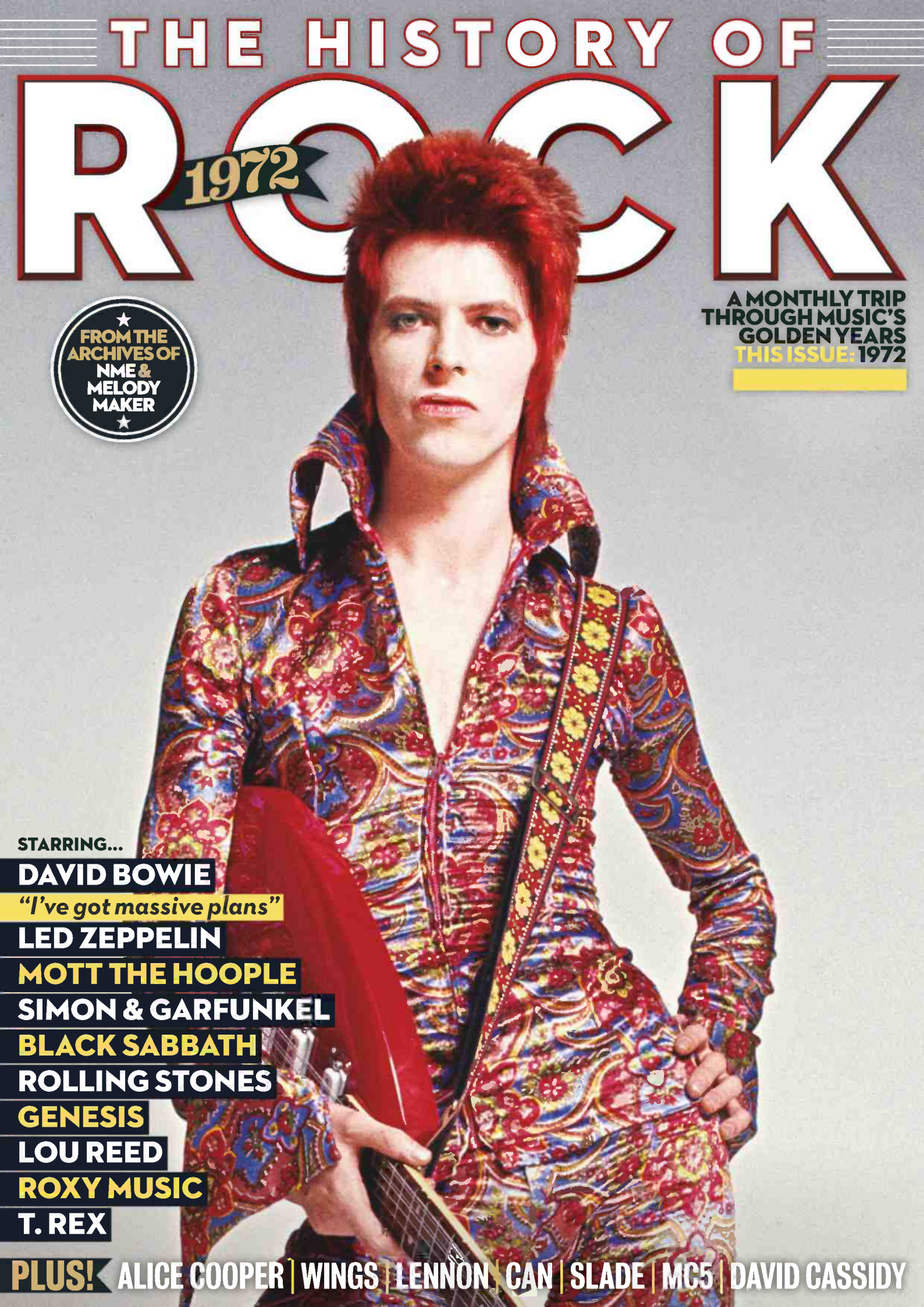
THE HISTORY OF ROCK

1972

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF NME & MELODY MAKER

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS

THIS ISSUE: 1972



STARRING...

DAVID BOWIE

"I've got massive plans"

LED ZEPPELIN

MOTT THE HOOPLE

SIMON & GARFUNKEL

BLACK SABBATH

ROLLING STONES

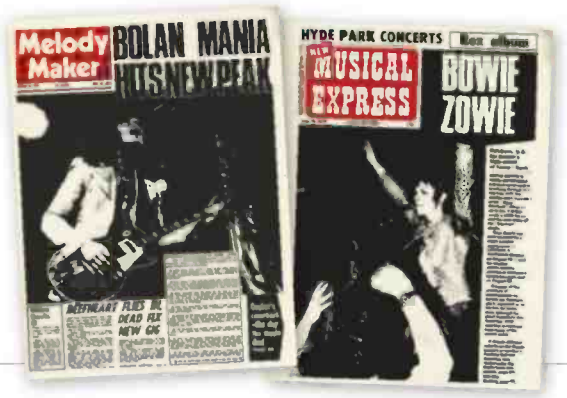
GENESIS

LOU REED

ROXY MUSIC

T. REX

PLUS! ALICE COOPER | WINGS | LENNON | CAN | SLADE | MC5 | DAVID CASSIDY



Welcome to 1972

FOR THE LAST 18 months, a sense of fun has gradually been squeezing out the worthy musical explorations of the recent blues boom. "Underground" spirit lives on in the likes of Hawkwind, 1972's unlikeliest chart stars. For the most part, however, the year's most successful music is colourful and boldly stated.

The dominant music listener is no longer the serious university undergraduate, but the teenager, who propels a flashy and addictive version of rock'n'roll revivalism into a popularity unseen since The Beatles. 1971's messiah, Marc Bolan, is the year's biggest seller, but his elfin head lies uneasy under the crown.

Our cover star, David Bowie, instantly presents a more serious proposition. He writes, performs and inspires frantic adoration for his theatrical rock. He even rejuvenates careers – a service he performs this year for Mott The Hoople, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed. The papers call his music "camp rock". Rod Stewart doesn't know what to think.

Bowie balances his multiple roles with apparent ease, and the character of the year is altered irrevocably by him, as he changes musical trends, wields influence, and becomes a topic of everyone's conversation. He is everywhere, or so it seems.

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

In the pages of this eighth issue, dedicated to 1972, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, compiled into long and illuminating reads. Missed an issue? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

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

At this stage, though, representatives from *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker* are where it matters. Bitching about Bolan. Smoking with Lennon in New York. Watching Lou Reed's ego run riot. "Everyone else is now at the point where I was at in 1967," says Lou in these pages. "Where will they be in five years?"

Join him here. Or even there. It'll be good to rap together.

1972 MONTH BY MONTH

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THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 8th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU | **EDITOR** John Mulvey, whose favourite song from 1972 is *Reelin' In The Years by Steely Dan* **DEPUTY EDITOR** John Robinson *Moonage Daydream by David Bowie* **ART EDITOR** Lora Findlay *All The Young Dudes by Mott The Hoople* **PRODUCTION EDITOR** Mike Johnson *Silver Machine by Hawkwind* **ART DIRECTOR** Marc Jones *Popcorn by Hot Butter* **DESIGNER** Stuart Jones *Rocket Man by Elton John* **PICTURE EDITOR** Kimberly Kriete *Starman by David Bowie* **COVER PHOTO** © Sukita/Bowie Archive **THANKS TO** Helen Spivak, Thomas Seal, Jennifer Johnson, Georgia Tanner **MARKETING** Charlotte Treadaway **SUBSCRIPTIONS** Sonja Zeven **PUBLISHING DIRECTOR** Jo Smalley **COVERS PRINTED BY** Polestar Wheatons **TEXT PRINTED BY** Polestar Chantry | **WWW.UNCUT.CO.UK**

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1972

JANUARY – MARCH

DAVID BOWIE, SLADE, MC5, CAN, PAUL SIMON, JUDEE SILL AND MORE

GETTY

Don't expect Danny La Rue

MM FEBRUARY 19 David Bowie introduces his sexy rock theatre.

AS THE BAND played on and sang "*You're wonderful*" in Edith Piaf emotion-drenched voices, David Bowie stepped down from the stage into the audience until they picked him up and carried him out in the spotlight. No bibbity-bobbity hat, but shimmering white satin trousers and shirt ripped open. Clothes by Liberty, boots by Michel, as the man said... But this was no fag show, a drag act full of lisping gestures and limp hands. Don't expect Danny La Rue or any Alice Cooper rubbish with boa constrictors and electric chairs. The costumes – and there were several changes – are the gilt on the lily, but they're not the substance.

The music is muscular, the performances witty and assured. What other group would dare to do "I Feel Free" before a London audience, complete with Cream rip-off solo – so calculated as to be a thing of glorious absurdity? Because Bowie and his band are nothing if not superb parodists, right down to the way in which Ronson walked to the front of the stage and invited the front row to caress the body of his guitar. It plucked the heartstrings, friends, the pathos of that moment.

Bowie has a tremendous sense of pace and timing. He varied things by slotting in a 15-minute acoustic piece, where he did "Port of Amsterdam", "Andy Warhol" and "Space Oddity", then threw in rockers like "Reeling And Rocking", and then highly abstract pieces such as "Wild-Eyed Boy From Freecloud".

The harmony singing between Bowie and Ronson was brilliant. "Space Oddity" was as perfect as the record. Not surprisingly, there was reference to the Velvet Underground. There was "Queen Bitch", dedicated to Lou Reed, and even a version of "I'm Waiting For The Man". Later on, in the dressing room, two chicks were saying they'd see Bowie at his next gig in Brighton. They'd seen all his others so far.

Dedicated to bringing theatrics back to rock music, David Bowie swirled and captivated at London's Imperial College on Saturday, queening his way through old and new songs, before a house packed to the door. And they hung on every word that dropped from his lips. *Michael Watts*

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON
LIVE!
FEBRUARY 12

"*I could make a transformation*": David Bowie almost pulls off an Iggy-style crowd walk on the fourth date of the first Ziggy Stardust tour, Imperial College, Kensington, London, Feb 12, 1972

"The trouble is that English people take everything lying down": Mick Jagger in London, May 1972

"England can govern itself"

NME MARCH 18 A government bill could outlaw gatherings at night, including festivals. Mick Jagger joins the protest.

"IT'S DISGUSTING," MICK Jagger exploded in anger when I talked to him in Hollywood about the latest developments in the Tory government's Night Assemblies Bill and its new and ominous threat to civil rights. Often misconstrued and publicly pilloried for his outspoken anti-establishment views, Jagger doesn't, however, advocate the guerrilla tactics of the street-fighting man. "What's needed is another kind of direct action," he scowled. "The British public should openly flout the Tory government. And voting is no good, because it never works. When it does work you usually have to wait for years for it to come into effect. The best thing would be for a load of our top bands to turn up somewhere and assemble a large crowd and do a gigantic free gig. If they did, then you be sure, I'd be there."

Surrounded by a bank of silent brightly lit vending machines, plus Rolling Stones Records executive Marshall Chess and the lithe and lovely Chris O'Dell, Jagger spoke freely during a break in the final mix-down sessions for the Stones' impending double LP.

We were in the rest room of an air-cooled studio along Hollywood's Sunset Strip and, obviously well pleased with his initial statement, Jagger made himself comfortable and continued while the hard, fast rockin' sounds of a number he described as "Turd On The Run" acted as a continuous backdrop to our lengthy conversation.

"My slogan is: 'Good Government Is No Government'. England doesn't need a government, because it can govern itself... I honestly believe that, because it does govern itself," he added, directing this personal philosophy at Marshall Chess, who was listening somewhat bemusedly.

"I honestly believe Britain would be better off with no government than the present Tory one," Jagger continued. "The trouble is that both Heath and Wilson are just as bad as each other... they're two of a kind. This present government has got to go. Heath isn't going to last for very long, and before you know it, he'll be out. And as far as the police – they should all retire. I mean they're all disgusting... England is just falling to pieces."

> **"The police should all retire... they're disgusting. England is falling to pieces"**

Suddenly Jagger clapped his hands together and bellowed, "There's absolutely no solidarity." It was an action which momentarily attracted the attention of Keith Richards, who popped out from the control room.

Jagger's opinion was: "The trouble is that English people take everything lying down. Nobody is going to feel sorry for England if the people continue to take everything in this position. For instance, you can serve cold potatoes to English people forever and they won't send them back. From what I can see, it seems as though the only people who care nowadays are the kids. And everything's being done to keep them down."

Adding more fuel to the fire, Jagger suggested that "People shouldn't take any notice of the Tory government, period. Or whatever Bills they pass. I think that all those kids who are over 18 years old, and even those who aren't old enough to vote, should openly register their disapproval by assembling a large crowd. Despite what the government says, the people should still go ahead and have a few rock festivals and then see what happens. As far as I can see, this thing is being done very underhanded... it's all very nasty."

Jagger concedes that sufficient space, catering and sanitary facilities should be of prime importance at festivals. But he added, "Most of the British festivals have been alright. Even the Isle of Wight was quite peaceful. Quite frankly I don't know what the government is worried about. But maybe they're not worried. They just wanna have a go at the kids. Let's face it, the Tories aren't in a good position. And if they get away with this bill, then they're really going to try and enforce other measures to restrict people's freedom. If they banned football matches then they'd see some trouble. Just let them start that – and see what happens."

Jagger says he regards the Night Assemblies Bill as just an initial move by the British government to suppress and limit the freedom of this country's youth. "For instance," he began, "you can't do anything in France. They keep the kids totally tied down and in the

GETTY

JAGGER SLAMS BRITAIN

NME's ROY CARR watched and listened in an exclusive sit-in at the Stones' latest recording sessions in Hollywood at the weekend. Details of the next Stones' single and album are on pages 4 and 9 and you can read Carr's interview with Jagger — in which he slams British apathy and the Night Assemblies Bill — on p. 8.

gutter. Italy is just the same, and it looks as though these same kinds of restrictions are going to be enforced in England. Since they came into power, Heath's government has succeeded in making a mess of just about everything. They started off with Rhodesia... sold arms to South Africa... and got involved in a terrible mess in Ireland. None of these things should have happened, but they did, and Heath has only made things worse. And if that's not enough, we had the miners' strike."

Jagger then voiced the opinion that among the worst offenders against freedom was the BBC, in that not only did it have a monopoly, but control the freedom of speech on radio. He offered the mass media's refusal to air Paul McCartney's new single as a prime example. "It's important we should have our own radio. All the excuses given by the BBC are nothing but pure bullshit. The Tory government will never give free radio to anybody, because they are afraid that people will say things they don't approve of.

"All these other reasons are side issues. The truth is that they are afraid of anyone saying the things that were said on Radio Caroline. You know the kinda things... Up with this, down with that and fuck the government."

He concluded: "England has always had a malaise of not caring. People take everything lying down. They are content to let the country be run by a load of misguided right-wingers."

When I asked Jagger why he felt that Great Britain was no longer Great he gave a wry smile. "It's due," he said, "to me leaving." *Roy Carr*

"They could turn up anywhere"

MM FEB 19 Banned records. Guerilla tactics. Wry remarks. P McCartney is back in action.

July 13, 1972: (l-r) Henry McCullough, Denny Laine and Paul McCartney of Wings play the Théâtre Antique in Arles, France

WINGS MADE THEIR surprise live debut last Wednesday at Nottingham University – in the style in which Paul McCartney wanted The Beatles to make a late return to live performances.

The group played the show completely unannounced. It was McCartney's first live appearance since The Beatles' last live performance in Candlestick Park, San Francisco, on August 29, 1966.

Before a delighted crowd, Wings played many new songs, blues jams which featured Henry McCulloch, some tracks from *Wildlife* and the new single "Give Ireland Back To The Irish". They finished with a rock medley, featuring McCartney singing "Long Tall Sally" – the song with which the Beatles frequently closed their stage act.

On Thursday, Wings played a similar concert at York University. McCartney's assistant, Shelley Turner, told the *MM*: "They are on the road at the moment and have taken a lot of sandwiches with them. They could turn up anywhere and play this week; I don't know exactly where they are."

"Give Ireland Back To The Irish" was this week banned by the BBC, ATV and Radio Luxembourg because of the strong political feelings in the lyrics. McCartney's reaction: "Up them!" He added, "I think the BBC should be highly praised, preventing the youth from hearing my opinions."

"There is a lot of rubbish coming out"

MM FEB 12 Virgin Records stop selling bootlegs.

THE BOOTLEG BOOM in Britain is over. Bootleg album sales in Britain have been escalating for three years – especially in the last nine months – but this week London's biggest open suppliers of bootlegs, Virgin Records, announced they were to quit selling illegal albums. The decision is bound to rub off on to other suppliers of bootlegs in Britain. Virgin told the *MM* this week, "We have decided to get rid of the stocks we have got and call it a day for various reasons. There is a lot of rubbish coming out in bootleg form in this country, and we are getting our own label together anyway. Unlike the States, there is not much money to be made from bootlegs in this country, and we want to get out before the situation gets out of hand.

"Bootlegs in Britain haven't really harmed any artists, and have probably given them some good publicity. The fans buy their official records as well as the bootlegs, instead of buying bootlegs instead of official records, as in the States."

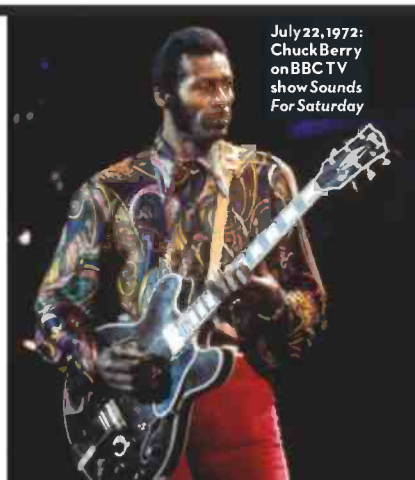
Virgin were one of the few shops to advertise bootlegs on the walls and have the records in racks. Other shops keep them under the counter. The move by Virgin follows the disappearance from the booking scene of Jeffrey Collins, self-styled "Bootleg King" in England. Collins sold bootlegs openly in his Chancery Lane record shop, and boasted to a national newspaper about his dealings in them.

GETTY (2)

"Absolutely knocked out"

MM FEB 12 Chuck Berry comes to Britain to play and record.

CHUCK BERRY IS back! The ace rock'n'roller hit Britain last week for just one date at the Lanchester Arts Festival, and amid amazing audience scenes, stopped the show. And he's coming back. His set at the Locarno, Coventry, was recorded for use on an album – but this audience were so loud that they spoiled the tapes. Chuck – "absolutely knocked-out" with this reception – travelled to London's Pye Studios on Saturday and recorded five tracks for an LP with Rick Grech (bass), Kenney Jones and Ian McLagan, of the Faces, on drums and piano, and Derek Griffiths (guitar). After a short period back in the US, Chuck returns to Britain in March. He opens on March 22 at Lancaster University, and dates are planned through to April 1.



July 22, 1972: Chuck Berry on BBC TV show *Sounds For Saturday*

The Chi-Lites in 1972: (l-r) Creadel "Red" Jones, Robert "Squirrel" Lester, Marshall Thompson and Eugene Record

"Black music was based on fantasy"

NME FEB 5 A meeting in Harlem, with the Chi-Lites...

IT HAS TAKEN the Chi-Lites 10 years to become an overnight success. A decade of dues paying on the chitlin' circuit, which helped justify their position as top-of-the-bill attraction at the esteemed pulpit of soul, the Apollo Theatre, deep in the heart of New York's black ghetto – Harlem. And it was in that theatre's Number One dressing room that I encountered Eugene Record, Marshall Thompson, Robert "Squirrel" Lester and Creadel "Red" Jones last Saturday night. Making my way backstage, I climbed two flights of steep stairs to find the group relaxing between shows in brightly coloured robes.

The Chi-Lites are amongst the advance guard of progressively minded black performers who are vigorously redirecting the entire course of America's black music. Lead singer and the group's prolific songwriter Eugene Record took it upon himself to open the conversation on this all-important subject.

Eugene Record: "This has all come about because people are now starting to deal with realism in music. Not only through the beat, but now you'll find that the lyrics of many songs deal openly with the real facts of what's happening all around us. Before that, most everything associated with black music was based on fantasy."

***NME*: The prime factor being?**
Eugene Record: "Undoubtedly the world situation... the war in Vietnam... and the general mess that affects just about everything."

> **"Music has always been the best way for us to put across our views"**

"Squirrel" Lester: "Eugene is right. For you see music is the way of expressing ourselves. This has always been the best way for us to put across our feeling and our views."

***NME*: Your recording of "(For God's Sake) Give Me More Power To The People" was socially orientated, and like the Chi-Lites, a lot of black artists are singing about equal rights and personal dignity, which is a commendable virtue. But do you feel that those artists who are advocating hate and armed militancy in their music are defeating their aims?**
"Squirrel" Lester: "Well, personally, I would put it like this: everyone has their own individual way of expressing themselves, some more than others. True, some black artists are much bolder about it, and we're all aware of the problems that beset everybody, but to stay within the commercial area you really mustn't be too bold about these things."

***NME*: In other words, you think that if those artists, as you put it, get too bold, that can drastically harm the music and the progress of their fellow artists by alienation?**
"Squirrel" Lester: "I couldn't really say. Like, we talk to a lot of people both white and black and some say that it's beautiful that artists are bringing all this out into the open and talking about their problems. Others say they don't think it's time."

