which didn't approximate to the recorded version in any way. Yes?

"In the first half... the sound wasn't very good and the vocal mics were pretty terrible – which makes it that much harder to sing and that much harder to work. And also it didn't sound as if there was any bass and drums. Unless there's a bit of that 'oomph', you can't really get off... It was just one of those nights where you bumble around and don't really get anything together. It sounded ragged all the way through. It doesn't worry me particularly; it just happens sometimes. Just chemistry really, innit?"

Mmmm. Well, OK, was the audience's response an accurate one, then?

"I think they enjoyed it reasonably – but I think a lot of people didn't really think it was very good. There's a difference between going home and thinking it was pretty good and going home and thinking 'wow'. And I know we do get that pretty often. More nights than not I know that most of the people there are going to go home and say, 'What a groove!' I think they probably want to convince themselves that they did have a groove just so that they don't think they hit on a bad one... and wasted their money."

Right. On to the Big Picture. The band has reached a level now – with *Moon* – where, inevitably, when you're at a party, someone will put it on and everyone will say, 'Jeepers, THE FLOYD!' – almost as a conditioned reflex, ie, whatever-the-Floyd-do-is-hallowed. How do you feel about it?

"It's a drag."

It's almost as if the band could put out a double album of Roger tuning his bass and it'd sell.

"I'm sure there would be people who'd react that way – but I'm sure sales figures would reflect a bad album in the end. But I don't mean that 100 per cent. I'm sure that if we put out an album of pure tripe it would sell vastly more than lots and lots of other bands' records. But in relation to our sales, a bad record would sell badly. It has done in the past."

With what?

"Well, *Atom Heart Mother*. I'd say that was the worst record we've made. I didn't like it and I don't like it much now. I'm not very keen on *Ummagumma* either."

Well, how about *Moon*? Did its musical content really merit its universal popularity – or was it the Floyd album that coincided with the peak of interest in the band?

"Quite possibly. You may be right. But it certainly was a very good all-round... uh... package. Everything about it was very well done. It was one continuous idea. It was recorded well, it was pretty well mixed, had a good cover and all that sort of stuff."

"But I've always felt, right from the word Go, that the musical side of it wasn't that hot in some parts. And I still feel that. Some parts are a bit weak. We'd have a lyrical idea but no real idea of a musical piece to put to it, so we'd just make something up and take the first thing that came – rather than being critical about the musical side as it was being done. But then some of those bits got knocked out during the months we were playing it on stage before we recorded it. The original travel section we played for months on stage and even recorded it before deciding to scrap it and start again."

Yes. But getting back to this bland acceptance thing... surely the band is to blame? On stage the music is almost moving towards a kind of Automation Rock, towards a kind of non-participatory, non-thinking music – where all the audience has to do is walk in, sit down and watch it all exploding in front of them. In terms of presentation you could be getting to the point where you walk on stage, throw a few switches and walk out. Will it come to that?

"Oh, I don't think so, no. I don't think that the audience have a very great participation in what we do but I don't think that's a bad thing necessarily."

Don't you think it promotes Bland Acceptance?

"No. Listen," he says (perhaps beginning to get a little riled), "we still have to get off. I mean, you know what the difference is between a good gig and a bad gig. And it's

not mechanical. We're quite capable of blowing a gig and we're also capable of doing a great gig."

But in the main it tends to glut the listener's faculties, promoting a glazed "OK, feed it to me" attitude (which, taken to its fullest extent, I might add, is positively somnambulist. I personally noted four people sound asleep in my row.)

"You think so?" he replies (perhaps stalling a little). "I think it's up to them. I think they're free to take it any way they want. A lot of people don't, though. We had someone the other night who must've known that we're football fans who was shouting, 'Cyyyomon you Floyd!!!' just like they do on the North Bank."

The new material sounded a bit recycled – like some of the more tangible stuff on *Moon*. Does that mean you're having trouble sorting out new ideas?

"Umm, yeah. I don't know... uh... 'Raving And Drooling' – the middle one of the three – sounds a bit recycled to me, but they're not there yet. I'm not very keen on that one at the moment... but, I dunno, these things get worked into shape. I know that one or two of them are gonna sound great recorded. I think the last one, 'Gotta Be Crazy', is very different to a lot of stuff we've done, but I don't think the words go right at the moment. I mean, the singing thing's been worked out a bit too quickly. Roger wrote the words to fit over a certain part and I'm not sure that we did it quite the right way."

But how can you equate doing something like "Gotta Be Crazy" – or "Money", even – from the relatively secure position you're in as a band?

"Well, 'Money' is obviously a satire on... money. And it is a self-satire. Obviously. It's easy to tell that, because a lot of the lyrics relate specifically to things that various of us have done, but I mean, I don't think we're as capitalist as... I think it mocks us, the song says that we're more than we are, in fact. It just keeps us aware of it all."

"'You Gotta Be Crazy' is about business pressure really. It does relate to us – I'm sure – you'll have to ask Roger really, he wrote it. The way I understand the words is that I guess you have to harden yourself up to – uh – you know, Make It in this world... if that's what you call Making It..."

The other thing about the new material is that it sounds "safe". It's years since the band has taken any musical risks, which for a group that claims its main appeal is that it "sounds different" from any other, is a little incongruous.

"Ah well," replies Mr G. "I think that's all down to what you want to do. I mean, I certainly don't want to do a lot of things we did earlier on. I'm just interested in actually writing music and getting the music done that we do." Ahem.

"... You know, I think that everyone's interests have gone more towards that sort of thing rather than some of the old rubbish that we used to do. Like we used to do an encore where we'd just go on and not decide what we were going to do until we'd started..."

How long ago was that?

"Oh, four years ago, at least. But I don't really want to go through that thing of doing five loads of rubbish and just once getting something that's pretty good and new. Or getting a half-hour number with about three minutes of worthwhile music on it."

But don't you think that if you'd have kept on progressing from the original improvising basis that by now you could've achieved a personal empathy that would alleviate most of those duff patches?

"I don't know. I really don't know... I've just got memories of standing on stage farting about, plonking away on stuff and feeling terribly embarrassed for long periods of time – and looking across at everyone else realising that they were all obviously feeling the same way."

"Maybe guaranteeing that what you play is something that you'll enjoy is 'playing safe'. But I don't think we've got an intentional play-safe policy." Peter Erskine •

"The musical side of *Dark Side*... some parts are a bit weak"

## Floyd juggernaut ...the road to 1984?

they wander on rather like four navvies who've just finished their tea break and are about to much like sixth-form poetry prissy, self-conscious and pre- while Gilmore blithely about the tom-toms and cymbals – pointing out that the song I play on his own...

# “We’re as poncey as ever”

Tight trousers. Better lights (indeed, “better everything”). Champagne and silver discs. **QUEEN** end the year well on the way to stardom, a situation which Freddie Mercury finds liberating indeed. “I’d hate to just do hard rock all the time, dear,” he confides.

— NME NOVEMBER 2 —

**F**UNNY HOW TIMES change. Seems like only yesterday that people were taking the mickey out of Queen. Of course, there were some who reckoned they had a genuine talent which would come to the fore, but for many they were merely a flash in the pan.

Two hit albums and two hit singles later, the band can afford a smirk at the expense of their journalistic detractors. This week Queen began their second major tour of Britain. Last time round they were just breaking “Seven Seas Of Rhye” – this time the new album *Sheer Heart Attack* will be featured, but strangely enough not their single “Killer Queen”, since their lead singer Freddie Mercury deems it “not necessary to add to what we are going to do on stage”.

It was Mercury, you may remember, who was so sublimely confident about the band’s chance of success – and he hasn’t changed. *Queen II* may have gone silver, but he reckons “it’ll go platinum” before long. Four months ago, you might have sneered – now it’s about time you listened.

The turning point for the band is really the new single. “A double A-side, though no-one seems to realise it because they keep playing ‘Killer Queen’,” interjects Mercury. It’s a turning point in that it sounds nothing like the noisy heavy metal sound to which we are accustomed from *Queen*, thus justifying their earlier claim of “versatility”. It’s more of a mixture of Beach Boys, early Beatles and 1920s music hall. Quite naice, actually.

Says Mercury: “People are used to hard-rock, energy music from Queen, yet with this single you almost expect Noel Coward to sing it. It’s one of those ‘bowler hat, black suspender belt’ numbers – not that Coward would wear that.” »



Freddie Mercury on stage in 1974 as Queen broaden their sound with third album *Sheer Heart Attack*

And you? "Oh no, dear, just a nice black number."

It is apparent that success (in any shape or form) has not altered Mercury, who still insists on using the suffix "dear" at the end of his sentences. He is also still very much hung up on maintaining the "star" image. For a start he never carries much money around with him. It's not that he's poverty-stricken or even mean - just that it's difficult to keep cash in your shoes. A star to the last, he wears pocketless trousers and keeps his finances close to his feet.

"I hate pockets in trousers," he stresses. "By the way, I do not wear a hose. My hose is my own. No Coke bottle, nothing stuffed down there."

Of course, Freddie. However, sticking rigidly to the star image has its drawbacks. Satin trousers aren't that durable ("I split a pair last week") and velvet and sequins have a nasty habit of dulling in the rain. Still, they create the desired effect of getting people to stare. Mercury still adores the stares, of course - he's insisted all along he's a star and thinks he should dress accordingly. But for all the high camp, he's got some grey matter in that head of his. It was, after all, Mercury who wrote six of the 13 cuts on the new album, and being artistically inclined, it was he who provided the idea for the album sleeve.

"God, the *agony* we went through to have the pictures taken, dear. Can you imagine trying to convince the others to cover themselves in Vaseline and then have a hose of water turned on them?"

Sheer agony, Freddie. The end result is four members of the band looking decidedly un-regal, tanned and healthy, and as drenched as if they've been sweating for a week.

"Everyone was expecting some sort of cover. A *Queen III* cover, really, but this is completely new. It's not that we're changing altogether - it's just a phase we are going through."

But won't Queen devotees be a trifle worried by this new image?

"They will love it. We're still as poncey as ever. We're still the dandies we started out to be. We're just showing people we're not merely a load of poofs, that we are capable of other things."

The album, as detailed above, boasts 13 tracks - most of them a mere three minutes in length.

"Not a collection of singles, dear - although we might draw another one off later for a single. I'm not absolutely sure about that, though. No, not all the numbers last for ages. There were just so many songs we wanted to do. And it makes a change to have short numbers. It's so varied that we were able to go to extremes. I only had about two weeks to write my songs, so we've been working [expletive deleted] hard."

It should be noted that the BBC seem to have taken "Killer Queen" to their collective bosom, since they've been flogging it to death. I wonder if they would be so keen if they realised the true story behind the single.

Mercury elucidates: "It's about a high-class call girl. I'm trying to say that classy people can be whores as well. That's what the song is about, though I'd prefer people to put their interpretation upon it - to read into it what they like."

The British tour is their first live manifestation since their ill-fated American bonanza, when they played

support to Mott The Hoople and returned early after guitarist Brian May contracted hepatitis. As if that wasn't bad enough, May was later informed that he had an ulcer. Currently he still has a certain air of frailty surrounding him, but claims to be feeling "better than ever".

Mercury advises: "Brian has got to look after himself in future. We all want to make sure something like that never happens again. So he'll have to eat the right things and steer clear of hamburgers."

Most inopportune, one would have thought, quitting their first US tour halfway through. Mercury, however, is confident as ever of the band's chances in America.

"We did what we had to do, anyway. Sure, a whole tour would have helped us a bit more, but there's no such thing as 'we lost our chance'. I still believe that the time is right for us there and we're going back pretty soon. We really did it - 'cos when we came back you should have seen the write-ups. They were beautiful and they just want us to come back as soon as we can. They are just waiting on new product."

One particular review from the US sticks out in Mercury's mind since it was, in a sense, on a personal level.

"We played a theatre in New York with Mott and this particular chick - well, they notice everything down to the pimple on your arse, dear - wrote that she noticed that when I did a costume change I changed even my shoes and socks. She also added she was so close she could tell what religion I was, and that I wasn't wearing any knickers. She also pointed out that Ian Hunter had knickers on. Ian's going to die..."

Indeed. Since the American market is taking such an interest in Queen, it appears Japan is not very far behind. *Queen II* was recently voted album of the year and all members of the band came up highly in the musicians' awards.

