

**THE
RADIO
ONE**

Story of Pop

THE FIRST
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
POP IN 26 WEEKLY PARTS



ELTON JOHN: Glamour on the Grand

THE SWIFT: Teenage Hell-Raisers

POP: Alive & Well in the '70s

PLUS: The Music Changed the World, Is it Art? & more

PART 26

25p

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Next week we commence 'The Story Of Pop Special Volume' which, in 14 weekly parts, presents an invaluable addition to the series. This additional volume takes an overview of the rock world, highlighting those areas which were previously outside the scope of the first two volumes. In eight separate streams we look at the people, processes and statistics that contribute to the making of the pop industry, culture and life-style.

In 14 features, for example, we investigate the structure of the industry itself, showing the life of groups, the way records are made, the men like producers who make them, and the fringe areas – like the pop press – that support it. We will also be taking an in-depth look at the writer/performers whose creativity provides some of the very best work in modern music. Names included are Harry Nilsson, Joni Mitchell, John Sebastian, Cary Simon and John Denver, along with nine other top-flight talents.

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The Music Changed the World

'Hail Hail Rock and Roll
Deliver me from the days of old!
(Chuck Berry, 'School Days', 1955)

'The world outside looks so unkind
I'm relyin' on you to carry me
through
So give me the beat, boys and free
my soul
I wanna get lost in your rock and
roll and drift away'

(Dobie Gray, 'Drift Away', 1973)

Two rock perspectives: Chuck Berry was always completely convinced of the revolutionary potential of rock & roll, far more so than anyone else back in the '50s. For him, one guitar riff was enough to roll Beethoven over, one chorus of 'Johnny B. Goode' enough to flatten 'easy listening' for eternity, and one coin rocked into the slot at the local juke joint enough to purge the soul of all that garbage shoved down you at high school. No qualms, no confusions, no doubts. Dobie Gray, on the other hand, is altogether more wary and more worried about what is going on outside the immediate teenage context. It could be said that like Chuck Berry he uses rock as a means of escape, but it's much deeper than that. Berry saw rock as a deliverance from 'the days of old' – rock was the music of the here-and-now, and that here-and-now was blissfully exciting, with its endless visions of sweet little rock & rollers and car chases.

Overpowering World

For Chuck Berry, and for the generation he wrote for, nothing was impossible. The world was there for the taking. For Dobie Gray, though, the world outside is all too overpowering – his context is one of foreboding and dark shadows:

'Day after day I'm more confused



*Yet I look for the light through the pouring
rain
You know that's a game I hate to lose
And I'm feeling the strain, ain't it a shame?'*

Rock & roll, for Dobie Gray, is an escape from the *present* rather than the past, and this set it apart from the meaning of Chuck Berry's music – it has become, in fact, almost a blues form. Berry had escaped from the blues tradition because he had felt it inadequate for what he wanted to say – it couldn't cope with the optimism, the ecstasy, the thrills of the late '50s teenage experience. By the early '70s, though, the wheel has come full circle – in 'Drift Away', surely the most powerful rock performance this side of 1970, the essence of the blues returns at the core of the rock experience.

The only common factor in 'Drift Away', and 'School Days' is the form of rock & roll music. It is this idiom that has transcended its teenage beginnings to become perhaps the most potent popular

music form this century – gradually, as the first generation of rock devotees become parents and even grandparents (think of that!), the music with the 'back-beat you can't lose' is becoming the universal popular music form, and it is this that gives it such importance. 'Music' Leroi Jones wrote in *Blues People*, 'is always a good starting point in understanding a culture'. If that is the case – and he's got to be right – no one can look back at the '50s and the '60s and comprehensively understand those decades without understanding rock. It's that important.

Elvis Obscene

Which all seems a long way from those intuitive leaps made by Elvis, Jerry Lee and Chuck Berry nearly 20 years ago. Back in 1955 and 1956 it cannot be said that anyone was making such grandiose claims for the music – in the press it was despised and laughed at. Young Elvis was a figure of fun in Britain, and in the Bible

Belt in the States he was just too obscene for words. No-one can ever forget the troubles he had on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, with the TV station finally compromising by cutting out any shots below the waist.

It was ignored, it was derided, but it made its mark. Its impact, though, was on a different generation from the one that was writing all the articles – a situation that has changed very little since. In fact, to read the critics' view of such as Slade and Gary Glitter even today makes it clear that age alone lies at the root of much intellectualised criticism, and brings about a cold detachment that is far removed from the pure excitement of the young fans. In the '50s, the only chroniclers of the teenage life-style were the rock & rollers. No-one else really had a clue as to what was going on. True, there were writers making tentative stabs at spotting a new consciousness at work among the young, but even those writers tended to come from outside the 'youth culture'. Take Norman Mailer as an example: *The White Negro*, an article he wrote in 1956, pinpointed the crippling psychological landscape confronting the young, white American. Mailer saw his only possible response in terms of existentialism – life must be lived, in order to be lived at all, on the very edges of that society. The individual must live dangerously, he must live positively, he must recoil from the nothingness of the prevailing WASPish culture. He must, in his memorable phrase, become a white negro and accept the negro's ghetto mentality as his own.

Middle-Class Beatniks

Mailer, though, whether he liked it or not was addressing the university students. His books were not read widely, and nor were his contemporaries such as Ginsberg and Kerouac – they were read by liberals, they were read by beatniks, they were read by college students. But all of them were out of touch with the rock & rollers and their audience. In a word, it was a class split: the beatnik intellectuals were predominantly middle-class, with a comfortable family background. Rock & roll, though, was the music of the dispossessed and the dispensable – as a result of this, it was more down-to-earth in its response and it was more dramatic in its impact. These were people without any sort of voice, and it was from this source that, ironically, the most powerful appeal to young people of all classes and creeds was made. Norman Mailer coined the phrase 'the white negro' just a year or so after Elvis Presley had established himself as the first white negro. No doubt that Presley never read Mailer, and no doubt Mailer never listened at that time to Elvis Presley. The music, just like the writings of the time, was initially class based.

The initial impact of rock & roll seemed to die sometime in the late '50s and early '60s. Presley was off in the army, Jerry Lee was in disgrace because of his marriage to a 13-year-old, Little Richard was rumoured to have flung all his worldly goods over



Ronald Grant Collection

In the '50s, Little Richard was considered outrageous. He was the 'wild man of Rock', with a fantastic audience appeal for his extravagant performances.

Sydney Harbour Bridge in a fit of religious remorse, and Buddy Holly had been killed in an air crash. Maybe, the press gleefully speculated, the whole disgusting spectacle was over. Pat Boone, Bobby Vee, Bobby Vinton and in Britain Adam Faith, John Leyton, Eden Kane and Cliff Richard seemed altogether more palatable.

The flame might have flickered, but it was a case of the fire next time. Nobody really understood that the *seeds had been sown*. Chuck Berry might have been in jail in 1960–61, but his music very definitely lived on in the minds of his early fans. It was in Britain that the next explosion occurred, and this time it was a different animal from that which had plagued the places of Godliness and Righteousness a few years previously.

Lost In Translation

Before the early '60s, British rock & roll had been a peculiar specimen. It never really stood up to the American challenge, and carried on in its own sweet way by 'covering' American hits and hoping that somehow the British counterfeit version would sell more than the original. This formula worked for many artists, although in the process several classics such as

Bobby Darin's 'Splish Splash', Jody Reynolds' 'Endless Sleep' and Dion and the Belmonts' 'A Teenager In Love' were lost completely in translation. Nevertheless, there were those who had bought these records, and there were those who rated Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley a few million light years ahead of Frankie Vaughan and the Kaye Sisters. And then the Beatles exploded in 1962 and 1963, and the British Beat Boom was born.

Scruffy Artists

It did, though, have its oddities. Most of the leading artists were ex-grammar school or ex-art school. Most of them were a little older – Cliff Richard rightly pointed out in 1964 that he was younger than some of the Beatles. And most of them – in the earliest stages of 1961 and 1962 – could only be described as scruffy. Just as the source of the groups was more evenly distributed across all sections of Britain's teenagers, their audience was likewise much broader. It was this affection for rock by students as well as schoolkids and young workers alike that surely shook the British establishment.

It was not until 1964 that the first outbursts by the puritanical lefties against this

new breed of rock & roll arose, and Paul Johnson threw his hands up in horror at the spectacle of young kids screaming at the Beatles. 'In my day', he wrote, 'we would not have wasted a moment on the Beatles and their ilk.' He told of his love at the age of 16 for Shakespeare, and noted bitterly that none of tomorrow's leaders would at that time be listening to the Beatles or the Stones. David Holbrook, at that time a leftist critic of sorts, talked of a 'new fascism', and condemned the Beatles as 'mercenary exploiters' – all their worst dreams were confirmed by the Stones' appearance on the middle-of-the-road British TV show *Juke Box Jury*, not making a coherent statement between them.

Those 'good old days'. They were wrong, they were hopelessly wrong, but in one crucial respect they had a point – they did recognise a revolution when they saw one, even if there was no clear notion of what to do with it when it had been spotted.

Second Generation Beat Group

The British Beat breakthrough liberated the British teenagers. They became conscious of their own individual identity, and a culture was born out of the music. It was the strength of this cultural basis that laid the framework for the second generation of the British Beat groups of the '60s – the Kinks, the Who and the Small Faces. Pete Townshend, for instance, has acknowledged his debt to the Mods consistently over the years – without such a strong tribal identity there can be little doubt that groups like his would never

Jerry Lee Lewis was once banned on most 'white' American radio stations for being too sexy, and later alienated many people by marrying a 13-year-old girl.

have emerged.

The effect of all of this in the States was shattering. In January, 1964, the Beatles suddenly shot to stardom, claiming over half the Top 10 entries at one time. Their impact was not only shattering, it was also deep and far-reaching, for it helped fuse together the two strands of American youthful dissent that had up until that time remained quite distinct. It brought together the Beats and the rock & rollers, the heirs to Mailer and the heirs to Presley. The college scene in the early '60s had been dominated by folk, Brubeck and the MJQ, and it had been intensely political and serious. The British breakthrough ensured that the political alienation fostered by the growth of groups like the SDS, and nurtured by the series of assassinations, the beginnings of the Vietnam war and the threat of Goldwater and his ilk, would at the same time become a *cultural alienation*.

America Accepts The Beatles

Nowhere is this development better seen than in the work of Bob Dylan. Dylan came over to England in 1964, marvelled at the Stones and the Animals, and went back and recorded 'Bringing It All Back Home'. The States got hold of the Beatles' music and took it to its logical conclusion. Where the Beatles had made the same sort of intuitive leap in the dark that the young Presley had made, American college kids were ready this time to absorb it and transcend it. Ten years earlier, the shift would have been inconceivable, because the college kids in the States were fast

asleep, far too drowsy to notice young Presley. But in the '60s, the kids at college remembered the music of their high school days, realised they had always loved it, albeit secretly, and were as pleased as punch when the secret was out. In Toby Thompson's book on the young Dylan, *Positively Main Street*, there's a telling passage where the teenage Dylan asks his girlfriend if she really likes Chuck Berry – this was the music closest at that time to Dylan's heart, but it wasn't until the Beatles let it all out that Dylan could acknowledge his real fantasies.

The States rarely does anything by halves, and San Francisco went crazy in the late '60s. Imagination – helped along by dope and acid – coupled itself to political dissent and tried to seize the nation. It failed, and in retrospect its failure can be pinpointed to 1968 and 1969 – but the results of the rock & roll inspired rebels undoubtedly helped in stopping the Vietnam war. If rock & roll has done nothing else, it would be important if only for this. Of course, there were other factors, none more important than the unending struggle of the North Vietnamese – but the young people of America showed that they were no longer attuned to the mentality of war-fodder. The Masters of War were rattled, and they were shaken as much by the attitudes of these strange young kids at home as they were by the peasants fighting for Hanoi.

Rock & Roll War Cry

Rock & roll became synonymous with revolution – the war cry was 'Rock & Roll, Dope and Sex in the Streets', and the work of the radical groups became the anthems. The Doors' 'Five To One', Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit', the Stones' 'Street Fighting Man' and Buffalo Springfield's 'For What It's Worth', all coming up at virtually the same time, certainly made for a lot of marching.

In a way, they were heroic days, but in retrospect it all tends to look a little futile. Nothing has dated faster than the written words of Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, or the recordings of Jim Morrison. It was a revolution without a mass following among the over-30s, and this was bound to fail.

In a way, the experience of Britain during the late '60s crystallises the problems of the American Movement more tangibly. After dope made its impact felt in 1967, there was a mass swing away from the established groups – not necessarily from the existing audience of the group or the artist concerned (this has tended to remain static with someone like the Rolling Stones for much of their career), but the *potential* audience. Non-college students didn't understand the flimsiness of flower power or the excesses of Cream and Jimi Hendrix, and their younger brothers and sisters felt even more out in the cold. Rock & roll had originally been a dance form, and in its infancy it was inextricably linked with dance halls and discos, where the prime object of the occasion was to meet somebody you fancied.



Ronald Grant Collection



In the mid-'60s, it acted as a two-fold liberating agent – it freed the mind as well as the body, and made the atmosphere that much freer and that much warmer and closer. It was comparatively easy to strike up relationships in a world dominated by rock. But it then became *intellectual* as well as *instinctive*, and it was this that brought about the schisms and the eventual '60s breakdown. The intellectual aspects of rock depended for their success upon a common knowledge, a common awareness amongst rock's audience – it depended on a common development, a growing sense of community. But for teenagers, the point was lost – they had not shared in these problems, they had no understanding of the Port Huron Statement or the significance of 'The Times They Are A-Changing', and, besides, they wanted to dance and get rid of their personal problems before tackling the revolution.

Revolution Ends

And so rock's audience divided again, but this time it was a *generational* rather than a *class* breakdown. The Revolution ended not so much with events like Altamont, or the election of Nixon, or the demise of the Beatles; but with beginnings like 'John Wesley Harding' in January 1968, and 'Music From Big Pink' a little later on the same year. Bob Dylan (never known to make a foolish move) and the Band went back to their Country roots in a conscious step away from the

generational conflict engineered by the prophets of the apocalypse. Their new music became an attempt to cross the generation lines – when it was claimed that the Band played the Music, this is what was meant. And The Music had to include The People, not just one generation of them.

Responsible Rock

Even in the early '70s, people haven't really recovered from the '60s; and if Dobie Gray sounds more relevant than Chuck Berry at this juncture, it's because of this hangover feeling. Rock is after all more responsible and more important than anyone probably imagined at the time of the great Hippy days of 1967.

That rock is 'responsible', however, is in many ways a double-edged sword. As the saying goes, 'you can't kill the snake by stamping on its tail – it will just turn around and bite you'. So, with rock a professedly 'revolutionary' music, it almost always finds itself compromised because it is so often 'the head of the snake' that is paying the wages.

Despite such moral crises, however, the music lives on. What's so nice about rock & roll is that nobody can make predictions, and, just as the doldrums appear to be setting in, along come a group like Slade to amaze everybody. Noddy Holder's living proof – if you need proof, and most people do from time to time – of the continuing power of rock & roll. 'It's got a backbeat and you can't lose it.'

Above: Bobby Vinton, he was one of the young smoothies from the high school period, who replaced the good old rock & rollers. Below: The Beatles, who changed young peoples view of rock music on both sides of the Atlantic.





PROFILE: 1968–74

The Sweet: Teenage Hell Raisers

'Funny, Funny' hit the charts in January 1971, and was both the first hit for Brian Connolly, Mick Tucker, Andy Scott and Steve Priest – the Sweet – and for Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman, the songwriting team whose commercial ear for the Top 10 has sold the group over 8,000,000 singles since then.