***NME*: With this new awareness now apparent in black music do you feel that both black and white forms will integrate or segregate?**
Eugene Record: "I think they are going to become even more integrated than they have ever been in the past. All that Sly Stone and Curtis Mayfield are doing is what Dylan practised in the '60s, but just relating it to their own particular environment."

***NME*: Do you think that with this new approach a lot of black artists are purposely forsaking the old blues and gospel traditions?**
Eugene Record: "Some of them have."

***NME*: Do you think this could be because of the implications involved when the**

GETTY (2)

American Negro was regarded as a second-class citizen?
"Squirrel" Lester: "Perhaps to an extent. However, if you care to explore the history of blues and soul music you'll find that in the past there wasn't enough instrumentation. As things have progressed, the music has become more arranged and far more sophisticated, with far more emphasis on instrumentation. But in the process they've lost a little of the soul, the natural harmonies and the spontaneous ad-libs... there's not enough room for it now in a lot of the music."

***NME*: In your opinion, do you think that with the advent of this new approach in soul, many of the artists who were popular during the mid-'60s will fade away?**
"Squirrel" Lester: "Well, to be truthful, and being black myself, I would think so. But those guys like Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker will continue to play an important role because they've been along there with the black people when people like us were just kids or probably for that matter not even born. It's only recently that they've started to be discovered and appreciated by the mass white audiences.

***NME*: Did the occasion ever arise that when artists like Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Little Richard were picked up and fêted by young white audiences they were dropped by their black opposite number?**
"Squirrel" Lester: "No, they never were. They were always accepted. In fact, these artists opened a lot of doors for both black and white artists like the Rolling Stones. They started a trend."

***NME*: Do you think that the recent experiments whereby Latin and soul music are being fused will amount to anything productive?**
"Squirrel" Lester: "Well, Latin music is very similar to soul music because it's all centred around the beat. In theory it may be two different things, but the fact is they go hand in hand. It's still soul music but with a slightly different way of expression."

***NME*: Do you feel that the sound of black music currently being played by Isaac Hayes, Curtis Mayfield, Sly Stone and yourselves is just the beginning of something very much bigger?**
Marshall Thompson: "Most definitely; I don't think it's even scratched the surface."
"Red" Jones: "I agree with Marshall. However, I don't think it will be too long before it reaches all audiences, black, white, rock, easy listening. It's a combination of the important facts of life and honest-to-goodness music. It could well take over from the heavy-rock scene."
"Squirrel" Lester: "I think that people are at last beginning to realise that if we are all going to survive on this big Earth of ours, we've got to try and live together. Let's face it, whether we want to be or not, we're all neighbours, and as such we should learn to compromise, live together, work together and survive together." *Roy Carr*

A dream for DIY sleuths

MM JAN 22 Introducing... Don McLean, writer of the roman-à-clef pop song "American Pie".

Don McLean: "I'm as anxious as everybody else"

PERHAPS IT'S INEVITABLE that with the feeling aroused by rock music, and its development over the past decade, "American Pie" should have struck home. Don McLean's eight-minute "potted history" of rock has received lightning American approval. Critics have seen reflected in its melancholia their own laments for the "death of rock". McLean's lyrics are a paradise for the imaginative interpreter.

Characters like the jester, the king and queen, the sergeants, and The Father, Son and Holy Ghost wander through the verses, each to be stamped "real identity – Bob Dylan" or whoever else the symbols merit. McLean has even been credited with some sizeable digs at Dylan, the Stones and the Beatles.

He doesn't own up to this; in fact if there is any significance to the song it's something everyone will have to work out for themselves without any help from its composer. His remarks encourage the do-it-yourself interpreter rather than offering him any hints. Basically, if you want to see it as the destiny of the western world epitomised in song, that's you speaking, not Don McLean. He just gave you the opportunity.

"That song isn't a criticism. The one thing I'd like to say is that it isn't meant to be a criticism. The metaphors are purely that, metaphors," McLean told me during our transatlantic exchange. "Everybody has a right to their opinions. I never listen to what people say about me. If I did I would have quit a long time ago."

"It isn't meant to be a criticism. The metaphors are purely that"

It's very easy to think of him as a new name, a lucky man with a first-attempt hit. In fact he's been earning a living, and apparently a non-living at times, from singing for years. An album called *Tapestry* was released in the States early in 1970 and was barely noticed. His single "American Pie" and new album of the same name have both topped the US chart. The former is selling "chart-topping quantities" in Britain and the album is released here on February 4. Had he expected or intended the response to his single to be as it has been?

"That would be an impossible feat. Only idiots and madmen expect or intend something like that."

The appeal of "American Pie" depends largely upon the listener's dedication to rock in general, rather than simply on the qualities of this particular song. At least, if one is dedicated to rock's more powerful influences, the song steps up to a different level of meaning. In its more negative aspect, this can unleash a stream of nostalgia, with the consequent debasement of people, who just become flotsam swept along by the current. The effect is to deny self-determination in preference for an oracular system in which musical arch-druids hold the reins.

McLean's life is not dedicated to the past, though. Whatever he did intend his song to represent, it is not a change into reverse gear. "I feel that there's a lot to look forward to than there is to look back at. I'll tell you that. I think I'm as anxious as everybody else."

The "death of rock" and its associations with "American Pie" promotes the idea that a resurrection is there to be undertaken. McLean's views on the subject are mellowed by his designation of rock as a folk form. "When you ask about whether music can be resurrected, what you're really asking me is whether people have a voice, because that's what rock's always been. I think as often as not that will continue to be."

In view of his remarks about the worth of the media, was his success and consequent public exposure difficult to come to terms with?

"Most of the time I am not willing, but I decided to give everybody one good round to see exactly what they do. I feel a larger audience deserves to hear from me since I can't see them all personally."

He added that probably he would be misrepresented by the media like most singers are. "If that happens I won't give any more interviews. I will just stop communicating. It won't bother me at all. I will still do concert appearances, but the media can go jerk itself off."

Andrew Means


Drove my
Chevvy to
the levee
PERHAPS it's inevitable th
feeling aroused by rock
its development over the p

April 24, 1972: three months after the interview reprinted here, Bowie puts down his redecorating brush to talk to *Disc* magazine's Rosalind Russell at his apartment in Haddon Hall, Beckenham

"I'm gay... always have been"

DAVID BOWIE reveals a new look, a new album – and a new sexuality, too. Who is he really? And where is his dress anyway? "I change every day," he says. "I'm not outrageous. I'm David Bowie."

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 22 —

DAVID BOWIE, ROCK'S swishiest outrage: a self-confessed lover of effeminate clothes, Bowie, who has hardly performed in public since his "Space Oddity" hit of three years ago, is coming back in super-style. In the States critics have hailed him as the new Bob Dylan, and his tour de force album, *Hunky Dory*, looks set to enter the British charts. "Changes", the single taken from it, was Tony Blackburn's Record Of The Week recently. David will be appearing, suitably spiffy and with his three-piece band, at the Lanchester Festival on February 3.

Even though he wasn't wearing silken gowns right out of Liberty and his blond hair no longer fell wavily past his shoulders, David Bowie was looking yummy.

He'd slipped into an elegant patterned type of combat suit, very tight around the legs, with the shirt unbuttoned to reveal a full expanse of white torso. The trousers were turned up at the calves to allow a better glimpse of a huge pair of red plastic boots with at least three-inch rubber soles; and the hair was Vidal Sassoon-ed into such impeccable shape that one held one's breath in case the slight breeze from the window dared to ruffle it. I wish you could have been there to vada him; he was so super.

David uses words like "vada" and "super" quite a lot. He's gay, he says. Mmmmmm. A few months back, when he played Hampstead's Country Club, a small, greasy club in North London which has seen all sorts of exciting occasions, about half the gay population of the city turned up to see him in his massive floppy velvet hat, which he twirled around at the »

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY

January 29, 1972: first sighting of Bowie's alter ego Ziggy Stardust at the Borough Assembly Hall, Aylesbury

end of each number. According to Stuart Lyon, the club's manager, a little gay brother sat right up close to the stage throughout the whole evening, absolutely spellbound with admiration.

As it happens, David doesn't have much time for Gay Liberation, however. That's a particular movement he doesn't want to lead. He despises all these tribal qualifications. Flower power he enjoyed, but it's individuality that he's really trying to preserve. The paradox is that he still has what he describes as "a good relationship" with his wife. And his baby son, Zowie. He supposes he's what people call bisexual.

They call David a lot of things. In the States he's been referred to as the English Bob Dylan and an avant-garde outrage all rolled up together. The *New York Times* talks of his "coherent and brilliant vision". They like him a lot there. Back home, in the very stiff upper lip UK, where people are outraged by Alice Cooper even, there ain't too many who have picked up on him. His last-but-one album, *The Man Who Sold The World*, cleared 50,000 copies in the States; here it sold about five copies and Bowie bought them.

Yes, but before this year is out all those of you who puked up on Alice are going to be focusing on Mr Bowie, and those who know where it's at will be thrilling to a voice that seemingly undergoes brilliant metamorphosis from song to song, a songwriting ability that will enslave the heart, and a sense of theatrics that will make the ablest thespians gnaw on their sticks of eyeliner in envy. All this, and an amazingly accomplished band, featuring super lead guitarist Mick Ronson, that can smack you round the skull with their heaviness and soothe the savage breast with their delicacy. Oh, to be young again.

The reason is Bowie's new album, *Hunky Dory*, which combines a gift for irresistible melody lines with lyrics that work on several levels – as straightforward narrative, philosophy or allegory, depending on how deep you wish to plumb the depths. He has a knack of suffusing strong, simple pop melodics with words and arrangements full of mystery and darkling hints.

Thus "Oh! You Pretty Things", the Peter Noone hit, is on one strata, particularly the chorus, about the feelings of a father-to-be; on a deeper level it concerns Bowie's belief in a superhuman race – homo superior – to which he refers obliquely: "*I think about a world to come/Where the books were found by The Golden Ones/Written in pain, written in awe/By a puzzled man who questioned what we were here for/All the strangers came today/And it looks as though they're here to stay*". The idea of Peter Noone singing such a heavy number fills me with considerable amusement. That's truly outrageous, as David says himself.

But then Bowie has an instinct for incongruities. On *The Man...* album there's a bit at the end of "Black Country Rock" where he superbly parodies his friend Marc Bolan's vibrato warblings. On *Hunky Dory* he devotes a track called "Queen Bitch" to the Velvets, wherein he takes off to a tee the Lou Reed vocal and arrangement, as well as parodying, with a storyline about the singer's boyfriend being seduced by another queen, the whole Velvet Underground genre.

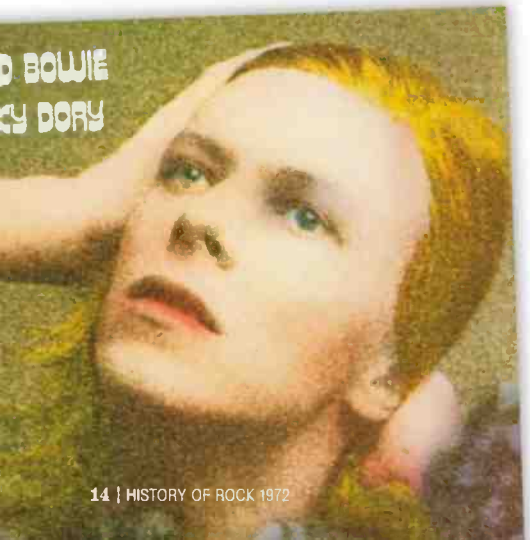
Then again, at various times on his albums he resorts to a very broad cockney accent, as on "Saviour Machine" (*The Man...*) and here with "The Bewley Brothers". He says he copped it off Tony Newley because he was mad about *Stop The World* and *Gurney Slade*: "He used to make his points with this broad cockney accent and I decided that I'd use that now and again to drive a point home."

The fact that Bowie has an acute ear for parody doubtless stems from an innate sense of theatre. He says he's more an actor and entertainer than a musician; that he may, in fact, only be an actor and nothing else. "Inside this invincible frame there might be an invisible man." You kidding? "Not at all. I'm not particularly taken with life; I'd probably be very good as just an astral spirit."

Bowie is talking in an office at Gem Music, from where his management operates. A tape machine is playing his next album, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*, which is about this fictitious pop group. The music has got a very hard-edged sound, like *The Man Who Sold The World*. They're releasing it shortly, even though *Hunky Dory* has only just come out.

Everyone just knows that David is going to be a lollapalooza of a superstar throughout the entire world this year, David more than most. His songs are always 10 years ahead of their time, he says, but this year he has anticipated the trends: "I'm going to be huge, and it's quite frightening in a way," he says, his big red boots stabbing the air in time to the music. "Because I know that when I reach my peak and it's time for me to be brought down it will be with a bump."

The man who's sold the world this prediction has had a winner before, of course. Remember "Space Oddity," which chronicled Major Tom's dilemma, aside from boosting the sales of the Stylophone? That was a Top 10 hit in 1969, but since then Bowie has hardly performed at all in public. He appeared for a while at an arts lab he co-founded in



REX FEATURES

Beckenham, Kent, where he lives, but when he realised that people were going there on a Friday night to see Bowie the hit singer working out, rather than for any idea of experimental art, he seems to have become disillusioned. That project foundered, and he wasn't up to going out on one-nighters throughout the country at that particular time.

So in the past three years he has devoted his time to the production of three albums, *David Bowie* (which contains "Space Oddity") and *The Man...* for Philips and *Hunky Dory* for RCA. His first album, confusingly also self-titled, was released in 1967 on the new Deram label but it didn't sell outstandingly, and Decca, it seems, lost interest in him.

It all began for him, though, when he was 15 and his brother gave him a copy [of a book] to play an instrument. He took up sax because that was the main instrument featured in the book (Gerry Mulligan, right?). So in '63 he was playing tenor in a London R&B band before going on to join a semi-pro progressive blues group that became Davy Jones & The Lower Third (changing his name to Bowie in September '65 when The Monkees' Davy Jones started gaining attention). He left this band in 1966 and became a performer in the folk clubs.

Since he was 14, however, he had been interested in Buddhism and Tibet, and after the failure of his first LP he dropped out of music completely and devoted his time to the Tibet Society, whose aim was to help the lamas driven out of the country in the Tibetan/Chinese war. He was instrumental in setting up the Scottish monastery in Dumfries in this period. He says, in fact, that he would have liked to have been a Tibetan monk, and would have done if he hadn't met Lindsay Kemp, who ran a mime company in London: "It was as magical as Buddhism, and I completely sold out and became a city creature. I suppose that's when my interest in image really blossomed."

> "My own work can be compared to talking to a psychoanalyst"

David's present image is to come on like a swishy queen, a gorgeously effeminate boy. He's as camp as a row of tents, with his limp hand and trolling vocabulary. "I'm gay," he says, "and always have been, even when I was David Jones." But there's a sly jollity about how he says it, a secret smile at the corners of his mouth. He knows that in these times it's permissible to act like a male tart, and that to shock and outrage, which pop has always striven to do throughout its history, is a balls-breaking process.

And if he's not an outrage, he is, at the least, an amusement. The expression of his sexual ambivalence establishes a fascinating game: is he or isn't he? In a period of conflicting sexual identity he shrewdly exploits the confusion surrounding the male and female roles. "Why aren't you wearing your girl's dress today?" I said to him (he has no monopoly on tongue-in-cheek humour). "Oh dear," he replied, "you must understand that it's not a woman's. It's a man's dress."

He began wearing dresses, of whatever gender, two years ago, but he says he has done outrageous things before that were just not accepted by society. It's just so happened, he remarks, that in the past two years people have loosened up to the fact that there are bisexuals in the world – "and – horrible fact – homosexuals". He smiles, enjoying his piece of addenda.

"The important fact is that I don't have to drag up. I want to go on like this for long after the fashion has finished. I'm just a cosmic yob, I suppose. I've always worn my own style of clothes. I design them. I designed this." He broke off to indicate with his arm what he was wearing. "I just don't like the clothes that you buy in shops. I don't wear dresses all the time, either. I change every day. I'm not outrageous. I'm David Bowie."

How does dear Alice go down with him, I asked, and he shook his head, disdainfully: "Not at all. I bought his first album, but it didn't excite me or shock me. I think he's trying to be outrageous. You can see him, poor dear, with his red eyes sticking out and his temples straining. He tries so hard. That bit he does with the boa constrictor, a friend of mine, Rudy Valentino, was doing ages before. The next thing I see is Miss C with her boa. I find him very demeaning. It's very premeditated, but quite fitting with our era. He's probably more successful than I am at present, but I've invented a new category of artist, with my chiffon and taff. They call it pantomime rock in the States."

Despite his flouncing, however, it would be sadly amiss to think of David merely as a kind of glorious drag act. An image, once strained and stretched unnaturally, will ultimately diminish an artist. And Bowie is just that. He foresees this potential dilemma, too, when he says he doesn't want to emphasise his external self much more. He has enough image. This year he is devoting most of his time to stage work and records. As he says, that's what counts at the death. He will stand or fall on his music.

As a songwriter he doesn't strike me as an intellectual, as he does some. Rather, his ability to express a theme from all aspects seems intuitive. His songs are less carefully structured thoughts than the outpourings of the unconscious. He says he rarely tries to communicate to himself, to think an idea out: "If I see a star and it's red I wouldn't try to say why it's red. I would think how shall I best describe to X that that star is such a colour. I don't question much; I just relate. I see my answers in other people's writings. My own work can be compared to talking to a psychoanalyst. My act is a couch."

It's because his music is rooted in this lack of consciousness that he admires Syd Barrett so much. He believes that Syd's freewheeling approach to lyrics opened the gates for him; both of them, he thinks, are the creation of their own songs. And if Barrett made that initial breakthrough, it's Lou Reed and Iggy Pop who have since kept him going and helped him to expand his unconsciousness. He and Lou and Iggy, he says, are going to take over the whole world. They're the songwriters he admires.

His other great inspiration is mythology. He has a great need to believe in the legends of the past, particularly those of Atlantis; and for the same need he has created a myth of the future, a belief in an imminent race of supermen called homo superior. It's his only glimpse of hope, he says – "All the things that we can't do they will."

It's a belief created out of resignation with the way society in general has moved. He's not very hopeful about the future of the world. A year ago he was saying that he gave mankind another 40 years. A track on his next album, outlining his conviction, is called "Five Years". He's a fatalist, a confirmed pessimist, as you can see.

"Pretty Things", that breezy Herman song, links this fatalistic attitude with the glimmer of hope that he sees in the birth of his son, a sort of poetic equation of homo superior. "I think," he says, "that we have created a new kind of person in a way. We have created a child who will be so exposed to the media that he will be lost to his parents by the time he is 12."

That's exactly the sort of technological vision that Stanley Kubrick foresees for the near future in *A Clockwork Orange*. Strong stuff. And a long, long way away from the camp carry-ons.

Don't dismiss David Bowie as a serious musician just because he likes to put us on a little. *Michael Watts* •

"There was something about it"

With Simon & Garfunkel no longer a partnership, PAUL SIMON reviews his recent past and looks to the future. "If you're around long enough," he says, "then you don't believe everything that everyone tells you."

— NME JANUARY 1 —

FOR THE SECOND time in his life Paul Simon stands alone. However, his name on a solo album amounts to much more now than when his *Songbook* album limped almost totally ignored onto the market some years ago.

Though he was the songwriting half of the incredibly successful Simon & Garfunkel partnership, Paul Simon – soloist – is now in the same position experienced by Lennon, McCartney or any other active limb of a creative body which has been amputated.

Simon is aware – though not unduly concerned – that people will undoubtedly make critical comparisons between the songs on the new album and those that he sang with Artie Garfunkel.

Continuing last week's article, Simon speaks about his recording activities, past and present, Dylan, bootlegs and songwriting.

***NME*: On the Simon & Garfunkel albums, there's always been intricate yet unobtrusive orchestral and group backings. Yet you've always chosen to undertake live appearances with just the two voices, your guitar and the occasional extra musician in support. What was your motive for this?**

At one point, we did use some back-up musicians, but most of the time we didn't, because it seemed to make things better just using the two of us. First of all, we'd require a lot of time and rehearsal. The guys we used on the records we couldn't take on the road because they were all very busy session men. If you said to guys like Larry or Hal, would you come out, they'd do it as a favour. But if you said we're going on the road for three months they'd decline. »

"I'm older and I dont' see things in the same way": the solo Paul Simon in 1972

GETTY

June 1972: Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel reunite at a fundraising concert for the presidential candidate George McGovern, Madison Square Garden, New York City

They've got families, their work, and besides, it seemed to work with just the two voices and the one guitar. There was something about it, the fact that it was reduced to such a small trio band… two voices and a guitar – that worked. Those numbers that didn't work, we didn't do, so I don't think that you felt it, by not doing things that couldn't be sustained within this simple context. If we had then I'm sure you would have felt it… but we didn't. Until *Bridge* came along, everything was easy to do that way.

It's so simple to go and perform that way. Sound problems were pretty much eliminated; even at the Royal Albert Hall – which acoustically is supposed to be terrible – was, for us, just great.

So there isn't a chance that you might suffer from the same predicament as Dylan, whereby a flood of unheard material is made available in bootleg form? I know there's one album called *Chez* which is supposed to feature both you and Artie singing and talking in a room. I haven't heard that one, but there's a lot of Dylan stuff about and there's a lot of Simon & Garfunkel bootlegs of concerts. But the most flagrant bootlegging that's being done doesn't revolve around unreleased material; it's done by those people who take the album and copy it, then resell it on tape cassettes and cartridges. These bootleggers make their money by selling it to the record dealers for much less than the actual record companies.