"Quite a change for a country which has of late been apparently obsessed with the likes of ELP and Yes. We're planning to go to Japan in the new year," states Mercury. "Can't wait, actually. All those geisha girls..." he laughs, "and boys."

Seems the Japanese market have twigged quite early - even now they send presents to the band. At EMI, Mercury received a Japanese wooden comb: "For your birthday. Please come over soon".

Before the British tour, the main priority has been rehearsing. This time round, the sound should substantially improve, since they will be playing larger venues than before, which are more suited to their vast sound system.

"We're just hoping to have a whale of time. We are going to have to put across all three albums. The repertoire will be built around them. But the main thing is to put across the energy of the

band and hopefully the versatility. I'd hate to just do hard rock all the time, dear. It should be good because we've got better lights, better everything."

Part of this interview was conducted in a local hostelry which sold liquor. Beforehand, Mercury seemed a bit nervous, about what kind of establishment it was.

"Is it working-class?" he asked, in what sounded like an elitist manner. No, it wasn't particularly rough. Even so, people did tend to stare when he entered.

"I love it, really," he commented, looking distinctly uncomfortable trying to avoid the stares of an old man nearby, whose eyes were attempting to leave their sockets.

"I just wanted to know what kind of place it was because I don't want a load of cut-throats around me. I just wonder what they think. I mean, when we walked in, that man's eyes did nearly pop out his head."

Does he ever get strange comments walking down the street?

"Some girls hissed, 'You devil.' They think we're really nasty"



### on tour Spring 1974

- March 1 Blackpool - Winter Gardens
- 2 Aylesbury - Friars
- 3 Plymouth - Guildhall
- 4 Paignton - Festival Hall
- 8 Sunderland - Locarno
- 9 Cambridge - Corn Exchange
- 10 Creydon - Greyhound
- 12 Dagenham - Roundhouse
- 14 Cheltenham - Townhall
- 15 Glasgow University
- 16 Strling University
- 17 Birmingham - Barbarella's
- 19 Cleethorpes - Winter Gardens
- 20 Manchester University
- 22 Sunderland - Locarno
- 23 Cromer - Links
- 24 Colchester - Woods on Sunday
- 28 Aberystwyth University
- 29 Penzance - Winter Gardens
- 30 Taunton - County Ballroom
- 31 London - Rainbow





Queen on *Top Of The Pops* in 1974—possibly before a visit to a restaurant where Mercury will be presented with a bottle of champagne after removing his trousers

"No, not really. I've had people try to pick me up once or twice, but I'm not intending to change into jeans because of it. I tried that a few weeks ago and people I knew remarked on that far more than my satin or velvet."

Somehow I have enough confidence in Mercury to feel that he could carry off any occasion with typical aplomb. Just a short time ago he found himself in a somewhat embarrassing situation and miraculously escaped. But let him explain that:

"We'd had a hectic day at *Top Of The Pops* and our promotion man Eric Hall invited us out for a meal. Unfortunately the others in the band couldn't come as they had to go back to the studio. Anyway, I had rather a lot to drink and I seem to remember at some point in the evening that someone removed my shoes and socks and hung them on a lampshade. Then I said something along the lines of, 'Well, if you're going to take everything off I shall remove my trousers...'"

Picture this. Our hero, half under his table at a rather trendy nightclub with trousers akimbo, when the big white chief of the establishment approaches.

"I thought he was going to throw me out, but instead he said, 'I hear you've got a gold disc.' He meant to say silver. And then he presented me with a bottle of champagne."

Now if Mercury can handle a situation like that with such style, think how easy it is for him to get everyone else convinced he is a true star.

Julie Webb

## — MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 9 —

"PEOPLE THINK I'M an ogre at times. Some girls hissed at me in the street... 'You devil.' They think we're really nasty. But that's only on stage. Offstage, well I'm certainly not an ogre." Freddie Mercury is a star, nevertheless. The first real rock supremo since Robert Plant or Rod Stewart.

Exuding elan, arrogance and stagecraft, he has emerged at the head of Queen to claim his crown. And step aside all ye who scoff or mock, for Queen are trundling ahead with inexorable momentum.

Freddie was shouting at me in the deserted bar of a Liverpool hotel at 11 am on Saturday. No—he wasn't expressing anger at recent *MM* criticisms of the band. He was just trying to make himself heard above the noise of a woman sucking at a carpet full of cigarette ash with her Holiday Inn vacuum cleaner.

"Oh my dear, she's coming this way," Freddie sighed as the din grew louder. Fastidious, elegant, he maintained an even temper, despite the ravages of last night's celebrations. Many bottles of champagne had been consumed in the aftermath of a riotous reception for the boys at Liverpool's stately, if somewhat battered, Empire.

Inevitably, thoughts had turned to another group of long ago, who caused similar scenes as they trod those hallowed boards. Oddly enough, Brian May, Queen's fleet-fingered lead guitarist, uses AC30 amplifiers, just like The Beatles. »

GETTY

But Queen's music is from the '70s—not the '60s. Cleverly arranged, carefully timed, delivered with maximum effort to create the greatest impact, it works on a young and receptive audience like a bombshell. Forget eight-year-olds screaming at The Osmonds. Their big brothers and sisters are learning how to yell again.

"Yes, I like an audience to respond like that," Freddie was saying. "Maybe we'd like them to sit down and listen to some of the songs, but I get a lot more from them when they're going wild, and it brings more out of me."

Queen are a strange, refreshing bunch. They are in that happy position in a band's history, when the first wave of excitement and success is breaking over them. Events are moving rapidly. Singles and album hits in Britain. America is within their grasp and beckoning seductively. Yet their image may have served to confuse and sow seeds of suspicion.

Like any band achieving success too quickly for the media's liking, they are under fire, although they seem more disappointed with the critics than hostile. The whole situation is an exact replica of Led Zeppelin back in 1969, when they were first deluged with self-righteous cries of abuse.

Perhaps Queen have gone about the business of forming a successful group with too much skill and intelligence. And yet they cannot be blamed for wanting to avoid the mistakes of their forebears. They have the example of the past 10 years of triumph and failure in the world of rock music to study, and they have profited from the examination.

Like many of Britain's most significant rock talents, Queen are collegians who have abandoned their degree courses for the lure of showbiz. Freddie Mercury in fact has a degree in graphic art. Roger Meddows-Taylor, their drummer, studied dentistry and has a degree in biology. Brian May, incredibly, is an infra-red astronomer, and could become a doctor if he completed his studies. When Concorde raced the sun to study an eclipse, he was in line to join the team of scientists on board.

John Deacon, their bass guitarist, has a degree in electronics. If ever the band's stage equipment presents a problem, then the roadies are tempted to call on him for expert advice.

Their amiable, efficient American manager, Jack Nelson, is somewhat in awe of them. "Freddie designed the group's logo, y'know, and he never even told me. If you look, you'll see it encompasses the four astrological signs of the group. Freddie's a Virgo."

Jack has managed the band since they first emerged from London's Trident Studios. "They go to Japan after they've been to the States in April. It's funny, they are the number-one group in Japan, above Jethro Tull, Yes and ELP, and even Deep Purple, and they used to *own* Japan. But they've never seen Queen yet—it's all through the *Queen II* album."

Meanwhile the vacuum cleaner roared in ever-decreasing circles. "I'm feeling less than sparkling this morning," said Freddie, who admitted



"To be frank, I'm not that keen on the music press"

a supermarket hype. But if you see us up on a stage, that's what we're all about. We are basically a rock band. All the lights and all the paraphernalia are only there to enhance what we do.

"I think we are good writers—and we want to play good music, no matter how much of a slugging we get. The music is the most important factor. This is our first headline tour, and the buzz has got around, without any support from the media. I suppose they like to find their own bands, and we've been too quick for them.

"You see, when we started out, we wanted to try for the best—the best management, the best record deal, we didn't want any compromise, and we didn't want to get ripped off. So far, it has paid off. In America, we've broken the ice already. As you know, we started a tour there last year, supporting Mott The Hoople, but Brian was taken ill and we had to come back. But we had a Top 30 album hit there, we've undertaken a huge project, but it's all good fun."

How long did Queen spend in planning their project of world domination? "You make it sound so preconceived!" Freddie protested. Mercifully the cleaning device wailed to a halt, and helped dampen a threatened Mercurial outburst.

"Believe it or not—it was spontaneous! It grew and grew, and remember, we had all been in various bands before, so we had plenty of experience of what *not* to do, and not be flabbergasted by the first rosy offer. That's how much planning went into it. This isn't overnight success, you know; we've been going for four years! We just got the right people to work for us, and the right company, and it's taken a long time.

"And yet we've been accused of being a hype, compared to bands we've never even heard of, and then finally told that we didn't even write our own songs. That hurt. Right from the start we have been writing our own songs, and that was the whole point—to come up with some *original* songs.

"In this country, to gain respect in a short while seems very difficult, and the papers like to feel they have you in their grasp. Well—we slipped out of their grasp."

However, Freddie is the first to admit that there can be dissent within the group, as well as without.

"We tend to work well under pressure. But do we row? Oh my dear, we're the bitchiest band on earth. You'll have to spend a couple of days with us. We're at each other's *throats*. But if we didn't disagree we'd just be yes men, and we do get the cream in the end." *Chris Welch* •



Queen in 1974: (l-r) Freddie Mercury, John Deacon, Roger Taylor and Brian May

# Queen: a Seventies bombshell

# A curious mix

**MM NOV 9** Queen's combination of heavy rock and glamour sparks scenes of tumult in Liverpool.

**T**HE GIG: AN atmosphere approaching bedlam is prevalent inside the Empire, long before Queen emit a hint of activity behind the sombre barrier of the safety curtain. Hustler have come and gone, and now the audience are hungry for action. Bad reviews? Supermarket rock? Thousands of Queen's Liverpool supporters look suspiciously as if they couldn't care neither jot nor tittle. They whistle and chant and clap with all the precision of the football terraces.

The ancient cry of "Wally!" still heard in northern territories echoes around the faded gilt decor. Jack Nelson is intrigued by the cry, wonders if Wally are a local group and wants to sign them, until informed Bob Harris already has a stake in the real thing. Mersey accents boom over the PA: "We do apologise for the technical hitch - it's to do with the PA system and we are assured the show will start in two, three or four minutes."

More whistles, as tough-looking lads in white trousers and combat jackets with ELP and Jethro Tull emblazoned on the back pass beer bottles and conduct the audience with cheeky gestures. It's all in fun and the only mild aggro comes when the Queen's entourage from London try to claim their seats near the front. "Fuck off!" directs one youth as PR Tony Brainsby pleads for his seat. "All these seats are taken, up to that gentleman there," says Tony, pointing at me.

Ribald laughter from the watching stalls, and repeated cries of, "Ooh - gentleman!" Grousing, the seat pirates eventually relinquish their hold, with dark mutterings of, "Alright, but we'll see you outside."

The battle was in vain, for as the party took their seats, the safely curtain went up, and the audience rushed forward. Instantly the house lights went up again and the curtain jerked uncertainly down. A nervous man with face ashen of hue appeared at the side of the stage clad in incongruous evening dress, as if he were the master of ceremonies and this was old-tyme music hall.

"There is no way we are going to start..." he began. "All you have to do is enjoy the show..." But there was a way. Somebody turned a blinding spotlight on the managerial figure, and he retired defeated, as the curtain halted in mid-descent and began a jerky upward movement. Within seconds most of the audience were standing up to gaze desperately at the darkened empty stage, and there they were - shadowy figures bounding towards the waiting instruments. The lights blazed, and there was evil Fred, clad all in white, the archetypal demon rock singer, pouting and snarling: "Queen is back. What do you think of that?" A tumultuous roar indicated

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December 8, 1974:  
Queen at the  
Congresgebouw in  
The Hague, Holland

that the mob were well disposed to the idea.

It was difficult to assess the early part of the band's performance because the fans, with that wonderful selfishness of clamorous youth, decided to stand on their seats, their bodies screening both sight and sound. As a guest, I was not too worried on my account, but felt sorry for the kids at the back who had paid their cash.

Retiring to the back of the theatre, and giving up the hard-won seats, we watched the scenes of tumult, including a boy on crutches, perhaps unable to see, but desperately waving his steel supports in supplication. The band's strategy and appeal began to take shape as they tore through such dramatic pieces as "Now I'm Here", "Ogre Battle", "Father To Son" and "White Queen" from the second album.