In fact, although it is often assumed that the Sweet were formed as an outlet for Chinn and Chapman's potential hits, Brian Connolly, the group's lead singer, and Mick Tucker, the drummer, were playing together as long ago as 1968 in Wainwright's Gentlemen, a soul band which included such notables as Ian Gillan and Roger Glover, who were later to find huge success with Deep Purple. Also in the band were the founding members of the bubble-rock group, White Plains, remembered for 'My Baby Needs Loving'.

In 1968, Connolly (then known as Brian McManus) and Tucker, formed the Sweet with Steve Priest (a former solicitor's clerk) on bass guitar and vocals and Frank Torpky on lead guitar and the group recorded their first single, 'Slow Motion', on the Fontana label. Its only interest now is purely historical, as it sank without trace, and a move to EMI gave no greater cause for optimism when the

Sweet's three releases for the company, 'Lollipop', 'All You'll Ever Get From Me' and 'Get On The Line' similarly flopped.

Meanwhile, the group gigged around the UK and Europe, pausing to replace Frank Torpky, first with Mick Stewart in March, 1969, and then with Andy Scott in October of 1970, the same year that they came under the management of Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman.

Songwriters/Producers

Chinn and Chapman are songwriters who specialise in turning out specific songs for specific artists, with the sole intention of producing chart successes. In the States, writers seem to be more concerned that the end product of their labours should have a semblance of artistic merit as well as a chart hit, and so there has been the growth of the songwriter/producer – a role that is virtually interchangeable – and which Phil Spector exemplifies. In the UK, however, the overriding preoccupation has almost always been that of total commercial success. Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman seem to have fitted perfectly into this latter line of thought. Until they found the Sweet, success had evaded them. With the Sweet, they have succeeded in producing worldwide single smashes.

In retrospect, there was really no reason why the Sweet should not have become a

very successful group. They had reasonably good looks; by 1970, two years on the road had made them fairly accomplished on their instruments (Andy Scott's late arrival to the group did not preclude him from this, as he had spent six months backing the Scaffold) and they were sufficiently aware of audience reaction to know how to manipulate a crowd from the stage. However, it is doubtful that the group could have consistently scored up hit after hit unless they had joined forces with their songwriter/managers and their producer, Phil Wainman.

A new recording contract with RCA Records resulted in the team's first record appearance in the shops in January 1971. Its title was 'Funny, Funny' and soon it was high in the singles' charts and although it was a distinctly bubblegum record, it can now be seen to have shown that right from their very first hit record, Chinn and Chapman were almost obsessed with providing songs which relied virtually totally on the 'hook' – the part of the record, usually the chorus, which is repeated several times and which, after only two or three hearings, has the listener humming along to it whether he likes the song or not.

The Sweet's only ambition appeared to be to have hit singles as a bubblegum group. Just before 'Funny, Funny' was released, Brian Connolly stated that their objective was: "To concentrate on tight,

four-part vocal harmonies and be a popular group, as opposed to heavy. We want to give people a good, melodic, danceable sound, and that seems pretty scarce these days." 'Funny, Funny' was almost a justification of this wish, as the vocals – and especially the 'hook' – virtually obscured the instrumental backing.

Their first hit, though, was securely under their belts and after that there was no stopping the newly-found success formula of the group. 'Co-Co', their next single, followed its predecessor into the Top 10 with a chorus that seemed to have been written in Swahili, and although there was a brief halt to the Sweet's growing success in the late summer of 1971 when 'Alexander Graham Bell' only reached the no. 30 spot, the momentum was regained with the release in January, 1972 of 'Poppa Joe', which was to be their third Top 10 single in Britain.

'Alexander Graham Bell' had had far less stress placed upon its vocals and 'hook' lines than 'Funny, Funny' and 'Co-Co', and instead had relied more on a sound which integrated the vocal harmonies with a more forceful instrumental backing. After its relative failure and before the release and success of 'Poppa Joe', Nicky Chinn said: "We tried something different with 'Alexander Graham Bell' but obviously the public preferred the out-and-out bubblegum sound of 'Co-Co' and 'Funny, Funny'."

This was something of an understatement as the public had preferred the out-and-out bubblegum sound of 'Co-Co' to the extent of having bought more than two million copies of the single throughout the world. So when 'Poppa Joe' was followed by 'Little Willy' – which was once again in the proven hit mould – it seemed that the Sweet's chart entries would forever be aimed at the weenybopper audience and would consist of a strong 'hook', vocal harmonies, and an adequate but minimal instrumental backing.

'Blockbuster'

In September of 1972, however, 'Wig-Wam Bam' was released. Although this remained largely true to the formula of the Sweet's previous successes – and did in fact turn out to be a massive hit – the vocals and instruments were stronger and sounded more forceful and more purposeful than on the previous singles. It was in many ways a transition single, paving the way as it did for the change of musical emphasis that came with 'Blockbuster', the group's first record of 1973 which quickly reached no. 1.

'Blockbuster', once again written by Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman and produced by Phil Wainman, heralded 1973 in with the sound of wailing police sirens and a driving heavy beat – a far cry from 'Funny, Funny'. But the essential 'hook' lines were still there, although the rest of the lyrics were virtually indistinguishable when heard on an average, pocket-sized transistor radio, buried as they were beneath the galloping, incessant beat, and



Foreground: drummer Mick Tucker.

it seemed as if their only *raison d'être* was to fill in the gaps between the screaming forth of the title.

The Sweet have always been unacceptable to music critics, who have generally savaged their records without mercy. But with or without critical acclaim, the Sweet have steadily gathered a mighty legion of fans throughout the world since their meeting with Chinn and Chapman. Sweet records, by the beginning of 1973, were selling in vast quantities almost everywhere in the world and the group have toured extensively throughout Europe and especially in Germany, where they were one of the most consistent chart-topping groups. Once again, critical acclaim for their live appearances in Britain was virtually non-existent, but it was down to the fans to pack out the halls, and pack them out they most certainly did. By Christmas of 1972, it was a rare gig for the Sweet when the audience were not in ecstasy by their third number.

A stage act, as such, did not exist and apart from bashing out their hits, Who numbers and a medley of early rock & roll songs were usually included. The group, however, seemed to take little notice of the critics and 1972 was a formative year for the Sweet. Taking advantage of the glam-rock mood created by T. Rex, David Bowie and Slade, the four group members indulged themselves similarly and took to wearing make-up and dressing in hot-pants, massive stack-heeled boots and other equally camp costumes. Brian Connolly emerged as the front-man, both on stage and off, mincing and pouting across the stage and emphasising his sexuality with fairly lewd innuendoes and explicit gestures. In keeping with this new visual image, his voice took on an

effeminate lilt, a lilt that was first fully heard on record on 'Blockbuster'.

After the initial shock and great success of that record, which in the true traditions of good pop singles was totally electric and seemed to be an Identikit record of every other glam/glitter number, Chinn and Chapman turned out another record very much in the same vein, 'Hell Raiser', which wasted no time in hanging around and went straight in at no. 1.

This success was somewhat marred by the fact that a month before its release, at the end of April, 1973, the Sweet had topped the bill at London's Rainbow Theatre, the High Temple of contemporary music, and had once again been critically lambasted, although yet again their fans, who by now seemed to have an average age of around 13, had poured adulation on the group, despite their equipment having broken down shortly after the set started.

Hit Formula

'Ballroom Blitz', the third high energy single from the group, came out nearly five months later in September and was yet another variation on the hit formula which had produced the last two 'new-look' singles. This was not surprising as, shortly after 'Hellraiser's' success, Mike Chapman had been quoted as saying: 'I now write everything around one chord'. With this single, the Sweet did begin to gain some critical respect, however. One British music paper critic wrote: 'how come their clever records aren't intellectually acceptable in Britain when such as Status Quo can get by with the tiredest of clichés?' Ironically, perhaps, 'Ballroom Blitz' was held off the no. 1 spot by a freak hit, 'The Van der Valk Theme' by the Simon Park Orchestra.

1973 was completed for the Sweet by a sensational stage performance at the Rainbow, once again, just before Christmas. For this Rainbow show everything worked perfectly, including a variety of fairly suggestive films and the taped special effects for their 1973 hits. Criticism, however, could be levied at the group for their lack of communication with the audience, and the almost deliberately arrogant manner with which the Sweet seemed to attempt to remain remote and thereby attain a god-like status.

By the end of 1973, the group had become one of the premier singles' bands in Britain, and they had also developed a highly sophisticated stage act. 'Little Willy' had proved something of a surprise by getting to no. 3 in the US over a year after it had been a hit in Britain. However, they had had only two albums released in Britain – 'Funny How Sweet Co-Co Can Be' and 'The Sweet's Biggest Hits' – neither of which had met with any great success. Gary Glitter on the other hand was selling large quantities of his albums throughout Europe. So, overcoming this lack of success was obviously to be the next goal. By now they had also a further problem. To what extent was their future in the hands of Chinn and Chapman?



Is It Art?

Before the emergence of the Beatles and Bob Dylan, it hadn't occurred to anyone to call pop music 'art'. Until then it was ecstatic fun, profitable entertainment or a serious threat to our moral standards, depending on whether you were a fan, a promoter or a conservative pillar of the community.

Ever since the first slits were made in cinema seats at Bill Haley movies, pop had attracted the attention of a few intellectuals, though they were mostly bemused sociologists on the outside looking in. And their interest was directed towards the habits and trappings of the teen life, rather than the music at the centre of it all. Even as sharp an observer as Colin MacInnes in his books *'England Their England'* and *'Absolute Beginners'*, concentrated on 'schmutter' (Yiddish slang for clothes) and scooters. The sounds of the youth culture were merely incidental.

But it all changed in the mid-'60s. As soon as the Beatles held the centre of the pop stage, more and more of the metropolitan middle-class began to take notice and try to incorporate the vitality of beat music into their view of the world.

Beatles Accepted

The most celebrated of the critics was William Mann, a respected reviewer of all things classical for the British newspaper, *The Times*. Suddenly one morning his regular readers found a column not about Beethoven or Boulez, but about the Beatles. It was written in exactly the same way as Mann's usual stuff, and spent a lot of time establishing the Beatles' credentials as serious musicians.

This was in December 1963, and Mann's eulogy was soon followed by even more grandiose praise from 'serious' critics. The *Sunday Times*, newspaper reviewer wrote that Lennon and McCartney were the greatest composers since Beethoven, while in the *Observer* newspaper, Tony Palmer compared them favourably to Schubert. When John Lennon's little book *In His Own Write* appeared, the *Times Literary Supplement* recommended it as 'worth the attention of anyone who fears for the impoverishment of the English language'.

All these critics were trying to claim the Beatles as part of the artistic heritage of a high culture which had always turned up its nose at mass culture, including

popular music. They were extending their traditional notion of art to include the bits of pop that they liked, and ignoring the rest. In busily proving how close the Fab Four were to Mahler or Schubert, they missed the point that the group were really far nearer to the Everly Brothers.

The trendies saw the Beatles in another way. To start with, the Swinging London peopled by the trendies was a weird mixture of charlatans and creators, of the wide-boys of the rag and music businesses and genuinely original talents in design, painting and the cinema. The latter held a very different conception of art from the critics mentioned above. People like Peter Blake and David Hockney in painting, Alan Aldridge in illustration and Dick Lester and Antonioni in cinema, were all working in 20th century art forms, profoundly affected by the technical and social changes of the last half-century. In the new rock music of the Beatles and Dylan, they saw a sister art form emerging, as different as the movies from the old-established arts like concert music, oil-painting and the novel.

Indeed, in the case of Bob Dylan, it seemed that he was actually aware that his songs were taking up a place in the constellation of the modern arts. They included frequent references to poets and movie stars: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Tony Perkins, Anthony Quinn. One telling anecdote about Dylan was of an occasion when a fellow singer commented that a lyric of his was reminiscent of lines by the French poet Rimbaud. Dylan looked at him blankly. Later, at Dylan's apartment, the singer noticed a copy of Rimbaud's poetry.

The effect of Dylan on the pop scene was of course massive. Maureen Cleave of London's *Evening Standard* newspaper wrote in her review of 1966 that 'pop singers in interviews said they were reading the works of Huxley, Sartre and Dr Timothy Leary. One even claimed to be reading *Ulysses*'. The situation was confused even more by the growing interest in what was called 'pop art'. In their early days, both the Who and the Move were claimed to be making pop art by their publicists, though no-one was actually able to explain what that meant.

In fact, pop art itself had nothing to do with music. It grew out of a fascination with the images of mass-design and advertising on the part of certain painters. Some were interested in exploding the pseudo-religious atmosphere of reverence which surrounded the traditional arts, and seized on the vulgarity of popular imagery in order to shock or amuse the high-art audience, by making sculptures from wrecked cars or carefully painting exact

copies of soup cans. Others, like Peter Blake (who did the 'Sgt. Pepper' album sleeve), wanted to celebrate the vitality of a certain life-style and its heroes, the film stars, pop musicians and sportsmen.

Pop art was ultimately the latest branch of traditional painting. Its works were exhibited in the galleries and sold to collectors. Only in the case of album sleeves did it manage to break out of that framework and become part of popular culture rather than an observer of it.

Dylan's achievement in widening the vocabulary of pop attracted a number of refugees from other art forms into music. He had shown how it was possible to marry complex poetic lyrics with pop music and others were quick to follow. The Canadian poet and novelist Leonard Cohen had a vast success when he set poems like 'Suzanne' and 'Sisters Of Mercy' to music, while those witty and surreal words to the Cream material that were songs rather than extended instrumental pieces, came from the former jazz-poet Pete Brown.

Outrageous Satire

On a more boisterous level were the Fugs and the Liverpool Scene. The Fugs were made up of New York beatnik poets like Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg. With a kind of amplified skiffle sound, their songs were a mixture of outrageous satire and cheerful obscenity, alternating with more lyrical settings of poems by Romantics like Blake and Shelley. Poets, painters and comedians from Merseyside, came together to form the Liverpool Scene, whose members along with the Scaffold, now form a travelling show of poems, songs and sketches called Grimms.

That show is one example of how the forms of expression chosen by pop musicians blur the line between pop and other arts, like theatre and poetry. Others are the growing number of musicians publishing their own (usually poor) poems, and the rock operas and musicals like the Who's 'Tommy' and 'Quadrophenia' and the glut of shows about Jesus.

Bob Dylan himself declared to interviewers that he was just a 'song and dance man', although his approach to pop music was clearly completely different to that of Elvis or Cliff. The younger musicians who followed his lead after 1966 were less cagey. Many exponents of what has come to be known as progressive rock declared their musical aims to be loftier than those of hit parade music, and saw themselves as artists rather than simply entertainers.

In fact, in many cases the progressive musicians were carrying on an honourable tradition of pop music, indulged in by rock & rollers and British beat groups alike. They all created their new pop styles by unashamed borrowings from musical and other forms outside the established pop field, because one of the basic strengths of good pop music from the '20s onwards had been the way it set its own standards for success, without refer-



Main picture: L.F.I. Inserts: Mary Evans

Dylan (above: performing live in Chicago recently), like many of his contemporaries saw himself as an artist rather than an entertainer. Insert, from left to right: P. B. Shelley and William Blake from whom many took their inspiration.

ence to any outside art form, or even its own past.