That's where the big bootleg market is – it's so much bigger than the bootlegging of discs. I mean, there's a Simon & Garfunkel Greatest Hits tape that's a best-seller. You can't con people into believing that somebody really bad is really dripping with talent. An artist wants to be good… he wants to please and finally succeed. If you're around long enough then you don't believe in everything that everyone tells you.

Is that hunger and that determination to succeed still as strong today as when you and Artie were working the folk club circuit? Well, the people that surround me, like my wife and everybody else, are always saying, "That's not as good as that one," or "Why not change that line in that song."

You have this reputation of being very meticulous when working in the recording studio, to the point of continually striving for complete perfection. In fact, Duck Dunn recently told me that when he recorded with you for the new album, you'd lay down a take – everyone would like it – but that you would insisted on redoing it over and over again until you were satisfied that you had captured a certain mood. (*Smiles as he remembers the event*) Well, I used Duck on bass and I used Jim Keltner on drums. We just came into San Francisco and started to work on one song which actually was never finished. I was looking for something, but I wasn't quite sure what I was looking for. They're both really fine musicians and I probably drove them crazy. I didn't really say anything; I kinda wanted to see what would come, and it didn't upset me in the least, because I was so used to working that way. I had plenty of time and I was just sorta formulating my ideas.

Duck's opinion was that as far as he was concerned, you didn't need any other musicians, just your guitar for support. That's a very nice thing for him to say. The track I was doing with him, I eventually completed with electric piano and organ played by Larry Knechtel… he's the guy who played on *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, and Joe Osbourne, the bass player who was also on that record. The rest of the lineup was Hal Blaine the drummer and myself on guitar, and I feel that particular song came out a lot better than if I had just played it with guitar. It just took time to evolve, that's all; you see, at that time it just didn't have it. I'm not so much that meticulous about these things, it's just that I'm waiting for something to happen. It can happen one way and I don't want that, but I just don't want to do it that way, because that's not the way I hear the song.

Talking about "The Boxer", there have been many conflicting theories as to the identity of the boxer – some say it's autobiographical; others, Dylan. Then when Dylan recorded it, it was almost like a confirmation. Can you clarify this? I would say it's autobiographical… although it sure surprised me. When we recorded it, someone said to me, "Hey, that song's about you", and I said, "No, it's not about me, it's about this guy who…" And as I'm saying it, I thought, "Hey, what am I saying; this song is about me and I'm not even admitting it." One thing is certain, I've never written anything about Dylan and I don't know of his personal life.

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Do you like Dylan's interpretation of your song? Well, first of all, I'll tell you how it came about. I was in the studio and Bob Johnston came upstairs and said, "Dylan's downstairs – do you want to come down and say hello?" And I said, "Sure, just as soon as I get a chance", which I did. Then they played "The Boxer" for me, which Dylan had just recorded. It was at a time when he was recording a lot of other people's material for his *Self Portrait* album.

About his version... I don't know, it's hard to say. You see, I identify very strongly with that song. Yes, I suppose it's OK, but I like Simon & Garfunkel's version... I was very pleased with that. It's one of my favourites of all the Simon & Garfunkel records. It's a very personal song and it's hard to imagine any other interpretation. It was fine... it was original. Like anything Dylan does, it has its own thing. He did it differently and I didn't think anyone could do that. Dylan's version makes me smile. When Aretha came along and then Stevie Wonder did it, they both did it in a way that was very natural for the song and they made it for me... I love it.

There are those people who haven't made good attempts simply because they haven't got the goods to do a good job on anything or because they didn't have enough time. I mean, there are more bad records than good records and so you expect that the majority of covers won't be good, but you're pleased when somebody takes the care and the time to do it well.

> "I don't have a schedule. I have periods of productivity – it's cyclical"

What have been your opinions of the countless cover versions recorded of your songs? Do they please you? Aretha Franklin's version of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was fine. There's been a lot of good versions of that song... in fact I've just heard a good one by Roberta Flack.

There are quite a number of cover versions which took the song into another direction than what we did. They are natural directions, because that song was a gospel-type song – it wasn't a gospel song – it had a gospel feel to it and therefore lent itself very well vocally as well as musically to that kind of arrangement. Artie is not a gospel singer or a soul singer, and Simon & Garfunkel never sang in a black voice, because that's not our voice. Artie sang that song, I think, very soulfully. Not black soul; he sang it from his heart and it sounded real.

You haven't appeared in public for nearly two years. Just how important is a live audience to you? I like it. But there was a time when I wasn't so much bored with performing, but bored with what I was doing. You know, singing the required Simon & Garfunkel hits which realistically speaking you had to do. That's why people came to see you.

I mean we just couldn't say, "I can't sing 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' again", because we've sung it so many times. People want to hear it, and if you're going out on a stage then you've got to do it.

When you re-listen to your very earliest material, do you feel some embarrassment like some artists do? Well, maybe a mild embarrassment. Really it's not just like looking at a picture of yourself in 1959 when everybody had short hair. You look at the picture and you see that the styles are so old-fashioned and you wish that you had been ahead of everyone else and had long hair in 1959. But you didn't.

Do you in fact play all your earlier albums? No. Well, very seldom.

When you do, is your personal opinion that a particular album was good at that time? I don't have too much perspective on those albums, because some of them were big hits, which tends to colour how I look at them. I tend to think that probably that was good because it was such a big hit, and then when I hear it the thing clouds... I just don't know. I don't spend too much time thinking or worrying about what I did in 1967.

Of all the material that you have written, which is your personal favourite? Well, most of my favourites are on the new album. It's not because they are the very latest and I haven't as yet had too much of a chance to get used to them.

Your earlier work reflected the hardships that you were enduring in both this country and America. Since achieving and enjoying success... well, you do enjoy success, don't you? (*Simon smiles and nods*) Do you find that in any way your present lifestyle has affected your writing? I think that the main thing that has altered my writing is the fact that I know a little more about how to write. I don't think it has too much to do with my lifestyle. It might have to do with the subject matter or the musicality of it. The way of using lyrics is something that you just learn from experience and study. I don't think it's a question of lifestyle. I'm older, too, and I don't see things in the same way.

Do you employ any special method for songwriting? I do have a method of writing, but I don't know exactly how to verbalise this. For one thing, I don't have a schedule. I have periods of productivity; it's cyclical. I can't say exactly how it happens, but I just sit at the guitar and one minute nothing happens, and the minute later, as I'm thinking, something happens musically. I play it and think about it. If it appeals to me I attach a phrase to it and some of those musical ideas evolve into songs and others go nowhere... I lose interest in it or I don't. That's how I write. I never set out with the intention that I'm going to write this now, or for that matter that I have to write.

In the past you have collaborated with ex-Seeker Bruce Woodley. Have you written songs with any other writers recently? Well, yes. "El Condor Pasa"... I only wrote the lyrics; the melody, which is traditional, was one that I learned from the group Los Cincos, so it's a collaboration between my lyrics and their melody. On the new album, there's an instrumental on which I collaborated with jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli.

You have also been studying the classical guitar. Will this influence show on the new album? There's no classical guitar on the new album, but I wouldn't separate my own personal tastes from what I will be doing in the future. Again, that's not to say that I'll be playing classical guitar only. I like it, for it teaches me a lot about music... I love the sound of the instrument. Anyway, I never learned how to play the electric guitar. I can sit and read the music and I don't have to think what I have to make up here or there. Its great music and I love it.

Is there any particular person that you would like to write material for? Artie Garfunkel. I think that, if I can rouse him up out of his world of Connecticut, he might. I don't see why not – he should – what I mean is, he could make a good album. He needn't if he didn't want to. He hasn't got anything to prove to anybody. All I know is that Artie likes to sing and record. He doesn't write, so he has a problem of finding material, but there's enough good material around.

During your very early career around the London folk clubs, did you for one moment envisage the success that you eventually achieved? No, of course not. *Roy Carr* •

Can at Inner Space, their studio in a disused cinema in Weilserswist, near Cologne, 1972: (l–r) Holger Czukay, Damo Suzuki, Michael Karoli, Irmin Schmidt and Jaki Liebezeit

Democratic and improvisational, the German group CAN make "music of the moment", with roots in jazz and classical composition. Too far out for record companies, the band work on their own, outside the regular music business. "You have to start refusing the basis of their power," they explain.

"We just freaked out"

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 5 —

IRMIN SCHMIDT HAS this theory. Have you ever noticed, he says, how music made by coastal dwellers invariably shows the influences of air and water; whereas the more one moves inland the more the dominant characteristic is earth – the more it becomes gut music, in essence.

His theory is a conclusion he drew principally from a study of African tribal music. He'd never really thought about it until now, but yes, he supposed it could well apply in a European context. Take the Can, for instance. They live inland in Germany, in Cologne, and their music is nothing if not earthy. "Music of the stomach," he calls it succinctly.

Irmin is the organist and spokesman with the Can, and he's here in England, sitting in the offices of United Artists Records, to put the word out about the band. Their second album, *Tago Mago*, has just been released here on UA, but how many »

of you Britishers know of them? Irmin smiles ironically. Now the Americans, they love the group. Every American who sees them play says they're terrific. Maybe he and Damo, the Japanese singer, who is sitting there with him, should be doing interviews in the States instead, do you think? Another smile.

Their first album, *Monster Movie*, never received much promotion and was a commercial bummer. The UA press release of the time described it as a "rejection of all the pressures of contemporary society". Heavy stuff. But this sort of PR verbiage is vaguely understandable.

In approaching the Can one is coming to terms with rock music that is genuinely different to anything that Britain or America has thrown up; a music whose emphasis is strongly instrumental, but aleatory and free-form in a jazz sense, and blessed with a rhythmic pulse that English and American "space music" groups don't possess.

The Can, like Amon Düül, the founding figures of contemporary German rock, bring a kind of abstract European quality to pop music, most probably because their music is not rooted in a vocal approach (and maybe because their heritage is so classical, which American music, with its folk and vocal origins, patently is not).

Their singer, Damo, is not so much a vocalist as another instrumentalist, now intoning the words in almost a whisper, now screaming them out as the rhythm accelerates. The fact that many of his lyrics are in Japanese, and that much of his English (on record) is unintelligible, emphasises the strange, alien nature of the music.

Then again, they create some powerful electronic sounds, intended not as mere effects but as integral parts of the music, and produced not by synthesizers, but through distortion and manipulation of regular instrumentation, like the guitar and organ, and experimenting with their mixer. They simply don't have the bread and the financial backing to buy any fancy electronic stuff. That makes their experiments all the more interesting.

"All the music is recorded live," says Irmin. "There's nothing worked out before. We never rehearse. We just play, and sometimes it's bad, sometimes it's good – but it's always improvised. Like the 'rain' effect on 'Mushroom' [a cut on their new album]. That was because the level had dropped in one place; the tape hadn't been regulated."

The lyrics, written by Damo, are similarly improvised. Even performing at a concert they never use texts. Any number is calculated to sound different from one performance to the next. That is why Irmin says a new listener has to see the band twice at least before he makes any judgement on their music.

> "All the music is recorded live. We never rehearse – we just play"

The band has an extraordinary mixed background. They are held together to an extent by a rejection of their musical and social pasts. Irmin was pursuing an academic career and proving successful as a composer and conductor of symphony orchestras ("a really bourgeois background with all those privileges that sort of existence gives you").

Jackie Liebezeit, the drummer, started as a Dixieland player and went through the jazz spectrum to become a founder member of the free-jazz group the Manfred Schoof Quintet before he found himself moving in a rock direction. Michael Karoli, the guitarist, had a college education, like Irmin. He went to law school, and during his period there he met Holger Czukay, the bassist, who was a teacher but only doing the job because he needed the money.

The two determined to form a group, but through Holger's association with Irmin, their group grew to encompass Irmin and the others. The Can was founded in autumn '68.

Malcolm Mooney, a Black American, was their first singer and was featured on *Monster Movie*. But he "became sick" and rather than enter hospital in Germany, where the staff, it was thought, would have difficulty in understanding him, he returned to the States. The band then auditioned 10 to 15 German singers, but that didn't work out.

"This mistake was that they were really singers," says Irmin.

Then, sitting in a cafe in Munich last May, where they were performing, they heard Damo singing in the street outside: "He was singing really loudly [Damo: "I was tripping"], and he looked really happy, and Holger just got up, as if he'd been bitten by a tarantula, went outside and said to him, 'You have to sing tonight with us.' There was no rehearsal. We just started playing and he began singing."

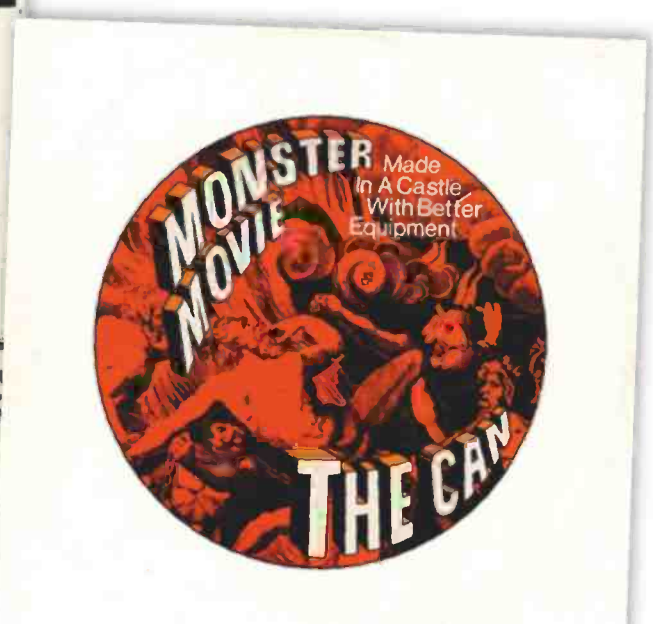
Damo: "I have no musical background. I was a street singer. I'd played in Sweden and London before, in the subways, hitching with my guitar on my back. I have about 300 songs but I couldn't really play guitar, just one chord, so I couldn't play other people's songs."

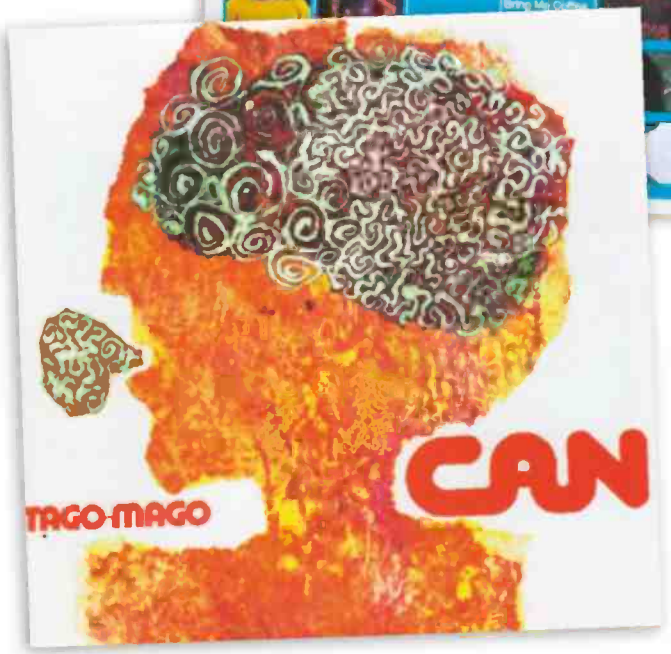
Freedom is a concept that crops up frequently in Irmin's conversation. The music revolves around the idea of the individual creating on his own whilst still working empathetically within the group framework. Similarly, they have attempted at all times to preserve their autonomy from the music establishment. Three years ago, when the German record companies were pressing all groups to sound like the English or the Americans, the Can were cutting their own tracks in their own studio. "We took our tapes to all the various record companies," says Irmin, "but always they told me, 'It's good y'know, you're a really gifted group, but it's so progressive no one will buy it. Just make another record first which is commercial and then you can release this, because people will then believe you.' We said no."

They achieved their breakthrough when a freak who had his own label, Music Factory, made 600 private pressings, and then UA, whom Irmin says had listened to the tapes before, suddenly became interested: "Soon it was like a legend. 'There's a really, really strange record going round' – you know. And finally, after some weeks, people were paying 50 marks for it [£6]. This convinced the record company there was some response in the public and so they released it."

All the same, the group is not going to be restricted by record company executives; Irmin loathes bureaucratic interference. Despite greater technical standards they will use no studio but their own: "We thought if we went into a studio we have to rehearse, and that's not the way we do things. And then there's always some guy behind you, with a watch in his hand, saying, 'Don't freak around, because that will be another 100 marks to me.'"

This attitude has not facilitated their financial situation. Musical





independence has meant them having to work on outside commercial ventures to make sufficient bread to continue. In the past three years they have done the soundtracks for 13 movies, including a 15-minute passage for Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End*.

"It's a question of the establishment, too. You know, when we took our tapes to UA that was a threat to them, because we weren't using their studios. With the Can we don't have a manager; we are our own producers and engineers and our own agency for Germany.

"You can't think just about getting rich in their way. You just have to start refusing the basis of their power, which means of their production. All you can try to do is set up little cells, which may grow or not, but music is not to make revolutions. The main question is not that you start and then get f——d up. It's to make music at the moment of the moment." *Michael Watts*

— NME FEBRUARY 5 —

OF ALL THE heavy German bands, Can are perhaps the most interesting and could prove the most influential. Next month they tour Britain and, judging from their newly released *Tago Mago* double album, they will finally kill the notion that European musicians are the poor country cousins of rock.

In fact, Can are further ahead in many respects than most British bands. Their music is dark, mysterious, often frighteningly cold, and created almost spontaneously in a studio built into a castle they own in Germany. As the album's sleeve notes point out, probably the only British band with anything in common with them are Hawkwind, since both groups base much of their music on repetitive riffs. But in spite of this the comparison is loose as both groups are exploring rather different fields of experimental music.

Last week Can's organist Irmin was in town together with part-Japanese, part-German vocalist Damo. Irmin, although coping with a foreign language, proved more articulate than many of our home-grown musicians, and explained how and when the group got together.

"The group really came together by chance back in late '68. Each of us knew different members of the group and we all came together because we were fed up with what we had been doing before. We just wanted to be with other people exploring different musical fields.

"Before that, everybody had been doing something different in the musical line. Holger, our bass player, had been studying classical music and played a little free jazz. Jaki, our drummer, had been playing free jazz in the most advanced group in Europe at that time. I had been studying some very anarchistic American music, while Michael had been playing guitar for pure pop groups. Damo, who joined us later, had just been singing on the street, which in itself is a genuine scene. The only thing we had in common at the start was that we all wanted to play music that was spontaneous.

"Now the music is improvised collectively. There's nobody dominating, nobody writing. When we were making the album we made two really long tracks by playing one rhythm for hours and hours. We played it back maybe six times and recorded on top of it. Then we cut out the best pieces of tape and stuck them together.

"When we were recording these tracks there were times when we felt we couldn't do any more on that particular piece, so we just freaked out – went completely wild. These sections were played with no previous thought at all. We cut out the best of them and put them on the album. Personally I feel that's a much more natural way to make music than the conventional method. Surely it's unnatural to get five people to learn a piece of music that was previously thought up in somebody's head and make them practise it over and over again.

"The point is, we don't think in terms of technical ability. That's a political term – an old value. The need to reach a certain technical standard is unnecessary.

"If somebody wants to express himself he doesn't need to study eight years to learn how to play quickly. To me, somebody who is the fastest on the guitar may well prove to be the most alienated to the guitar of all. His guitar doesn't have anything to do with his life. His aim is just to be a fast guitarist."

Can, of course, are not the first band to break through from Germany – the various combinations of Amon Düül being the other prime example. I wondered whether Irmin had any ideas on why German bands seemed particularly interested in the heavier side of music.

"Basically, I think it's because people on the Continent no longer think making music means imitating British or American groups," he replied.

"People in Germany, for instance, were born, educated and brought up in a completely different environment, so if they express themselves in a true sense they are bound to have a different feeling to their music... but without having any nationalistic feeling, which is something I hate – and this is what's coming through.

"Also I have this idea that in the past all music from America, and especially from Britain, has been more related to melodies. If you study music from all over the world it seems that in lands surrounded by water the music is influenced more by water and air, while the more you go into a continent, the more you get into a land mass, the melody of the music becomes less important in comparison with the rhythmic heaviness. It seems water has something to do with melody, while countries like Germany produce music more of earth and fire.

"I wouldn't want you to make too much of that theory, but maybe that has something to do with it. Really, I don't think any style or music should dominate, especially if you're playing new music." *James Johnson* •

> "The more you go into a land mass, melody becomes less important"

"A battle cry for the kids in America"

American revolutionaries the MC5 arrive in London. On the agenda: "reality vibration", future shock, love, and even music. "We're not interested in making it big like Led Zeppelin," says Fred Smith. "There are more important things to do."

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 5 —

CONTROVERSIAL AMERICAN ROCK band MC5 arrive in Britain on Thursday to begin a series of concerts arranged at the last minute by promoter Ronan O'Rahilly. They will be in Europe until the end of March and are also planning concerts in France and Denmark.

They are hoping to record a live album during the British concerts and are writing and performing the music for a film entitled *Gold* which O'Rahilly is producing in April.