Roger's drums are the band's workhorse, punching home the arrangements, and mixing a sophisticated technique with violent attack. Roger says his favourite drummer is John Bonham. Brian is a fervent, emotional guitarist, who is like a Ronno figure to

Freddie, and is obviously a gifted musician. The onstage attention is judiciously divided between them, and when May takes a solo on his homemade guitar, Mercury leaves the stage, only to return in a stunning new costume.

Into a medley now, and apart from their slickness and Freddie's dynamic presence, the extra power of almost choral vocal harmonies is appreciated, something that few bands with a central lead singer can achieve. The camper aspects of Queen are displayed in "Leroy Brown", a gay, Dixieland tune that

Freddie insists is inspired by The Pointer Sisters. Then their first hit, "Seven Seas Of Rhye", and a lunatic tempo on "Stone Cold Crazy", "Liar" and the finale from "Lap Of The Gods".

Dry ice began to envelop the stage, and as red light glowed through the fog, group and audience took on an eerie aspect, like a scene

from some Wagnerian forest, as arms waved like young saplings in a night breeze. Then an explosion of white light, and two red flares burn over a deserted stage. Queen have gone, signalling a desperate roar of "MORE!" After some three minutes, the band responded to the insistent demand "We want Queen", Wally having been long forgotten. Into "Big Spender", with its slow, measured pace, and finally "Modern Times Rock 'n' Roll", an apt anthem for a group of our times.

The band are still developing, and their mixture of heavy rock and glamorous display might seem curious. But as Queen makes its royal tour of the land, the effect on their subject is to inspire unmitigated loyalty. And amidst predictions of gloom for the British rock scene, it is a healthy and encouraging spectacle. *Chris Welch*

**There was evil  
Fred, pouting and  
snarling: "Queen  
is back. What do  
you think of that?"**

# 1974

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Robert Fripp: "Instead of King Crimson, you're now getting me - a small, independent, mobile and intelligent unit"



## "The old world is dead"

— ALBUMS —  
**REVIEW**  
— 1974 —

**MM OCT 5** King Crimson's seventh album, *Red*, will be their last. The band's prime mover, Robert Fripp, explains how he has ditched "dinosaur civilisation" to prepare for a "critical decade" to come.

**W**HY HAVE YOU decided to call it a day? Is the experiment over? Yes, and for three reasons. The first is that it represents a change in the world. Second, where I once considered being part of a band like Crimson to be the best liberal education a young man could receive, I now know that isn't so. And third, the energies involved in the particular lifestyle of the band and in the music are no longer of value to the way I live.

But to go back to the first point, the change in the world. At the moment, we're going through a transition from the, if you like, old world to the new. The old world is characterised by what one contemporary philosopher has termed "the dinosaur civilisation", large and unwieldy, without much intelligence - just like the dinosaur.

An example of this would be, say, America or any huge, worldwide power. Another would be any large band with lots and lots of road managers... All these units originally start out to service a need, but you now have a situation where, being creative, they have to create needs in order that they may continue to exist. In other words, they've become vampiric.

The interesting point is that a number of groups are still going when the musicians involved are no longer in charge of the situation. With King Crimson, although that situation hadn't yet been reached, it could have developed that way within the next six months...

It was becoming a dinosaur, then? No, It would never have become a dinosaur. But it would have become a smaller version of a dinosaur. A mechanical situation would have developed which would have been unwieldy. And the band wouldn't have been sufficiently small, independent and intelligent enough to exist in the new world.

And those, of course, are the attributes of the new world: small, mobile, independent and intelligent units, whether it's, ah... Instead of a city, you'll get small, self-sufficient communities, modern villages. And instead of King Crimson, you're now getting me - a small, independent, mobile and intelligent unit.

But the transition between the old and the new has already begun. The old world is, in fact, dead and what we're seeing now is, if you like, the death throes. The large units have immense resources and a lot of power, albeit power of a not very nice kind or quality, which they will use to maintain their existence.

The transition will reach its most marked point in the years 1990 to 1999. Within that period there will be the greatest friction, and unless there are people with a certain education, we could see the complete collapse of civilisation as we know it and a period of devastation which could last, maybe, 300 years. It will be comparable, perhaps, to the collapse of the Minoan civilisation.

**But you seem to be conjuring facts and figure out of thin air. How do you substantiate your**

claims? I base all this, firstly, on a period of living in and experiencing, first hand, the materialistic civilisation - I'm thinking of America and working in an organisation which was, although not a dinosaur, nevertheless large. I saw in America enough evidence of the breakdown of social and economic order to know that something's fundamentally wrong and it can't be reversed. You don't have to be very bright or perceptive to realise that, frankly, the system is breaking down. Life is much too complex and involved to be continued in the present way.

I have contacts in New York who are into a very heavy economic and political situation and they put the year 1990 as the date of the crunch. Besides, it feels right to me.

**Can we go on to your second reason for bringing Crimso to an end? You were talking about a "liberal education"...** Yes, in order to prepare myself for this critical decade I need to acquire certain skills and abilities. The education of King Crimson has taken me to this particular point, but it can no longer educate me in the fashion I need to be educated. Instead of King Crimson, I now need, well... that brings us to my third point, about the energies involved in working with a band.

King Crimson was a democratic band, we each had the power of veto, and would accommodate each other. But we'd got to the point where we discovered we were working together simply because we wouldn't be able



to find musicians of that calibre outside of the band. In other words, if I wanted a rock drummer I could find a number of people to work with. But if I wanted a drummer, and not just a rock drummer, I'm stuck. There's Bill and, maybe, Mike Giles [a member of the original Crismo] and perhaps two others in England. And where would I find a better bass player than John?

A European tour was suggested, but I'd already decided the band was coming to an end. The tour would have meant that the band was on the road for another six months, but I'm not prepared to keep secrets from men I'm working with and life is too valuable for me to commit six months to a situation in which I'm not

wholeheartedly involved. Hence the decision to end the band rapidly. The whole thing wasn't discussed, as such, although I think both Bill and John were aware of my feelings. The energies involved weren't right. Getting on stage and having to fight the aggression of 5,000 people, to beat them down to the point that they're listening... The band became very adept at going on stage and smacking straight through, but at the expense of creating something of a higher nature, if you like.

To give you an idea of the work we've done this year: from January to February we made an album, then went to Europe for a tour, then immediately off to America, back to Britain for rehearsals and straight back to America for another tour. After that, I had one full day off in the country before we started recording *Red*. With that kind of life there's a lot of things I'd like to do, but can't. There are my responsibilities to the land, for instance, which can only be discharged by going out there and working [Fripp owns a cottage in Dorset].

Consequently you can now see me up a very large tree claspng two large saws and a pair of secateurs.

I am also spending more time learning, both in a very broad sense - for example, I am practically inept at anything more exciting than changing a three-pin plug - and in the field of musical electronics. I would like to become self-sufficient so that, not only am I mobile, but I'm

also independent. In other words, I want to develop practical skills and, in addition to this, there is a mental approach involved in all these things.

**But what are your musical plans?**

They involve the creation of another small, independent, mobile and intelligent unit, which is, of course, the Fripp & Eno situation. We'll be going on the road in November. Fripp & Eno is, for me, the perfect example of all the things we were talking about earlier. It won't reach the mass of people in the way King Crimson did - I hoped, you see, that Crismo would reach everyone.

In terms of most bands, of course, it was remarkably successful. But in terms of the higher echelon of bands like Yes and ELP, it didn't make it. My approach, therefore, has now changed and what Eno and I will try to do is influence a small number of people who will, in turn, influence a great number.

I've always known that I will not be a rock 'n' roll star, the guitar idol that millions of young guitarists learn their licks from. I'm not prepared to get involved with that star syndrome, if you like... Eno and I will be creating energies different to King Crimson. They'll be far more subtle and indirect, but they'll eventually be far more potent, they will create more.

**Why? Because I know they will. What can I say? One doesn't always have the choice, but one is sometimes fortunate to have the chance to do certain things. Side One of the Fripp & Eno album is the finest thing I have ever done; it ranks with the first King Crimson album.**

It won't appeal to so many people, but over the years it will come to be regarded as a classic, and in five years' time, people will come to wonder how they could have missed something of that quality. Eno and I will be setting off, primarily in England and Europe... We'll be working in England at the end of November and December.

It will be of a far smaller and personal nature, smaller halls and just the two of us. We'll be able to work without a great deal of organisation or preparation; it will be personal; it will create the right kind of energies and it will enable our lifestyles to be civilised. It will give us a lot of time to ourselves and, of course, it will enable us to do other things.

Such as? Another of my ventures is an album with Robin Trower. Robin and I got on very well in America and he's one of the very few guitarists with spirit, an unerring ability to pick what's right. His field is what many people would consider to be narrow, but that's totally irrelevant. Within that field he's immaculate - his feel and control are both superb.

And in addition to this, I have been offered some production work. I'd also like to say that I'm now open to offers of production work; this is another thing about being mobile and independent. People can actually phone me

up and offer me work. But I get no offers at all as a guitarist, and this is another thing I'd like to see happen. I'm looking forward to people asking me to play on records or on their gigs.

**Will you be playing live with Robin Trower? I'd love to do some gigs with Robin. But he has his own trio and it would be, ah, presumptuous... but if Robin asked me to do a tour I'd say, 'Yeah, you bet.' No way could you keep me away.**

But there is a fourth thing I want to see develop: I'm going to give guitar lessons. I have been pondering for some time the creation of a new guitar technique which brings about a change in the personality of the person who's going through the discipline.

I was tone deaf and had no sense of time when I became a guitarist. And, looking back over the years, I've wondered what on earth an unmusical, tone-deaf, timeless dummy was doing becoming a professional musician. And I've found the answer: I needed music, and music needed me. If you accept that I needed music, then this also involves responsibilities. Because of what I received, I have responsibilities, and I can discharge these as a player.

My tuition involves the creation of a technique which enables the player to have the facility to move his hands to perform an idea which has come from a feeling inside him. In other words, it's a technique which works on the level of the head, the hands and the heart...

**Isn't this the essence of most musical forms? Well, if you're talking about all harmonised and balanced music, yes. If you wish to take the rock 'n' roll musician, for example, he plays very largely from the hips. It doesn't involve any higher energies. Rock 'n' roll is not a particularly intellectual music, nor is it, essentially, very spiritual.**

What I'm interested in doing is providing the rock 'n' roll musician with a technique that will enable him to develop a vocabulary that goes beyond all that. But in order to explain this a little more we really have to go into the elements of music.

If you were to take rock, jazz and classical music, you have, fundamental to rock 'n' roll, a physical expression, this very raunchy feel, but with jazz you have a much looser approach to things, something which tends to be very emotional. And classical music demands a discipline which most

rock 'n' roll musicians would find frightening.

Each of these kinds of music exist on different levels. There's the particular kind of feeling associated with each of them, and there's the separate vocabularies needed to express those feelings.