Nevertheless, there are two serious reservations that have to be made about some of the new 'self-conscious' music, to use Robert Fripp's term. Behind a number of attempts to combine a rock group with a symphony orchestra (Deep Purple and the LSO, Frank Zappa and Zubin Mehta) is a barely concealed lack of confidence in the whole idea of pop itself, coupled with a desire to make the music respectable by moving it into the concert hall. The history of popular music is littered with the corpses of earlier activities of this kind, from Paul Whiteman who tried to dress the blues in evening dress, to George Gershwin with his symphonic poem 'Rhapsody In Blue', whose vastness is far less effective than three minutes of his great song 'Summertime'.

The other mistake that many practitioners of progressive music and their partisans tend to make, is to assume that because they turn their backs on British TVs' *Top Of The Pops* and all its works, they are therefore not 'commercial'. But

since all musicians are professionals, and work within an industry, fundamentally like any other, this attitude is simply unrealistic. Art and commerce in pop are like the Frank Sinatra song about love and marriage: you can't have one without the other.

Now this doesn't mean that all pop is just commercialised pop, even if a lot of it is. In fact, much of the best pop music is produced in the tension between the need for self-expression of the musicians and the audience on one side, and the business interests of the publishers and record companies on the other.

The trouble with controversies about pop aesthetics, is that the word 'art' itself carries so many connotations that it becomes almost totally ambiguous. As we have already seen, it can mean both the élitist 19th-century pseudo-religious cult of 'beauty' and 'truth', and also the radically different new activities of the 20th century.

It is probably more useful to turn the question on its head and ask, if the best pop music isn't some kind of art, then what is it? The only answer there can be from the fierce antagonists of the 'pop is art'

idea, is that it is simply entertainment.

To say this, is to suggest that pop music cannot have any lasting effect on our lives and our feelings, and is just a musical equivalent of disposable paper cups. That is, of course, true of much pop music, as it is of many movies and books. For 'entertainment' is what happens when music is just another form of leisure, designed to fill up our spare time in between working and sleeping. It is what happens when the 'self-expression' side of that creative tension has all but disappeared, when pop music seems to be hearing the ultimate dream of the businessman – the endless repetition of what has already been successful, eagerly lapped up by a docile audience.

The pop music which achieves the status of a genuinely modern art, does something else as well as entertain. To adapt Robert Fripp's phrase, it not only appeals to the feet, or to the heart, but to the head as well. Along with the cinema, it is the major contemporary art form, able to reflect more of the times we live in than any of the traditional arts.

NEXT WEEK IN THE MUSIC: Nilsson's Pandemonium Schmilsson Show.

Fragmentation in Rock

The story of rock (or in this case *The Story Of Pop*) has many plots. A common one is the tale of how rock, reborn in Liverpool after the heroic days of rock & roll had come to an end, conquered the world and became the platform from which opposition to the fuzz, American Imperialists and just plain old fuddy-duddies was organised and the context in which drugs, booze and whatever were consumed.

A sub-plot that is often linked to this, is the steady emergence of young people into higher and higher profile, first as consumers and then by the middle of the '60s, as the living embodiments of youth culture. Fill in the narrative with some 'living' detail – the underground, 'All You Need Is Love', 'We want the world and we want it now', Vietnam, hippies, kaftans, acid, communes etc., – and you have the recognizable story of rock.

The End Of An Era

More than that, the story actually explains rock's first 15 years. However, by around 1970 or so it starts to run into difficulties: the Osmonds, Alice Cooper, skinheads and the '50s revival, among other things, punctured the great community myth. But by then, the community was withering away anyway from within and had been certified as being dead from natural causes by various community spokesmen. Richard Neville called 1970 'the end of an era' in *Oz* and Jon Landau in the rock paper, *Rolling Stone* spoke of 'the lack of excitement in the air', while John Peel contrasted the euphoria of '67 with the fact that in 1971 'everything in Britain is such a downer'. The dream was over, rock, and even more importantly the culture that had grown around it, had gone the way of rock & roll and upped and died on us.

Of course, rock didn't die, it merely changed. And just as the late, great Buddy Holly's death came to symbolise the death of rock & roll, so the deaths of Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison, especially seen in the context of the remarks of the above prophets of doom, marked the end (for the time being at least) of the notion of rock as the voice of the community. The community

fragmented, but ironically the result was not *less* interest in rock – but *more*. Album and tape sales soared as people began to listen to their own-style records.

In the halcyon days of the underground, rock had a message and a beat, but by 1970, the two had been firmly divorced. For messages, you listened to singer/songwriters who took their start from the gentle strains of Crosby, Stills and Nash (whose names George Melly once said, 'sounded like a reputable firm of lawyers'). And for the beat and 'getting your rocks off' (the concert cry of the late '60s) you went to the highly amplified concerts put on by the new wave of 'heavy' groups, who took their cue from Cream. In both cases, the models were mid-'60s groups; indeed often the personnel of the new supergroups came from dead mid-'60s groups, or like Jethro Tull and more recently Mott The Hoople, they were mid-'60s groups that finally made it. Rapidly though, the old models were discarded as James Taylor on the one hand and Led Zeppelin on the other, set the scene.

If only because the qualifications for a singer/songwriter were more concrete – you had to write 'em and sing 'em, though somehow Elton John slipped in – that line is easier to follow. One by one, the new singer/songwriters appeared, Cat Stevens replaced James Taylor, Carole King replaced Melanie who'd already replaced Laura Nyro only to be replaced by Carly Simon; and don't forget Joni Mitchell! Each was the new superstar, the one who would explain all – turn his or her heart inside out for our sympathetic understanding and then pick up the money and run back to the nearest mental hospital for a rest before the next album. And if you didn't like one it didn't matter, because there was always another to try; and if you didn't like any of them, it still didn't matter, because if you didn't like messages you obviously wanted to boogie and 'keep on truckin'. And the man could provide that too: Led Zeppelin, Blind Faith, Iron Butterfly, Grand Funk etc.

No Staying Power

The only trouble with these groups was that they were so concerned with getting bigger and bigger banks of amplifiers, that with the exception of Led Zep, they were short on staying power. Enter the man again: 'Hey, suppose we resuscitate that underground hype about rock artists being real sincere artists and good musicians, heck and if that don't work we could even try a stage act, you know like those Motown singers have.' Hey presto, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, Chicago, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Joe Cocker, Jethro Tull and Leon Russell, superstars every one, all giving their concert and headphone audiences serious boogie music with a few 'right on' home truths thrown in for good measure. And for those people still stuck in '67, the man recycled the Dead and the Mothers as *real* serious music and *real* fun people.

Obviously 'the man' doesn't exist as

such, but the formulae for success do – not every group makes it, witness the Brinsley Schwarz hype, but once the community (real or mythical) built around rock had collapsed, it became possible to market X as the new thing. The proof of the pudding is in the sudden rise to fame of the Dick Clarks of the '70s, the manipulators and managers, like David Geffen and Terry Knight, who make artists overnight.

If anyone is still in doubt as to the fact that rock changed as it entered the '70s, they should turn back to page 125 of *The Story Of Pop* and contrast Roy Carr's description of an Alice Cooper concert, with Jon Landau's description of the best

Redferns



All other pictures, S.I.

Top row from left to right: Alice Cooper, Jimi Taylor. Bottom row: The Stones, David Bowie.

of mid-'60s rock being 'listened to and made by the same group of people'.

Alice Cooper began as a Zappa protégé in the unsensorable ethos of the underground when, as the CBS poster ran, 'The man can't bust our music'. But, unlike Wild Man Fischer and the G.T.Os, his stablemates on the Straight label, Alice wasn't satisfied at being merely weird, which in his case meant being taken for a gay (hence the group's name). Alice Cooper wanted to be rich and he realised that an assault on his audience in the name of entertainment rather than art was the way to make that money. As he put it, 'I don't care what kind of an effect I have on my audience, I'm up there as an

entertainer, and it's like OK whatever you want from me."

Cooper wasn't concerned to change his audience, but his boa constrictor, gallows, and guillotine routines and most of all his success, pointed the way forward to rock theatre. Once again, stage presence and an act became important. On its own it wasn't enough, but the music was in most cases secondary. In Cooper's case, the music was a rehash of the dependable 'Summertime Blues/Schooldays' type lyrics plus evocations of the stage act: in the Stones' case it was the old Stones, etc. But it was the image that dominated in all cases, and it was

origins in record collectors and fans who refused to believe that the '50s could ever die, but by the time that Ralph Nader's rock & roll revival shows were getting good reviews in America and a rock & roll revival circuit had appeared in Britain, the old fans were outnumbered by the new audience for the camp nostalgia of Sha Na Na (who ironically rose to stardom in the *Woodstock* film) and the perpetual stream of comeback artists: Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis.

Nostalgia of the '50s (under attack by '40s nostalgia of the mid '70s), like the fragmentary movements it superceded and paralleled, threatened to sweep all before it: even the slew of Jesus rock musicals has been temporarily abated by '50s musicals and films (*That'll Be The Day*, *Let The Good Times Roll*, *Grease*). More than anything else, the '50s revival pointed to the growing sense of tradition that rock had discovered as increasingly roots and dues paid, became the qualifications for superstardom - in the mid-'60s rock personalities hoped to become stars, by 1970 everyone was a star hoping to become a superstar, complete with his own label and publishing company. The roots syndrome quickly developed into a re-issue programme by the record companies that by the end of '73 had reached the mid-'60s themselves with, for example, Lovin' Spoonful and Buffalo Springfield re-issues. However, it was as singles that the re-issues really made their marks on the charts.

In the days of the underground, rock had become album-orientated, the album became 'aesthetically satisfying' and the single 'commercial product'. As a result, singles' sales fell. Even radio in its FM form became album-conscious. This lack of attention to singles by the industry and its superstars, finally revealed a gap in the rock market by the late '60s: the younger brothers and sisters of the album-buying rock market, the weeny-bopper who had money to spend but nothing to spend it on. And the man had a way to plug that gap too: recycle old singles, if people had bought them before they could buy them again for nostalgia reasons, if they hadn't heard them before, so much the better, any record that had been a hit once could do it again. But the killer and the real money-spinner, was the man's second thought: OK, so we haven't found the new Beatles yet, but what's to stop us recycling Beatlemania. Enter T. Rex, the Osmonds, David Cassidy, Gary Glitter, the Sweet and Slade. All of these, bar Slade, were wholly manufactured androids. With the Osmond litter, you got everything, Beatlemania, the '50s (remember 'Young Love' and 'The Twelfth Of Never'), Shirley Temple cuteness, the lot.

But, if Glitter, Cassidy and the Osmonds caught the young girl audience, it was Slade with their 'Everybody stamp your feet, everybody clap your hands' routines that caught the ex-skinheads and bover boys who until Slade, had thought more of

Charlie George and football, than of rock or rock stars. It was Slade who marked the first real break with the community rock of the mid '60s. Slade defined themselves, not in terms of a gap in the market that they could plug, but as a complete reaction against the underground. As Noddy Holder succinctly said "We are after the kids, we don't want no underground leftovers". The wheel had come full circle, for Slade and their audience the underground, the culmination of rock's fight with establishment music, had become the music of the establishment and the older generation.

But Slade marked not only the total reversal of the ethics and concerns of the underground, they also were examples of the break-up of the Anglo-American bridge that the underground had created. Before the Beatles, British acts meant nothing in the States, by 1970 only closely defined formula groups, like Black Sabbath, could successfully cross the Atlantic regularly. The (American) record companies still saw London as the fourth corner in the New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles square, but were less successful in repeating British successes in America. Slade, T. Rex, and Gary Glitter, despite odd hits, all failed to make it in the States.

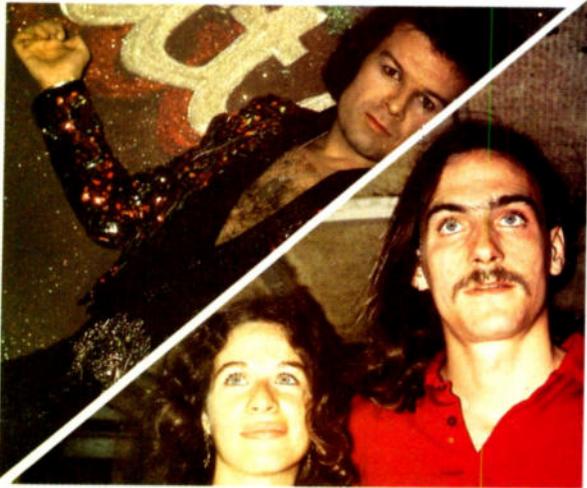
One reason was that just as in the early '60s and late '50s Britain had nothing different to offer America: the 'middle-of-the-road' easy-listening revolution was adequately catered for in America by the growing number of soft country singers like Glenn Campbell. Similarly, strange to say, Slade and T. Rex, outside of the specific British context that produced them, were too difficult to classify for exploitation in the States.

Vast Leisure Industry

Whether there was any real community that centred on rock in the days of '66 and '67 is debatable, but there was a sense, as at the time of rock & roll, of the music and the audience definitely not being of the establishment, but rather being united in opposition to it. By 1973 that notion had completely disappeared. Rock had become a vast leisure industry (in 1972 it was bigger than the film industry in America), rock had become Entertainment with a capital E, and rock had become drunken mumbles of right on; but these three descriptions couldn't be yoked together.

Rock still has major performers, but unlike Dylan, the Beatles and the Stones, who magisterially commanded the scene in the early and mid-'60s, it becomes clear, that no sense of what rock is about in 1974 can be found in a listing of however many names: but perhaps tomorrow will add to them. At the moment, it seems that we are in the middle of a country (not country rock, but country) movement, but it could just as easily be gipsy fiddlers for all the sense it makes.

The 'dream' is indeed over, but that isn't necessarily the end of the road.



Hendrix, Gary Glitter, Carole King and James Cat Stevens and the rock group, Sha Na Na.

the image of the rock star as entertainer that was picked up by Elvis, Johnny Winter, The New York Dolls, Bette Midler *et al.* Even Bowie, a master of disguise if there ever was one, used the stage as his launching pad.

A formula for success had been found and accordingly it was mined to the end. Artists and groups even changed formulae in between records and concert tours. One day, Sweet were a successful soft pop group, the next day an even more successful decadent glitter group. One day, Elton John was a singer with a piano, the next a Judy Garland glitter act and the next a recycled revivalist of the '50s.

The '50s revivalist movement had its

NEXT WEEK IN ROCK: Groupies.