Dates fixed for MC5 are London School Of Economics (February 5), Corn Exchange, Cambridge (10), Mardi Gras Club, Liverpool (12), Greyhound, Croydon (13), France (17–22), Lanchester Polytechnic (25), Roundhouse, Chalk Farm (27), Seymour Hall, London (28) and Thomas Hall, Canterbury (March 4). Other dates are being arranged. »

PHOTOSHOT

The MC5: (c/wise from top left) Michael Davis, Dennis Thompson, Fred Smith, Wayne Kramer and Rob Tyner

The group is managed by John Sinclair, the White Panther leader recently released from jail after being arrested for drug offences and the beneficiary of a charity concert at which John Lennon and Yoko appeared.

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 12 —

THE MC5 DON'T want to be stars, if you can dig that. The reason that they are there with you to fill the air with vibrations, to take control of the air molecules and fill them with sensitivity. You see they are still very much into politics, although it is more subtle now and not just a matter of "Kick Out The Jams".

You have to progress, and they make a point of putting over the fact that they are now into reality. Tuned into reality because rock'n'roll is a force that can put people back into a feeling of security. It's a high-level energy trip that can give people something they need.

But at the same time when stars become stars they lose that high-level energy and reality because instead of them thinking of the people, they become a machine that thinks of tax returns. And money prevails. At least that's how the MC5 see it.

"I think the political side of rock'n'roll is still there, but like a lot of other people, it is not just slogans. Political music is moving into reality," says guitarist Fred "Sonic" Smith. "It's more tuned into a reality vibration."

"It's a high-energy release," added Wayne Kramer, the band's second guitarist.

Outside their hotel room, across the road, children played during their lunch hour, shouting and letting off all the energy they could. If everything in the world is too cool it is up to them to make it so. But they point out that the natural loving instinct in children is stifled from the day they are born. Parents teach children to love them only, the brothers and sisters a little bit less, and to be careful of everything else around them. It's all to do with possessiveness and sexuality, the band point out.

"It is to do with the way you approach living," said vocalist Rob Tyner. "You can approach it living and loving everything like children, or you can approach it from a personal thing like in America. Children are brought up in such a way that they are afraid to love.

"When you are young you are willing to love anybody, but your parents close that sensitive door. They close it so that you love them only. I have a child myself. I try to help it as much as I can, because I know what happened to me when I was a kid. God knows what I would have been like if I had not been repressed at home and at school, and in religion. I'm bizarre enough now, but I don't know what I would be like if I had been left to grow up in my own way."

"Religion," says Wayne "is particularly repressive. Just take the title, which comes from the Latin word *religio*, which means to follow a dogma. It has nothing to do with turning this planet around and changing it."

The phrase "future shock" crops up with Wayne as he stresses a point about people's closeness to their own way of life. Future shock has caused a lot of people to crack, people who can't keep up with the use of change. That, he says, accounts for the weird behaviour of people who become involved in senseless violence that has become a pattern of life in the western world, especially America.

So where does rock'n'roll come in to this pattern of future shock? How can rock'n'roll save the world from going to the dogs?

Well, it can change because it is a powerful force. People read books, stresses Wayne, but they only read them once and then put them on a shelf or leave them in a plane or something. Films you can only see once, and he dismisses TV.

"People play records a lot. They are part of a lifestyle. People listen to rock'n'roll throughout the day, and they keep playing their records. But mainly they listen to it when they do anything. In a sense, rock'n'roll is the most powerful medium we have at the moment," said Wayne.

Rock'n'roll has a different, anarchistic lifestyle too, and that, Fred thinks, is important. But most important of all, he feels that people have to be re-sensitised. We need change. People need to change their lifestyles, and lifestyles have been changing with rock'n'roll. With rock'n'roll, the most important thing is to have sensitivity to airspace, to treat the air molecules with respect.

Rock'n'roll has escaped from the rigid musical traditions that have prevailed in music for thousands of years. If rock can do that, then people can escape from the structures that have tied them for thousands of years. Look at the States, they say; the ideal behind the democratic government goes back to Greece and Rome.

To find ideals they are looking for in life, the MC5 are thinking of moving their operations to London, because things are cooler here and because they feel that it is the centre of European art. Anyway, there are lots of people they want to get to know, especially science-fiction writers they admire and musicians they want to dig out and get to know.

But the main thing with the MC5 when you get underneath all their political ideals is that they are open and honest. Unlike the vast majority of radicals who want to replace what we have now with equally restrictive governments, they are as mixed up as anybody. That is an important thing when they talk politics.

They are talking from a human level, a level that they themselves have found. Anarchy, they feel, is the thing, but anarchy that allows people to feel free to move in their own direction instead of those laid down by the powers that be. *Mark Plummer*

— NME FEBRUARY 19 —

OF ALL THE groups who have dabbled in politics over the last few years, the MC5 seem to have gained the reputation as one of the most fervent, the most committed and the most outrageous. Tales of their exploits on stage are so varied that it's difficult to sort out fact from fiction. Ask vocalist Rob Tyner about them and he says, "Well, yes, we used to burn American flags, blaspheme, rape and pillage and sacrifice virgins...", but all with a sly, enigmatic smile that you still don't know quite what to believe.

Either way, the MC5 are thought of as some kind of evil bogeymen, the kind of guys young chicks should be scared of and known better for their outrageousness than their music. After all, most people know they were first to come up with the phrase "Kick Out The Jams, Motherf———s", but how many have actually heard the song?

"In fact that phrase started out as a colloquial expression in the Detroit area," said drummer Dennis Thompson. "Like, a lot of bands would come and play in Detroit and they'd be so lame you'd yell, 'Kick out the jams', meaning get off the f———g stage. Rob turned the phrase into a song and gradually it became a battle cry for all the kids in America."

It was in Detroit that the band first formed, as a purely instrumental rock outfit back in 1964. Even at that time, though, they say they were becoming "politically conscious" and when they met John Sinclair, now president of America's White Panthers, this intensified. He played a shadowy background figure in the band's development, calling them his "tool for the revolution" until they split from him two years ago.

Last weekend the band hit London for their second British visit, which includes dates all round the country. On their previous trip they only played four dates, so this is really the first chance Britain has had to see them. "I think maybe people will think we're

> "Children are brought up in such a way that they are afraid to love"

"When we go out on stage, everybody knows how to get it up there, how to reach a climax": the MC5 in London, 1972

going to preach politics at them," said Thompson. "But not at all – we don't want to make the gigs like going to school. We'll just be rocking, foot-loosing, saying off-the-wall things and just acting crazy.

"At one time we used to state things verbally, all that stuff about screwing in the streets, etc, etc, but that was just an embryonic stage. In a way, just to state them is very limiting.

"Now we let messages come through on a subliminal level through the music. As the music is super sexual, super sensual, erotic and obviously very liberated, our observations still come through.

"But what we're into has no set political thoughts anyway. It's to do with total anarchy of the mind. The MC5 thing is a total screw off. Like, I don't care what you do so long as you're free. Whatever drug you want to abuse – abuse it. Whatever poison you want to take – take it. You can have the craziest fetishes imaginable and I'll still be your friend. To me, rock music at present is completely limp. Like, Rod Stewart sends me to sleep. Why don't bands give everything of themselves on stage? They certainly aren't at the moment. Why don't they express their natural passion for life?

"We don't take audiences on little trips and fantasies in their minds, but get them out of their seats, give them music that is super-explosive. We want to get people out of their tormented minds and into their bodies and have a great time."

> "The MC5 thing is to do with total anarchy of the mind"

Judging from the band's first gig at the London School Of Economics last Saturday, they did succeed on this level. There was no great technical virtuosity displayed, but by the end most of the audience were indeed out of their seats dancing to some pretty basic, no-holds-barred raucous rock.

"Our music had always stuck to the basic elements of rock'n'roll," said Thompson, "because that's the music that belongs to our generation. Ever since we started we've been expanding within that form.

"The key word is energy. You've got to have that to allow people to respond. The reason why there's so much in this band is that we've been playing with each other for seven years, so we've broken down all inhibitions between ourselves. Consequently, with each other we're all super loose.

"When we go out on stage, everybody knows how to get it up there, how to reach a climax, how to go, go, go and climax again. It's been said we're the only band in America that can make an audience come. If we make English audiences come then we've done what we want to do."

James Johnson

— DISC & MUSIC ECHO MARCH 4 —

IT COMES AS something of a shock when the MC5 – long since branded as a revolutionary and rather spine-jarring band – looks deep into your eyes and starts talking about "loving awareness".

"That," says guitarist Wayne Kramer "is what it's all about."

He, along with other guitarist Fred Smith, are talking in a Fleet Street coffee shop. Wayne periodically cleans his fingernails with a fork.

"For instance, when you meet someone, instead of having a defensive awareness, you have a loving awareness and you're ready to take in this person's full vibration. Loving awareness is the only answer to our problems – look at President Nixon, the most defensive cat in the world. His whole constitution has fallen into a defensive pit."

The MC5 are over here for only the second time in their careers, but look like they'll be here a lot more often if they sign on with ex-pirate radio chief Ronan O'Rahilly, who is thinking of being their manager. Their last tour here – in summer 1970 – was fairly disorganised and included the equally disorganised Phun City festival, and they also recorded their last album, *High Time*, here. A few copies of that were released when they arrived here this time, but that seems a little disorganised too – a word which is all too frequently applied to the group.

An Atlantic newssheet described them as "the band that advocated screwing, smoking and the burning of the American flag", and although this might have coincided with their early image and first album *Kick Out The Jams*, it certainly doesn't any more. They're still a rough-and-ready rock band, generating a great deal of energy, but their aim is to utilise this energy for communication.

"We're not interested in making it big like Led Zeppelin," says Fred. "It doesn't bother us at all that we can't go up on stage and do all those ridiculous things – we've had a dose of that type of life and there are more important things to do than carrying around shopping bags full of money. I've SEEN Led Zeppelin leaving a concert hall carrying the money in shopping bags."

"If you have money spend it, we reckon. Ronan is very into that – he spends it on good projects like his idea for pirate TV. He never talks about money, never worries about it, lives in a £12-a-week flat and drives a jeep."

They are thinking of putting out a live album next (their first one was live, and one of the best examples of live recording). The whole loving awareness concept is something that has evolved during their six-and-a-half years together. When you're as powerful on stage as they are, you have a grave responsibility to use that power well.

"I don't think we've ever got up on the stage and just played along and not cared about anything," says Wayne. "As a band gets older it really does begin to utilise its powers. Soon music and albums will be one of the main forms of communication. At the moment, albums brought in more revenue in America than films last year, which is incredible." *Caroline Boucher* •

JOE STEVENS

"We just pummel their brains"

A band with a hardcore live following, SLADE have also become a genuine chart phenomenon: basic, bawdy, for the kids. "Parents couldn't take our music," explains Noddy Holder. "It's not meant for them."

Look wot they dun: Slade appear on Granada Television's junior pop show *Lift Off With Ayshea*

REX FEATURES

— NME FEBRUARY 19 —

SLADE, T. REX AND FACES – THE MINI PHENOMENON

WE LIVE IN the age of the mini phenomenon. It's a situation born out of three/four years of waiting in a post-Beatles limbo for a new real phenomenon to present itself for deification. And a situation born too out of the music industry's gradual awakening to the fact that no such substantial and lucrative hunk of manna is either going to be manufactured or dropped from the heavens into its lap.

So the mini phenomenon – either initially business masterminded or public initiated, then in both cases gratefully seized upon and glorified by a hungry rock industry... has been the order of the day.

Lately we've had the T. Rex mini phenomenon, the burgeoning Faces mini phenomenon and the Slade mini phenomenon. The qualitative "mini" by the way, chosen not to imply a put-down but as an attempt to maintain perspective.

I've lumped these three bands together for other reasons. One, because I've a hunch that if there is to be a new real phenomenon of the '70s – one with a standing equal to that of the Beatles... then the chosen he/she or it will find it necessary to embrace certain charismatic characteristics from all these bands.

A hefty measure of Marc Bolan's skilled use of the music as the media as the message perhaps? A bountiful dash of the swagger and vitality of the Faces? And, lastly, the kind of identification and involvement with their following that Slade have made their trademark.

The other reason why these three bands group naturally together is that all three have tapped for their devotees a considerable hunk of the public that has hitherto either been an ignored backwater uncatered for by the excesses of the 20-minute album trackers or, more simply, been at school up to now.

In the latter cases these are the kids getting their first influential (in the sense of having the bread to influence trends) taste of rock music: the young brothers and sisters of the Stones, Dylan and even Zeppelin fans; the kids who haven't been programmed and conditioned by the "accepted" norms of snob rock behaviour... who want to do what their elders did when they first turned on to rock'n'roll.

They want to feel the emotion and the sheer gut and crutch power of rock at least on a par with, if not ahead of, the cerebral qualities that have been pushed down the throats of the older generation. They want, as Marc Bolan puts it, to boogie. They are, as Noddy Holder of Slade remembers from his first experience of rock'n'roll through groups like The Who and Rolling Stones, wanting to "rave from the start". What seems to have been neglected is the middle ground between the straight pop and progressive factions. Not all rock'n'roll devotees are graduates hung up on John Cale and Terry Riley. Some are 16, just out of school and itching to boogie.

Jonathan King makes a valid point when he says that today's pop performers are too old to relate to the new generation of pop listeners. I don't see reggae or The Weathermen as the answer. Maybe T. Rex and Slade are.

This'll take you back, those of you who remember with fondness those hazy nostalgic days when The Beatles and Stones would be releasing singles in the same week, so setting the nation and the industry abuzz with excitement to see who got the better of the other as the records battled up a then-vibrant and alive singles chart.

I'm sitting in an anteroom waiting for my interview, half listening to Noddy Holder being interviewed for Australian radio in an adjoining room, and Slade publicist John Halsall is passing time telling me of the release date clash between the Slade and T. Rex singles.

Somebody somewhere agrees with the premise that both bands attract similar audiences because, when it was discovered that "Telegram Sam" and "Look Wot You Dun" were scheduled for release on the same day, Slade's Polydor label sagaciously decided that their band might get the worse of a sales clash and pulled their release date forward a week.

EMI, Bolan's label parent company, promptly responded by pushing their lad's single forward as well. Study of *NME* Charts over the past few weeks will have shown that the T. Rex single won out handsomely with the initial sales, although what is now Slade's third hit is quickly making up lost ground.

If you don't flash on that little story then you're not a part of the ever-increasing movement who feel that the boost music needs right now is a return to shit-hot quality singles by the top names in rock.

Noddy Holder, anyway, when I got in to see him, expressed surprise and disclaimed all knowledge of any behind-the-scenes dealings. In his opinion, T. Rex are in a higher league than his band are on the concert circuit and have had four/five hit singles while his group have had three and are still on one nighters.

But he adds, in a nasally Midlands accent, "Of course I'd like Slade to be as big as T.Rex, but I don't think that we are in competition. However, if we are, then I think that can only help the music business. Competition is a healthy thing."

Holder does concede certain similarities between the followings of the two bands. Not only in that they are likely to cross out each other where singles buyers are concerned, but also in that they attract the same age range. Anything from 10 to 15, with a concentration between 14 and 18.

> "The audience sweat their bollocks off... It's a kind of release valve"

"These are the ardent fans," comments Holder. "It is the sort of young kids who are leaping about. There is this section of younger kids who aren't into sitting and listening, and are wanting to rave from the start. Same as I did when I started to take an interest in music. I never sat down and listened. I saw bands like The Who and the Stones.

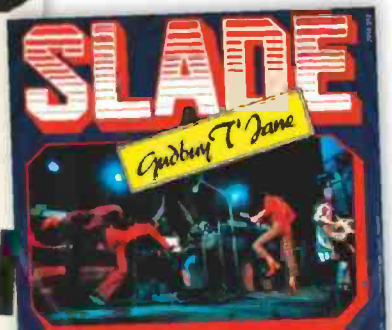
"I was gassed with The Who when I first saw them. I saw The Beatles on stage too. I couldn't hear anything but they were fantastic. It has got to come back full circle. I suppose we are doing our bit."

Personally I find Slade, apart from anything else, too crude a musical band for my tastes, but to dismiss them out of hand would be to ignore the demands and opinions of a considerable body of people. They are, to my mind, the kind of band whose appeal revolves as much, if not more so, around a charismatic image as it does around the kind of music they play. The heavy, boot-stomping beat that they've made their trademark has more to do with image than music.

Slade's main appeal is that they come on strong, playing it part serious/part humorous, as a band of neighbourhood heroes. Holder, with his strutting stride and vulgar onstage manner, is the neighbourhood tough. Dave Hill, with his effeminate mode of dress, the neighbourhood flash. To the kind of predominantly working-class audiences they attract, they can be identified with. Here are no four/five remote acid heads attempting to preach peace and love at some Barnsley municipal hall. Slade is one of your mates made good.

There are similarities with The Who's early days in that respect – in fact Slade's early material possessed that same naivety of stuff like "I Can't Explain" and "Anywhere, Anyhow, Anywhere" – because The Who at the outset owed their success to a very strong identification with the youth movement, the mod movement, of the time.

Holder draws the line at musical similarities but admits to a strong admiration for The Who and, on the subject of audience identification, comments: "It is obvious to us that it is that same sort of response that they had."



Slade in 1972: (l-r) Noddy Holder, Jim Lea, Don Powell and Dave Hill

From the Black Country, the industrial heart of the Midlands, Slade was born against a backdrop of aggression. Holder is from Walsall, a working-class area of Wolverhampton.

"Yeah," he answers with a drawn-out grin, "it was pretty rough. I suppose you have to have some sort of streak of aggression in order to exist there."

He also makes the point that the life of a group quickly takes a musician out of his native environment and slaps him down in another. Slade still live in Wolverhampton – Holder with his parents – but spend the majority of their time on the road, and when in London, live in hotels.

Formed virtually straight out of school, they were just one unknown band in a thousand before their meeting with manager Chas Chandler, the former Animal and Hendrix's co-manager... a meeting which coincided with perhaps the most influential point of their career, this the frequently harked-upon skinhead gimmick.

Holder explains: "Back in Wolverhampton the fashion was catching on and suddenly we thought, well, these are the people we're playing to so we might as well look like them too. It shocked Chris, but I think he liked the fact that we had done something to associate with our audience.

"What also impressed Chas was the fact that we were playing all different sorts of stuff: Motown, blues, anything. We were not playing for ourselves, but playing to please the audience. Chas said he had seen so many groups playing just for their own enjoyment on stage."

I won't go over what has become well-trod ground. Suffice it to say that Slade's bookings slumped as drastically as if they'd contracted leprosy. The silver cloud was that in one stroke of the barber's scissors, the group had done its bit, however insignificant at the time, to bring rock'n'roll down from its lofty cerebral plains and put it back on the clubland floor and street corner.

"Any group into playing long, dirgy guitar solos" growls Holder, "would never have thought of that. They would have thought it uncool. Doing that skinhead bit knocked our bookings down, but the audiences – not the head audiences of course... they really flashed on it. That was the realisation of what it meant to communicate with an audience."

From that point, although the hair was again left to run its natural course, Slade set about using the lesson learned to build a very real empathy among a growing following. Today, a good Slade reception is down as much to the audience as to the band. Holder says that the credit for a good gig is usually distributed 50 per cent between band and crowd, and adds that audience involvement doesn't necessarily stop with the set. "We get a lot of people come along and talk backstage after a gig," he maintains. "We like to find out what they are thinking and what they would like to see happen on stage."

Since their first hit "Get Down And Get With It" there has been barely any resistance to the band's appeals for audiences to loosen up. Any audiences slow to come forward get a treatment of vulgar harassment.

"There are some people pissed off with being bored by band after band," says Holder, "but they're too shy to let themselves go because of the people next to them. We tell them not to take any notice if somebody next to them is sitting down because, if they get up and do it, then the guy next door will too. Sometimes you get a whole audience too shy but we just pummel their brains until they give in."

The result, at Slade's gigs over the country (surprisingly, London has never been cold to them), has led to scenes of audience participation unknown since the pop heyday of the early '60s. Yet their gigs are remarkably trouble free. Holder feels that the humour they employ tempers the aggression in the music and has a therapeutic side effect.

"It is the beat we play at, that sort of tempo," says the vocalist. "They sweat their bollocks off through a show and when they pour out of the club they are shagged out. It's a kind of release valve." *Nick Logan*

— MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 23 —

***MM*: Do you think you have reached the stage where fans go and buy your records because it's Slade, regardless of the record?**

Noddy Holder: Yes, people do. We've got a hard core of fans but the hardcore can't push a record in the charts. If we put some real crap out it wouldn't get in the charts. It's still got to be a decent record. Our records are good for discos and dancing, which is good.

Jim Lea: I think our records have got better as they've gone along. It's dangerous thinking they'll buy anything. With a lot of groups they get worse.

Holder: "Mama Weer All Crazee Now" has some atmosphere on it which we think is like our five feet. We did this on "Take Me Bak 'ome" as well, but "Look Wot You Dun" and "Coz I Luv You" were a recording studio type thing. Now we are back in the "Get Down And Get With It" style, which is the style that broke us. That's what people expect from us on stage. On stage, "Get Down And Get With It" goes down 10 times better than "Coz I Love You" and "Look Wot You Dun", so we might as well give them what they want from us. The *Slade Alive* album is the same sort of style. »

CAMERA PRESS

Dave Hill: There's about eight tracks laid down on the new album so far. They're all different songs and some of them have the live feel and some the recording feel. We've put two out as this new single, and the other six will go on the album.

> "At a lot of places we get more fellas than birds"

***MM*: Are all your live gigs riotous occasions with massive queues outside the halls?**

Holder: Oh yes, everywhere.