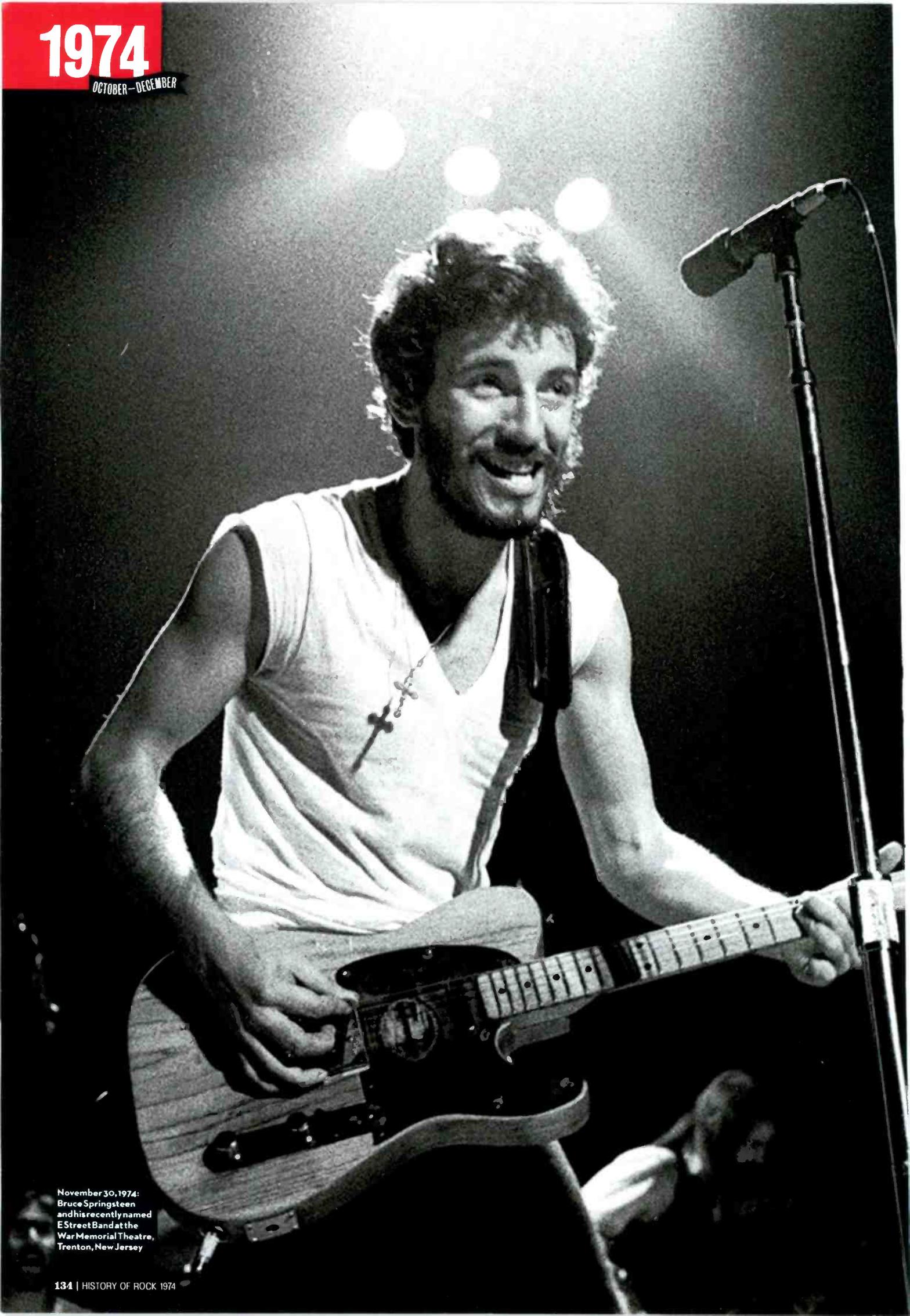
What my guitar technique will do is enable musicians to move more freely from one form of music to another since, in learning the technique, his personality will be put under sufficient stress that he will not only develop emotionally and mentally, but the feelings involved will change his personality. In other words, it's not so much a guitar technique as a way of life. *Robert Partridge*

**“Rock 'n' roll is not a particularly intellectual music, nor very spiritual”**

**Why I killed the King**

1974

OCTOBER - DECEMBER



November 30, 1974: Bruce Springsteen and his recently named E Street Band at the War Memorial Theatre, Trenton, New Jersey

Bowie and The Hollies are covering his songs. On his own time, meanwhile, **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN'S** live show is winning over the USA, one dancehall at a time. "There are never too many encores," he says. "If you can't let me do an encore, let me smash a chair."

"I would never cheat myself"

— MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 30 —

**I** TRAINED TORRENTS that week in Texas, but the outlook never seemed less fine. We were down there for a christening, anyway, albeit a little late in the day. The baby, you see, has long been bawling for our attentions, and most of us have been a little slow to notice. And then, it's a very HUNGRY baby we have here.

So Texas it was, though it could have been anywhere, because Bruce Springsteen is some baby, all of 25 years old and pretty seasoned as far as these things go; you figure he'll have the crowds on top of their seats anyplace he turns up.

He wants a shot at the big title, as they say, and in turn a growing number of people would like to see him take that crown which has been bobbing from head to head of every rock'n'roll champ in the past two decades.

In their minds he's the logical contender, the new golden boy of rock'n'roll, who's finally emerged from the fastnesses of New Jersey bars and campus halls to bid for the public's heart. »

ALLAN TANENBAUM/GETTY

You talk to almost anybody in New York now and what do they say? "Bruce Springsteen! Oh, sure, he's great. But, sugar, you've seen NUTHIN'. You shoulda been there *two years ago* when he was playing at the Student Prince in Asbury Park. THAT was really somethin'."

And so on, blah, blah, blah, New Yorkers always being like that after the event.

But in Texas that big, Lone Star State brooding south-west on the map, where the news takes a while to filter down, it's hard to be blasé. Especially when the rain is falling in gut-buckets.

"Springstein, you say? Jewish fella?" We-ell, no. Of Dutch origin, actually; a Catholic, but we'll let it pass.

It's not their fault. Bruce Springsteen has only just begun to break big anywhere, to touch that vital psychic nerve of a mass audience which sets the ball rolling, and no one can be absolutely sure why it's happening now, though those who've seen him lately instinctively feel his rapport with the goddess of fortune.

Two years, however, when that benign spirit John Hammond signed him to Columbia Records, the press mostly snickered up their sleeves about the "new Bob Dylan". Springsteen replied with his manic-euphoric grin, and then they wrote him off as some kind of Dr Demento.

"*Madman drummers, bummers and Indians in the summer with a teenage diplomat*"—they always picked up on that first, and wildly off, line from his first album, *Greetings From Asbury Park, NJ*, and dismissed the rest as junk in some sort of summary tribunal.

After all, surely you had to be a nut, or gobbling bennies, or some misdirected/informed Dylan disciple to write like that, didn't you?

To his credit—or perhaps he was just oblivious—Springsteen hung on in, sustained by kind words from worshippers who had seen him in his long-haired, bar-band days back in Asbury and thereabouts, plus new fans who were jolted back by the fierce, jumping current of his personality, with its foggy numblings and impenetrabilia, the feisty stance of the street punk and those lyrics that leaped at the inner ear with their roll-call of weird, vibrant characters—Wild Billy, Crazy Janey, Rosalita, Weak Knee Willie and the whole steamy essence of Latin street life that wafted out from the kitchen of his imagination.

He stuck to it the only way a musician can—he kept on playing even though other bands took fright at him and wouldn't, increasingly, use him as a support in case they were blown away—and a double difficulty here, because he was opposed anyway to gigs with heavy rock acts and their attendant zombie audiences.

Finally, he had a job getting booked anywhere outside New York and New Jersey. But he didn't seem unduly bothered because, as he often said, he'd as soon play to 15 people as 1,500 if the music was right. Although the second album, *The Wild, The Innocent And The E Street Shuffle*, sold more than the first, Springsteen had still not really registered as the major artist Columbia and John Hammond had prophesied, and Hammond—everybody always brought this up—had been the guy who brought Dylan to the label a decade before.

The presence of the Minnesota Kid did seem in all truth to loom uncomfortably over any young unfortunate who had aspirations, even circumstantially, to the crown.

Just because he was new, and he had the beard and the hair... it was too bad, it really was, and him not even Jewish. Springsteen, in fact, only owned a few Dylan singles—being too shy to ask his record company for the catalogue—and he'd never even seen Dylan perform, since Bobby hadn't made it to Asbury before the motorcycle disaster.

They still said he'd been influenced by him—well, if you were healthy at all, he reasoned, you'd better be influenced by him!

And then, in the middle of this year, the numbers appeared to click in a perfect combination. No longer playing to chick peas and shell steaks at Max's Kansas City, that downtown pitch for wide-eyed tourists, he and his E Street Band were booked in July into the posh Bottom Line club, Greenwich Village's finest and the kind of place where CBS president Goddard Lieberson might feel more at home.

In the space of a couple of nights the boast of his producer/manager, Mike Appel, that this scruffy kid with the perpetual grin was the "finest actor/artist in the history of rock 'n' roll" could no longer be laughed off

on the rock gossip circuit, but had to be fed for analysis into the critical computer.

A top-notch American rock critic had already come out with his own strip of tickertape proclaiming Springsteen as "the future of rock 'n' roll".

In New York, at least nobody laughed after that, nobody said it was "Bellevue rock" any more. At concerts, girls threw red roses to him in a Spanish love tryst, stages buckled from too many vociferous feet.

And a lot of people began remarking, "Do you remember that time we went out to New Jersey, and there was that band...?"

**T**O BE FAIR, it was certainly true that Springsteen's performance had developed in a year since he was Upstairs at Max's.

At New York's Avery Fisher Hall in October, what once were mannerisms had flowered into a perfect synchronism of rock 'n' roll ballet—theatrics without the tricks, movements and dances assimilated from old '60s soul revues, bits of stage business with the drummer and the black tenorist, a gift for mimicry, and this big, dramatic whisper that Springsteen employed as one weapon in his vocal armoury—a whisper roughed out hoarse and attractive, played off against an acoustic piano and a violin at certain sections in his performance.

More than ever, too, it was apparent that his musical roots were embedded in the thundering symphonies of Spectorland, secured especially in the styles of Spector's girlie groups: in the Crystals and Ronnie and The Ronettes, several of the girls themselves from New Jersey, of course. One of his proudest possessions, it later emerged, was a signed colour photograph of Ronnie Spector.

Springsteen's heart, evidently, was back there in the '50s and early '60s. His poetic intellect had

absorbed the songwriting advances of the '60s and '70s—those knotty problems of metre and internal rhyme—but he intuitively anticipated in his new audiences the response for that uncluttered, emotional freshness embodied in a song like "Then He Kissed Me".

The number, in fact, with which he closed his Avery Hall show that night was the old, joyful rabble-rouser, Gary Bonds' "Quarter To Three".

In those few months since the Bottom Line performances his album sales have started to pick up in America, especially those of his second record, which has gone past the 80,000 mark. Still, that isn't too great; by big-league standards it's even a failure.

So the people who know about these things are forever badgering him to bring in a big-time producer instead of Mike Appel, someone like Richard Perry, maybe, or Bob Johnston, or... or Spector.

Springsteen says no, summoning a rueful smile for his elders and betters. He and Appel managed it OK together, as far as he's concerned. All his records had been commercial, he thought, and no sounds had gone down he disagreed with.

Though there's a smell of burning somewhere, he remains very loyal to Appel, while Appel announces, in very precise tones, that his artist's "presence on stage dwarfs any musical attempt on vinyl. Any album is a disaster in comparison."

His record company, meanwhile, bites its nails and waits for the release of the third album in the early part of next year.

Other artists, maybe, will break his songs first. David Bowie has recorded "Growing Up" and "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City", The Hollies have done "4th Of July Asbury" and Allan Clark "If I Were The Priest".

But Springsteen doesn't want to be just a fat cat on some publisher's shelf. He's looking for the main action.

**O**F THESE MUSICAL politics, however, the good people of Austin, Texas, know nothing, though the name of Bruce Springsteen is well remembered from a gig last year at the Armadillo World Headquarters, a big, 2,000-capacity club that likes to think of itself as a Fillmore in a city with pretensions to the cultural cosiness of old-time San Francisco.

Austin, situated on the Colorado river in the Texan interior, if that's the phrase, plays home to Doug Sahm and the 40,000-student University Of Texas, and once, indeed, to Charles Whitman, who from the top of a tower near the main drag rifled 18 people to death.

He becomes  
a pool-hall  
hustler, a '50s  
runaway,  
floating cool...

Kinky Friedman, another Texan, and a Jew to boot, wrote a catchy ballad about it; that's one way to achieve immortality. During the day a travelling band in this city might occupy itself looking through a number of thrift shops for old 45s and 78s on Dial, Duke/Peacock, Josie and other, more arcane labels.

But at night after a cloudburst the visitor is greeted only with streets dripping empty and miserable, surfaces black and shiny, with the neon strips of hamburger joints little more than cold comfort. We find Springsteen late at night in the Fun Arcade on Main Street, which is where one would have expected him arriving in a strange town.

He's literally running from game to game – from the pool tables, to the pin football – at which the Tex-Mex kids are so adept – to Pong (the official name for “television tennis”), and on to Air Hockey, a two-player game that involves slamming a puck between goalmouths across an air-cushioned tabletop.

He's a small guy, about five foot seven, with a deceptively rumpled, sleepy face – deceptive because he's winning at all these games. Tufts of curly hair grow out from under a grey cloth “po' boy” cap, his skin is sallow, and the beard is scrappy.