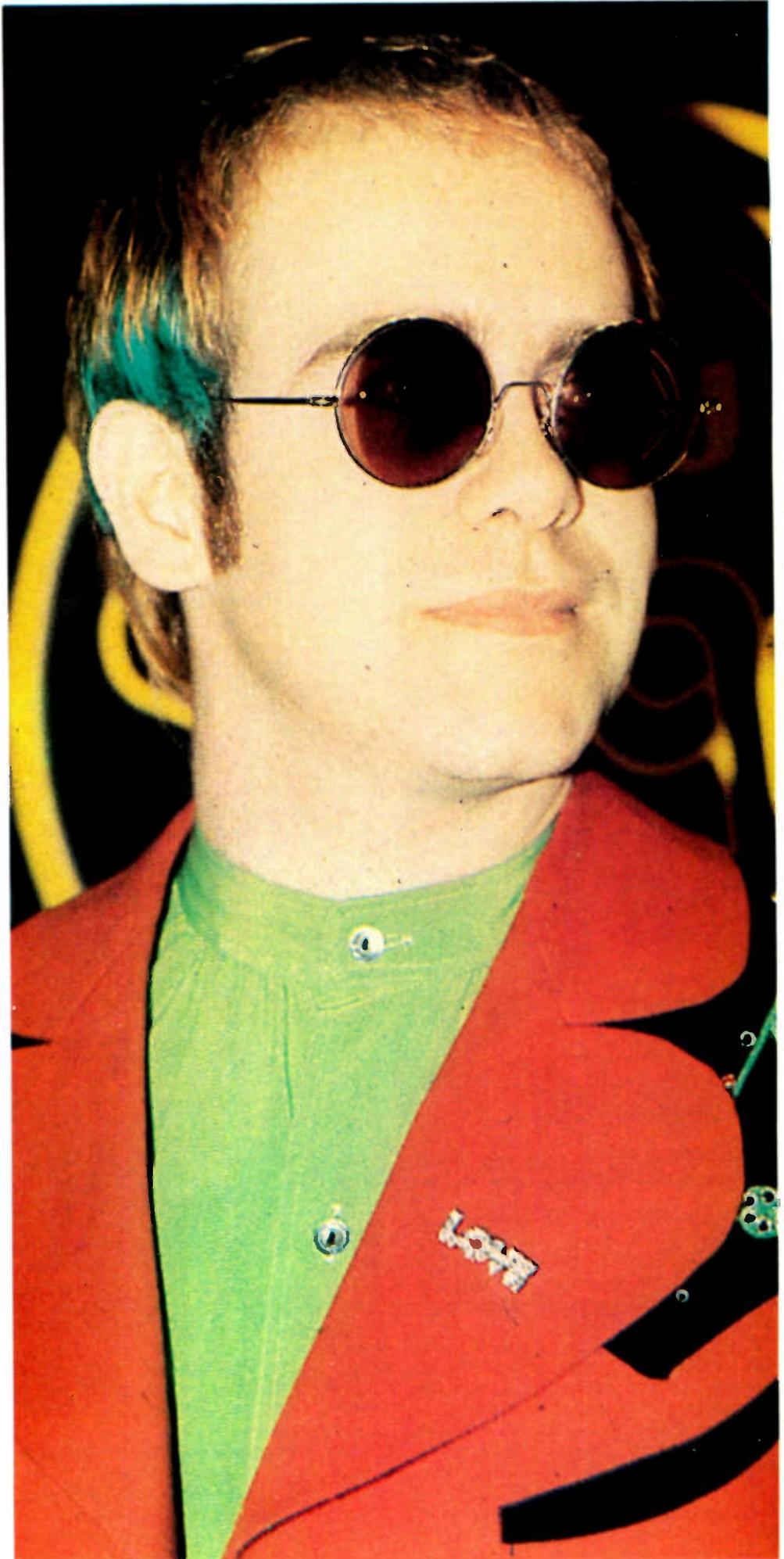
Elton John: Glamour on the Grand

On a hot summer night in L.A., 25,000 people had crowded into the famous Hollywood Bowl. After the supporting acts had come and gone, and with the stage bare, the spotlight fell on the female MC who, with a succession of superlatives, was announcing the star of the show. Finally the words, 'Elton John', preface a deafening roar, and as the back of the stage miraculously turns into a stairway reminiscent of Hollywood's heyday, the man appears.

He is dressed from head to foot in ostrich feathers, a jump-suit and a hat about twice his own size. Arms aloft, accepting the cheers, like royalty out for the day, he slowly minces down the steps – maintaining a precarious balance on six-inch heels. The hat is swept aside with another grand gesture as he seats himself at the piano. Is it a joke?

Yes and no is the answer, as Elton and his band swing into a two-hour repertoire of songs – co-written with Bernie Taupin – that many a serious 'artist' might envy. The feathers are removed to reveal a podgy, gold lamé-d body cavorting on stage like a mad teddy bear. And still the music goes on, a mixture of '50s rock and singer/songwriter sensitivity; a mixture of art, slush, volume and daring; the work of a serious charlatan, a musical clown – the boy from Middlesex taking L.A. by storm.

Reggie Dwight was born and raised in a suburb of London, and pursued a normal family/school life. He went to Music Academy as a teenager, as he said, "five years every Saturday morning playing my Chopin études and passing my grade examinations." But the blues were his first love, and he got involved in a Harrow-based group called Bluesology, which played semi-professionally around the London clubs, mostly using material





Pics. by Joe Stevens

Model by Tony Lovelock, photographed by Kim Sayer

BACK TRACK

1947: Born 25th March in Middlesex, near London. Piano lessons and study at the Royal Academy of Music.
 1964-67: Playing with Bluesology, as semi-pro local group ('64-'66), backing group for visiting American soul stars ('66-'67), working around Europe ('67), backing Long John Baldry ('67).
 1967-69: Songwriting for Dick James Music, playing and singing on budget cover labels, starting collaboration with

Bernie Taupin. Made couple of singles which flopped.
 1969: 'Lady Samantha' single and 'Empty Sky' album, both of which were fairly successful.
 1970: 'Elton John' released in April to critical acclaim but low sales until Elton takes America by storm in late summer tour. 'Tumbleweed Connection' released in autumn, both albums make US Top 10.

1971: Three albums released - 'Friends' soundtrack, live '17.11.70', in April, and 'Madman Across the Water' in October. All score Gold in the States, but Britain is not impressed. The amazing rise of Elton John seems to have turned into an equally amazing fall in Britain.
 1972: Elton decides to drop the heavy string arrangements and get back to basics with a band. Davey Johnstone on

guitar is added to Dee Murray on bass and Nigel Olsson on drums. The group go to the Strawberry Studio in France to record, 'Honky Chateau'. It gives Elton his first no. 1 album in the States. Elton makes guest appearance in Marc Bolan's *Born to Boogie* film.
 1973: 'Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only the Piano Player' released early in the year and shoots to no. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. Elton's career obviously on the

upswing again. Two singles taken from the album are both huge hits - 'Crocodile Rock' and 'Daniel'. Elton does the Royal Variety Show and doesn't enjoy it. Rocket Records formed to promote unknown artists, to give them better royalties in particular and a better deal in general. The year ends with Elton himself high in the singles and album charts of the US and UK with 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road'.



The two extremes in a successful music team, Elton John and lyrics-man Bernie Taupin.

another one, to be titled 'Don't Shoot Me. I'm Only The Piano Player'. The first side turned out to be 'my discotheque album'. Three singles were released from the album, two of them in particular – 'Daniel' and 'Crocodile Rock' – really hitting the jackpot. It is a happy album, a long way from the doom of 'Madman'. The piano rocks along over Olsson and Dee's thumping beat and Davey plugs in the gaps with some amazing guitar-playing for someone who'd only just turned electric. Elton sings like he's really enjoying himself.

The lyrical content has also shifted since 'Madman'. Bernie's obsession with old America is not so all-pervasive, the '50s music scene and the '40s film scene are rapidly becoming the prime targets for his nostalgia: 'long nights crying by the record machine, dreamin' of my Chevy and my old blue jeans'. And still on each album there are a couple of gems in the sensitive love song department and songs on many a matter, from crime to rednecks, from schooldays to teenage-idols. In the meantime Elton swept across the States and Britain playing to packed houses, and becoming more outrageous each time.

The 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' album released in autumn '73, seems in many ways to sum up all that's gone before.

Being a double album it has space to include just about everything. All the things that Bernie and his audience have lost – the American West, Marilyn Monroe, a simple male chauvinist view of women and vice versa. '50s rock & roll, sanity – are paraded in an apocalyptic procession. The band really know each other by this time, and the combination of their musical skills, Elton's singing, and the duo's writing, produces a few really remarkable songs. The one about Marilyn, for example, is only flawed by a couple of Taupin's lines (he does have a tendency towards uneven writing within songs). The chorus is perfectly constructed, sung beautifully over a fine, distinctive melody, illumined by flashes of Davey Johnstone's guitar.

*'And it seems to me you lived your life
like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to when the
rain set in
And I would have liked to have known you
but I was just a kid
Your candle burned out long before your
legend ever did'*

The fine moments on this record suggest that Elton has finally begun to put the pieces of himself together. He seems to have bridged the gap between pop and

rock, between fun and dedication, between being a clown and being an artist. He has always been all of these, but before, the various parts used to get up and bite each other. Part of his audience would tug him one way and part the other. Perhaps now he's getting to the point where he can tug them together.

'Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting' is a good example. Perhaps one of '73s best singles, Davey's crazy, rocking guitar riff and Elton's rockabilly piano put it in a class of its own. *That* and it's easy to imagine Elton up there on stage prancing round in his gold lamé, strutting his stuff . . . straight-talk is always surprising. In one music paper it was argued that 'diversion not revolution, sentiment not existential angst, fun not solemnity, and professional competence not good intentions are what a large section of today's audience seeks in its performers, and these Elton has in abundance'. But is that fair? David Bowie's claim to superstardom rests on his proven ability to get past these dualities, and it is arguable that Elton and Bernie have achieved something similar, if at a different level of seriousness. When the 'madman across the water' starts dancing the 'crocodile rock', then something is up in the State of the Nation, even if no-one knows what it is.

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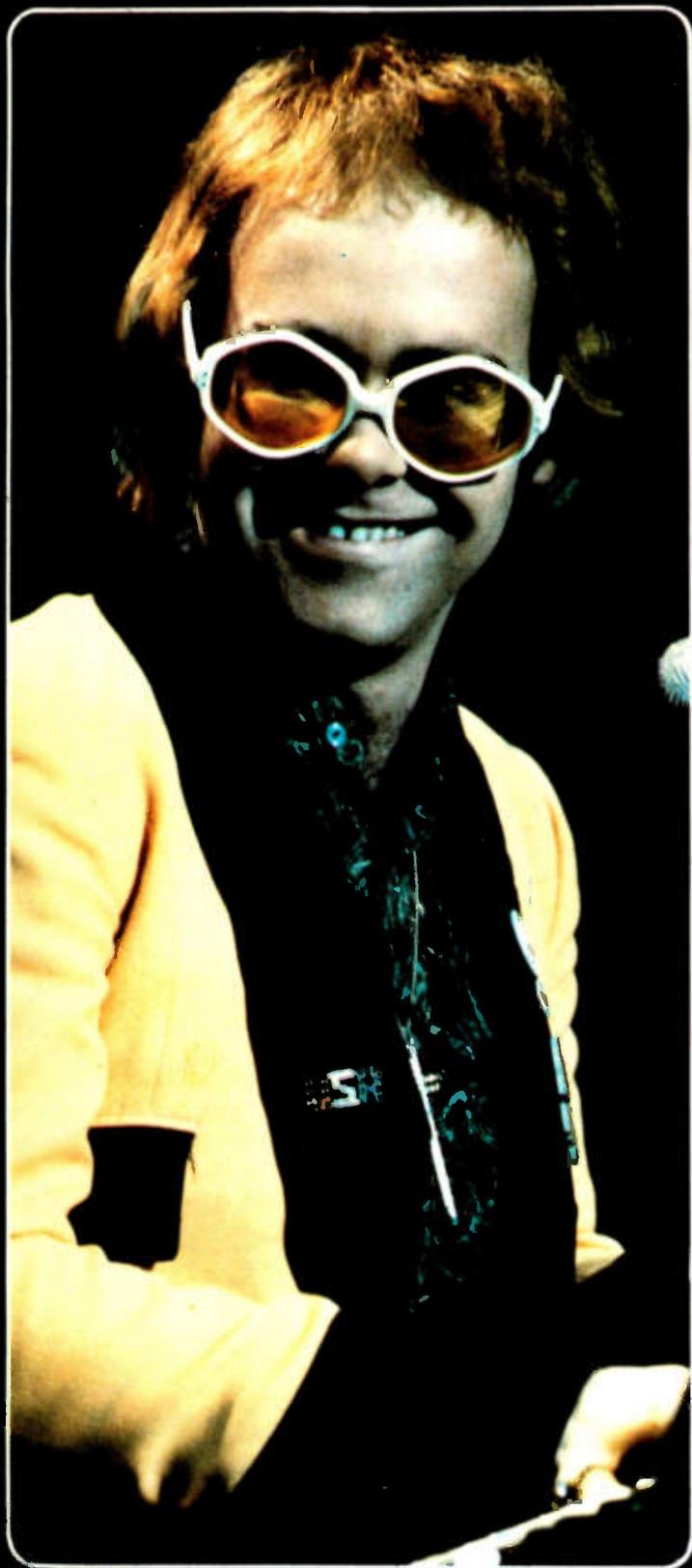
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BACK TRACK

1947: Born 25th March in Middlesæx, near London. Piano lessons and study at the Royal Academy of Music.

1964-'67: Playing with Bluesology, as semi-pro local group ('64-'66), backing group for visiting American soul stars ('66-'67), working around Europe ('67), backing Long John Baldry ('67).

1967-'69: Songwriting for Dick James Music, playing and singing on budget cover labels, starting collaboration with

Bernie Taupin. Made couple of singles which flopped.

1969: 'Lady Samantha' single and 'Empty Sky' album, both of which were fairly successful.

1970: 'Elton John' released in April to critical acclaim but low sales until Elton takes America by storm in late summer tour. 'Tumbleweed Connection' released in autumn, both albums make US Top 10.



Model by Tony Lovelock, photographed by Kim Sayer

1971: Three albums released – 'Friends' soundtrack, live '17.11.70', in April, and 'Madman Across The Water' in October. All score Gold in the States, but Britain is not impressed. The amazing rise of Elton John seems to have turned into an equally amazing fall in Britain.

1972: Elton decides to drop the heavy string arrangements and get back to basics with a band Davey Johnstone on

guitar is added to Dee Murray on bass and Nigel Olsson on drums. The group go to the Strawberry Studio in France to record, 'Honky Chateau'. It gives Elton his first no. 1 album in the States. Elton makes guest appearance in Marc Bolan's *Born to Boogie* film.

1973: 'Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player' released early in the year and shoots to no. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. Elton's career obviously on the

upswing again. Two singles taken from the album are both huge hits – 'Crocodile Rock' and 'Daniel'. Elton does the Royal Variety Show and doesn't enjoy it. Rocket Records formed to promote unknown artists, to give them better royalties in particular and a better deal in general. The year ends with Elton himself high in the singles and album charts of the US and UK with 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road'.



The two extremes in a successful music team, Elton John and lyrics-man Bernie Taupin.

another one, to be titled 'Don't Shoot Me, I'm Only The Piano Player'. The first side turned out to be 'my discotheque album'. Three singles were released from the album, two of them in particular – 'Daniel' and 'Crocodile Rock' – really hitting the jackpot. It is a happy album, a long way from the doom of 'Madman'. The piano rocks along over Olsson and Dee's thumping beat and Davey plugs in the gaps with some amazing guitar-playing for someone who'd only just turned electric. Elton sings like he's really enjoying himself.

The lyrical content has also shifted since 'Madman'. Bernie's obsession with old America is not so all-pervasive, the '50s music scene and the '40s film scene are rapidly becoming the prime targets for his nostalgia: 'long nights crying by the record machine, dreamin' of my Chevy and my old blue jeans'. And still on each album there are a couple of gems in the sensitive love song department and songs on many a matter, from crime to rednecks, from schooldays to teenage-idols. In the meantime Elton swept across the States and Britain playing to packed houses, and becoming more outrageous each time.

The 'Goodbye Yellow Brick Road' album released in autumn '73, seems in many ways to sum up all that's gone before.