Jim Lea: Lincoln, I think, was the breaking point. Since that night it's been ridiculous.

Holder: We haven't worked for a couple of weeks now, but the last two gigs we did in Felixstowe we had to get there at one in the afternoon to get into the gig. There's been a queue a mile up the road before we've even got there. The acceptance of all-round fans came at Lincoln. Since about last September we've been getting full houses, but now the heads have accepted us since Lincoln. Before that they probably thought we were just a hit-record band. I think it was word of mouth among the people who were there.

Lea: The Rainbow was our major London concert.

Holder: The manager of the Rainbow wrote us a letter and said it was the best concert they'd had in 10 years. He wasn't talking about us playing-wise, but about how the crowd behaved. They were all raving but there was hardly any damage done.

***MM*: Do you get mobbed outside theatres now?**

Holder: That's been going on for a long time now. On the British tour in May it was taking us time to get out of all the concerts. We don't mind that because it shows that people are digging what we're doing.

***MM*: Is it mostly girls?**

Holder: Oh, no. That's the good thing we dig about it. At a lot of places we get more fellas than birds. The fellas dig the stomping stuff just as much as the birds. I think it's the music that's bringing them in as well as the image we've got.

***MM*: Do you deliberately go for this rough image?**

Holder: Not deliberately. It's just built up from the skinhead thing. We don't play it down and we don't build it up, it's just there. The fans like it, and they probably like football too. We are playing to a new generation of fans, like Dave said a few weeks ago; we are playing to kids who didn't know about The Beatles or the Stones. They might know about them but they associate with the music that is coming out now.

***MM*: What do you think is the fans' average age?**

Holder: Sixteen, about. That's the time when all of us started to latch on to music. Younger than that you latch on to the music of a band or girls wet their knickers. When you're 16 you start digging the music more and the image doesn't count as much. The image is important but it can't take over from the music. They won't dig rubbish.

***MM*: Are you reaching the point where live gigs will be confined to big tours?**

Holder: We shall do mainly tours, but one-nighters who gave us a chance in the early days we shall still work. They deserve to make bread on us now. It'll get chaotic, but it gets chaotic at the concerts. They'll still crawl all over the stage and knock the stuff over. We love it.

***MM*: Did you expect *Slade Alive* to do as well as it has done?**

Holder: We thought it would do well because of the following we've got and because people asked us to do a live album. Now it's been in the charts six months and people who come to see us for the first time are buying it. They must be holding it in the charts.

***MM*: It's been said that you are the new generation Rolling Stones. Do you agree?**

Hill: We hate this classification. I don't think we're the next anything. We are the only Slade, and we're working on what we're doing now. Forget all the past groups, The Who, the Stones, The Beatles. We're nothing like any of them. We're after our own bit. Imagine what John Lennon thought if people asked him if he was the next Cliff Richard.

Holder: I know what you mean. If you have to put comparisons, then Bolan is akin to The Beatles and we are akin to the Stones. It's a parallel in a way and it's a compliment to us.

Lea: The obvious comparison is the Stones, but we're nothing like the Stones really.

***MM*: But parents will hate you like they did the Stones.**

Holder: Yes, that's right. Parents couldn't take our music. It's not meant for them. It's meant for the kids.

***MM*: You still live at home in Wolverhampton, though.**

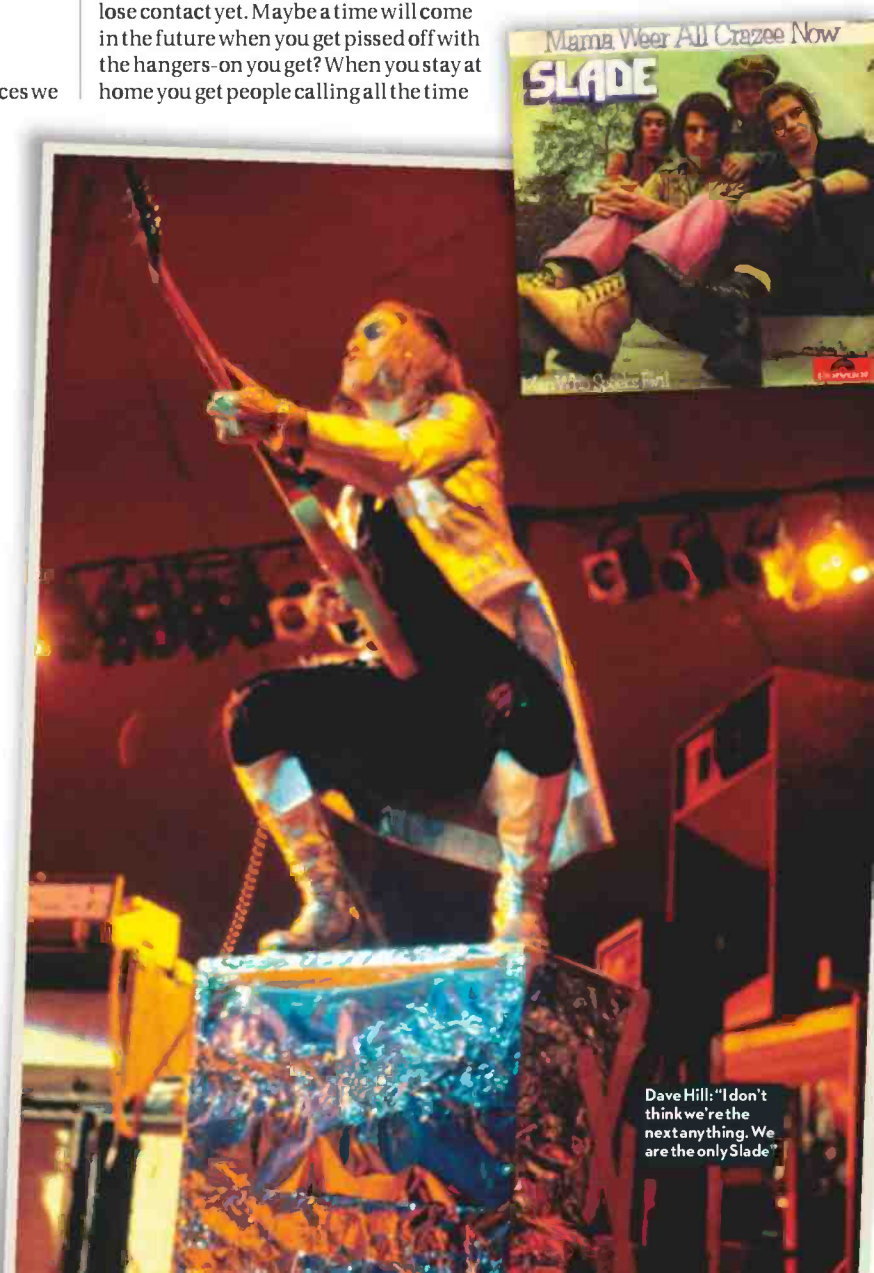
Holder: Yes. We are having to look for ways to spend our money or the taxman will take it all off us. A lot of money we plough into the band. It takes a lot of money on the road. The travelling and hotels and roadies take a lot of bread.

Hill: I think we'll venture out of Wolverhampton soon.

Lea: It keeps our feet on the ground there.

Holder: It keeps the contact with the average bloke on the street and that's valuable. That's who we play to, and we get musical ideas there. We get to know what kind of records they're going to dig and that's a big help to us.

Holder: If you've come to the stage where you can afford to become a recluse in Surrey you've probably got sick of the scene anyway. We're not sick of the scene yet. We love every minute of it. There's no reason for us to lose contact yet. Maybe a time will come in the future when you get pissed off with the hangers-on you get? When you stay at home you get people calling all the time



Dave Hill: "I don't think we're the next anything. We are the only Slade"

REX FEATURES

asking for pictures and autographs. It doesn't particularly bother us; it's our parents that have to put up with it.

Holder: We love every minute of it. Some of the fans send us stuff like presents and gear. They go out and spend their bread on us, which is great. I've had watches, scarves and hats and braces. A bird gave me a fur stole the other week. It's great that they think that much of you to give you things.

Powell: There's a bunch of birds from Liverpool who always follow us when we come up North. They have bags of booze and sandwiches, and gear on like Slade coats and Slade hats. They must spend a fortune and they can't be earning much.

Hill: These are dedicated fans who don't particularly want to go out with us. They have tremendous scrap books with every write-up we've ever had.

***MM*: Have you a fan club?**

Holder: Yes. In the last six months it has become out of this world. They get an average of about 800 letters a week. Usually there are 200 a day but it varies depending on if there's a record in the charts or not. We send them pictures back. They all want to get involved in what you're like and what you're doing. We can't tell them what we're like normally. There was one letter in the office the other day from Singapore. They come from everywhere.

***MM*: Some critics have said you dress to look like characters from *A Clockwork Orange*.**

Holder: At the time they said that I've never seen it. The others had.

***MM*: Why do you think the last six months have been so successful?**

Hill: We put it down to hard work.

Holder: The time is right for us now but it obviously wasn't before. We weren't ready for the success before anyway. We realise that now but we didn't at the time. We're handling it alright now and haven't gone out of our brains because of it. We'd have blown it before.

***MM*: Why?**

Holder: We were too headstrong before. We wouldn't listen to any advice, but now we do. We always thought everything we did was right. We needed advice from outside the band, which we have got now. From Chas [Chandler] mainly.

***MM*: How big a part does Chas play in the making of your records?**

Holder: We go to him with a song and he looks on it as the public would look on it. Of the eight tracks we've put down for the next album there were three singles and if could have been singles and if it was left up to us we wouldn't know which one to choose. But Chas can tell what will appeal to the general public.

Powell: Chas has got this uncanny knack of getting these things right.

Holder: He doesn't want us to step too far ahead too quickly. He doesn't want us to get complicated or introvert. He wants us to do what we are good at doing instead of experimenting with things we won't be good at.

Hill: It's not a question of doing things we won't be good at. You're wrong there, Nod. We could be good at doing anything. Certain songs could be done good but they'd be the wrong kind of songs to bring out.

Holder: Oh yes, I'm talking about getting introvert on to a completely different track of music from what we're playing now.

Lea: Can you see Slade playing modern jazz?

Holder: We might think one day we'd like to do something like, say, Matching Mole, but it wouldn't be us, though. Even though we might be able to play it, it wouldn't fit in with our progression of songs.

Hill: It would be a waste of time.

Holder: It wouldn't fit in with the stage act. It wouldn't fit in with us. We always take things carefully, which is Chas' big influence on us. The things we are putting down on the new album are things we can work with on stage. They are all in context with a Slade show. When we first went into the studio we weren't getting it together at all. We were trying to make the arrangement of the songs too complicated. Chas was always drumming it into us that we were trying to be too complicated. We couldn't see it.

"Get Down And Get With It" was the turning point, because it has the live feel. We went in and did that live just like we do on stage, and we'd hit on something by doing it like that. Now we do everything like that, because it gives us a live feel. If we sing it live, we record it live, and that's it.

Chris Charlesworth ●

"Hands up, all the girls with no knickers on!"

MM SEPT 2 Slade continue their riotous ascent...

THE HARSH BAWLING of Noddy Holder has led Slade to more triumphs than a team of David Bedfords. And Saturday's volcanic eruption at Bridlington's Spa Ballroom was no exception. It was a stormer; proving beyond doubt that Slade have reached the all-important step where they no longer have to be as good as their next single.

Their stamping, crashing riotous stage act is one for the kids who want to stamp and crash as well. No one sits and listens. Like an unruly football mob behind the goalmouth their fans chant and wave scarves.

With so many one-nighters behind them, their act is now perfect from start to finish. It's pretty simple stuff – a mixture of 12-bar, their recent hit singles and material from the *Slade Alive* album and they put it across with what appears to be a maximum of effort.

Guitarist Dave Hill and bass player Jim Lea leap up onto conveniently placed tables and boxes throughout the set while Holder gets on his knees for Janis Joplin's "Move Over Baby". His amazing voice is always the root for whipping up the excitement.

"Hands up, all the girls with white knickers on," he yells to the crowd. A few hands are raised and the shrieks come forth. "Hands up, all the girls with no knickers on." And uproars break out. "We've heard there's a lot of very rude girls in Bridlington. Is that right?" Three thousand voices – male and female – acquiesce in unison and the crowd force themselves tighter against the stage, reaching out to touch the boots of their heroes.

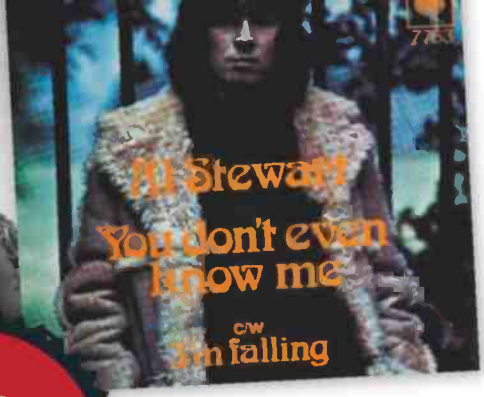
Few other groups could get away with such basic stuff, but it suits Slade to a tee. Like many before them, they've realised that success comes with keeping things simple. And using that formula they've found a style of their own based largely on the similarity in the sound between the bass drum pedals and the boot heels crashed onto a ballroom floor. Drummer Don Powell's contribution to the overall sound cannot be underestimated.

As the act wore on, the fans became indifferent to what was being played. So long as Slade were up there they were having a good time and nothing else seemed to matter – there were even a few screams during Slade's rendering of John Sebastian's "Darling Be Home Soon". Especially as Holder, somewhat inevitably, suggested that blokes have "a good feel with the birds" during this comparatively slow number.

Basic they may be, but they're very good at it. Many other groups with a similar formula have tried and failed, but Slade's patience and ability have brought them through the rank and file to the front. On this showing they'll stay there a long time. *Chris Charlesworth*

1972

JANUARY – MARCH



SINGLES REVIEW 1972

"Speechless, and you can quote me on that"

MM FEB 12 Faces keyboard player Ian McLagan speaks his eccentric mind on some recent releases.

Jake Holmes
Trust Me CBS

Turn it off (*simultaneously with opening bars*). I don't like it! Ah, the Pinball Wizard. Nice production, but I've no idea who it is, and I can't wait for the end. It's not Rod, is it? Not a hit. But then, I was the one who said "Lazy Sunday" would never be a hit. Puts blindfold on again.

Colin Blunstone
Say You Don't Mind EPIC

It's Colin Blunstone. Well, I read the label, didn't I? I like the song, but I prefer the original by Denny Laine. Have they re-released Denny's because of Wings? In the nicest way possible, I've heard this before, and the original is a bit of a classic in our house. I think this is overproduced. But I like him as a person and I buy all his records. Ee, I am a horrible, wheedling person.

Lonnie Mack
Rings ELEKTRA

Joe Smith, is it? It sounds like him. Billy South? Clapham South? Ray Stevens? John Lennon? Hell, he's been listening to Joe South. He sounds white. No idea. But I'd prefer to hear this on Radio One than some of the things they play. You hear a million records like this in the States every week.

Who is it? Lonnie, I love you! He's retired twice, you know. We used to do one of his numbers on stage. Good luck to him.

Cilla Black
The World I Wish For You
PARLOPHONE

(*Strides over to the hi-fi and deftly removes record from turntable after a few moments*) Thank you, thank you! Oh, I know that voice. What's she doing? What a drag.

Al Stewart
You Don't Even Know Me CBS

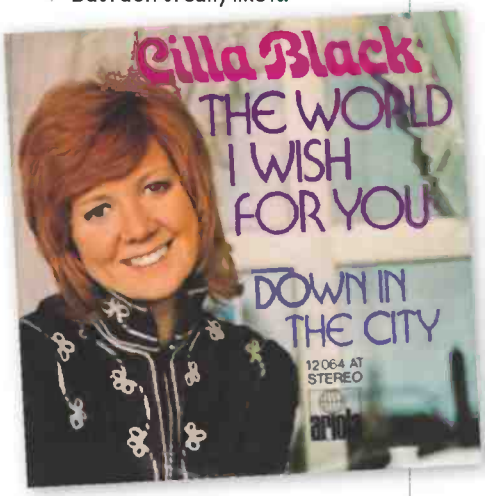
Nice bit of piano. Is it Entwistle? The lyrics and voice remind me of him. Oh, a nick off the Ox [a nickname for John Entwistle, bass guitarist with The Who]. Perhaps it's John Entwistle's dad? Very much like *Who Sell Out*. OK, I know it's not Cilla, I'm intrigued. Now it's really *Blonde On Blonde*. It's not Rod's brother, is it? That always makes me laugh when I'm reading the music papers and I see bits about "Stewart off on tour". I always assume it's about Rod. Long innit? I prefer his brother. Poor old Cilla. I still have a soft spot for her, you know.

Cat Mother
Letter To The President UA

I'd say... Everly Brothers. No, I'm only messing about. Let me see now... Status Quo! I'm just imagining myself reading this back – without all the gaps. Y'know what I mean. Have I heard of this band? I can't imagine who it is. That ain't bad at all. I never realised how hard this was. I'm finding this baffling. I say that by way of explaining my ignorance.

Paul Simon
Mother And Child Reunion CBS

Oh, it's reggae. I don't mind that at all. What I like about good reggae is the feeling that it's all going to collapse at any moment. I can't understand how they can go into the studios and play it. Like, the guitar part is very strange. It's very developed music. They're just picking up on reggae in the States, and it's just over the water for them. Listen to that drumming – it comes in from nowhere. It couldn't be Alphonse the Greek? Who is it? REALLY? (*Jaw sags*) Speechless, and you can quote me on that. He's really got into reggae. He must have an original reggae drummer there. Now I know it's him I don't know if I like it. He's multi-talented, that boy. Them's all his own words, you know, and he's not got long hair.



Mike Vernon
Let's Try It Again BLUE HORIZON

God, it's a load of rubbish. Is it that guy from Wales – Dave Edmunds? It's a group? Fibrositis? I think it's fantastic. But I don't really like it.

Hookfoot
Sweet Sweet Funky Music DJM

Oh, I like that. A few years ago I would have said it was the Buffalo Springfield. It ain't Poco and it ain't Neil Young, but it's something to do with Buffalo Springfield. It's not Buddy Rich? No, no, I didn't think it was. Who is it? Oh, good luck to Caleb Quaye [Mr Quaye is the leader and composer with Hookfoot].

Huddersfield Transit Authority
Runaway POLYDOR

It's Mario Fabrizi! Del O'Shannon? Gawd! Oh, horrible production. Definitely a hit. That wins the prize for scapegoat of the week. We recorded this song with the Small Faces. Oh, what a horrible overstatement of the chord changes. I'd give that nought out of 10. Oh, nice strings. What lovely windy sounds. They must have been eating Mexican food.

GETTY

"Jesus Christ. Is it a football team?"

MM FEB 26 Two weeks later in Blind Date, Bee Gee Robin Gibb is astounded by the tracks he hears.

Wings
Give Ireland Back To The Irish APPLE

I don't like this for a start. I don't think McCartney should do this kind of thing. I like McCartney but I don't think he should get into a political thing, because it is not his image. This song has a message more than a melody and it's more of a John Lennon type of number. Some of the things he has done since he left The Beatles I have liked, and although this has a catchy chorus I don't think it's his kind of material. This has been banned, hasn't it? I don't think any record should be banned, but its good publicity to be banned.

Uriah Heep
The Wizard BRONZE

It's nice production but that bit sounds a bit gimmicky. Is it an English group? The backing is far too loud but the beginning was great. It's not Blue Mink, is it? I can't get into this one at all. I don't think it's that commercial. Uriah Heep? It's not heavy at all. I don't think it's a very good record.

Chelsea Football Team
Blue Is The Colour
PENNY FARTHING

Jesus Christ. Is it a football team? Forget it. They should stick to playing football instead of getting into records. I don't believe it. It's unbelievable. It would be better if people in a group started playing in a top football team.

Cher
The Way Of Love MCA

This is a cover of another song I have heard. Is it Cher? This is the first time I have heard it but I recognise the voice. This is a beautiful song, but I don't like the backing to this very much. It could easily be a hit but I don't like the production. The production seems a bit dry.

Open Road Swamp Fever
GREENWICH GRAMOPHONE CO

Is it American or English? It might be a good album track, but I don't think it's good listening. Is it Creedence Clearwater Survival, or Revival or something? It sounds like a heavy trendy singer. I can appreciate heavy music but his is too busy. There is too much going on, and it doesn't mean anything to me.

Glen Campbell
Oklahoma Sunday Morning
CAPITOL

This is American. Is it Glen Campbell's brother? It's a write-off. Whatever he is doing, he is not doing it very well. The backing is nice, but so many records have this sound. By some freak it could make the charts, but again, this is terrible production.

The Deltones
Chopsticks TROJAN

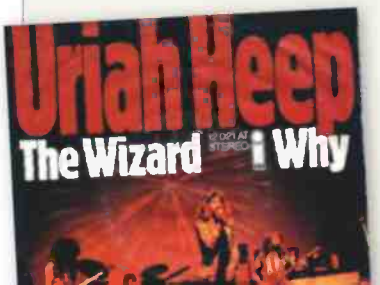
I don't like reggae for a start. I respect all kinds of music but I don't like this at all. It sounds like an instrumental version of Mungo Jerry's "In The Summertime". It's just not significant, and this type of record brings any music down and down.