But with his rubbed jeans, beat-up leather jacket, and his hat tipped raffishly over one eye, he becomes at second glance something quite charismatic... a pool-hall hustler, a '50s runaway, floating cool with his hard-earned savvy, the kind of character that Kerouac would immediately have recognised and set down.

A peculiarly anachronistic air clings to Springsteen. After observing him a few moments shooting pool and rattling up big scores with much

intensity, I start to think he should've been a beat poet himself, hopping on boxcars around America, sharing a bottle of wine with ol' Ti Jean and the hobos out in the yards and then writing down his fleeting sensations, each rush of thought, on scraps of paper he stuffed about his clothes.

That was another age, when electric guitars weren't so common, but Springsteen still gives off this heady whiff of pristine romance, of nostalgia for a wide-open America that this rock generation has never known, some outlaw quality of adventuring that cuts right across all this business of middle-class white boys leaving school to sing black men's music.

And again, the well-thumbed line comes straight to mind, that nobody ever taught him how to live out on the street. Because he already knew, knew instinctively.

On the Thursday morning, when the *New York Times* calls the Sheraton Inn in Austin, Springsteen turns to the man from CBS and asks if he's really got to do the interview.

“It's only 10 minutes of your life.”

“But why?”

“It can help you. They want to do a big story.”

Springsteen brightens at a sudden thought. “You got the wheels, right? OK, lets get out and play. Lets go get some hamburgers” – his favourite food, since fancy cuisine makes him uncomfortable.

He treats the CBS man to a hoarse, compulsive chuckle. His voice has a husk on it like a kernel.

“You really should talk to him. It is the *New York Times*.”

There's a pause before he grumbles assent. “Aw, OK.”

Springsteen avoids interviews if he can, apparently not out of bolshevism or any attempt to envelop himself in mystique, but because he finds it hard to adjust to the brittle game of question and answer, of careful probing, smart deceptions and double-guessings that are supposed to elicit some approximation of the truth.

He is too real to put his faith in the glamour of headlines, too mindful of his privacy to undervalue his personal feelings at the sight of a notebook or tape recorder.

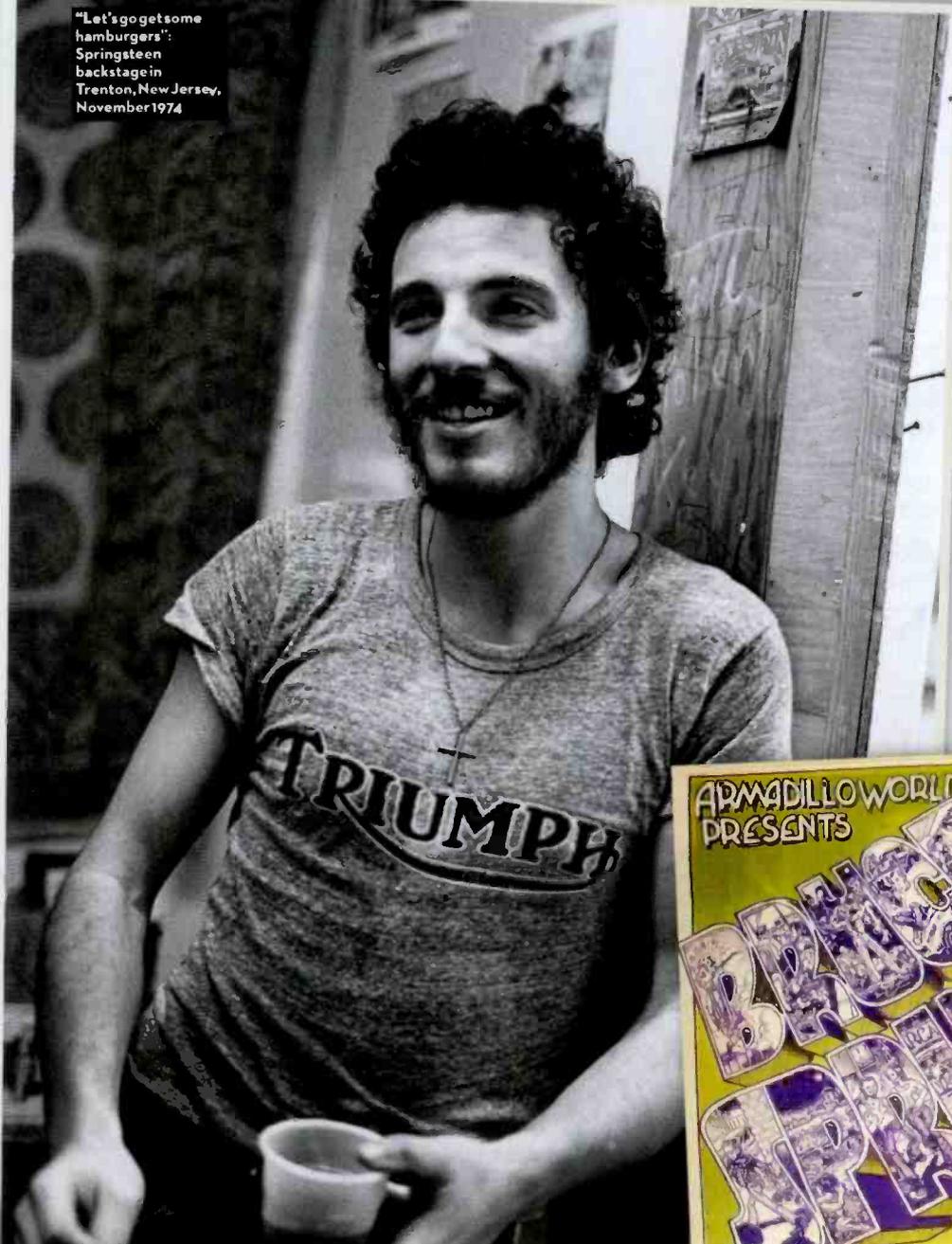
This attitude is really a corollary of his dislike of rock stardom, which he professes to find as meaningless as most rock stars are unappealing to him. They're jokes, hoaxes, gyps, he's fond of saying, because every other person can be one if he's willing to surrender himself to a public-relations man.

“They're just people who wanna crawl back in the womb,” he will say, “people who have built their own reality and are afraid of reality itself.” Being a rock star was letting yourself be controlled, and that way you cheated yourself.

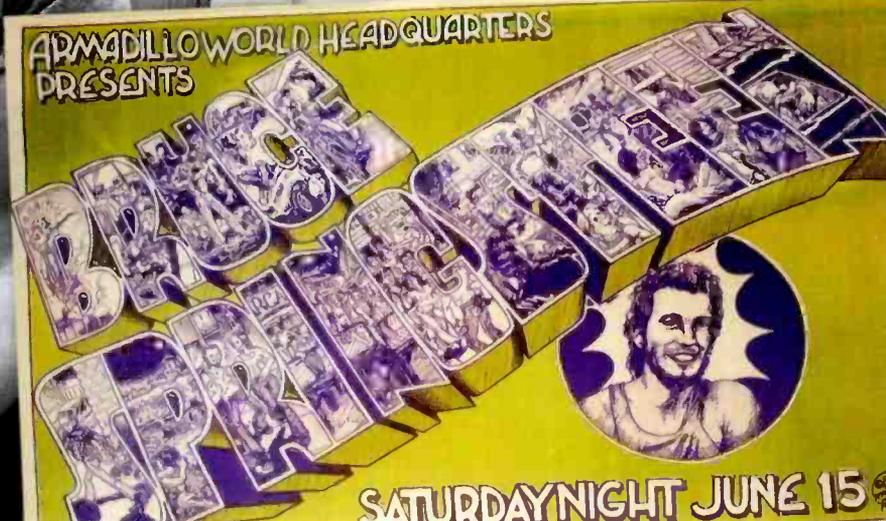
So no, he doesn't ever want to be a big, hyped-up rock star, playing Madison Square Garden, where the kids need binoculars to see him.

“I hope somebody shoots me off stage,” he says “if they ever see me there, because then I'll deserve it.” »

“Let's go get some hamburgers”: Springsteen backstage in Trenton, New Jersey, November 1974



ARMADILLO WORLD HEADQUARTERS  
PRESENTS



The band, guys who've been out on the road for some years, several of them spent with Springsteen, are less sure of what's involved. The organist, for one, Danny Federici, a taciturn, sandy-haired man who also played with Bruce in a group called Steel Mill back in the old Jersey days.

"I don't know what to think of the whole thing," he says. "I don't even know what to think of the way the audiences respond. I know Bruce is good, I know that, but I don't really understand what it is, or how they let it all out the way some of the people do for our concerts."

Still, it's essentially Springsteen's responsibility. He supervises the music as totally as he orchestrates the audience's emotions, and the E Street Band is a group in which personal expression has to be sublimated in the collective effort in which there's a group sound and infrequent soloing, since one of Springsteen's musical ideals is the sound-mesh that Dylan achieved on his electric albums.

Only Danny, briefly, gets a large slice of the spotlight, just as it was Al Kooper alone who was allowed to rise out of the mix on *Highway 61*. Springsteen has picked them all carefully. The bassist, Garry W Tallent, has been with him since '71 when Bruce led another band of Jersey renown, Dr Zoom & The Sonic Boom.

The pianist, Roy Bittan, arrived in September after longtime keyboardman Davey Sancious became too idiosyncratic with his prepared piano pieces and iconoclastic Debussy style, while the present drummer, Max Weinberg, was auditioned around the same time. He's a number-one pupil of Pretty Purdie, and among other occupations, an ex-Broadway pit player (*The Magic Show* and *Godspell*), showbiz experience that Springsteen particularly utilises in his rapid number of time switches and off-the-cuff routines.

But the main man is Clarence Clemons, a big, imposing black tenorist, who was a football player with the Cleveland Browns until he got a leg injury, and who once held down a spot as one of James Brown's Famous Flames. Clarence also sings harmonies, and he's a kind of foil for Springsteen, this huge dude, standing front left, setting off the diminutive singer—Clarence in his white suit, black shirt and hat, with the shades, counterpointing this skinny, hungry-looking kid who looks as if he's been leaning on fire hydrants all his life. The band is as tight as the fingers on a hand, all living within 10 miles of each other in New Jersey, near the beach and not far from Asbury Park, just so's rehearsals will be easier to arrange.

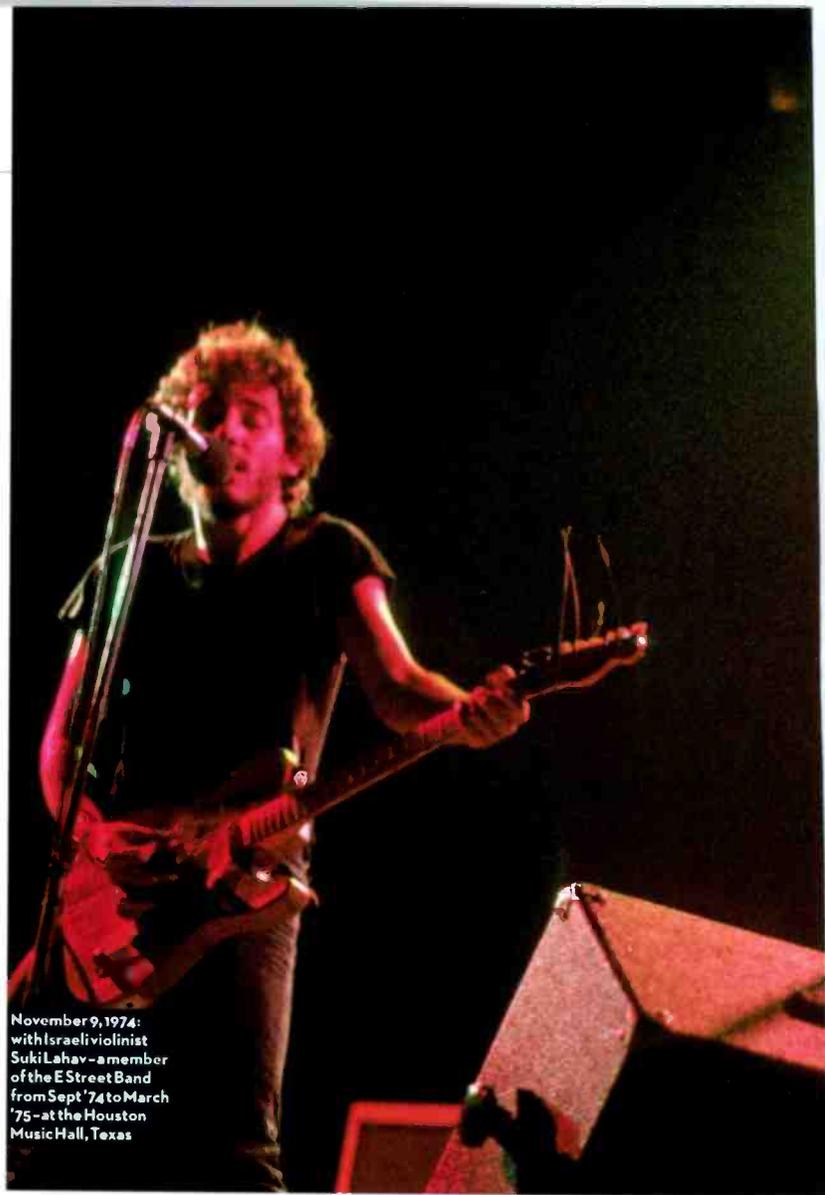
**ON THURSDAY AT** the Armadillo there are no visiting dignitaries, but the audience is greater than the previous evening's, a crowd of tall Texan gals and young longhairs in dirty-cream cowboy hats cocked back on their heads, in their hands huge pitchers of pale beer which they slop in the glasses of whoever is standing near.