Being a double album it has space to include just about everything. All the things that Bernie and his audience have lost – the American West, Marilyn Monroe, a simple male chauvinist view of women and vice versa, '50s rock & roll, sanity – are paraded in an apocalyptic procession. The band really know each other by this time, and the combination of their musical skills, Elton's singing, and the duo's writing, produces a few really remarkable songs. The one about Marilyn, for example, is only flawed by a couple of Taupin's lines (he does have a tendency towards uneven writing within songs). The chorus is perfectly constructed, sung beautifully over a fine, distinctive melody, illuminated by flashes of Davey Johnstone's guitar.

*'And it seems to me you lived your life
like a candle in the wind
Never knowing who to cling to when the
rain set in
And I would have liked to have known you
but I was just a kid
Your candle burned out long before your
legend ever did'*

The fine moments on this record suggest that Elton has finally begun to put the pieces of himself together. He seems to have bridged the gap between pop and

rock, between fun and dedication, between being a clown and being an artist. He has always been all of these, but before, the various parts used to get up and bite each other. Part of his audience would tug him one way and part the other. Perhaps now he's getting to the point where he can tug them together.

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Power to the People

Ever since pop got involved with rock & roll it has been to a greater or lesser degree subversive. Rock & roll grew out of the Blues, and the Blues was the music of an oppressed minority exploited and abused by the society in which they were forced to live.

The American Negro's music, if not exactly 'protest music', expressed values that were quite opposed to those of the dominant white society. They were sexually permissive, they made heroes out of 'bad men', they were indignant about working for The Man. But more important than the sentiments of their lyrics – which after all had a lot in common with early white grassroots folk music – they had a new *sound*.

Where European music was based on the values of harmony and purity of sound – having been monopolized for centuries by the Church – the Negro's music was based on the raw earthy sounds and rhythms of West Africa, whence the slaves originated. This new sound was in itself an affront to the clean-living, self-respecting, 'civilized' white man, as anyone who has ever been requested to 'turn off that jungle music' well knows.

First Convert

When an irresistible force such as the Blues meets an old immovable object like the 'easy listening' music devised to keep the housewife humming through her chores and the errand-boy whistling through his round . . . something has got to give. The Negro first found a witness in white society, for his music at least, in the person of Elvis. By now everyone knows the story of the boy who went to make a record for his Mom's birthday present and recorded an Arthur Crudup number etc. etc. . . . Elvis the Pelvis. And those hips are important, because not only could that boy sing, but he knew just how to *deliver*. This was the New Style's explosive



In the mid-'60s Judy Collins, like many others, sang strong protest folk songs.

beginning. Of course, when it came down to it, this young man didn't want much more than what his old man was allowed to have – it was just that he didn't want to be kept waiting. He wanted chicks, flash cars, blue suede shoes . . . he certainly didn't want to change the world, just wanted a bigger share of it. And who wanted more in those innocent days?

Anyhow, Elvis was the first, and as King he reigned supreme for two years, 1956–58. He was the highest you could get then. Look at him and you can see just how much society was prepared to take at that particular point in time. He was the top reading on the barometer of social change. In his wake came many other rock stars, both white and black.

White American Visas

The Blacks, like Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Fats Domino, might have been rocking and rolling since Elvis was wet behind the ears, but it was Elvis who got them their visa into White America. White stars included such names

as Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Gene Vincent, Buddy Holly . . . it was a wild five years. But by 1960, when the King returned from two years of National Service, the rock cake was hardly still cooking – at least not as far as he was concerned. The style had gone, and he turned himself over to ballads and third-rate general audience movies.

Public Enemy

All was not lost however. While Elvis retired to his platinum ranch, other rockers kept the flame alight. One of them, Chuck Berry, was to be an even more seminal influence on subsequent generations. Just being black and successful was enough to put him on 'straight' society's Public Enemy list, and that in turn should have made him rightful heir to the space that the King left behind him. Looking back, it's easy to see how much rock is indebted to him, even if it has taken 15 years for him to be recognized. In many ways Chuck Berry was still an all-American guy with all-American needs and desires, much like

Elvis, but there was another side too.

While the Elvis generation went into retirement – marriage, kids, mortgages, conspicuous consumption, love of The Flag, occasional nights out with the good ol' boys down at the gun club, and a myriad other responsibilities – Chuck Berry was still pointing a way forward. Even as he celebrated the new chrome and plastic world of pop, there was also something a bit tongue-in-cheek about his songs, an element of reserve – if not downright sarcasm – in his praise. 'Sweet Little Sixteen' was really a rather *funny* little girl, being so sweet and innocent and all . . . is it possible that *somebody* was putting whitey on? Just a *little* bit?

Another significant thing was that Chuck wasn't just a great performing artist like Elvis, he also wrote his own material and accompanied himself, one of the first complete-unto-himself rock troubadours. Nothing new to the black scene, admittedly, but revolutionary on the white, and another indication of the way things were to go.

Berry Jailed

Chuck Berry might well have been the new King, but just as things seemed to be going his way he was arrested and put away on the rather dubious pretext of 'crossing a state line with a minor'. By the time he got out again in 1963, the rock scene had been dealt a number of severe blows in the form of high school, several imitation Elvises, and lashings of teenage love. Never mind. Two new movements were taking shape that were going to put the Tin Pan Alley boys' backs firmly up against the wall yet again.

In New York, especially around the coffee bars of Greenwich Village, droves of earnest, white middle-class kids were coming to hear, and sometimes play, 'folk music' – in particular folk music with a strong 'protest' flavour. Now 'protest' was nothing new to Greenwich Village, having already played host to the Beats of the late '50s and early '60s. Centred around the legendary figures of Kerouac and Ginsberg, the Beats had found expression in the reading and writing of tormented poetry/prose, the digging of frenetic hot jazz and some blues, and the imbibing (often) of a number of 'consciousness-altering' drugs, both hard and soft. Also marked by an almost complete indifference to Elvis Presley *et al*, if the folk/protest movement owed anything to anybody, it was to the Beats.

At the centre of this scene was Joan Baez, the Queen, surrounded by various courtiers like Peter, Paul & Mary, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Judy Collins, and a number of more blues-influenced young performers like Rick von Schmidt, Dave Ray and John Koerner. There was only one thing missing – a King. And then along came Jones – that is to say, Bob Dylan.

At first his message was simple enough, some would even say naïve. Dylan was anti-war, anti-racist, anti-establishment, humanitarian . . . much the same as Baez

and Seeger. But the persuasiveness of his songs – and the fact that they were his own originals – put him head and shoulders above the rest. These songs had a number of distinctive qualities. Most noticeable in the early tracks like 'Talking World War III Blues' and 'To Ramona' was Dylan's mastery of earthy, downhome, crackerbarrel, straight-from-the-shoulder wit. Just like Woody. Pose it may have been, but he did it brilliantly. If the conscience of America was to have a voice, it had to sound like a hillbilly. America would be able to tell by the dirt beneath his nails that he wouldn't lie, and Dylan was shrewd enough to know that.

Meanwhile, another new thing was happening that was to revitalise rock for the '60s. While Dylan was trying to pour new wine into old bottles on the American folk scene, kids in Britain were working on new bottles. Beat groups – in themselves a new thing, not just there for backings – like the Beatles, the Stones, the Animals, Manfred Mann, the Yardbirds, the Kinks and the Who were spreading like wildfire all over the UK. The main thing they had in common was that they were all attempting in their various ways to get back to the black roots of rock – blues, R&B, soul, and even in odd cases, jazz. Apart from the Beatles, who favoured the more uptown R&B of such as the Miracles and the Isley Brothers, most of them were working at the rawer sound of the more ethnic R&B bluesmen like Muddy Waters and Jimmy Reed. Many of them were into Chuck Berry too. None of them had much time for Elvis.

It was inevitable, however, that this new scene should find its focus in America. The British groups were good at it, but it was America that really had the problems, so it was only there that they could be taken really seriously. While 'Swinging England' might well feel a general lack of satisfaction, in the States the chips were already down. The assassination of Kennedy in 1963; the escalation of the Vietnam war and the call-up of young men to go and fight, maybe even die; the increasing tension between students and police over conscription, drugs, long-haired life-styles; the flare-up of the black ghettos . . . so, as the political climate in the States got hotter and noisier, so did Dylan. He came rocking back on his fifth album, 'Bringing It All Back Home' with a renewed vitality – or to put it another way, an electric backing group.

Dylan's New Voyage

The strange thing was, however, that as The Movement gained momentum, so Dylan seemed to start back-tracking. 'Don't ask me nuthin' about nuthin'/I might just tell you the truth' gave way to 'My Back Pages', where he confessed that perhaps things weren't so simple after all. His fourth album, 'Another Side Of Bob Dylan', had been met by puzzlement and confusion and even howls of pain from some quarters of the protest fraternity. By the fifth album, 'Bringing It



1970. National Guardsmen stand over a Kent

All Back Home', although he was still kicking out the jams with his new electric group on tracks like 'Maggie's Farm' and the superb '115th Dream', it also became clear from other tracks like 'Mr. Tambourine Man' and 'Gates Of Eden' that he was embarking on some strange new voyage into a world of paradox and fantasy.

By his sixth and seventh albums, full of melancholy despair and even nightmare, many people began to suspect Dylan of having actually gone mad. Undoubtedly he showed signs of depression verging on paranoia, self-obsession and self-contempt. After a great deal of sound and fury railing against the evil of the world, he seemed to have come to the conclusion that it was all in his own head. Evil thinks as evil is. Let him that is without guilt cast the first stone. So he stopped casting stones. Then



Assoc. Press

State University student after the guardsmen fired into protesting students on the Ohio campus.

he disappeared. The story is that he had a motorcycle accident, and in his state of mind, such an accident must have seemed like his final nemesis, his pay-off.

Anyhow, the new concept of 'folk-rock' had appeared on the scene, and within a year it was to dominate, especially in the States. The summer of 1967 saw the explosion of countless groups blamming out increasingly heavy protest, with increasing decibels of rock backing. Dylan's 'Highway 61 Revisited' album (1966) had shown the way with the bitterly sardonic title track, 'Like A Rolling Stone', 'Ballad Of A Thin Man' and 'Desolation Row'. But whereas Dylan's disillusionment seemed by now almost total – even the Good Samaritan was just another phoney down on 'Desolation Row' – others of his contemporaries still had

enough faith left to try and keep the freedom flag flying.

New groups like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, and the Doors on the West Coast, and the Fugs and the Mothers Of Invention on the East – all contrived to make themselves more and more obnoxious. All this with a smell of burning in the air. Burning Stars & Stripes, draft-cards . . . and joss sticks. By 1967 flower power had arrived. For a few heady months – it was less intense but lasted longer in Britain – young Americans poked flowers down the gun-barrels of the National Guard and found salvation (or solace) in Transcendentalism. This euphoria didn't last too long, mainly perhaps because of the reality of the draft; but it did reappear in a slightly less 'mystical' form at Woodstock, where

500,000 young American 'freaks' were recorded 'freaking' on millions of feet of film for the rest of the world to see.

It was never to be the same again. The summer after that, 1969, was the summer of Altamont. There the previous year's myth of universal love was blown off the stage by Intrinsic Evil (another myth). The demos went on, however, and at Kent State University on May 4th, 1970, the Great American Dragon, in a state of chronic nervousness, momentarily hic-coughed fire and the next thing the world knew, four students were dead. The establishment had finally blown it, and they knew it. The tragedy, however, had a strong, sobering effect on protesters and police alike, and although it by no means brought an end to the Vietnam war, it dealt a severe blow to 'straight' America's already flagging morale.

Thus the protesting '60s came to a close. Not that people have since stopped protesting, in fact just about everybody has a bit of protest in their repertoire now. Protest has become a *recognised form*. While history doesn't necessarily move in decades, people tend to think in decades, so the '70s inevitably had to bring something new. And, in truth, no-one can keep on saying the same thing over and over again – however true it may be. That is especially true in pop. Besides, anyone who has ears to hear must have got the message by now. To those who took protest seriously only one thing is left – to decide what can be done at an individual level to help turn those ideals into reality.

Nation Of Voyeurs

Meanwhile, popular music rocks on. Its purpose has always been to shock, and since pacifism, multi-racialism, free love etc. are no longer shocking, it must find new themes. This is especially true in Britain. Whereas in America pop has been dealing with a real life-versus-death situation, in Britain the urgency could only ever be experienced second hand. Britain has been in the front row at the gladiatorials, but never quite in the arena. It has felt the tigers' hot breath wafting on to the front rows and smelt the blood. It has all been quite *sensational*. Britain may even have learnt a thing or two from American experience, but mostly it has become a nation of voyeurs. The States had Woodstock and Altamont – Britain got the films. The States had the war, the ghetto riots, the assassinations – Britain had the newsreels . . . and so it goes on. It has become a British habit, the need to be shocked.

In the States, though, things have started to look up. Admittedly the coming to power of Nixon at the close of the '60s didn't bode too well for the new decade, but Vietnam is over, Cold War is on the thaw, and there has been 'the Watergate'. There is a feeling of a 'new dawn' – if somewhat guarded – and many rock groups, with some feeling of gratitude, have gone back to playing good old straight rock & roll.

Talking 'bout my generation

AMERICAN PIE

DON McLEAN

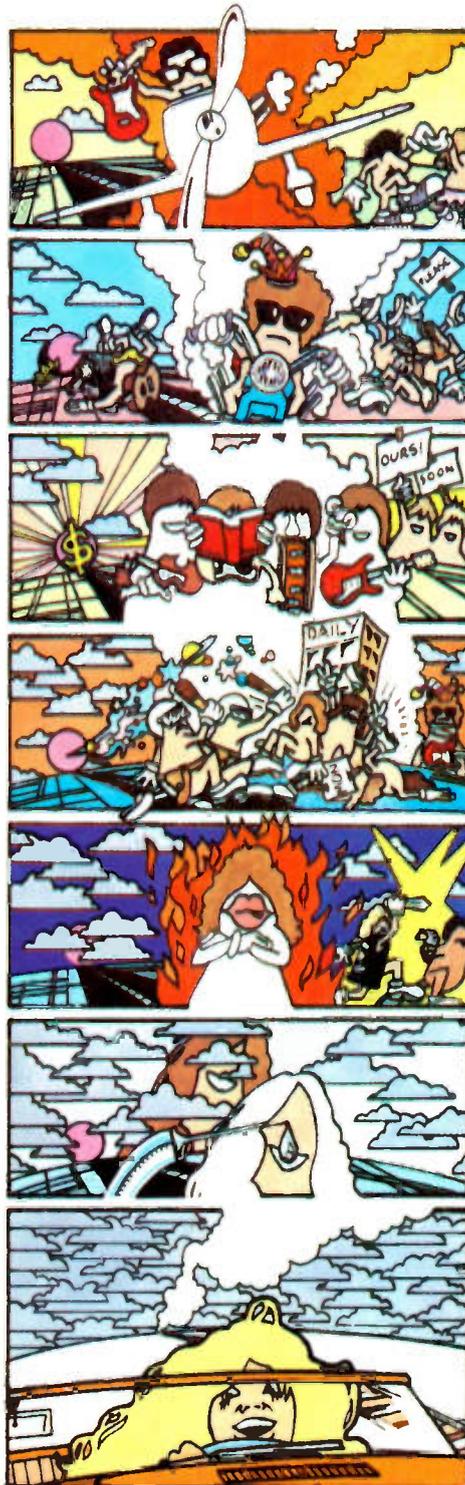
A long, long time ago I can still remember
how that music used to make me smile
And I knew that if I had my chance that I
could make the people dance
And maybe they'd be happy for a while.
But February made me shiver with ev'ry
paper I'd deliver.
Bad news on the doorstep, I couldn't take
one more step.
I can't remember if I cried when I read
about his widowed bride,
Something touched me deep inside . . . the
day the music died.