Dave Clark & Friends
Think Of Me COLUMBIA

This sounds like a very English track. Is it Wayne Fontana or Crispian St Peter? It's Dave Clark. I don't think it will be a hit but it's a nice record. It's very average and mediocre and there is nothing to get you. Dave Clark is a nice fellow and I would like to see him in the charts.

Norman Hitchcock Just Another Minute POLYDOR

[Produced by Maurice Gibb] I haven't heard this before. Is it English? It's very commercial. There are some nice key changes. Who is it? (*On being told!*) My brother produced this. It's very Radio One-type material. This is the first time I have heard it. It's not my kind of music, or the Bee Gees kind of stuff, but it's got all the ingredients of a hit record.



ALBUMS

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

Neil Young Harvest
REPRISE

The *Mona Lisa* has nothing on Neil Young. Enigmatic is probably too precise a work for a man whose songs defy any attempt to pin him down. He is all things to all men: loner, martyr, Christ-figure, poet, mystic. The archetypal, all-purpose outsider, with whom any screwed-up, alienated kid can identify and through whom countless more can wallow in sweet, vicarious sadness.

He is also one of rock's greatest song-writers, wrapping up small nuggets of truth and pain and beauty in melodies which have the haunting simplicity of songs half-remembered from childhood and lyrics which, like the best songs of Dylan and Lennon, can be interpreted on many different levels.

It is the elusiveness of many of Young's songs that makes them so precious. Because they are not explicit, each listener can interpret them in a way which is meaningful to him or her. Listening to the songs on this album, I find it impossible to set down on paper what many of them are really about. Yet meaning is there, to be divined instinctively.

A few of the songs, superficially at least, are more explicit than others. "The Needle And The Damage Done", recorded live at the UCLA, California, is a quietly poignant lament for a dead addict. "Alabama" seems to continue the theme of "Southern Man" on his previous album, albeit more obliquely. "A Man Needs A Maid" is about the pain of love, of being involved, and the impossibility of living without it: "*To give a love, you gotta live a love/ To live a love, you gotta be 'part of'.*"

The other songs are harder to pin down. They tell of joy, sorrow, love, old age, half-described incidents and meetings – all expressed in oblique, fragmented lyrics which create an indefinable atmosphere of regret and nostalgia for a simpler, happier way of life which probably never existed.

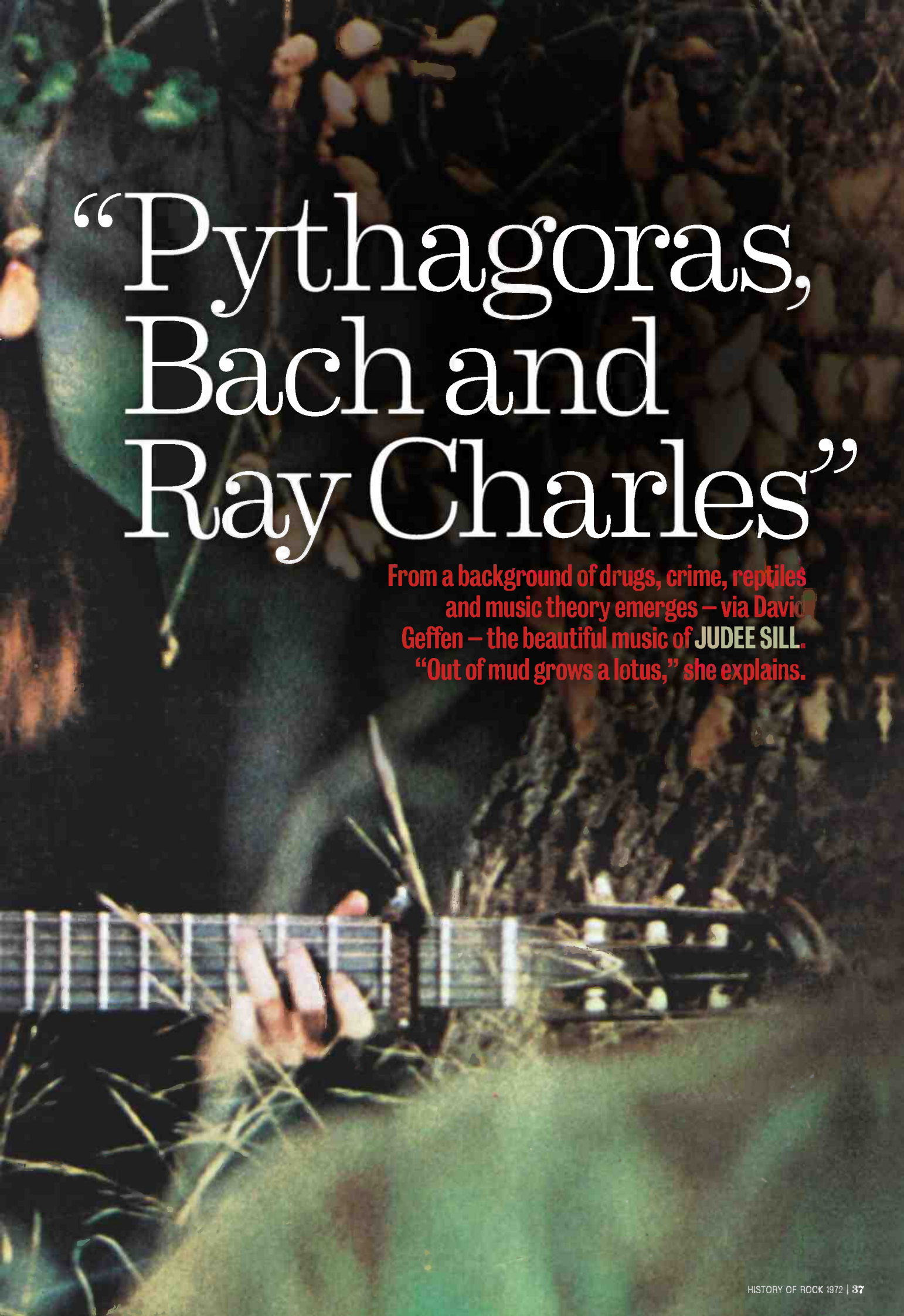
Musically, the songs here hold few surprises, except for "A Man Needs A Maid" and "There's A World", which were recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra at London's Barking Town Hall, with some majestic string arrangements by Jack Nitzsche. The rest feature the fairly familiar mixture of plangent rhythm guitar, wood-chopping drums, stinging lead guitar and touches of steel, harmonica and piano.

Melodically, Young's songs seem to have been getting gradually simpler, and some of the songs here, notably "Heart Of Gold" and "Are You Ready For The Country", are simple to the point of being facile.

And yet... he makes them work. That desolate, vulnerable, painful voice compels you to listen. And when the voice, the song and the arrangement come together as they do on "A Man Needs Maid" the result is... frightening.

Alan Lewis

Judee Sill: "Spiritual things are the main inspiration for my songs"



"Pythagoras, Bach and Ray Charles"

From a background of drugs, crime, reptiles and music theory emerges – via David Geffen – the beautiful music of JUDEE SILL. "Out of mud grows a lotus," she explains.

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 25 —

"I DON'T LIKE REPTILES any more – they're so indifferent." Judee Sill took a spoonful of yoghurt and watched a man clambering on to the roof of the Italian Embassy. She had just been discoursing on her past activities as herpetologist when her attention was distracted. "That's the same man who was lying on the floor in my bedroom just now," she exclaimed.

The small lunchtime gathering, inveigled for the same purpose of eating salad and joining conversation with Miss Sill, a native of California, looked puzzled.

"Perhaps he is an electrician," suggested somebody. "Or a plumber." Miss Sill announced her intention of moving from the house, provided for her at a cost of some £200 per week, during her stay in London's Mayfair. "I'm moving next door," she said firmly.

Miss Sill is a firm young lady with a plump face, owl-like glasses and a businesslike manner. Her conversation is college-cultivated, humorous, dry and frank.

At one point she stretched out in her chair, gazed at the ceiling and uttered an expletive that would have shocked Germaine Greer. "Oh, that f—— spoilt my image of you," sighed a youth, toying with his chives. Judee looked suitably blank and then gently explained that she usually did her best to dispel her public image.

Judee is a singer-songwriter, who played a sell-out concert with America at the Royal Festival Hall last weekend, and is her on the crest of a wave of interest in her debut album, just released on Asylum.

She follows in the illustrious footsteps of Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, Judy Henske, etc. "Yeah," she says thoughtfully. "Did you know there is a new female singer-songwriter who plays guitar called Joni Judy?"

Judee's album is a highly developed musical statement, surprisingly mature and rounded for a debut performance. But as Judee hints, she has been around a long time and been through a number of maturing experiences. Her songs have a graceful, formal construction based, as she explains, around the concept of four-part harmonies, and this stems from her two years' study at Los Angeles Valley Music College.

Although the album is notable for its sensitive string arrangements, which enrich her compositions, she works as a solo artist on tour, accompanying herself on guitar and piano. One of her problems in the States has been clumsy booking, being put on to open the show for teenybop rock acts.

"I really want to sell some albums so I don't have to do that any more and I can go out on my own. Please buy the albums!" she pleads. It was the second day of sunshine in a city just recovering from a shower of sleet and a plague of power cuts when Judee arrived at her temporary home.

"I hear everything was in darkness," she said sympathetically. "How awful." She welcomed us into the reception room and we sat down while she moved sheets of music out of the way. "I've been writing some songs," she explained. "You know, I did the album 10 months before it was released. I don't know why it was delayed, but I did it all in eight days. The arrangements took about two weeks' working out beforehand. I sang the parts of the orchestra and they worked it out. I really like strings, but next time I'll use the human voice more. Vox Humana!

"Before the album was finished, I had done hardly any gigs, but since then I have been on the road learning how to sing in front of people."

What did Judee do in her formative years?

"Oh, I went to college and studied Pythagorean musical theory. I had strong ideas that I wanted to put into songs, ideas on religion that I hardly every talk about because I say them so much better in my songs."

One of Judee's most popular songs from the album is "Jesus Was A Cross Maker", produced for her by Graham Nash, which typifies the Sills style – gentle, melodic, mysterious.

"It's not a religious song; it's about a bandit who stole my love. In fact, it's an unrequited

"Dog puke" MM APRIL 22 Judee Sill sits down with some recent releases. "I have to be honest," she says.

"I BET I don't know many of them. I hate rock bands," said Judee Sill sitting at the dining room table in her luxury antique furnished mews cottage. That's good – there's some bad rock for you. "Oh, God. I hate it, but I have to be honest," replied Judee.

Earl Scruggs & The Earl Scruggs Revue Foggy Mountain Breakdown CBS

I love it. Sounds like "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" – Earl Scruggs. Or is it someone else? I love this kind of hoedown music. I get the idea. I like this very much. Hoedown is something I like in much the same way that I like classical music. I think the music comes from these parts, right? Comes from the old jigs in tune.

David Cassidy Could It Be Forever BELL

He's on a TV show in the States. That's right, *The Partridge Family*. Listen, I'll pretend I don't know who it is. Good production. The string parts are nice. But that's all I like about it, I'm afraid. Eleven-year-old girls will love it. It's silly, it's silly.

Help Yourself Heaven Row UNITED ARTISTS

That's cute. I like the piano lick in this one, but I find the song monotonous. It's the same old stuff. I really think the piano lick is nice though. [*MM*: the piano's a bit Leon Russell-ish.] I don't know who he is. Is he a famous piano player? It could be a hit, but who knows.

Curved Air Sarah's Concern WARNER BROS

Oh God! What a weird song. Sounds a little stringy, doesn't it? I don't think it will be a hit. A little dancey, isn't it? It sounds like all the middle voices are missing. Oh dear. Oh dear. Pretty bad, isn't it? Poor record, poor song. Too bad. I don't think that was too good.

Anne Murray Cotton Jenny CAPITOL

She's a kind of female Glen Campbell. Pretty middle of the road. I like the sound of her voice. She's got good pitch. It's well produced and the strings are nice. Doesn't knock me out, but at least it's in tune. Very pleasant. Nice song. She's got a nice light voice. It doesn't stab me in the heart like an arrow. It's always refreshing to hear someone being in tune.

Alice Cooper Be My Lover WARNER BROS

It's terrible so far. Oh God, disgusting. Dog puke. It's so unoriginal. Who is this group? Agggh, I can't listen any more. Maybe that's the worst record I have heard in my life. Alice Cooper, uggggh.

Joan Baez Song Of Bangladesh A&M

I've always liked her voice. It's not that I have anything against people starving in Bangladesh. I like her voice, but she's a terrible songwriter. I'm prejudiced. Political songs always turn me off. Oh God. Yes, I know about all these things. I can listen to the news if I want to get all these things. She believes in what she is doing, but it's such a poor song.

Aretha Franklin Day Dreaming ATLANTIC

I love Aretha Franklin. I've always loved her piano playing. Who wrote this; do you know? Oh Aretha, what happened? What happened to Aretha? It's going to get better, isn't it? Doesn't knock me out so far. Hey, I have a piano over there, can you help me lift it over here? I expected this record to be better than this.

Carly Simon Legend In Your Own Time ELEKTRA

Have you noticed she always has her legs apart? Actually, I don't really like this. I think it's mediocre. It just doesn't do anything for me. Good production, though. I can't believe that Alice Cooper voice; is he like that all the time, or does he do it on purpose? Well, sorry, Carly.

Hurricane Smith Oh Babe, What Would You Say COLUMBIA

What's all this? It's not a single, is it? It sounds like old movie music. I like this. It's ridiculous; sure does sound like old music doesn't it?

SINGLES REVIEW 1970

love song about a romantic bummer of great magnitude! One of the biggest romantic bummers of my life. Yes, he's heard it – we're good friends now."

"I'm really excited about singing 'live' – I love it. I don't worry about anything regarding music, I haven't started to record my next album yet, but a new one will be out on October 7, like my last one, on my birthday. The last one has sold about 40,000 in the States which isn't bad. They keep putting me on with rock bands in the States, which is appalling. It really is the limit. I come on and there's 11,000 screaming groupies taking reds (amphetamines), and red wine." *Chris Welch*

— NME APRIL 8 —

ACCORDING TO JUDEE Sill: "Out of mud grows a lotus." In other words, something beautiful comes from something unpleasant. The phrase applies well to her own life. Judee, you see, has seen some rough times. Born in Oakland, California, she was brought up in her father's bar, where the customers gambled illegally and she hid under the tables to avoid the fighting.

After the father died, her mother died of alcoholism a few years later, and Judee took drugs – principally heroin, which led to a life of petty crime and prison. Yet, remarkably, she pulled herself out. She became the lotus. After kicking drugs and discovering certain religious, spiritual feelings within herself, she now writes songs of rare beauty, full of imagery and symbolism tied in with her spiritual beliefs.

"I was always singing when I was a kid," she told me in an express-train torrent of words. "I always wanted to harmonise with somebody but I couldn't find anyone, so I learned to play the piano so I could harmonise with that. It was the same with the guitar.

"I didn't know whether I was going to be a songwriter or anything like that, but I always liked writing songs and it slowly started evolving. It was the only thing I was any good at.

"When I decided to quit being a heroin addict I realised I had to make some kind of rash move that would give me the same kind of thrill but at the same time be of a positive nature. I realised writing songs was the thing I did best, so I decided to pull my full energy into it.

"Musically, probably the turning point was when I became interested in alchemy and spiritual things like that. It influenced my music a lot. Although it wasn't a sudden think, I didn't wake up one morning and say. "Oh, I see." I began to want to entice the listener to open his heart.

"Generally, spiritual things are the main inspiration for my songs. I try to get inspiration in other ways, but I usually find this so inadequate. I just wait for my inner voice to tell me, 'This is a subject to write on.'

"Always, though, I've had this leaning towards a professional life in the music business. It's just that I had such a hunger with this drug addiction that I thought maybe I could use this hunger to push me forward. So I just started working as hard as I could, and figured that when the time was right things would happen.

"One day, I was sitting at home thinking, 'Gee, it's about time something happened', and David Geffen rang to say he'd fixed me up with everything – recording, publishing, the lot."

Apart from looking after Miss Sill, Geffen in the past has handled people of the calibre of CSN and Y, Joni Mitchell and Laura Nyro. These connections led Judee to her first major tour with Crosby and Nash. Did she find it hard to go on stage at the beginning?

"Yes, but I knew it would be alright eventually. At the start, it was hell. As I walked on stage I used to think, 'Oh God, I'd rather stick a knife in my heart than go out and say, "Nice to be here!"

"Gradually, though, my nervousness turned to excitement. I started out on the road about a year and four months ago, and it's just built up steadily. Often it's been with good people, like Cat Stevens, Gordon Lightfoot or Tom Paxton. Unfortunately, sometimes I've played with rock groups, which is – urrrrgh – terrible, ridiculous, in fact.

"If somebody is ready to hear rock'n'roll they're ready to have a certain part of their mind or body stimulated. It's asking too much of anybody to suddenly switch round and have another part of them stimulated by something else.

"But I like playing in Britain anyway. People over here are much nicer. I think maybe their taste is more culturally mature. Sometimes everything in America seems tuned to a much grosser level."

Judee is at present in Britain making a few appearances and promoting her album. Also she's working on some songs, but says she's not a very prolific writer.

"All my songs have been written over a long period. I wish I could write faster. I've tried, but I just can't. They don't all come up to my standards. They sound crummy, so I reject them. Sometimes it feels as if something outside me is writing the songs. It's so thrilling when it comes through me. But when I get my own personal ideas I try to reject them. I think there are enough people writing on that level. I want to write songs when the inner voice in my heart tells me there is something to write about. There are plenty of people writing songs about 'you and me, baby'. So let them. Good. Probably I'm most influenced by Pythagoras, Bach and Ray Charles in that order."

Is there not a conflict between the subject matter of her songs and the fact that she has to sell them on a commercial level in the form of albums?

"Well, I'm just concerned with doing one thing, which is writing songs. But obviously to get your songs heard you must be successful. Being successful is more or less a sideline. If success was my goal, of course, my songs would be shit… they'd be worthless. Songs usually are when that is the foundation for their inspiration. That's what I find, at least.

"But I would like to ask people to buy my album. If they can't afford it I'd like them to ask those who can afford it to buy it. Then I won't have to open for rock groups when I get back. My destiny is in your hands." *James Johnson* •

Judee Sill in London in 1972, on tour to promote her second album, *Heart Food*

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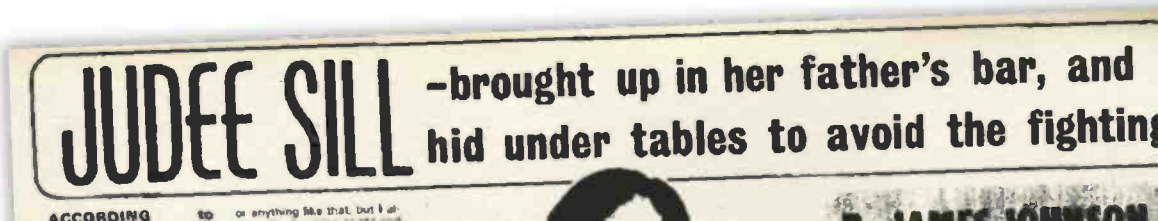
> "If success was my goal, my songs would be shit"



NEED ANY BACK ISSUES? SEE PAGE 144

Readers' letters

MM JAN–MAR Bowie and Jagger respond – as does a crestfallen Paul Simon fan.

LET IT ROCK

Do you ever wonder why, after so many years, a great many people hang on to the rock'n'roll that was? You can't dismiss us all as nostalgic Teddy boys or hippy-hating rockers.

To get an idea of what it was like when rock'n'roll was new, when Brando and Dean were young… the sense of the loss felt when in such a short time the Great Ones started to die – Chuck Willis, Buddy Holly, Big Bopper, Ritchie Valens, Eddie Cochran… Chuck Berry jailed, Jerry Lee Lewis ruined by a vicious press… Presley after the army a star where once he had been a legend… Little Richard turned to religion… Alan Freed banned from US radio… watching the gold lamé change to mohair…

Forget all those rock books written by guys looking back. Grab a glimpse through Don McLean's eyes; he's been there. It's all on "American Pie" – go and find it.

SHAKIN' STEVENS & THE SUNSETS, Queens Road, Penarth, Glamorgan (*MM* Feb 12)

With the tremendous success of the recent Chuck Berry concert at Coventry, we are delighted at the prospect of "authentic" rock'n'roll music making a serious comeback with today's contemporary rock audiences. If the powers that be only had enough insight to re-release, much of this legendary sound – with enough radio airtime – would soon find itself in the charts. Take, for example, the half-dozen records Presley cut for Sun with Scotty Moore and Bill Black, surely the most exciting sound of the century. Take Rick Nelson's early work with the amazing guitar picking of James Burton. Listen also to Johnny Burnette's Rock'n'Roll Trio of 1956/7 featuring Paul Burlison's incredible guitar licks. What about Carl Perkins and Buddy Holly's original rockabilly sound?

Today's rock generation has never heard it. One thing's for sure: when they do, they'll realise what they've been missing.

MEMFIS BEND (Rock'n'roll trio), Cardiff, Glamorgan (*MM* Mar 11)

YER BLUES

Having been unfortunate enough to watch *Top Of The Pops* tonight, I was disgusted to see the Chelsea football team singing their appalling record. Surely the Chelsea football club are a profit-making organisation and therefore it is ridiculous for them to be able to sing their own praises on the BBC? But perhaps the BBC can't find anything else apart from this trivia to play? May I suggest the McCartney record?