It's a crowd that wants to boogie and crack those empty cans of Lone Star beer under their scuffed boot-heels in this large barn of a joint, warm but still redolent of the rainy night outside.

So they're unprepared and somewhat off-balance when Springsteen walks out in his battered duds with little, scholarly Roy, the pianist, and Suki, who just happens to be the wife of his sound engineer, Louis Lehav, and spent time in the Israeli Youth Ork—this slight, tiny blonde, a heart-stealer in rolled-up denims and boots, a thumbnail sketch of charming, fragile femininity, who crooks a violin in her shoulder.

And Bruce, in his muscle T-shirt with his hair haloed by the lighting, a tender John Garfield characterisation with one hand fingering the veins in his arm, eyes hooded in shades. Bruce starts in on his uptown drama of a Spanish Johnny, sad-eyed Romeo figure, looking for a sweet word from his girl, all the sounds of the city in the song, with the violin like a breath of night wind across the West River.

And the cowpokes, even if they're all maths students most likely at university, cease their crunching and slurping. "And from the shadows came a young girl's voice, said, 'Johnny, don't cry!'" Springsteen whispering over the mic in a long moment of total magnetic



November 9, 1974, with Israeli violinist Suki Lehav—a member of the E Street Band from Sept '74 to March '75—at the Houston Music Hall, Texas

concentration, until on the last piano note, a single, delicate droplet, the crowd bellows out its huge roar of rough approval.

And from that instant Springsteen has them, Austin and Texas, by the horns, all out to ride the emotions off 'em. He always performs this single song, "Incident On 57th Street", as his opening number, and then brings on the rest of his band: Clemons, clutching his gleaming horn; Garry Tallent, vaguely Leon Russell with his flowing brown hair and beard; Max's face virtually obscured by the hovering cymbals; and Danny on last, the sandy moustache with its hint of truculence, sitting right across the stage from Roy Bittan.

They ease out with the familiar Crystals oldie, altered naturally to "Then She Kissed Me", and then Bruce's own "Spirit In The Night", Clemons and Tallent on the harmonies, a rasping big-band sound, Weinberg driving and hopping them along, Bruce skinny-legging it around the stage, and the audience fully twitching now, caught in the spill of the event.

The music is truly overwhelming, a wild, heady mixture of lyrical mosaics refracted through a warm glow of nostalgia, memories of nights spent listening to the radio under the bed covers, when music was undiluted and young, the same, almost forgotten stab of joy, but

undeniably '70s R&B, the music brought clean and wailing into the present times and suggesting at every other turn the influence of jazz and Latin sounds.

The measure of its exciting effect is its refusal to be pinned down, but for me at least it touches some sensitive chord, submerged deep in the rubble of the subconscious, that's exhilarating but also disturbing, because it's rarely exposed so completely.

I listen to Springsteen like I used to listen to Dylan, John Lennon and Chuck Berry—as though a life depended on it and no more can be said than that. Just one impressive factor about Bruce Springsteen is his encyclopaedic

"I know Bruce is good, but I don't really understand what it is"



He was in and out of various bands, even making nightly trips to the Cafe Wha? in Greenwich Village, but his first important group was Child. Danny Federici was another member, Bruce was 18, and the band went off to San Francisco and cut a four-hour tape for Bill Graham's Fillmore Records—so good, according to Federici, that Graham offered

their manager \$2,000 to sign, which wasn't considered enough.

They came back and changed their name to Steel Mill, playing heavy rock, and picked up a reputation in Jersey towns, where they could play to two and three thousand people a time for \$500 and 50 per cent of the gate, even without a record company.

He wrote a lot more those days. Every weekend the band had a new repertoire. And he was into the image, sexy with his shoulder-length hair and his guitar slung low, low down.

Until one night it wasn't enough any longer. They were a big local act, and yet one evening Bruce walks on stage and he doesn't feel it any more, it's almost as if he were parodying himself, and there and then he decides to bust it up. It was hard on Federici. His wife had just left him and here was Bruce saying it was all over. He still has this mental picture of himself stuck in his hallway with his suitcase, trying to figure where to go next. The next two years he never played with anyone unless they paid him upfront, he felt so hurt.

As for Springsteen, he set up another band, Dr Zoom & The Sonic Boom, which included Garry Tallent and practically everyone else he knew who could play an instrument. He was still searching for the right vehicle, and then hitched his name to a 10-piece band, loaded with horns and R&B riffs, that eventually whittled itself down to seven, and then to five.

They had been friendly for a time with Looking Glass, seen how they hit the jackpot with "Brandy", a Number One American single, and wondered why they weren't hitting it, with Bruce writing these great, colourful songs—and wondered especially why Tinker, Springsteen's manager from way back, hadn't ever clinched that record deal.

A vote was taken, and one morning Springsteen went sorrowfully back to the surfboard factory where he and Tinker lived, and delivered the black spot. The guy was fixing his truck, underneath it. He didn't say a word. It was through him that Springsteen met Mike Appel.

By the time we've all boarded the group bus that Friday morning, ready to leave rained-out Austin, a rather unnerving change has swept through the whole party.

Five or six of us are wearing hats like Springsteen's, bought in town from the Texas Hatter and pulled down low over one ear in the true style of the Depression era, so that we resemble young Okies, or the Little Rascals,

depending on your imagination.

Springsteen looks amused at his groupies, but he never says a word. From this point, leather jackets, jeans and caps, beat up and lived in, become a uniform. The bus pulls out at midday on its 200-mile trek to Corpus Christi, a town on the Gulf Of Mexico which combines, one is led to understand, the palm-treed pleasures of a resort with the financial income of oil refineries.

Just above Springsteen's bunk, where he's curled up in a blanket, a single red rose hangs from the roof, a tribute cast by »

## I shut my eyes and I can see those dirty New York yellow cabs

knowledge of rock'n'roll and the intuitive use to which he puts it.

Eddie Cochran brushes shoulders with The Crickets and Bo Diddley, Phil Spector appears all over the place, and in the live version of "Rosalita" he throws in a Four Tops riff.

On "Sandy" he even uses Federici on accordion, possibly inspired by The Beach Boys' "God Only Knows". But the noise and smells of street life crowd in on him. I shut my eyes and I can see those dirty New York yellow cabs, nosing in wolfpacks down the hot asphalt on Eighth Avenue, the charred stink of bagels in the air. Manhattan or those tacky towns of New Jersey, he hasn't wandered far from either.

"It's hard to be a saint in the city," he sings with an edge of pride, a sentiment chock-full of New York atitudinising. Tough cops, bar fights, jukeboxes, pimps, alleyways, Harleys, greasers, filthy denims, circuses, boardwalks, Spanish razorboys, trains and tenements—this is his literary stomping ground.

Springsteen, born in Freehold, New Jersey, lives these days in an outlying district of Asbury called West End. Asbury Park is a seaside town in Eastern New Jersey, with a population about 50 per cent black, and crammed in the summer with tourists who haven't got the money to go to Atlantic City up the coast.

It was the usual story. His mother had bought him a guitar when he was nine, but he hadn't taken it seriously until he was 13, around the tail-end of that golden age of rock'n'roll, and just before The Beatles arrived to whip up every white kid's latent fantasy of success in the adult world.

Elvis, The Chiffons, Sam Cooke, The Shirelles, Chuck Berry, The Isley Brothers—every night he went home and put those babies on the record player, seeking out that release promised in the black grooves. Rock'n'roll, he swore, was what kept him from going nuts, but it was the genuine, horny old stuff he dug. The Beatles were pop, the Stones he stopped buying after *December's Children*. Something to do with the fancy production.

# LONE STAR

He laughed when critics called him 'the new Dylan'. But he stuck to his guns



an admirer at the Tower Theatre in Philadelphia. But Bruce is suspended in his own uneasy limbo, drained of sleep by the previous two days' performances.

He dreams he's being driven across a rough landscape and up a huge mountain, slowly and terrifyingly, because the incline is vertical. And it stops, and he's poised, safety resting on a clenched breath, his body almost upside down, jagged edges below...

When he awakens, sweaty and anxious, to cars speeding by on the highway, he fishes around for an explanation of the dream. "And the mountain was named Success, right?" grins one of the party.

He explains that during a performance he has to fulfil two needs, the physical and the emotional, and that sometimes you do one, sometimes the other, but usually you fall short on both. Inside himself he envisions these little gates, and throughout the performance he goes through each one until BOOM!—the big release! But always there's another one there, always just one, and the intensity of the feeling burns in his stomach, needing to be released, because performing is the only thing he ever does in his life and he has to go all the way with it.

His philosophy is, you have to drain yourself, your band, and your audience, and in its place the performer leaves something else, an indefinable something. But for all parties it's the sense of release that's important. Music is simply the modus operandi.

"Because," he will elaborate, "a movie, music, a book—whatever—everybody uses these things to satisfy a need. Creating is a release in itself. Everything's a release.

“A movie,  
music, a book –  
everybody uses  
these things to  
satisfy a need”

"That's what it's about in society—you gotta get released," laughing at his own intensity.

"That's what everybody wants; that's why the audience come, man. They don't come to say, 'Hey, you're great!' or to be jived with rock stars and stuff—they mightn't even know why they come—but they come to get release, to be set free.

"The think they're gonna get something they need, and it's gotta be more than just jump up and down and 'boogie, boogie!'

"What happens is that people cheat themselves and they don't know it. I would never cheat myself. If you don't cheat yourself, you don't cheat anybody. You can never play

too much, for example; there are never too many encores.

"If you can't let me do an encore, let me smash a chair or somethin'. I don't know if there's ever enough of a release. Maybe it comes when you die, the Ultimate Release..."

In Corpus Christi that night, where he's topping the bill over old Sir Douglas Quintet organist Augie Meyers, the local cat from San Antonio, he does four encores, even though there are only 300 people in the 1,700-seater Ritz Theatre.

There's been no air play on him, no announcements, no advertising. As a word of mouth he's a whisper down here in darkest Texas... but the audience is ecstatic, going totally bananas in this bare, white-bricked theatre that was built back in the 1920s as a vaudeville hall.

And Springsteen gushes, coming off really high, saying, "No, man, it doesn't matter how many are there. Sometimes it's even better when there's not a lot there. You get off on yourself and the band."

November 30, 1974:  
on stage at the Trenton  
War Memorial Hall  
with tenor sax player  
Clarence Clemons,  
formerly one of James  
Brown's Famous Flames

He knows that next time he played here it would be full; but it's unlikely there will be a next time. For this is an altogether grey, creepy town. Several years ago a hurricane blew in from the Gulf and took Corpus away with it, and though the physical scars have been patched up, in spirit it's only one graduation from a ghost town.

So much for sun-kissed beaches. The resort has shut down for winter, the air is clammy with cold. So no one was unhappy to leave that alien town for Houston, a wide, expanding sprawl of a city, not unlike Los Angeles in its centreless architectural concept. Sitting, later, in his Houston hotel room, Springsteen can look back on his Corpus performance and say, "I had a good time, but right now it seems like a kind of a void. It didn't seem complete enough."