So bye bye Miss American Pie
Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee
was dry
Them good old boys were drinkin' whiskey
and rye,
Singin' 'this'll be the day that I die,
This'll be the day that I die.

Did you write the book of love
And do you have faith in God above?
If the Bible tells you so
Now do you believe in rock and roll
Can music save your mortal soul and can
you teach me how to dance real slow?
Well I know that you're in love with him
cause I saw you dancin' in the gym
You both kicked off your shoes
Man, I dig those rhythm and blues.
I was a lonely teenage broncin' buck with
a pink carnation and a pick-up truck
But I knew I was out of luck, the day the
music died.

I started singin' . . . Bye bye Miss
American pie.

Now for ten years we've been on our own
and moss grows fat on a rollin' stone
But that's not how it used to be when the
jester sang for the king and queen
In a coat he borrowed from James Dean
and a voice that came from you and me
Oh and while the king was looking down,
the jester stole his thorny crown
The courtroom was adjourned, no verdict
was returned



And while Lennin read a book on Marx the
quartet practiced in the park
And we sang dirges in the dark . . . the day
the music died.

We were singin' . . . Bye bye . . .

Helter-skelter in the summer swelter the
birds flew off with a fallout shelter
Eight miles high and fallin' fast, it landed
foul on the grass
The players tried for a forward pass, with
the jester on the sidelines in a cast
Now the half-time air was sweet perfume
while the sergeants played a marching
tune
We all got up to dance but we never got
the chance
Cause the players tried to take the field,
the marching band refuse to yield
Do you recall what was revealed . . . The
day the music died.

We started singin' . . . Bye bye . . .

And there we were all in one place, a
generation lost in space
With no time left to start again
So come on, Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,
Jack Flash sat on a candlestick
'Cause fire is the devil's only friend
And as I watched him on the stage my
hands were clenched in fists of rage
No angel born in hell could break that
Satan's spell
And as the flames climbed high into the
night to light the sacrificial rite
I saw Satan laughing with delight the
day the music died.

He was singin' . . . Bye bye . . . etc. . . .

I met a girl who sang the blues and I asked
her for some happy news
But she just smiled and turned away.
I went down to the sacred store where I
heard the music years before
But the man there said the music wouldn't
play.
And in the streets the children screamed,
the lovers cried, the poets dreamed
But not one word was spoken the church
bells all were broken.
And the three men I admire the most, the
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
They caught the last train for the coast the
day the music died.
And they were singin' . . . Bye bye . . . etc.

© United Artists Music

The start of the '70s saw a new attitude to rock. The music was by then 15 years old, it had a history, and it was extraordinarily meaningful to millions. For the first time people started to look back on it, putting it into the perspective of post-war world events and assessing its development. It was time for an anthem, for a song about the music. Don McLean supplied it.

'American Pie' is about a generation and the music that formed it. In its lyrics appear — in one guise or another — the songs, people and events that made up the short history of rock. Soon after its release and the tremendous impact it caused, listeners everywhere were busily trying to interpret it. The song starts, appropriately, with Holly and being young in the '50s. 'The jester' has to be Dylan, and 'Lennin' must be Lennon punned

against Marx to indicate the new preoccupation with revolution. 'The birds' are obviously the Byrds because of 'Eight Miles High', and 'the sergeants' can be nobody else but the Beatles. Both, obviously, are set in the summer of 1967, and Dylan has just broken his neck because the jester's in 'a cast'.

Despite its singalong beat and goodtime feel, 'American Pie' is not a happy song. It's about disillusion with your heroes and the death of those you love and admire. Is 'the girl who sang the blues' Janis Joplin? And why have 'the three men I admire the most' left for 'the coast'? Have they sold out? Betrayed their followers? And who is Miss American Pie? Perhaps lost innocence? The puzzles are there to tease, and probably, in the final analysis, it doesn't matter what McLean intended, only how the song hits the individual listener and the emotions it arouses.

Pop is Alive and Well

In the British pop paper *Melody Maker's* list of the Top 5 singles of 1973 (based on position and length of stay in their chart), some significant facts were, not surprisingly revealed about the state of British pop: (1) 'Tie A Yellow Ribbon'/Dawn (Bell); (2) 'Welcome Home'/Peters and Lee (Philips); (3) 'Yesterday Once More'/Carpenters (A&M); (4) 'And I Love You So'/Perry Como (RCA); and (5) 'Spanish Eyes'/Al Martino (Capitol).

First, all five were strictly 'middle-of-the-road'. Secondly, four of the five were American – a proportion in complete contrast to that of the best-selling singles in Britain between 1962 and 1972. In that period of which only one of the Top 30, the Archies' 'Sugar Sugar', was from the States. Thirdly, with the exception of Karen and Richard Carpenter and Lee if not Peters, the rest are old enough to be Donny Osmond's father or grandfather. Dawn's leader, Tony Orlando, had a big hit in 1961 with 'Bless You', which makes him a newcomer compared to Como and Martino. Those two crooners were in at the very beginning of pop.

Dummy Instruments

The origins of the pop music in the above list can readily be traced back to the early '40s and specifically to one man, Frank Sinatra. There had been popular music and popular singers before him, but he was the first performer to promote the kind of image and evoke the kind of public reaction which has subsequently characterized pop. He started out as a singer with a big dance band, first with Harry James and then with Tommy Dorsey. Until the '30s vocalists had not been considered necessary for such bands, and the musicians themselves would offer a chorus whenever it was needed. When bands did begin to feature singers many fans disapproved and the singers would pretend to play an instrument in order to vindicate their inclusion in the personnel. Even Bing Crosby started out miming with a dummy violin in Paul Whiteman's band, but by 1940 the singers' importance was recognized. Every band had one: Chick Webb had Ella Fitzgerald, Benny Goodman had Peggy Lee, and Ted Weems had Perry Como.

Recognize these two? Monkee, Mickey Dolenz (left) with Beatle Paul McCartney, in February '68.

Sinatra left Tommy Dorsey's band in September 1942, and within five months had broken Rudy Valle's 1924 attendance record at the Paramount Theatre, New York. He had learned a lot from listening to Bing Crosby, and found out more for himself as part of a band. But he was much more than just a crooner. He was young and he was good looking, although he certainly wasn't conventionally handsome. Basically he was a natural for teenagers to identify with. There were kids on every block with Italian names, similar clothes, and his looks. Sinatra played up his very ordinariness, and the girls screamed and they swooned. This was the first expression of fan hysteria outside of Hollywood – but it was only a start.

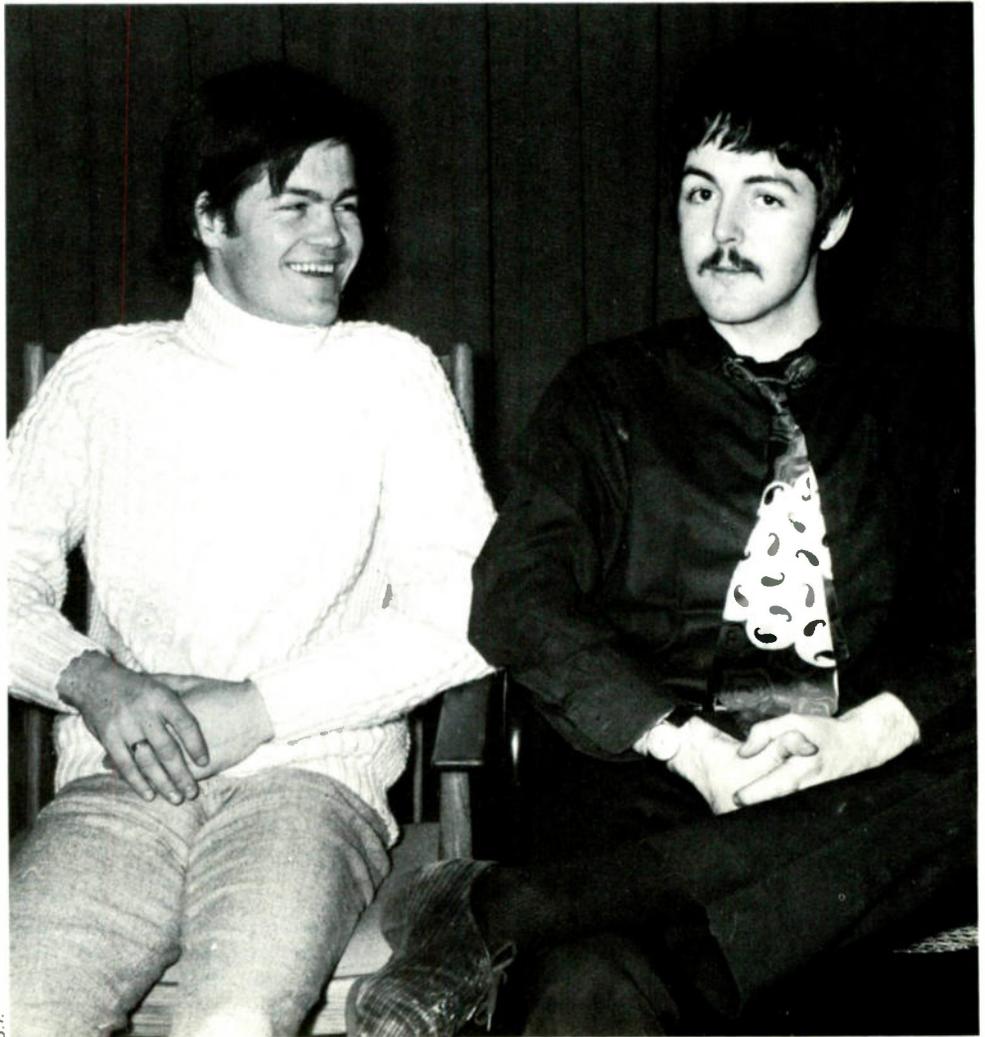
In addition to Sinatra's obvious qualities, there were other reasons for the emergence of the singing star by the end of the Second World War. As Ian Whitcomb points out in his history of popular music, *After The Ball*:

'In August 1942, the American Federa-

tion of Musicians went on strike against the use of records in juke-boxes and on radio stations. Canned music was an 'anaemic substitute for real live music' and records were 'music monsters' and the 'Number One scab of the business', said AFM chief James Petrillo. For two years no bands recorded, but singers weren't covered by this union and they made records with just vocal accompaniment. The records sold very well indeed and by the time the bands came back to the studios the singers were in charge.'

Up there with Sinatra were several others of Italian origin: Como, Vic Damone, Al Martino, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, and Frankie Laine (previously Frankie Lo Vecchio). They peddled mostly romance – Laine leaning heavily on melodrama, where the others played it cool – but none added much to Sinatra's style.

Johnnie Ray did that. In 1951 he sang 'Cry' and collapsed in tears at every performance – the record sold millions. His songs were no improvement on the rest, nor his singing; but his act was a sensation. Also where Sinatra had looked approachable, Ray appeared positively vulnerable – mainly because of his skinny awkwardness and his onstage anguish, but this image was embellished by an enormous hearing aid which he wore at all times. Ray did better than Sinatra. He got his clothes torn off.



Britain had no-one to match Johnnie Ray, no-one to match Sinatra. What Britain did have was a bunch of hand-me-down balladeers – Ronnie Hilton, Dickie Valentine, Dennis Lotis – and their female counterparts – Joan Regan, Alma Cogan, Lita Roza. As far as the general music public was concerned, in Britain especially, sweet melodies, romantic platitudes, and the occasional novelty song, dispensed by well-groomed and (Johnnie Ray apart) well-behaved singers in a variety of dance tempos, were all that was happening or likely to happen until the mid-'50s. British chart toppers in 1955 included Dickie Valentine ('Finger Of Suspicion'), Rosemary Clooney ('Mambo Italiano'), Tony Bennett ('Stranger In Paradise'), Perez Prado and Eddie 'the man with the golden trumpet' Calvert with separate versions of ('Cherry Pink And Apple Blossom White'), Jimmy Young ('Unchained Melody' and 'The Man From Laramie'), and Alma Cogan ('Dreamboat').

Right at the beginning of the year two singles by Bill Haley and the Comets had entered the British charts. 'Shake, Rattle And Roll' reached as high as no. 4, but 'Rock Around The Clock' only made no. 17. It wasn't until October, when 'Rock Around The Clock' re-entered the Top 20 and went to no. 1 for five weeks that rock & roll had arrived.

The music industry and most fans over the age of 21 put it down as a passing craze. They had to – it upset too many apples. Initially its impact on the British charts was not overwhelming. If Bill Haley returned to no. 1 in January 1956 (with 'Rock Around The Clock' again), there was only Pat Boone, whose cover version of the Flamingos' 'I'll Be Home' was hardly rock & roll, and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers (with 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love?') to follow him. The year's big hits were by Winifred Attwell, Ronnie Hilton, Doris Day, and Johnnie Ray.

No Passing Craze

Besides Haley, the one successful rock & roller was Elvis Presley, who had six Top 20 hits, two of which – 'Heartbreak Hotel' and 'Hound Dog' – reached no. 2 and had long chart runs. However, by 1957 it was clear that the novelty hadn't worn off – especially in the States, where record sales had doubled in three years with the expansion of the teenage market – as the musical establishment and those whose concern was the moral welfare of young people had hoped.

The industry, in accepting the situation, set about exploiting it. Basically the music was loud, brash, anti-authoritarian, and sounded black. But it did have other qualities: a dance beat, strong melody and lyrics, and subject-matter of direct interest to its audience. And these, after all, were merely a variation on the elements that had animated pop music for years.

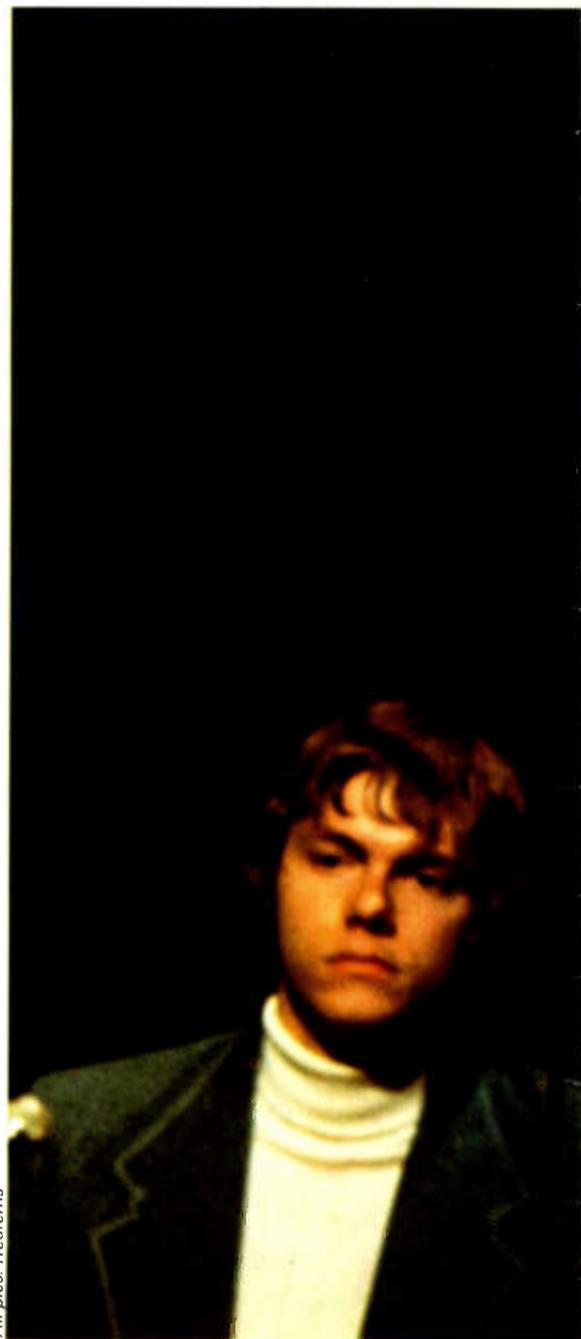
Dot, the Tennessee record company, that as early as 1955 had had the bright idea of packaging widely unacceptable black music in a handsome white skin

(Pat Boone's), came up with the profitable notion of the Teen Ballad. It was hardly a surprise when 'Young Love' was recycled by Donny Osmond in 1973, 16 years later, or that it should have been a hit, for Donny's pretty face is just the '70s version of Tab Hunter's, and the men behind the release of the song by Donny are as keen to exploit the female teenage market and as adept at the task as Dot were in 1957. The success of 'Young Love' encouraged others, and pretty soon the pros were in charge again. They groomed images, pulled the strings so their puppet singers would open their mouths or move their limbs, they wrote the songs, and took their cut from the top. The Man.