GERRY HEAL, Victoria Road South, Southsea, Hants (*MM* Mar 11)

SAX APPEAL

What type of saxophone was played by David Bowie on his album *Hunky Dory*?

MICK WARD, Sheffield

It is a Selmer white plastic alto which I've possessed since I first began to play the saxophone when I was 12 or 13 years of age. I began my musical education playing drawing-room piano! As plastic saxes haven't been made for years, mine is now extremely rare. I had lessons for a time from Ronnie Ross because I was into the jazz thing in those days. The alto still has the original plastic mouthpiece and I always use plastic reeds. I bought up a big stock of these some years ago and haven't yet exhausted them. They were called roc'n'roll reeds and were introduced to me by a member of Sounds Incorporated. They only come in one thickness and are as hard as hell – like playing through a piece of mahogany! You can try sanding them down, but if you want a tight, thick sound like King Curtis, they're fine. I don't think you can buy them in Britain, but they might be available in the States.

DAVID BOWIE (*MM* April 29)

JAM TOMORROW

Jamming With Edward *(Rolling Stones COC 291001, featuring Nicky Hopkins, Mick Jagger, Ry Cooder and others, received a harsh review in* NME *recently. Mick Jagger gives his own point of view here:*

Here's a nice little piece of bullshit about this hot waxing which we cut one night in London while waiting for our guitar players to get out of bed. It was probably forgotten (which may have been for the better) until it was unearthed from the family vaults by these two impressive entrepreneurs – Glyn Johns and Marshall Chess.

It was they who convinced the artists that this historic gem of the giants should be unleashed on the unsuspecting public. As it cost about £1.10 to make the record, we thought that a price of £1.49 was appropriate for the finished product. I think that it is about what it's worth. No doubt some stores may even give it away.

The album consists of the Rolling Stones' rhythm section plus solos from two instrumentalists, Nicky "Woof Woof" Hopkins and Ry Cooder, plus the muffled bathroom mumblings of myself. I hope you spend longer listening to this record than we did making it.

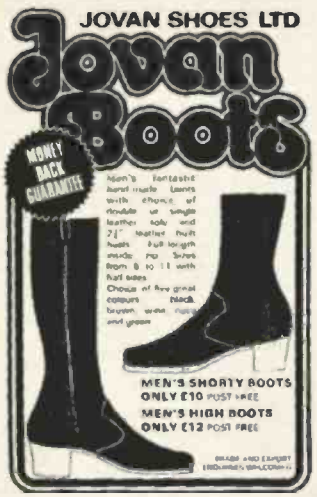
MICK JAGGER, Rolling Stones Records, London WC1 (*NME* Jan 29)

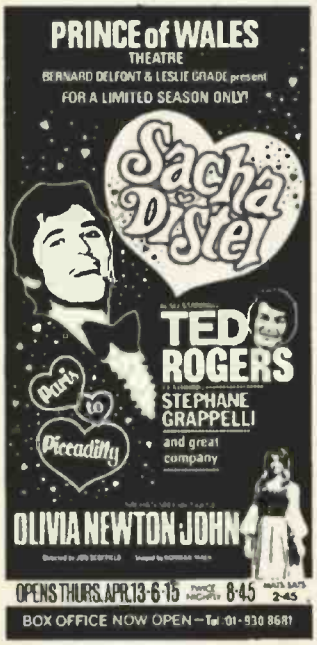
TROUBLED WATERS?

LP WINNER!

TO PAUL SIMON: As one who has purchased all your works, seen your concerts and followed your career with a dedication bordering on abnormality, it hurts me to write this letter, Paul, but if your latest LP, *Paul Simon*, really did take two years to put together, then I'm one customer you haven't kept satisfied. I know you're swimming in troubled water since Art's departure from the seemingly inseparable partnership you had, but I don't think you can expect us to accept such mediocrity because of his absence. The phenomenal success of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" has not been forgotten in your latest work, has it? I never thought I'd see the day when the pen of Paul Simon gave up the search for originality, new subjects and new depth. I'm on your side, Paul, but when times get rough and evening falls so hard, follow Dylan and lay low for a few years. Remember: when a man gets tied up to the ground, he gives the work his saddest sound. Please don't become another destroyed genius.

COLIN BRINTON, Harwich (*NME* Feb 26)





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1972

APRIL – JUNE

IGGY POP, HAWKWIND, LED ZEPPELIN, ROLLING STONES AND MORE

"Ideas mainly come from the title": Roger Dean's illustration for the inner gatefold of *Close To The Edge* by Yes

"The music has never influenced me"

MM APRIL 29 Introducing... Roger Dean, creator of fantastical cover art for Yes and Osibisa.

YOU CAN TELL a Roger Dean cover most times by the strange little jagged monsters that work their way out of his prehistoric fantasies. Over the last three years Dean has become one of the most sought-after album sleeve designers, working on albums that range from Osibisa and Yes to *Motown Chartbusters*. His work is even being sought after by some London art galleries.

Dean lives in a large workshop flat near South Kensington tube station in a small community of artists, including his brother, who designs furniture, and a dressmaker. Through the flat, »

Artist Roger Dean in 1972; (left) one of his Osibisa covers with an elephant originating from an early ad for Virgin Records

past the dining room which acts as a dressmaking workroom and you enter into a fantasy world that has been created by Dean for album sleeves. A world that is every bit as compelling as the standard of the music he is packaging. Little books of drawings done when he was studying furniture design at Canterbury Art School and the Royal College Of Art in London sit on shelves in the room, with his bed built up above the floor on a platform. Open them up, and the ideas that now sit on covers are inside.

"With illustrations you can have any fantasy. Graphics are used for the quick idea"

Until three years ago, Roger was working exclusively on furniture design with his brother Martin. They were commissioned to work on the furniture for the upstairs at Ronnie Scott's club in London, bumped into the manager of The Gun and Roger asked to design the cover for their first album.

That cover now looks a bit like a very bad copy of a Roger Dean cover. But at the time it carried a lot of influence in cover designing. It moved away from the standard picture-and-graphics cover that had been popular for a decade. Dean managed to capture, probably more so than the music, the fantasy world of rock.

Dean – a quiet, unassuming, almost shy person nursing a broken wrist at the moment – wondered why we should want to interview him. But he does see the importance of a good sleeve, and believes that it can help bands who are struggling to sell records. Retailers, he says, like to use sleeves in window displays. And the better the sleeve, the more chance it has.

"Some people don't seem to realise the importance of a sleeve," says Roger. "I have no idea how useful the Osibisa sleeves were for them, but they must have made some impression on people."

The flying elephant on the Osibisa covers, flying through a fantasy world, about to make contact with a grisly lizard, was originally an idea for Virgin Records. It was used for one of their early adverts, but when Virgin dropped it in favour of the double-sided girl, Dean resurrected the animal from his sketchbooks.

The music that is going to be inside his covers does not mean a lot to Dean; he doesn't listen to the sounds and then design the illustration to fit. With Osibisa, though, he was drawn into their music by David Howells, A & R man at MCA. He went along to gigs with them and became acquainted with their music.

"I think, to be honest," said Dean, "the music has never influenced me. But I do like to have the music around. I think Osibisa was a classic example of someone making me aware of the band. I don't find music inspirational at all. Ideas mainly come from the title or something else.

"With illustrations you can say anything, you can have any fantasy. Graphics are used for the quick ideas; it's a joke, it's an idea. I think a lot of the stuff, like the Osibisa idea, has to give someone a fairyland, instead of just Africa – an Africa that is as much fairyland as anything else."

As well as covers, Dean has designed logos for record companies including the Harvest logo for EMI and the grotesque fly on the centre of Fly records. The Harvest logo perhaps captures Dean at his inventive best – although the graphics, which are not his, are not so good as the logo itself.

Dean is expensive now, charging three-figure sums. And he thinks that perhaps he, too, should get a percentage of the album. He feels that with certain albums, his covers have had a lot to do with getting them off the ground. And so he believes a royalty would be fairer. But that brings in problems: *Fragile* sold more than any other Yes album in Britain – and is still doing so – but it was definitely not due to his cover. So where would record companies draw the line and say royalty for this and not that? Roger doesn't really know.

He also owns the copyright to his designs, and makes sure he gets his original artwork back from record companies – which is not always easy. There are labels he especially likes to work for, who allow him time to get a cover done without hustling him over timetables. Keep hold of Dean covers, for if specialists are right, he and other designers are producing sought-after collector's pieces. *Mark Plummer*

GETTY, REX

November 26, 1972: Carl Palmer with ELP at the Hammersmith Odeon, West London

"Business isn't dropping off"

MM APRIL 22 ELP continue their assault on America.

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER will play a special concert at London's Crystal Palace Bowl on June 17, part of a European tour. The group finish their current American tour on April 23, and then take two weeks' holiday. Their European tour will start on June 5 and include concerts in Paris, Rome, Zurich, Copenhagen and Berlin. They then return for another tour of America.

Carl Palmer told the *MM* on Monday from Detroit: "Our tour is doing very well, although we are playing quite a few small-town venues this time, so more fans in remote areas get a chance to hear the band. We sold out in New York, so business isn't dropping off. We've been doing some gigs with Dr John supporting and next week we are on with Bruce, West & Laing."

Carl promised that the group had "a few ideas" for their presentation at Crystal Palace, but wouldn't divulge the details. He is also planning a solo album on which he will feature his new drum Moog and invite guest stars. Carl would like to invite such giants as Buddy Rich and Oscar Peterson to take part.

Neil Young in his 1972 film *Journey Through The Past*

"We'll definitely be electric in January"

MM JUNE 10 Back in good health, Neil Young plans his return.

NEIL YOUNG IS planning a major British tour – and now that he is in good physical condition after a spinal operation, he will be playing electric guitar. On his last British concert, at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1970, Neil confined himself to acoustic work because it was less strenuous.

"I've wanted to do a proper tour with electric and now my back's OK we can go ahead." Neil told *MM* editor Ray Coleman in Hollywood last week: "So we'll definitely be electric in January in England. I've had back trouble for two years, so I've not been able to strain myself and it's been frustrating. It should be a new dimension for me next time in England."

Neil said he would be accompanied on the tour by the musicians who were featured on the *Harvest* album. "I'd like to do a free concert in Hyde Park – that really appeals to me. But we'll be coming at the wrong time of the year. It will be freezing in England in January and I can't play with gloves on!"

He added that the idea of doing a Hyde Park show was still not being dismissed. Neil and his manager David Geffen stressed that the British tour – a week playing the major cities – would be planned with low prices for seats. "We feel strongly that audiences should not be robbed," said Geffen. "Neil's fans deserve a really good deal and that's what they'll get." The British visit will be part of Neil's first major European tour.

Sunk on a technicality

MM MAY 13 Filibuster! The Tory government's Night Assemblies Bill "talked out" by Labour MPs.

THE NIGHT ASSEMBLIES Bill, which only a week ago looked certain to become law, was dealt a seeming death blow in the House of Commons last Friday night – only hours after the government had announced the appointment of a committee to advise it on pop festivals.

The bill, promoted by Tory MP Jerry Wiggin, was sunk on a technicality. Several Labour MPs, including John Golding, Leslie Hucksfield and Gerald Kaufman, succeeded in "talking it out" – discussing the bill's various clauses at such length that it ran out of its allotted Parliamentary time.

Time permitting, the bill could be reintroduced on two further Fridays – but the consensus of opinion is that the bill is dead. Its defeat is the culmination of weeks of work by people inside and outside Parliament – notably the Labour MP for Accrington, Arthur Davidson.

The new committee, which will report to the Secretary for the Environment, will be headed by 26-year-old Dennis Stevenson, chairman of a government working party on the role of voluntary organisation and youth, which recently produced a paper severely criticising the aims of the Night Assemblies Bill.

Mr Stevenson, director of a market research company, told the *MM* on Monday: "As I understand it, the committee's first objective will be to draw up a code of practice for festivals. Secondly, as festivals continue, we will be there to give advice to people – local authorities, promoters, residents' associations and so on.

"I hope that, as a result, some of the steam will be taken out of the situation. The silent majority, who are quite justifiably worried, will begin to see that festivals can be run properly. I also hope that promoters will start disciplining themselves more effectively."

Mr Stevenson added that he hoped the committee would be representative of all the factions interested in festivals – local authorities, the Red Cross, Release and "even some promoters. The keynote will be people who are interested in the nuts and bolts of festivals, and who are sympathetic to them."

He was present at the Wesley Festival last year, and described it as "a good example of the problems involved, and of the mistakes that can be made".

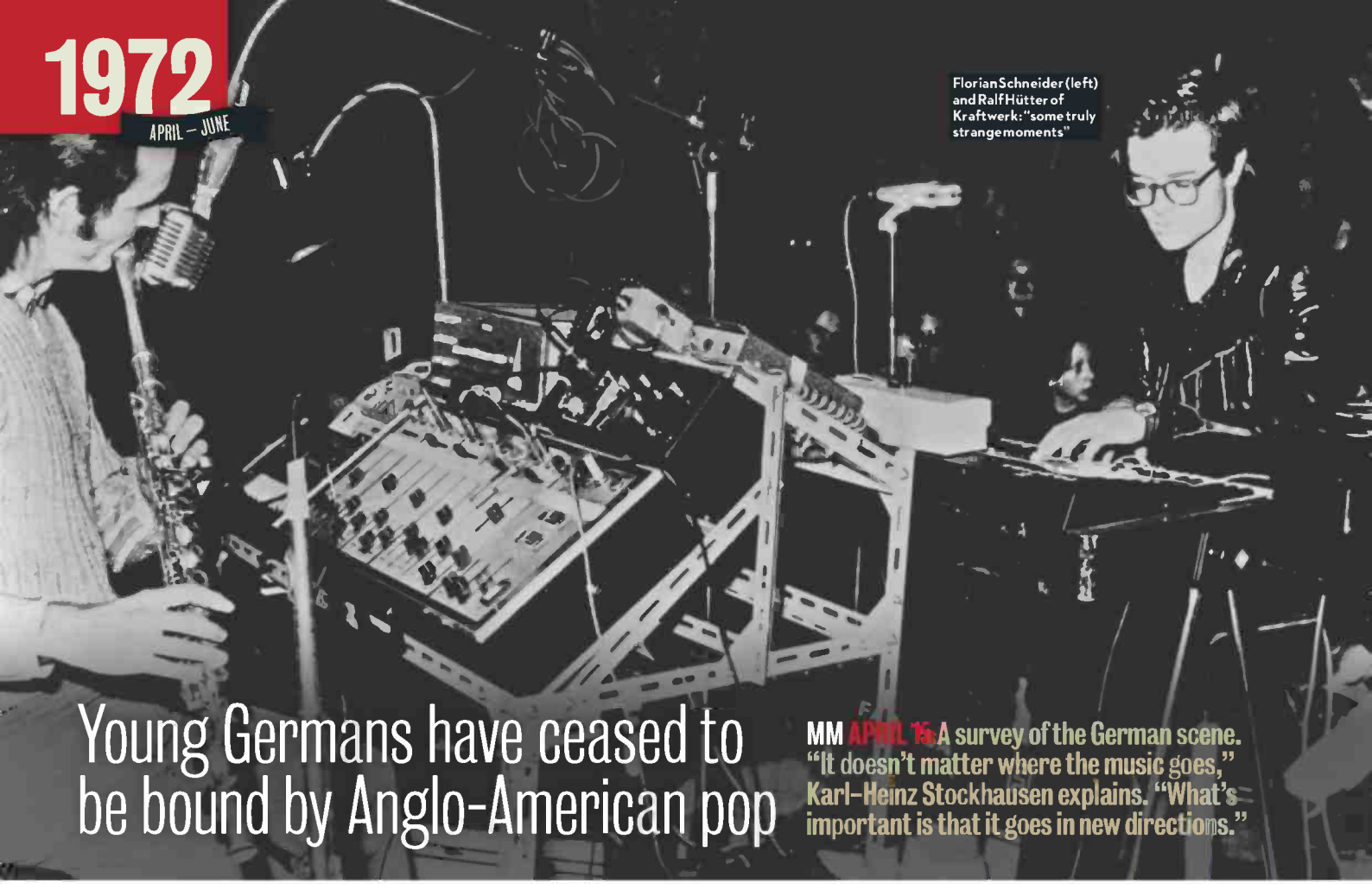
REX

Re-equipped free of charge

MM MAY 13 Equipment theft fails to halt benefit-gig-friendly Hawkwind.

HAWKWIND WILL NOT split after all. The group, who were threatened with extinction following the theft of their equipment last week, have been completely re-equipped free of charge by AKG and Vox. All existing gigs will be honoured, and an additional two appearances have been fixed for the group supporting The Doors in their two concerts at Birmingham Town Hall on Friday.

Their equipment and a van, worth £10,000, was stolen from Russell Road in Palmers Green, London. A £500 reward is offered for information leading to the recovery of the gear. It will be impossible to dispose of in its present form because it is elaborately painted and stencilled with the group's name. Hawkwind's singer Bob Calvert was released from hospital this week and he will be rejoining the band on all future gigs.



Florian Schneider (left) and Ralf Hütter of Kraftwerk: "some truly strange moments"

Young Germans have ceased to be bound by Anglo-American pop

MM APRIL 15: A survey of the German scene. "It doesn't matter where the music goes," Karl-Heinz Stockhausen explains. "What's important is that it goes in new directions."

SOMEONE ONCE TOLD Michael Karoli, guitarist with Can, that the band sounded like the Velvet Underground. "Yes," he retorted, "but after all they're really not American but a European group."

It's an interesting, if debatable, viewpoint. Karoli was attempting to explain not so much that American bands have never looked to Europe for inspiration, but that European rock groups are no longer ipso facto influenced by what is going down in the UK and US. He's right, as British audiences will see for themselves when Can arrive in this country, to be followed at some future date by Amon Düül II.

It's no coincidence that both these bands are German. Of all the Continental countries trying to create their own rock situation, Germany is the one that seems most fertile and experimentally inclined. It's an exaggeration to say that German musicians have formed their own scene, independent of outside influences, but at least a handful of their bands are pursuing paths that are more adventurous than the majority of their Anglo-American counterparts and virtually all the other Europeans.

It's important that they be encouraged, that they have the success in the British and American markets which they so desperately want. At a time when British rock is so insistently harkening back to the past, these are possible pointers for the future. This is no attempt, however, to foster the idea of a mass rock'n'roll movement; just to indicate that there's good music across the Channel which is not receiving much recognition in this country, even though the German record market is considered to be the fourth largest in the world.

It should be stressed that the main percentage of German bands are essentially imitative of Anglo-American pop. It's not an absolute rule of thumb, but these second-raters tend to adopt English names, like Birth Control, Lucifer's Friend and Epitaph. In a more obscure, Freudian sense, there's also a predilection for horrific, somewhat stomach-churning album sleeves. The cover for an LP by Lucifer's Friend, for example, shows two sinister-looking men, one a Napoleonic dwarf, standing in a pool of blood and surrounded by severed hands and fingers.

The music of these bands is derivative of Anglo-American pop in that it's usually dominated heavily by guitar and sounds as if the musicians are just going through that period from 1965 to 1966, when there was a transition from blues and R&B styles to hard rock.

The analogies can even be extended to the degree that these groups generally sing in English, mainly with appalling misunderstanding of the idiom. The most popular of these is Frumpy, who won a poll not long ago in a German magazine, but the most accomplished that I've heard is Improved Sound Limited, who are so confident of their mastery of the English language that they go so far as to print all the lyrics of their double album. The results vary.

This is the chorus of "Doctor Bob Dylan" (a lot of the lyrics echo Dylan's work and include some of his phrases): "*Last June, at Princeton's commencement/ Dylan's got a doctor's degree/ Down in a filthy Bronx basement/ Perished the last US flea*". Curious, you have to admit.

UNDOUBTEDLY, THE DECISION to sing in a language foreign to their own is due partly to a desire to be instantly accessible to Anglo-American audiences. Many of these bands even include English or American musicians, like the lead vocalist, for instance, in Twenty Sixty Six And Then, a Liverpudlian named Geff Harrison. As with so many others, he went to Germany with an English band and finally stayed on.

There's another reason, too, however. After the last war, the Germans became so demoralised and disillusioned with their own culture that they turned to America, particularly, for their ideas in popular art. This rejection has been so complete that it's not until recent years that they have regained some initiative. Jazz musicians have now taken independent directions, and in another area young Germans anxious to express their own concepts have ceased to be bound by the framework of Anglo-American pop. They see the rock tag as a convenient way of packaging their own ideas to get them over to the masses.

This is particularly true of the musicians with political motivations, like Ton Steine Scherben with its utterly left outlook, Ihre Kinder, and the Marxist Floh De Cologne. Their emphasis on lyrics rather than music, and their subject matter is frequently a diatribe against the capitalist system. This is notably the case of Floh (English translation "Flea"), who have released an album with the translated title of *Conveyor Belt Baby's Beat Show.*

These polit-rock bands, though they represent food for thought, are not particularly rated in their own country. In fact, Winifred Trenkler, a leading German rock critic who lives in Cologne, described Ton Steine as "completely left and unintellectual." The main torch carriers for intelligent German rock music are a nucleus of groups headed by Can and Amon Düül II. These include Embryo, Kraftwerk, Guru Guru and Tangerine Dream. Between them they define the best of German rock.

GETTY

told gui- the Vel Yes." er all

Deutsch Rock

IT'S WHEN ONE talks in terms of "rock" that it becomes difficult describing their music. The label has to be used loosely. Although they're avid followers of Anglo-Americana, the majority of "thinking" musicians don't convince me that they have a proper rock feeling. They don't swing in the slightest, and they don't possess an understanding of the dynamics of rock'n'roll. At the risk of being accused of xenophobia, I'd put this down to the proverbial Teutonic stiffness and self-consciousness at having to express themselves in a light, easy way.