If only he could have done a final encore, he broods, the show at the Houston Music Hall might have come close to the perfect emotional dissolve that he's seeking. But the management's fear of the unions prevented them performing and he wanders off dejectedly as the audience swarms out, upset that he's not physically spent, that there's energy left with no place to go...

**S**OLATE THIS Saturday evening, in Houston's downtown Holiday Inn, Bruce Springsteen is slowly shaking off his post-performance blues and equalising his emotions. He's saying that when he gets back to New Jersey he has to make a lot of changes in the band, to get more depth. He feels he's just on the perimeter of what he should be doing.

But perhaps inside he's remembering that night years ago when he walked out on stage and suddenly found he was only parodying himself, that it had become a bore. He's only too aware now of how he needs that shiny hit record to sustain his momentum, that elusive

combustible which will break open another door for him, just as he once stepped through a door that took him into rock'n'roll and off the streets.

And yet change is all around him. He spends long weeks on the road now. He will see less and less of Asbury Park, which though now millionaires' row, has been a big source of inspiration for his music. He's rarely written on the road before, but he will have to adjust. His consciousness is developing. He has to work it all out.

He's a guy who might have gone bad, or just become a bum, but found this little seed within himself and learned what makes it grow, till he's filled up inside with lots of different goodies. Everybody has it but most people never figure it out. Springsteen says his father was one of those. "And there are guys still out there, guys my age, guys a lot older."

So with this perspective he sees his function, his role, if he has any at all, as one of trying to show people some quality, some emotion, that is real, and the way he tells it is less pompous than it sounds. He says, "You've got to be able to see yourself for what you are, and not until then can you improve on what you are and be what you want to be. But people throw it away for a hoax, the Big American Hoax. For me, I can't deal with life in reference to governments and politics; I have to deal with it on a personal level.

"If you look at Bob Dylan, that's what he was doin'. 'Blowin' In The Wind' was all right, but I don't like it half as much as 'I Want You', 'Like A Rolling Stone' or anything on *Blonde On Blonde*.

"I want you" – that's it, that's the ultimate statement you can make to anybody. What else can you say? And that's the greatest lyric in the song, those three words, in the whole damn

song! I put that on, man, and I get blown away, I get blown down the street, 'cos there's no hoax there – it was real, real as hell."

In his own songs Springsteen tries for that same honesty, searching, however wildly, for some clear picture of himself. "I don't know what I'm writing from," he says, "but the main thing I've always been worried about was me. I had to write about me all the time, every song, 'cos in a way you're trying to find out what that 'me' is. That's why I choose where I grew up, and where I live, and I take situations I'm in, and people I know and take 'em to the limits."

But in pursuing this self-discovery, away from the stage he's grown self-contained, untouched by people in the final analysis. Although easy and friendly, not a bit aloof, he's still a lonestar, moving on his own, independent trajectory. He's into none of the musician's usual trips – doping up, drinking and heavy womanising. The girls he meets on the road he never turns into groupies, to be discussed with appropriate lip-smacking noises in the bus next day. Dope was not even important to him as a teenager.

"People do it because their friends do it," he explains carefully, "and at the time I didn't have any friends in Asbury... I had a guy I'd see once and a while and a girl, but outside of that there was nobody, I wasn't in that circle. Consequently, I was oblivious to a lotta social pressures and stuff within the scene, 'cos I was on the outside, on the outside looking in... until I started to play, and then people come close to you. You don't go to them, they come to you."

He pauses, his hands rumpling through his hair. "But by then it was too late. I was totally involved in what I was doin', and I had no need for anything else, or for anybody. I was there, and that was it, for me."

He gets up and turns the television off and then he goes back to the bed, where he sits cross-legged.

"Y'know, you have to be self-contained. That way you don't get pushed around. It depends on what you need. I eat loneliness, man. I feed off it. I live on a lotta' different levels, y'know, because I've learned to cope with people, which is – be cool all the time. I can do that, because... I've got too much going on inside to be upset over things that are trivial to me.

"So I've learned to really flow with it on the surface. I can roll with the punches. It's a way of getting along."

Still, he's in the ring now, moving up the rankings, with other managers fastening their beady eyes upon him. Suddenly it's become a big deal, and he needs all the help he can get. He and Appel battle it out together, managing on a shoestring, until The Breakthrough arrives. One day he wants to have that big pile of money, wants to hold a million dollars in his hand, just to see what it's like.

And come that day, he's promised himself he'll ride in a limousine and go to some spiffy high society do, where they'll have to announce him. Then – thinking dutifully – there's his mother who's worked every day since she was 17, and she's old now. He'd like her to stop – his old man, too. Oh – there's all kinds of dreams wrapped up in that million bucks. But mostly he knows what he wants, and it's to do with an attitude. "I wanna be able to spit on the floor when I like," he says with passion. "I just don't wanna be controlled through the air, man. I wanna spit in the air..."

In the early hours of Sunday morning, we confront ourselves at a celebration party held in Roberto's home, a large, wooden-frame building set back from the road amidst thick, tall grass. The rain has stopped momentarily, but the vegetation on the drives swishes heavily.

Inside it's a great melee, with people crushed drunkenly together. Ice rattles in a big tub holding cans of beer. Over in one corner several people play in rummy on a big, battered old table. There are cigarettes stubbed out in the potato salad. The party is on its last legs...

It's well after 3am when Roberto, mad Chicano that he is, portentously raises his hand and calls, in thunderous fashion, for silence. As the hubbub cuts out, he draws Bruce to him and makes a little speech about how honoured he is to have such a rising star in his home, he, Roberto. And while Springsteen looks sheepish, the guests raise their cans of beer to him for a brief deep moment. Then someone coughs and the party limps to its close.

Later, in the car back to the hotel, Springsteen says, "Do you know what he gave me?" And he pulls out of his pocket Roberto's absurd Lone Ranger mask. We all have a good laugh at that, and then we head out for the nearest hamburger joint, because Bruce is feeling very hungry by now. *Michael Watts* •

"I can't deal  
with life in  
reference to  
governments  
and politics"

# 1974

OCTOBER—DECEMBER



## “Goodnight!”

MARTINI HALL  
GRONINGEN  
**LIVE!**  
OCTOBER 13

**NME OCTOBER 26** Finally embarking on their first full-scale European tour, the Faces are having themselves a real good time. Riotous off stage, somewhat pissed on it, the band retain some magic. But how long can it last?

**O**NE MIGHT HAVE thought the Faces would have become a little tired of disrupting the world's hotels by now—or, at least, that they would have developed a certain dignity about the process.

Imagine yourself, therefore, in the foyer of an establishment known as the Helvetia in an obscure Dutch town called Groningen. At about midnight, Rod Stewart is squatting atop the receptionist's desk attempting to conduct a face-to-face dialogue with the guy behind it, apparently working on the maxim that if you shout loudly enough at foreigners they'll understand you. Meanwhile, there's a staircase to the right which, for a spell, proves a rather hazardous passageway, since a chair or table is liable to come tumbling down from the first floor at various irregular intervals.

The Faces' European tour has been underway for a couple of weeks now and any prior decisions made by the band to curb some of their more overt boisterousness appear to have been kicked in the ass. "Each of the boys is really all right on his own," remarks one of the road crew, "but when they're together this sort of hysteria develops."

Quite how one personally reacts to these sort of incidents basically depends on whether you sympathise with the on-the-road partying in the cause of rock n'roll or whether you'd actually hoped to get a night's sleep.

On this occasion, the Faces after the gig (and a couple of hours at a local bar) set upon a sort of party which consisted of playing a tape of the concert at full blast, followed by some Chuck Berry and then a session of repeatedly slamming doors—complete with loud yells of "Goodnight!" to cheerily keep awake any of the more bona fide guests.

Altogether, the tour hasn't been quite organised like the usual round-Europe trek. On most occasions the band's private jet has been at the ready to whisk them back to London after the various concerts. As one of the band's associates remarked: "I think their ideal is to have a private jet waiting outside the hall to take them home. One of 'em said the other day, 'Won't it be great when Concorde comes into service? We can get home after New York!' They're home-lovin' boys, y'know."

In fact, this is really the first time the Faces have set out on a full-scale tour of Europe,

having previously concentrated their efforts on Britain and the States. Consequently, they're drawing middle-sized rather than huge crowds.

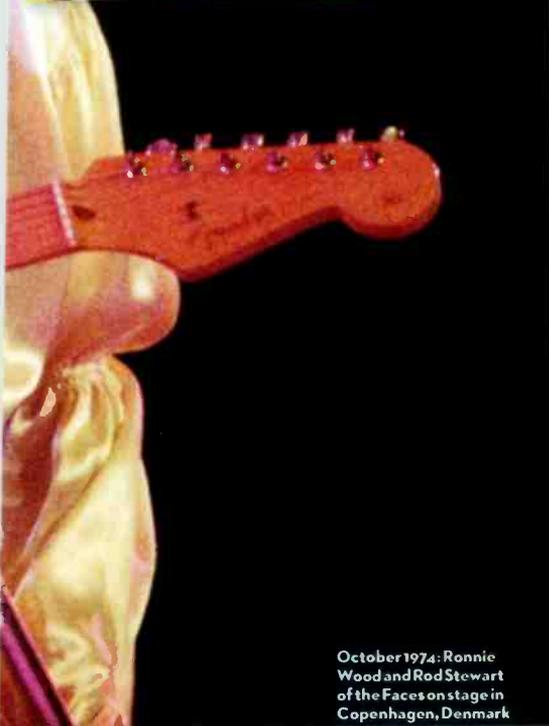
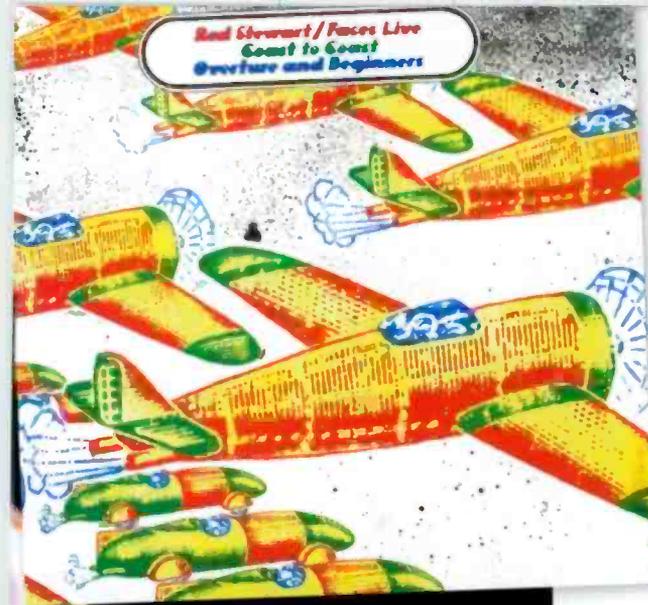
As they somewhat forcefully indicate, playing (what in terms of the rock business is) a fairly insignificant town like Groningen doesn't exactly show them to their best advantage. "I'm looking forward to a European tour, though," remarked Rod Stewart a couple of weeks previously. "It's strange, really, that in five years we haven't really been over there."

It does have its drawbacks, though: "I had an interview with a French journalist the other day and I thought this'd be good, y'know... new questions and all that, but the first thing he said was, 'Give me your history...'"

After battling with a BEA strike and a two-and-a-half-hour journey on Dutch rail, the whole expedition took on an air of pointlessness from quite early on. Originally it had been partly prompted by Rod Stewart's reported desire to conduct a series of three interviews for the *NME*, one with Ron Wood, one with Charles Shaar Murray ("to see what

GETTY

Rod Stewart / Faces Live  
 Coast to Coast  
 Structure and Engineers



October 1974: Ronnie Wood and Rod Stewart of the Faces on stage in Copenhagen, Denmark

to appear in Covent Garden, to take part in some shots for his forthcoming film, to record the Russell Harty show, to make a couple of appearances on the tour, and on Monday night, to be back in Scotland - "for a clan meeting - but how can I get there if BEA are on strike?"

But the fact that his album is selling acceptably is some cause for celebration, since, perhaps surprisingly, he felt worried about how it would be received.