Nothing much happened to change all this until the '60s. Britain searched for an answer to Presley, and found Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard instead. Steele went into legitimate showbiz; Cliff wiped the sneer off his face and turned quickly to the British teen ballad. Pop prevailed. Then there came Craig Douglas and Adam Faith – and then there were the Beatles.

The '60s belonged to the Beatles. Not only did they record five of the top six best-selling singles between 1962 (the year they released their first record, 'Love Me Do') and 1972, but they drew freely from many sources and brought to pop music a level of intellectual and artistic respectability that would previously have been inconceivable. Who could have previously imagined the music critic of Britain's most prestigious newspaper *The Times* devoting almost half a page to a review of a pop record, as William Mann did when he wrote about 'Sgt. Pepper' in 1967. The piece was entitled 'The Beatles revive hopes of progress in pop music', and Mann referred to 'the consistently lively poetic interest' of the lyrics, 'myxolydian' tunes, and 'hurricane glissandi'. One of his most significant remarks was that 'A Little Help From My Friends' was 'the only track that would have been conceivable in pop songs five years ago'. The Beatles had indeed pushed pop music forward. As well as predicting the advent of the 'concept album' he concluded by describing 'Sgt. Pepper' as 'a sort of pop music master class examining trends and correcting or tidying up inconsistencies and undisciplined work, here and there suggesting a line worth following'.

Some were already following the Beatles: the Monkees in the States, who were manufactured in the manner of the late '50s teen idols purely to cash in on the Beatles' immensely popular image; and a multitude of British groups, whose inspiration varied as much as their success. Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich (or more accurately Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley, who managed the group and wrote the hits) exploited the pre-'Sgt. Pepper' formula of immediately accessible melodies, catchy words, and inventive, even gimmicky, instrumental sounds, and had a string of hits between 1966 and 1968. But after 'Sgt. Pepper' the Beatles had a lesser influence on the mainstream of pop music, and, in fact, their biggest



All pics: Redferns

Some middle-of-the-road people, providing

selling singles had all been pre- 1966: 'She Loves You' (1963), 'I Want To Hold Your Hand' (1963), 'Can't Buy Me Love' (1964), 'I Feel Fine' (1964), and 'We Can Work It Out'/'Day Tripper' (1965).

Ironically, in the year of 'Sgt. Pepper', the two best-selling singles in Britain by far owed much more to the romantic ballads of the post-war years than to the Beatles. They were 'Release Me' and 'The Last Waltz' – both by Engelbert Humperdinck. Humperdinck, like Tom Jones who had recorded the top-selling record of 1966, 'Green Green Grass Of Home', had been deliberately moulded in reaction to the Beatles, and the wave of the long-haired groups that emerged in their wake. Their appeal was to a distinctly post-teen age group, and Humperdinck's material came in the croon/moon/June tradition.

Their success at that time provoked a rash of big ballads in the British charts



music for some of the teens and over-20s. Above: The Carpenters, Karen and Richard. Insert: (top) Tony Bennett and below, Perry Como.

from such as Vince Hill, Harry Secombe, Long John Baldry, and Des O'Connor; it hastened the dismissal as 'commercial' of the straightforward pop virtues of Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich, the Tremeloes, Love Affair, and others. It encouraged the 'Sgt. Pepper' - inspired concentration on the half-hour album rather than the three minute single by many 'serious' bands, and led to a period of disinterest in the late '60s and early '70s for the single, and hence straight pop music, among musicians, critics, and certain sections of the record-buying public.

The '70s have, however, seen a widespread revival of interest in and a new respectability for pop. It has become acceptable to express admiration for pop groups like Slade or Wizzard or Sweet or even for Gary Glitter. And these are the performers that dominate pop today. In 1973 their singles sales outnumbered

those of Donny Osmond and David Cassidy, and those of Dawn, Perry Como, and David Bowie, of course, beat them all.

There is little to distinguish a Slade fan from a Wizzard fan or a Sweet fan or a Gary Glitter fan or a Bowie fan. They're all pop fans. Although Slade started out with a skinhead image in the late '60s, and Wizzard's Roy Wood had had his first hit with the Move at the start of 1967, and Bowie had initially attracted somewhat intellectual critical appreciation; by 1973 they were all promoting variations of a similar image along with Gary Glitter and Sweet, and appealing to the same kind of teenage culture.

Sweet are the odd ones out in that their songs are written for them by professional songwriters, but the rest write their own material - Glitter with his producer, Mike Leander. The ingredients of their songs are the eternal ones: catchy words, catchy

tune, a dance beat, and relevant subject matter. The healthy state of pop is reflected in the fact that a group like Mott The Hoople should deliberately turn itself into a *singles* band, and that 10cc should set out to be one from the start.

The success of Perry Como and Al Martino in 1973 was not due to a change in taste among teenage record-buyers, but merely demonstrated the vastness of the audience for the old popular musical values. The case of the Carpenters differs only in that they are anticipating a similar middle-agedness by providing equally middle-of-the-road music for those in their 20s who have grown out of pop.

As long as someone can get kids onto a dance floor, radio listeners tapping their feet and singing along, football crowds chanting their variations, and leave choruses resounding endlessly in countless minds, pop will never die.

NEXT WEEK IN HEADLINES: The Roll Call.

From Slaves to Superstars

The story of Black Music is in many respects the story of Black America itself.

Always being closely tied – sometimes in an almost physical way – to the moods and aspirations of its grass-roots audience, the development of the music has reflected the various social changes undergone by that audience, often contributing in some measure to these changes.

The '20s and '30s saw the massive migration of black people from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North. The economic reasons for this were varied – natural disasters such as crop failures and the great Mississippi floods, coupled with the increasing demand for labour in the factories of the big cities – and were referred to constantly by blues singers of the period. In his 1927 'High Water Everywhere', Charley Patton sang of the floods:

'Now the water was risin', airplanes all aroun'

It was fifty men and children come to sink and drown'

The promise of better things 'up North' was typified in Clarence Williams' 'Michigan Water Blues':

*'Michigan water, tastes like sherry wine
And Mississippi water tastes like turpentine.'*

This urbanisation of the majority of American Blacks had direct and profound effects on the music – on the growth of jazz (essentially a 'big city' music) and on rhythm & blues and gospel forms – all of which evolved into the broad mainstream of Black Music as we know it today.

All the great centres of jazz were in the ghetto cities. After its New Orleans beginnings, only the new black urban centres could provide sufficient support (both in terms of an audience and local independent record companies) to sustain its growth into several distinct regional 'schools'. Kansas City was the home of the great blues-based bands, like those of Andy Kirk and Count Basie, and the spawning ground for early rhythm & blues shouters such as Jimmy Rushing and Joe Turner. Chicago was the centre of boogie-woogie, another forerunner of the R&B that was to be based in the city after World War II.

Ragtime piano, on the other hand, developed into the Harlem stride style of Duke Ellington and Fats Waller. It was in the '20s in Harlem that, amidst the poverty of the ghetto, well-to-do whites would



Keystone

through the Cotton Club to listen to the 'jungle music' of the Ellington band. And, significantly, it was in Harlem that the 1935 rioting broke out against white business establishments, in the wake of the great Depression that hit America's blacks even more ferociously than it did the poor whites.

It was the Depression that finally ended any illusions about a 'better life' in the North. The poverty and conditions of life were as bad, if not worse, than in the South, and prejudice – though not as overt and institutionalised – was as real as in Jim Crow country. But in the ghetto environment, where hundreds of thousands might live on top of each other in a few, rat-infested square miles of the city's worst property, a new kind of black 'togetherness' was possible for the first time. Here, opportunities for success lay largely in (often illegal) activities – pimp, pusher, preacher – that were tied to the life and needs of the ghetto itself; the only 'outward-looking' occupations that offered anything more than a servile existence, were for the few who 'made it' in sport or popular music.

And as the music business tightened its purse strings following the Depression, relying more and more on the most commercial and 'sweet' of the big bands (Glenn

Miller, Artie Shaw) and crooners (Sinatra, Nat Cole), so more black musicians began to take an 'insular' stance with music that was uncompromisingly Black.

On the one hand, the founders of be-bop turned jazz upside down, creating a new framework of improvisation, along with a 'hip' life-style of jive-talk and a black bohemianism; at the same time the blues (with the introduction of the electric guitar by singers such as T-Bone Walker and the popularity of '40s jump bands like Louis Jordan's Tympani Five) was evolving into the urban rhythm & blues of the early '50s; and the gospel music of the church, the common heritage of all Black America, took on an even greater 'identity' role as part of black culture in the closed world of the ghetto.

It was in the '50s that White America came face to face with Black America. Politically, this was heralded by the first actions of the Civil Rights movement – attempts by black demonstrators to occupy the 'white' front seats of southern buses, the attempts to enter black children into the all-white schools of Little Rock, Arkansas in 1954, and the Montgomery bus boycotts of '55 and '56. In terms of music, the confrontation came in the growing popularity of rhythm & blues among young whites, and its eventual



Joe Stevens

Police, in the '30s, slug an unemployed demonstrator. Right: The Isaac Hayes Dancers.

mass acceptance in the form of rock & roll.

The Civil Rights campaign, led by Martin Luther King, had as its aim, racial harmony and integration, rather than any form of separatism or Black Power, and was strictly non-violent in its methods; because of this it appealed widely to white liberals, and to the young in particular. The fear it nevertheless aroused in the older whites of Middle America (especially in the South) was in many cases nothing short of hysterical, and the ultimate threat to all they held as traditional was to come with their sons' and daughters' passionate enthusiasm for artists (black *and* white) such as Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley; artists that blatantly represented a music that was basic, and in a word, Black.

The variety of rhythm & blues records to hit the general best-seller lists was unprecedented in the middle-'50s. Chicago-based Chess/Checker artists Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, the New Orleans jump style of Fats Domino, the gospel screaming of Little Richard, and the vocal groups like the Platters – all graced the charts under the general banner of rock & roll, along with the hybrid of R & B and country music, represented by Bill Haley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley.

This *origina'* rock & roll soon disappeared from the charts of course, and with it, its rhythm & blues content. But Black Music of one kind or another continued to be an important influence in the late '50s.

A strict discipline had always existed in Black Music, concerning the difference (and separation) between blues and gospel music; one was in praise of the Lord, the other about the earthier facts of life. Through to the early '60s, Ray Charles was more responsible than anyone else for bringing these two black traditions together. In fact, the formula was not universally welcomed – blues singer Big Bill Broonzy, who also had served time as a preacher, commented – "He's got the blues, he's cryin' sanctified. He's mixin' the blues with the spirituals. I know that's wrong." But the formula worked, and 'soul' became a musical adjective.

Charles, in numbers like 'I Got A Woman' and 'Hallelujah I Love Her So', established a whole gospel/soul genre virtually single-handed, creating a new tradition of eight and sixteen-bar songs, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ time signatures, previously strictly church territory. Apart from individual singers like Sam Cooke and Dinah Washington, the main immediate impact of Ray Charles was on modern jazz.

His album, recorded at the '58 Newport Jazz Festival, and his 'Soul Brothers' albums with Milt Jackson, established his reputation in the jazz (as well as rhythm & blues) world, and soon the work of musicians of the calibre of Horace Silver and Cannonball Adderley, complete with tambourines and hand-clapping, was putting something *black* into a modern jazz scene that had been getting progressively 'whiter' since the early '50s, West Coast

'cool school' of Bud Shank, Gerry Mulligan and their followers.

The early '60s were the Kennedy years in America, when the country was enjoying a new optimism under a young and (hopefully) progressive president. This optimism extended into the black community, where the new administration's pledges on Civil Rights issues promised a better future for the black American. The lunch-counter sit-ins at the beginning of the decade, and the campaign to register black voters in the South, led in 1963 to the great March on Washington and the subsequent Civil Rights Act ('64) and Voting Rights Act ('65).

The optimism of these years showed itself no more clearly than in the music of Detroit. While Chicago was the centre of blues, in the motor city the gospel music that the soul musicians had secularised, was utilised in a way that made it the new music of the ghetto. Berry Gordy Jr's Tamla label (formed in 1960) soon had a roster of the best local talent, singers like Marvin Gaye and Barrett Strong and the vocal groups (an innovation from the churches) that included the Isley Brothers, the Miracles and the Supremes. The songs, even when of a 'ballad' type, tended to the joyful feel of church music, with call-and-response arrangements, tambourines and clapping. Soon the output on Tamla Motown dominated the national R&B charts with numbers like the Marvellettes' 'Please Mr. Postman', the Contours' 'Do You Love Me' and Martha and the Vandellas' 'Heat Wave' – but of more significance was the fact that these same records made the *overall* best seller charts in the US as well.

By 1964, Motown (on the Stateside

label) was making an impression on the British charts – not without the considerable boost of the patronage of the Beatles and other British groups – and today the label and its music has become an established part of the music business. But, being an established part of the music business has never been what Black Music is primarily about, and the mid-'60s saw the centre of focus move down South.

As the promise of the Kennedy period became an unfulfilled dream under Johnson, disillusionment among blacks turned to a dissatisfaction with their own moderate leaders. A new militancy was in the air; the Watts ghetto of Los Angeles erupted in flames in '65, in '66 the Black Panther Party was formed, and all over Black America 'Black Power' rather than 'integration' became the demand. With this new assertion came an increasing *cultural* consciousness – Afro hairstyles became fashionable, Blacks began to refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister', and James Brown urged

*'Say it out loud,
I'm black and I'm proud'*

Developing the gospel-based sound of Brown (with the 'backing vocal' harmonies played instrumentally), the output from Volt, Stax and other studios based around Memphis and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, came to prominence as soul music, a dominant force in the assertion of the black 'identity'. With a formidable array of studio talent that included such luminaries as Steve Cropper, King Curtis and Isaac Hayes, the 'Memphis sound' of Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge and many more, became *the* black music by 1966. Musically and lyrically it summed up the feeling of the time among black

people everywhere, no more so than in Otis Redding's 'Respect' –

*'all I want
is a little respect
when I come home'*

Since the mid '60s the spread of Black Power as an ideal has led to a large measure of cultural separatism. More riots following the Watts pattern flared in Detroit and Newark in 1967, the next year an assassin's bullet robbed Black America of its most respected leader Martin Luther King, and against the background of a reactionary administration under Richard Nixon, the tendency in the '70s has been for political and social activity at a local (ghetto) level.

This separatism has been most pronounced (in music) in the later developments of soul music. Sly and the Family Stone's 1968 hit 'Dance To The Music' was the first notable example of 'psychedelic soul' or 'funkadelic' music that Sly Stone and the (post '67) Temptations came to represent. The Temptations' development in this area is interesting as it represented a straight Motown 'show-biz' group suddenly getting into 'message' songs and involved (if often gimmicky) arrangements, at a time when critics were 'down' on Motown as a whole. Another talent that continued to develop in his own amazing way on the Detroit label was Stevie Wonder, who in his albums like 'Talking Book' and 'Inner Visions', has reached a peak that it would seem hard for even him to surpass.

The separatism is manifest too, in glossy aspects of soul like the enormous popularity among better-off blacks of Isaac Hayes – and in the success of films like *Shaft* (for which Hayes wrote the score),

that for the first time are black films, as opposed to white films with black actors.

In the case of jazz music, this emphasis on a separate black culture, has been prevalent since the '40s be-boppers took to adopting Muslim names and modes of dress. The Afro thing appeared again around the early '60s in works like John Coltrane's 'Africa Brass' and Charles Mingus' 'Black Saint And The Sinner Lady', and in the more recent (so-called) jazz/rock period of Miles Davis.

In fact, right across the music scene, there are now black *parallels* rather than aspects of black music *within* some part of the white scene. Even at the most commercial level there is the Motown Corporation, which is now worth enough to finance a project as big as a major movie (*Lady Sings The Blues*), and in Philadelphia the 'hit factory' of Gamble and Huff, Thom Bell, Harold Melvin and the rest of the 'Philly Sound' writers and performers.

As black culture has asserted itself over the years, this has always shown itself most clearly through Black Music. As post-colonial black peoples flex their (cultural) muscles, the first signs we get are in the music. The popularity of their music in Britain and elsewhere has led to the developing studio scene in the West Indies, home of blue beat and reggae music, and the same seems to be happening in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. The role of Black Music in the future will be as crucial in the development of popular music as it has been in the past.

Below: Ray Charles plays a London concert in 1963. Right: Otis Redding.



Valerie Wilmer

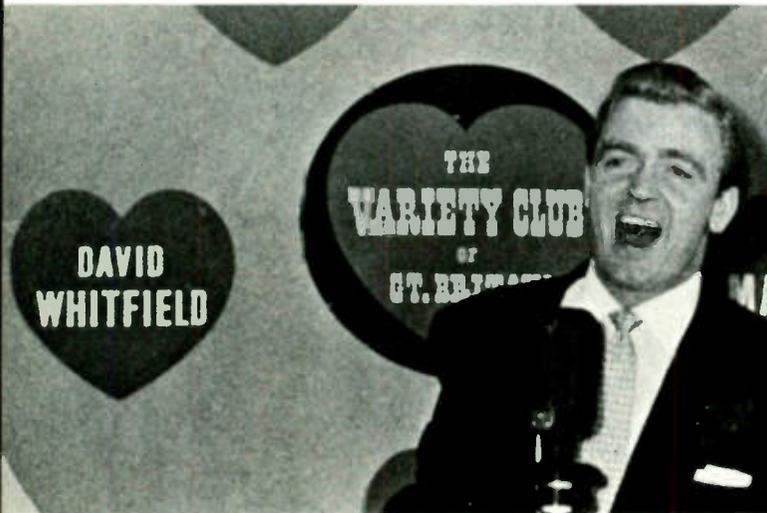


SKR

POP FILE

... the Who's Who of Pop. Week by week the A-Z of who did what and when.

DAVID WHITFIELD was a British crooner who was one of the biggest home-produced names in the early and mid-'50s. His hits included 'Santo Natale', 'Mama', 'Everywhere' and 'My September Love'.



MARTY WILDE was the first of the Larry Parnes stable to make it as Britain searched for its own mini-Presley. He hit in 1958 with 'Endless Sleep', followed it in 1959 with a cover of Ritchie Valens' 'Donna' and a cover of Dion and the Belmonts' 'Teenager In Love', and had hits right through to 1962 including



'Sea Of Love', 'Bad Boy', 'Rubber Ball' and 'Jezebel', his last and probably his best recording. He has recently launched his son Ricky on a rock career.

ANDY WILLIAMS had a number of ballad hits in the '50s, continued to sell sporadically in the '60s, with 'I Can't Get Used To Losing You' (1963), 'Can't Keep My Eyes Off You' (1968) and 'Happy Heart' (1969) and is now among CBS' biggest album sellers in the 'easy listening' market. He also bought up the Cadence Records tapes of the Everly Brothers 1958-60 hits and got them re-issued on two CBS albums in 1970.

HANK WILLIAMS was born in Alabama and began playing guitar at the age of eight. As a teenager, he led his own country music outfit and became a nationwide star through the Grand Ole Opry broadcasts. He died in 1953, but his recordings

continue to be a major influence on today's country music scene. His best-known songs include 'Your Cheatin' Heart' (later recorded by many artists including Ray Charles), 'Hey Good Lookin'', 'Jambalaya' (a hit for Fats Domino), 'Ramblin' Man' and 'Cold Cold Heart'.

BRIAN WILSON wrote many of the Beach Boys' hits (including 'Surfin' USA' - sharing the credit with Chuck Berry - 'I Get Around', 'California Girls', 'God Only Knows' and the group's masterpiece 'Good Vibrations'. Up to 1966 he led the group on stage as well as producing their records, but he then stopped performing with the band and concentrated on writing, produced an un-released album with Van Dyke Parks, got into transcendental meditation and invited the Maharishi to join a Beach Boys tour. From this time on he led the group away from their earlier obsessions with surf and hot rods into more complex realms, a trend that has continued up to the group's ambitious Holland album.

BILL WITHERS began singing and playing guitar in his mid-20s after completing his US Navy service. After some years of trying to get known he met Clarence Avant, head of Sussex



Records, who got him together with Booker-T. Jones. The result was a best selling album which included 'Ain't No Sunshine' (1971). Since those semi-pro days, Bill has established himself as a major soul performer. His latest album is 'Live At Carnegie Hall' (1973).

HOWLIN WOLF born Chester Arthur Burnett in June 1910, was working on a plantation near West Memphis when he formed his first band in the late '40s, which included harpists James Cotton and Junior Parker and guitarist Willie Johnson. Wolf then got a job on a Memphis radio station before recording 'Moanin' In The Moonlight' for RPM, later signing to Chess where he made his classic recordings of 'Evil', 'Smokestack Lightnin'', 'Spoonful', 'Wang Wang Doodle', 'I Asked For Water She Gave Me Gasoline', 'Killing Floor' and many others. With his 'wolf' cry and harsh singing, Wolf stood out from many other blues singers and was a major influence on the young white players of the '60s. He was the first of the bluesmen to record a London Sessions album with the cream of these musicians, including Eric Clapton and Stevie Winwood in 1971.

ROY WOOD'S WIZZARD was formed in 1972 after Roy split from the Electric Light Orchestra, which has since been led by Jeff Lynne. The mainstay of the Move in its heyday, he has continued to make hit records with Wizzard including 'Ball Park Incident', 'See My Baby Jive' and 'Forever'. Wizzard have released two albums, 'Wizzard Brew' and 'Boulders'.

THE YARDBIRDS were formed in 1963 with Keith Relf (vocals and harmonica), Top Topham (lead guitar), Chris Dreja (rhythm guitar), Paul Samwell Smith (bass) and Jim McCarty (drums). They quickly built up a reputation in the south of England as 'a most blueswailing outfit' and took over the Rolling Stones residency at a South London club, Eel Pie Island. By this time Eric Clapton had taken over the lead guitar spot and the band played London's Marquee Club and where they recorded 'Five Live Yardbirds'. They toured Europe, backing Sonny Boy Williamson and made the singles charts in 1965 with 'For Your Love', the first of many fine singles although Eric Clapton wanted to keep the band in a strict blues style and left after this record. He was replaced by Jeff Beck and the hits continued with 'Heart Full Of Soul', 'Evil Hearted You', 'Still I'm Sad', 'Shapes Of Things' and 'Over Under Sideways Down' to 1966. Paul Samwell Smith left to go into record production, Dreja took over bass, and Jimmy Page came in on second guitar. The group now concentrated on the States and never again recorded anything up to their earlier standard. Soon Beck left the group as well, leaving Jimmy Page to carry on with the group. In 1968 the band played its last gig and Page formed the New Yardbirds, which he quickly re-named Led Zeppelin. The Yardbirds produced three great guitarists and set the style for many other guitar-oriented groups. Although their blues was patently white and weak on record, they were one of the best live bands of their time, while their recordings showed imagination and style quite ahead of their time.

YES were formed in 1968 with the line-up Jon Anderson (vocals), Chris Squire (bass), Peter Banks (guitar), Tony Kaye (organ), and Bill Bruford (drums). Despite massive publicity from



Roger Morton

Atlantic Records, the band was slow getting off the ground. Their third album 'The Yes Album' established them in 1971 by which time Steve Howe was playing guitar. Rick Wakeman joined the band from the Strawbs and Kaye quit in 1971, while in 1972 Bruford left to join King Crimson and session drummer Alan White came in. The band's strength is the technical ability of its component parts, and they tend to play long 'pieces' rather than 'songs'.

JIMMY YOUNG was a fair-sized name in Britain as a singer in the '50s - the basis of his present rapport with the BBC housewife audience. His hits included 'Man From Laramie', 'Unchained Melody' and 'Chain Gang', and he still slips them in from time to time on his radio show.

NEIL YOUNG was born in Toronto in 1945 and worked in Canada as a folk singer before joining Steve Stills in Buffalo Springfield in 1966. When the band split in 1968, he took up solo performances again and recorded an album, 'Neil Young' which he followed with 'Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere' (1969) for which he used a backing group which he named Crazy Horse. He was invited to join Crosby, Stills and Nash and his songs 'Helpless' and 'Country Girl' were the most impressive on the band's 'Deja Vu' album. At the same time he cut another solo album 'After The Goldrush', where he proved his abilities as a songwriter who regarded lyrical content to be as important as

the music. This was the high point of his creativity. Since then his albums 'Harvest' and 'Journey Through The Past' have not lived up to the promise of 'Goldrush' and have become increasingly self-obsessive and doom-laden.

THE YOUNGBLOODS were formed in California in 1967 and featured Jesse Colin Young (bass), Banana (guitar and electric piano), and Joe Bauer (drums) playing soft rock numbers with a light jazz feel. The band avoided the pitfall of playing cocktail pseudo-jazz and had a big US hit with 'Get Together'. Their albums 'Ride The Wind', 'Elephant Mountain' and 'Sunlight' never achieved their deserved success and they split in 1971.

FRANK ZAPPA was born Francis Vincent Zappa in California in 1941. He formed the Mothers Of Invention in 1965 where he was able to use his talents as a composer and songwriter to the full and to indulge in his taste for '50s high-school pop



L. V. Houten

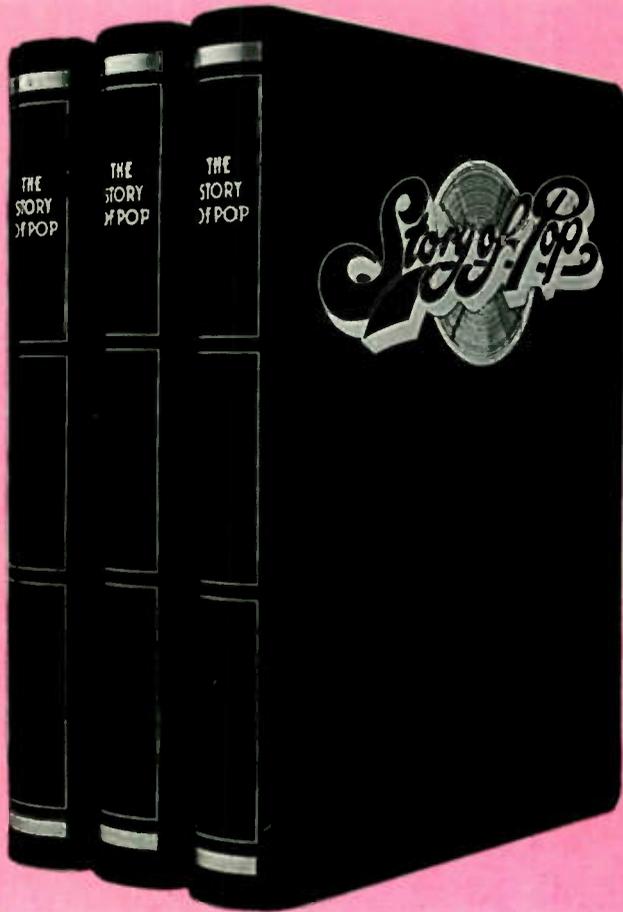
as a background to comment on the state of plastic America. As the Mothers progressed, it became clear that Zappa was capable of composing incredibly complex music. His 'Hot Rats' and 'Burnt Weenie Sandwich' albums successfully combined elements of rock, jazz, classical strains and avant-garde experimentation - normally a surefire formula for pretentious nonsense. Zappa is an accomplished record producer and an underrated guitarist, but his outstanding strength is that he is a self-willed gentleman with something to say, who employs rock or film as a medium to express himself and is one of the most thoughtful and intelligent people to emerge from rock.

THE ZOMBIES were formed in 1962 in St. Albans. In 1964 they won a talent contest and signed to Decca. Their first single 'She's Not There' made the charts in the UK and US and the band recorded their 'Begin Here' album. In 1967 they signed to CBS and cut 'Odyssey And Oracle', from which 'Time Of A Season' was a major US hit in 1968 after the band had split. Keyboard player Rod Argent went on to form Argent, and singer Colin Blunstone split from the music scene to return as a solo singer. The other members of the group were Paul Atkinson (guitar), Chris White (bass) and Hugh Grundy (drums).



SKR

POP FILE



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In the next issue



PROFILE

Dusty Springfield: Otherwise known as Mary O'Brian, Dusty is one of very few British girl singers to hit the Big Time. In the '60s she was preaching the Detroit Sound when it first hit Britain, but has since gone glamorous in Memphis.

ROCK

Groupies: The geisha girls of rock, they aspire to bed with the musicians of the world. Perhaps it's just that today's musician is yesterday's gypsy or joker; or maybe it *is* the Good Life indeed . . .

INDUSTRY

On The Road: Life is just an endless succession of planes, limousines, dressing-rooms and hotel suites, plus thousands of dollars a night and – hopefully – a great show for the fans.

MOVIES

Blackboard Jungle: Back in the dim and dreary '50s, the film was almost *everything* controversial – juvenile delinquency, 'what's it all about for a no-hope kid (?)' and the 'liberal dilemma'. It was a big hit.

MUSIC

Nilsson: Little Richard, the Yardbirds and David Cassidy have all sung his praises and his songs. Nilsson is probably *the* quiet man of rock . . . but there's a lot of people like him.

THE SUPERSTARS

John Lennon: Always the aggressive, intellectual one of the Fab Four, he's the caring one who has been compared to James Joyce and Lewis Carroll. He has explored whole areas of psychology, politics and personal fantasy . . . and his voice is still as earthy and exciting as always.

POP

The Roll-Call: Within a few years of hitting the charts, most of rock & roll's original artists had been killed. In the days before chartered jets or mini-buses, most rock stars had to drive from gig to gig, or resort to tiny planes – and expediency seemed to win over self-preservation.

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