"It's difficult to know where I stand, especially in America.

For the last couple of years, I've rather sat back and watched everybody else get on with it, observed from the touchline so to speak. Like, it was strange when I went over to the States a month ago to do some press. I felt like a stranger, starting all over again. I phoned up the president of the record company and said, 'What's it like breaking a new artist? He said, y'know, tongue in cheek, 'We've done it before - we can do it again.'"

If Stewart had experienced any worries about coming back strongly - they now appear to be quite overcome.

"I think about it - I'm quite aware that everybody is bound to find somebody else in three years' time and I shall have to start thinking about doing something different," he comments before pausing and grinning... "No, actually I'm just being diplomatic. I'd really like to keep going as long as possible. I'm gonna be the big Three-O this year, but there are plenty of guys making records that I could give a good eight years to, from what I hear."

Anyway, after a little persuasion the band complete are ferried into the two limousines, which are pointed in the

direction of the Groningen concert hall. The place itself turns out to have all the ambience of a fall-out shelter, a fact that isn't totally lost on the band. Kenney Jones arrives earlier, however, and, as always appears the most concerned about the band.

"It's been really good so far up to now. I don't know what it'll be like tonight, but on previous dates I think we've come together a lot. We needed the break and we've needed a few days on tour to sort things out among ourselves. I think we're ready to play England now. We should be really good."

After a fairly spirited set from Strider, the Faces eventually hit the stage to the strains of "The Stripper" before falling into "It's all Over Now". As they continue, it turns out to be a fairly standard Faces set. You almost know what's to come next: "Memphis", "Too Bad", "I'd Rather Go Blind", "Angel" and "Stay With Me" are all included. But while it all may be familiar, and while the playing ranges from the ragged to the quite excellent, the band still possess that certain raunch and style which is quite often underestimated. The Faces on a

bad night are still quite more entertaining than the average band at their best.

Perhaps their main fault is that they seem determined now to concentrate on the loudest, most upfront material without exhibiting any of the more underhand, slinky power of their earlier days.

Actually they did put in two new numbers - "I Can Feel The Fire" from Ron Wood's album and "Sweet Little Rock 'n' Roller" from Smiler. Yet more innovations are promised for the English tour. They are received affectionately if not rapturously, and back in the dressing room nobody regards it as one of the greatest gigs ever.

However, things appear sociable enough, although it's Tetsu who appears the most docile, carefully nursing a bottle of Teacher's whisky. One attempts to enter into conversation, but although he's amiable, his command of the English language is not great. Mostly he appears rather bemused by the surrounding activities while confirming he's cut down his drinking.

"Yeah... it used to be two bottles of this a day," he gently waves the bottle of Teacher's. "Now I've got it down to one."

He nevertheless claims there were no difficulties in slipping into the Faces routine: "It was easy. All I had to do was play - play the bass and play my part. Nobody said you must do this or that... It wasn't like that at all.

"I've never know a group like this before, y'know," he shakes his head a shade. "It's a different sort of group. In everything... everything is there when you want it. You don't have to do anything. Sometimes I think too much, y'know," he waves his hands around to try and grasp his exact meaning. "Sometimes you want to do something and you can do it... but you don't have to, you know what I mean?"

So it would appear there isn't much solemnity about the proceedings. And nobody seems to want it any other way.

"I can't take rock that seriously," says Rod Stewart. "A lot of critics do - and give good views on music. But look, take an artist like Turner for instance... I mean, I love his pictures, but he never took them seriously. By that I don't mean I just want to walk on stage any old how - the vibes I want to give off is to cheer everybody up and in doing so cheer

myself up. It doesn't take that much anyway - I'm generally quite a happy little soul."

Altogether one still recalls the offstage incidents more than the concert itself. Like it or not, the Faces on tour I suppose are still a unique and rather exhausting rock music phenomenon, unequalled

by any imitators. To contrive to keep a party running through till around six in the morning after hardly the most exhilarating of gigs must be some sort of achievement.

By early next morning the hotelier on the door was wearing a somewhat strained expression but still maintaining a certain good humour. He also managed to comment in halting English: "I think there will be a large bill to pay." James Johnson

makes him tick") and the other, perhaps, with Elton John. It had been hoped to witness the Rod Stewart-Ron Wood confrontation but it was squashed by Stewart with, "Not tonight, James, I'm feeling a bit fed up."

The whole mood of the evening had been set at dinner where, upon arrival, the party appeared to be plunged into abject gloom, mulling over steaks and Blue Nun. Groningen did not appear to be to anybody's taste. On such occasions the standard formula appears to be to move from depression to almost enforced hilarity, to ensure some level of good humour before they hit the stage.

Ian McLagan conducted a fight with some coathangers. Rod Stewart fell off his chair, Ronnie Wood and Kenney Jones maintained a certain repose - while Tetsu (as is usually the case) was subject to everybody's humour... "Stop talking, Tetsu," was occasionally thrust in his direction, after the somewhat sleepy bass player had not been heard to utter a sound for around 10 minutes.

Otherwise, amusement was mostly gained by lobbing a few rolls at the head waiter, naturally much to the amusement of the lower echelons of female staff.

This particular evening was Sunday night, and for Rod Stewart in particular, it was the start of a fairly hectic week. He was scheduled

**"Take an artist like Turner... I mean, I love his pictures, but he never took them seriously"**

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"I've got massive plans"  
**LED ZEPPELIN**  
**MOTT THE HOOPLE**  
**SIMON & GARFUNKEL**  
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"We've always felt like a cult..."  
**LED ZEPPELIN**  
**DAVID BOWIE**  
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**ROLLING STONES**  
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**BEACH BOYS**  
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**THE CREAM**  
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"I don't like to stay in one place"  
**THE BEATLES**  
**THE BEATLES**  
**BEACH BOYS**  
**TRAF**  
**DUKE LLINGTON**  
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**THE BEATLES**  
**LED ZEPPELIN**  
**THE BEATLES**  
**CREAM**  
**THE DOORS**  
**ALF & THE ARCADE FIRE**  
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**THE ROLLING STONES**  
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**SIMON & GARFUNKEL**  
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# Readers' letters

MM/NME JUN—DEC Stones, Fabs, Floyd... and an impassioned fan of Sparks.



## Stones; gathering moss

I have recently heard the Rolling Stones' new single release, and it has finally convinced me that they are the paper tigers of the '70s. Gone are the days of "Jumping Jack Flash", "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" and even the more recent "Angie"; the moss is gathering as the Stones stop rolling.

Has the creative talent of the Jagger-Richards combo dried up at last, as seen from the last two offerings: "It's Only Rock 'n Roll But I Like It" and the new "Ain't Too Proud To Beg"? They seem to have exhausted their Buddy Holly/Chuck Berry repertoire which contributed to part of their success in the '60s.

Are we to see the influences of different writers in an attempt to halt their waning popularity, as they are obviously no longer able to produce the old magic?

Mick Jagger is now a spent force as far as musical creativity is concerned, as can be seen when the recent records are compared with the earlier golden discs. Are the Stones relying on their name as former kings of rock 'n' roll to try and pull them through the void into which they have sunk? The Stone Age is gone.

**DAVID JONES, Water Lane, Cobham, Surrey (MM Dec 7)**

## Stones: in fact, still rolling

I am sorry Mr Jones thinks that the Stones are a spent force (MM, Dec 7). It seems to me he has not really said why he thinks this is so, but has made rather a harsh judgement on hearing the two singles drawn from the album *It's Only Rock 'n Roll*—the album which in fact shows that the Stones are once again the major force in rock 'n' roll to be reckoned with.

Gone is the bland pop-song style of "Angie" and the directionless, uninspired album *Goats Head Soup*; instead we have the energy and rawness that the Stones' music has always contained when at its best.

Tracks like "If You Can't Rock Me" and "It's Only Rock 'n Roll" show that the arrogance and strength of the Stones we used to know is still there, both as musicians and people. "Till The Next Goodbye" far surpasses

"Angie" in its role as a rock love song. It is loose, spontaneous and warm where "Angie" was cold, calculated and colourless, and it deserves to succeed.

"Time Waits For No-One", with its superbly balanced guitar work, shows an insight and maturity that is surprising in its beauty—could you imagine the Stones writing this in 1966?

The Stones are progressing and no amount of "waning popularity" (their album at No 18 in the British charts, and No 2 in the States) on the part of Mr Jones, or anybody else for that matter, will stop it.

**A ROSLING, Newark Road, Lincoln (MM Dec 21)**



## For Steve's a sparky young fellow

Today I bought the album of the year. I feel I can say this without expecting several letters saying I'm rubbish. The album is *Kimono My House* by Sparks. I bought it on the strength of the single. Every track is brilliant—although I must name "Equator", "Complaints", "Amateur Hour" and "Here In Heaven" as the best tracks, and in that order.

**STEVE MORRISSEY, 384 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester**

Migawd. Conviction oozes from every sentence like the very ichor of life itself from the metal life-support systems of the Bronze Giant of Fangorak. The eyes of Mr Morrissey gleam with a missionary zeal that shames into submission the cringing doubts of those yet unconvinced. Me? I dunno. I ain't heard the thing yet. S'pose it's all right, though.  
**CSM (NME Jun 15)**

## They should work it out

It's about time somebody told Messrs Lennon and McCartney to

put their egotistic brains together again and produce something worth listening to. Having bought *Walls And Bridges* and *Band On The Run*, it's fairly obvious that both are lost without each other.

Let's face it, no one is ever going to match Lennon's "Come Together" or McCartney's "Hey Jude", but it's time these two guys realised that they'd do better to stop slacking and start writing something good.

Also I don't see why The Beatles don't re-form. They owe it to their public. They all seem to use the same musicians, with the exception of McCartney, in Jim Keltner, Jim Horn, Jesse Ed Davies and Klaus Voorman.

Another reason is that Harrison's work has been about as interesting as Leeds United on a Saturday afternoon.  
**C TIPPLE, Crestfield Avenue, Elland, Halifax (MM Dec 21)**

## Home, home again...

I object to Rick Wright's comment in his interview last week in *MM* when he said: "...since I moved out of London to Cambridge where people don't know anything about the Floyd...".

I live near Cambridge and go to the school which Roger Waters and Syd Barrett went to (Cambridge High School For Boys, now Hills Road Sixth-Form College) and in our school nearly all the boys should know Pink Floyd because their music is played in our music lessons sometimes. Many of my friends in the sixth form are dedicated Floyd fans, and Roger Waters and Syd Barrett are even remembered by some of the masters.

Pink Floyd have never played a gig in Cambridge, to my memory, certainly not in recent years, so Rick Wright expects recognition in the streets of Cambridge, even though among 10,000 university students there must be a fair proportion of Pink Floyd fans.

We are unfortunate in Cambridge: we haven't a venue big enough for Pink Floyd's show, nor have we a good football club "where potentially exciting games" are played. But we are still the town of "Grantchester Meadows".

**MCOWLEY, Twenty Pence Road, Wilburton, Ely, Cambs (MM Dec 7)**

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# 1974

MONTH BY MONTH



## Coming next... in 1975!

**S**O THAT WAS 1974. Hope you freaked completely. 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, 1975!

### LED ZEPPELIN

**THE BAND COMMENCE** another mammoth tour. Live shows are witnessed in the USA and in England, while John Bonham (now resembling a droog from *A Clockwork Orange*), and Robert Plant are interviewed. The band also release their epic double album, *Physical Graffiti*. "It goes from one extreme to the other," says Plant.

### PATTI SMITH

**INTRODUCING A MAJOR** new force to emerge from the New York poetry scene, "who bears a striking resemblance to Keith Richards", and who has just made a magnificent debut album: *Horses*, produced by John Cale. "We went through hell," says Patti. "We had nothing but friction, but it was a love-hate relationship and it worked."

### PETER GABRIEL

**THE SINGER AND** frontman quits Genesis. His plans? Stories, "video projects" and the possibility of joining a commune—until it turns out to be called Genesis, that is. What of his old costumes? "I'll go down to the village and frighten all the children," he grinned. "Or busk the queues outside the next Genesis gig!"

### PLUS...

**GIL SCOTT-HERON!**

**101ERS!**

**BOB MARLEY!**

**ZZ TOP!**

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

# THE HISTORY OF **ROCK** 1974

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1974.  
*"There's a rose in a fisted glove/And the eagle flies with the dove"*



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