In a way, this is a good thing for their music. At least what emerges is natural, and what is natural reveals itself as a preoccupation with uncompromising rhythms, with drum patterns that are as rigid as piston strokes and just as inexorable; and, moreover, with sound per se. Although most German rock groups lack the financial support to equip themselves with the VCS3s and Moogs that bands here accept as almost obligatory, they show a fascination with electronics, and use sound effects not as embellishment but for themselves. It's not too far-fetched to suggest that Stockhausen is the father figure of German rock, especially as Irmin Schmidt, keyboards player with Can, and Holger Czukay the bassist, are both former students of the composer.

Both men are intellectuals and perhaps see the rock tag as a means of packaging music which is nearer to the avant garde than to the Top 20. This is not the manipulation it sounds. Stockhausen, talking earlier this year about Can, said that their music was presenting itself under the name of pop or rock to people who were expecting something ready-made. This was very positive, he explained, because it annoyed an audience as much as it pleased them: "You only listen to something when you're surprised, when it's new and changes. It doesn't matter where the music goes. What's important is that it goes in new directions."

Enough has been written about Can's new albums on United Artists, *Monster Movie* and *Tago Mago*, but mention should be made of Czukay's *Canaxis 5* album, which he made with another German called Dammers for Music Factory, a private record company owned by a freak who made the original limited pressings of *Monster Movie*. The first side, "Ho Mai Nhi", ("Boat Woman Song"), consists of laments by Vietnamese villagers sung (or rather wailed) over a tape loop of voices and orchestra. The latter repeat a line of virtually descending notes throughout the side, strongly at first, then receding, but always there in the background. It's very formal and eerie.

On side two, called "Shook Eyes Ammunition", a series of electronic bleeps are suddenly interrupted by the mighty crashing of a gong, which introduces a man's vocal, then various "galactic" sounds precede a choir chanting a continuous passage comprising two notes. The effect is tranquil, conjuring up Buddhist monasteries, and silent, aloof ceremonies in my mind, although Czukay and Dammers style themselves on the sleeve the Technical Space Composer's Crew.

Can's performances are as unflagging as their rhythms. At Cologne's Sportshalle in late January they did a free concert in front of 10,000 people – the city council had given their blessing in the name of modern Kultur. The group played for around four hours in all, including intermissions for jugglers, acrobats and a guy with a singing saw. To hear them thundering away like a non-stop express is something of an experience, but the repetition of their open-ended act was finally a little too much for these English ears at first go. Their enthusiasm seems to work better in the edited context of an album.

EMBRYO HAVE AN album called *Embryo's Rache* ("Revenge") on United Artists, who, along with Philips and the avant-garde label Ohr, release most of the better-known German product. They're rather jazz-oriented, with a soprano sax, flute and organ, but unmistakeably German, with that heavy, insistent drum rhythm. While they sing in English they're basically instrumental, but they're not averse to political songs, like "Espagna Si, Franco No", with its line about "*evolution is the only way*". However, the most interesting track is the last, "Verwandlung", with its use of Mellotron and piano leading into Edgar Hofmann's violin, which sounds as if he's been listening to Don Harris.

"Many German groups use sound effects not as embellishment but for themselves"

Kraftwerk ("Power Station"), I understand, have released two albums, one of them, *Tone Float* (as Organisation), on RCA, the other, simply bearing the band's name, on Philips (whose English office say they've never heard of them). The band revolve around Ralf Hütter on organ and Florian Schneider-Esleben on flute, violin and electric percussion. Though some of the Philips album reflects a trivial use of sound, there are truly strange moments like the heavily phased drumming on "Ruckzuck", which fades in and out of the speakers with the cold precision of a machine. In fact, they've got the most "mechanical" energised sound I've ever heard in places. Their name couldn't be more apt.

Tangerine Dream, on the other hand, a Berlin group, are far less earthbound. If "space music" is not too overworked an expression, that's them. Sort of Pink Floyd-minus-tunes meets King Crimson's 21st-century schizoid man. They've got two albums out on Ohr, *Electronic Meditation* and *Alpha Centauri*, and I've recently heard a single, "Ultima Thule (Parts One and Two)", which if I recollect rightly, is a phrase from Virgil meaning "Furthest Thule". Most of the musical substance seems to be done with a Mellotron and an organ but it's pretty effective, even if Part Two does bear a certain resemblance to "Set The Controls".

Guru Guru are also on Ohr (it means "ear", incidentally) with an album called *UFO*, and they should be checked out because of their drummer, Mani Neumeier, who plays electric percussion, which several other of these bands have.

Leaving aside Amon Düül II, there are a number of other bands and musicians who are worth checking out. There's Parsival, who play something akin to chamber rock, and are light, airy and pastoral in approach; Georg Deuter, who combines a mixture of electronic sounds, bongos, straightforward guitar and sitar – one track is called "Krishna Eating Fish And Chips", Klaus Weiss, a prominent drummer in Germany who has recently recorded a super-percussion album, *Niagra*, with other drummers from the States, England, Germany and Venezuela; there's Eiliff, who have a bassist named Bill Brown, and are organ-dominated with rather orthodox arrangements; and then there's Et Cetera, Gila, Xhol, Cluster, Popol Vuh, James Jackson, Sweet Smoke, Paul and Limpe Fuchs (a live record cut in Ossiach, Austria) and Ash Ra Tempel (who are supposed to be ferocious).

OF ALL THE German bands, however, the most assured is Amon Düül II. If they can maintain an equilibrium within the band and continue to remain unaffected by the various personnel changes, there seems no reason why they should not become a positive force on the international rock scene.

In terms of awareness of the rock idiom they're head and shoulders above the competition. They're less "alien"-sounding than Can and Kraftwerk; they have absorbed the transatlantic musical vocabulary. But their music has remained their own, despite references to the Dead and the Airplane on the first two albums, *Phallus Dei* and *Yeti*, and Hendrix and the Floyd on *Dance Of The Lemmings*. They can encompass an astonishingly wide range of sensations, from the far-out space rock of *Lemmings* to the tingling acid rock of "Archangels' Thunderbird" on *Yeti*, which made one of the best hard-rock singles ever.

Their new album, *Carnival In Babylon*, is their most composed. It's almost gentle even, with rather pastoral-sounding vocals from their girl singer, Renate, newly returned to the group. The music is not as experimental as on the previous albums but there's more texture: nice bass lines, particularly on "All The Years Round" and deft strokes from the two guitarists John Weinzierl and Chris Karrer. With these two lies the future of Amon Düül. *Michael Watts*

"We were all pretty weird by this time"

At only 24, IGGY POP is already a survivor. Beset by "ugly, unbeautiful" musicians, he created instead the visionary STOOGES. Having beaten "a man-sized habit", he is now in London. He offers his thoughts on record production, rehearsal and the road ahead. "I want to do the best for my music," he says.

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 1 —

AS MARC BOLAN swung his hips for the benefit of Ringo Starr's camerawork, did any of the 9,000 upturned faces notice the auburn-haired American fifth row from the front? From his seat in Wembley's Empire Pool, Jim Osterberg, alias Iggy Pop, alias Iggy Stooge, was checking out an aspect of the English scene as from one phenomenon to another, and that singer he couldn't believe! "Kinda chipmunky," he was to say later. Iggy is sort of, uh, more extrovert.

He sings a bit but he likes to express himself in other ways as well. You know, bash his head against the stage, pound his teeth with the microphone, draw a little blood. Anything can happen at an Iggy Stooge concert. Everything does.

It was unfortunate that time he played with the Stooges in St Louis. The time that the mic stand broke, and he was rhythmically smashing the jagged edge on the stage, and he never saw the chick climbing towards him until he felt the metal slam into her head. When he pulled it out there was – ugh! – all this blood everywhere. Nasty business. But like I say, funny things go on when he's stooging around. »

July 15, 1972: billed as a solo show, Iggy Pop and The Stooges play a brief midnight gig at the Scala cinema in King's Cross, London. In the audience are US journalists who earlier that evening had witnessed David Bowie's Aylesbury Friars show before being bussed back to town by manager Tony DeFries

Re-formed but not reformed: Iggy & The Stooges in 1972 – (c/wise from top) Ron Asheton, James Williamson, Scott Asheton, Iggy Pop

Iggy is living in England right now. He says he'll be making some appearances next month. All you British mums have been warned. An Iggy Stooge performance is the physical, visual culmination of that long line of bumps and grinds that has distinguished rock'n'roll since Presley put lead piping down his pants. Iggy has gone further than any of them along the road of audience participation. A feature of his act has been to jump from the stage into the arms of his fans and invite them to beat him up a little. It sounds like the fulfilment of sadomasochistic fantasies. It probably is. Iggy just says it's impromptu. Whatever happens, happens. Que sera, sera, rock'n'roll style.

Before Iggy's band disintegrated, the act would go something like this. The other three Stooges would arrive on stage, plug in, and proceed to play with the total immobility that's associated with Bill Wyman. Far out. But then, who is this bare-chested kid with the bug eyes and the flapping arms and the bashed-up two front teeth where the microphone keeps lashing? See him flop like an obscene jelly beside the guitarist before springing out over the spotlights on to the heads of the groupies. And Jesus, is that really hot wax he's pouring over his torso? Ladies and gentlemen, is Iggy Stooge your kind of meat?

But tell me, Iggy, is everything they say about you true? "Yeaaah, pretty much. Maybe it gets a little distorted. Like, if I was sitting on some guy's lap it comes out that I was f------him, and if someone gets hurt they say I'm into injuring spectators. But that's cool.

"Let me tell you a story. One time on stage I did this windmill thing with a wine bottle, bashing it on my chest until it broke. I can't tell you how beautiful it was, to see the glass shattering and the lights reflecting it. And then I looked down and there's this chick, who's been telling me she loves me, holding up her arm and it's covered in blood. She's saying, 'I hate you.' The cops cordoned the place off. I just about got away."

Iggy, or Jim as he refers to himself offstage, snickers gleefully. He's wearing a wide-brimmed black hat over a face coarsened with excessive living. He sits in the London office of his new manager, puffing cigarettes and spitting out anecdotes with the smoke.

People have egged him on, he says. The Stooges once played this open-air festival, and the organisers kept telling him not to incite the kids to bust down the perimeter fence, else it was going to be his ass that was on the line. Naturally, he recalled, by the time he went on that was just what he intended to do.

"So I made these little gestures, pointing to the wall, and then they tried to revolve me off the revolving stage they had. But our equipment guys beat up on them. It was beautiful. You could feel the electricity." He smiled, slow and impishly. "A lotta times you start playing and just get in the mood."

Iggy and The Stooges attained national prominence in the summer of 1970 when they played a festival held at the Cincinnati Redlegs Baseball Stadium. Traffic, Mott The Hoople and Alice Cooper were also on the bill, but it was Iggy who made the headlines. Pictures of him leaping, tongue flicking like... an iguana, and the people handing him round on their shoulders, were syndicated throughout the States. He was bound for glory, however spurious. Less than a year later The Stooges were all washed up.

There were lots of problems within the group. Musical ones. And: "I got a real man-size habit, and then I didn't want to be on stage any more 'cos

Lock up your daughters, Iggy's

S MARC BOLAN swung his hips the benefit of g Starr's camera-

business. But, like I say, funny things go on when he's stroging around.

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Iggy is clean now. He didn't go to any clinic, he took himself off the hook. It

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I knew I couldn't do my best under those circumstances – I always try to do my best for my music. So I started trying to get out of playing, but what with managers and audiences that's more easily said than done. It got to the point where I'd get on stage and then puke. The people didn't care. Their attitude would be, 'I've seen him do so many far-out things, now let's see him kill himself.'

"I tried to fail so I'd just fade away, but they wouldn't let me. We just kept getting bigger crowds. So I quit. 'Goodbye, world, f---off.' I bombed out for six months."

Iggy is clean now. He didn't go to any clinic, he took himself off the hook. It was sheer, schizoid hell, he recalls, but he dropped the habit. And for that, he says, he has largely his parents to thank.

Iggy grew up in a trailer park. He was a caravan kid. He was brought up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at high school there he joined his first rock'n'roll group, Iggy & The Iguanas, as a drummer. Later, playing in Detroit with a blues band called The Prime Movers, he met Mike Bloomfield, then with Paul Butterfield. Bloomfield liked him, he says, and gave him Sam Lay's address in Chicago, so off he went to the Windy City and bummed off Lay for a while, picking up tips on playing. There followed a number of one-night stands with most of the black bluesmen there, such as Walter Horton and JB Hutto. About his drumming, Iggy ain't modest. "Where I came from I was a legend," he says sincerely.

He never played more than one or two nights with these bands, but they got him cut-rate. The more he hung around the Chicago bluesmen the more contempt he got from all the white guys trying to play the blues. They had no personal presence, which was what he was looking for. He wanted to play music that dripped right off his fingers, like these black guys. He headed back to Detroit.

> "When I met my manager I was on the bum with no plans, no food"

It was here in '68 that he formed The Stooges with three friends. These were the two Asheton brothers – Ron on lead guitar and Scott on drums – and Dave Alexander the bassist. Musicians was a pretty high-flown word to use in connection with them. They'd had virtually no previous musical experience. Iggy had to teach the drummer the rudiments, and the bassist learned by himself. Iggy wanted people who were untutored. All the guys who could actually play, he recalls, were "stupid and unbeautiful".

They went out on the road as the Psychedelic Stooges, a name vaguely connected with the Three Stooges, and for a time were involved with the MC5 (also from Detroit) in John Sinclair's multi-media community, Trans Love Energies. The Stooges did a couple of benefits for the community concerned, but it wasn't their scene. They never got paid and Iggy didn't like the people who were involved. "I'm waiting for the day when I meet someone who's never heard of John Sinclair," he says.

Then in late '68, the band was signed by Elektra Records. Danny Fields, possibly the most famous rock'n'roll publicist of all time, went to Ann Arbor for Elektra to look over the MC5.

At this time, says Iggy, The Stooges were real bad, not just bad. For a start, they had hardly any equipment. At the end of their set, however, the band left the stage with the amps feeding back and Iggy was wandering around the audience being Iggy. Fields came by, told him who he was, and talked about signing them.

Iggy thought it was a put-on: "I believed he was an office boy, who just wanted to meet me and impress me. He didn't look like what I thought a record company executive should look like. He was dressed like us. In jeans and a jacket."

He was finally convinced of Fields' serious intent, and not long afterwards Elektra's co-owners, Jac Holzman and Bill Harvey, came to see the band. The performance they gave was not exactly smooth. "I was really sick. I had a temperature of 101. There were bruises on my head 'cos I'd had a kind of a fit, and my one ear was gone. It was at this time that I wrote 'I Am Sick' and 'Asthma Attack'. Before I went on I was sitting in this blanket, shivering, and then when we appeared I kept falling down. It was really macabre. I was in unbelievable pain and they thought, 'This guy's into it.' They were so totally freaked they thought they should sign us."

The first of their two albums for Elektra, which was simply called *The Stooges*, was produced by John Cale. "We were a really strange band, and Elektra thought they knew a strange producer," he says. "We were still living in Ann Arbor and John came out. I really liked him. He just let us have our heads. His job was to protect my mad ideas from outside influences." Iggy snickered again.

"We did that album in four days. We'd never played a note at that time and the band hadn't written any songs before, so I bought a guitar and learned these chords in two weeks. I wrote the songs in three days and then we recorded them. They were all about 10 minutes long."

The album was cut at The Hit Factory, which is above Times Square in New York. Jerry Ragovoy was on the sessions. Iggy remembers him well, if not with any fondness.

"It was an R&B studio, and they thought we were horrid little creatures. Then Holzman heard it and said, 'I don't hear anything but three chords', so I said, 'If you don't like it we got lots more material, let us go in again.' He set it up for the day after tomorrow. We were at the Chelsea and it was there we wrote the other half of the songs. 'Little Doll' I wrote in the lobby. All it is is '1969' changed around."

Second time around, he says, Holzman liked it, but they haven't remained the best of friends. Iggy is now finalising a deal with CBS. It didn't work out too well with Cale, either. Iggy wound up mixing the tapes himself.

"John's got a real genius for arrangements, like on *Marble Index*, but that stuff's too shiny for a rock'n'roll band. When I got the tapes they came out sounding like *Marble Index* again. In general, he doesn't have a feel for the fluidity and dynamics of rock'n'roll – or at least, as I like to play it. He's got a classical background and it's made him stiff."

The second album, *Fun House*, made at Elektra's studio in Los Angeles, was produced this time by Don Gallucci, who had recorded The Kingsmen's "Louie Louie" when he was 17. Elektra gave them a practice studio to rehearse in. It didn't work out that way: "We were all pretty weird by this time, and instead of working we picked up these instruments like a tuba and a saxophone and marched around doing 'Old Joe Clark'. We refused to do anything but set up our instruments and record. Eventually, the sound we got was so ridiculous that it was physically impossible for anyone else to like us."

Yes, it was weirdness and more weirdness all the way.

By now Our Hero, hat pulled low over his forehead, is slumped in his chair with his feet stuck on the windowsill. His voice comes out in a slurry drawl, like a looser version of James Stewart. Under the shadow of that hat he seems no more than a kid.

Young Jim Osterberg is explaining why he's Iggy Stooge. He will, he says, do anything to get himself off. It's absolutely necessary for him to have kicks, to move his mind, and if people are upset, well, he's sorry, but right from the word go he's been used to offending them.

People who "orient themselves into art" are always telling him he's so abstract. He's not antisocial, not unless it's cops or characters with no brains. And then, someone will look into his face and see... beneath the brim his eyes take on that psychotic look. Don't look at him, kids. It's not nice.

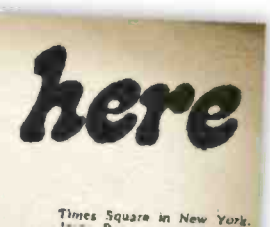
Minds are alive, he explains. They see pictures and make up stories. He sees big pictures and makes big stories; his audience sees little pictures and invents big stories. A performance is a whole mixture of these pictures and dreams. You should have the guts to let the dream flow.

Iggy says he's had a lot of luck in his life, too: "I've always been lucky. I've wanted everything in the world. I've wanted it all. I'm as dishonest as the next guy, y'see. I'm greedy, crooked and vain, and I like to profile. Everybody has a shadow and I like to project a big one.

"When I met my present manager I was on the bum with no plans and no food, and all of a sudden I met this dude, said 'I trust him' and signed with him. The next thing I know I'm talking to the president of Columbia and he's saying 'yeah' and now I'm in England. That's awful good fortune for a poor boy!"

Iggy switched on TV the other night, just in time to catch Judee Sill saying she preferred to play without a rock'n'roll band, who are so "young, loud and snotty", or something like that. Iggy has written a tune about it, he was so creased. Because, as he says, that's the way it is when you're having fun. He'll be coming your way soon. Have fun.

Michael Watts •



"The politics of freedom"

Underground freaks turned Top 10 stars, HAWKWIND are 1972's unlikeliest success story. In the wake of their hit "Silver Machine", they reveal plans for a new "space opera". "Audiences have changed now," says bassist Lemmy. "It's a collective consciousness."

— NME FEBRUARY 5 —

LIKE THEM OR not, you must admit that Hawkwind are honest. Guitarist Dave Brock is not loath to admit that most of the band's musicians are at best mediocre, while Nik Turner (sax) never ceases to be amazed by their success.

Partly, it's all due to the band beginnings. When they first came together, Hawkwind was just a means of having a good time – "a pleasurable sideline", as Brock puts it. Only when people actually seemed to like their music did they begin to take it seriously. And even now the main motive of the band is to provide fun both for the audience and themselves.

"I think that's the only reason why we get across to a lot of people," said Turner. "They see that we're obviously having a good time, and they get something out of that. In the beginning I never thought our music would appeal to anybody, simply because we've never pandered to public taste, never compromised and just played exactly what we wanted. By a happy accident people seem to be digging it."

Now the band are probably more involved in their music and in assorted projects than ever before. Upmost in their minds is a space opera they hope to take on the road in late spring.

The brain behind it all is word man Bob Calvert, who explained, "It doesn't have a plot like a traditional opera but is an opera nevertheless in the way it presents a situation. It concerns dreams people might have if they were suspended in animation in deep space. Whereas our last album concerned a journey into space, this is more about actually being there.

"On stage it'll be a totally theatrical event, with dancers, mime and a new way of using light techniques which will cover the whole audience. Hopefully we want to get together the best ever light show ever put on the road. And it won't just be complementing the music but actually part of it. The guy operating the lights will be playing them, if you like, just as the others play their instruments."

"I really don't think groups give enough to their audiences," said Brock. "They don't seem to have much contact. If you go round dance halls in the country and see the miserable conditions people are in, you feel you should give them as much in a live show as you possibly can. Most groups don't do it. They go through the same routine so much that they might as well be working in a factory."

Hawkwind, of course, have always had special connections with what's loosely called the alternative society. Again it stems partly from the beginnings of the group – as Brock explains: "When the group formed we were all hustlers and dealers on the scene, and now we still see the same people and go to the same places."

But do the group see themselves as any different from others?

Bob Calvert replied, "I suppose if the underground has any meaning at all we're part of it, simply because we don't see ourselves as part of the music industry or aligned to the profit motive »

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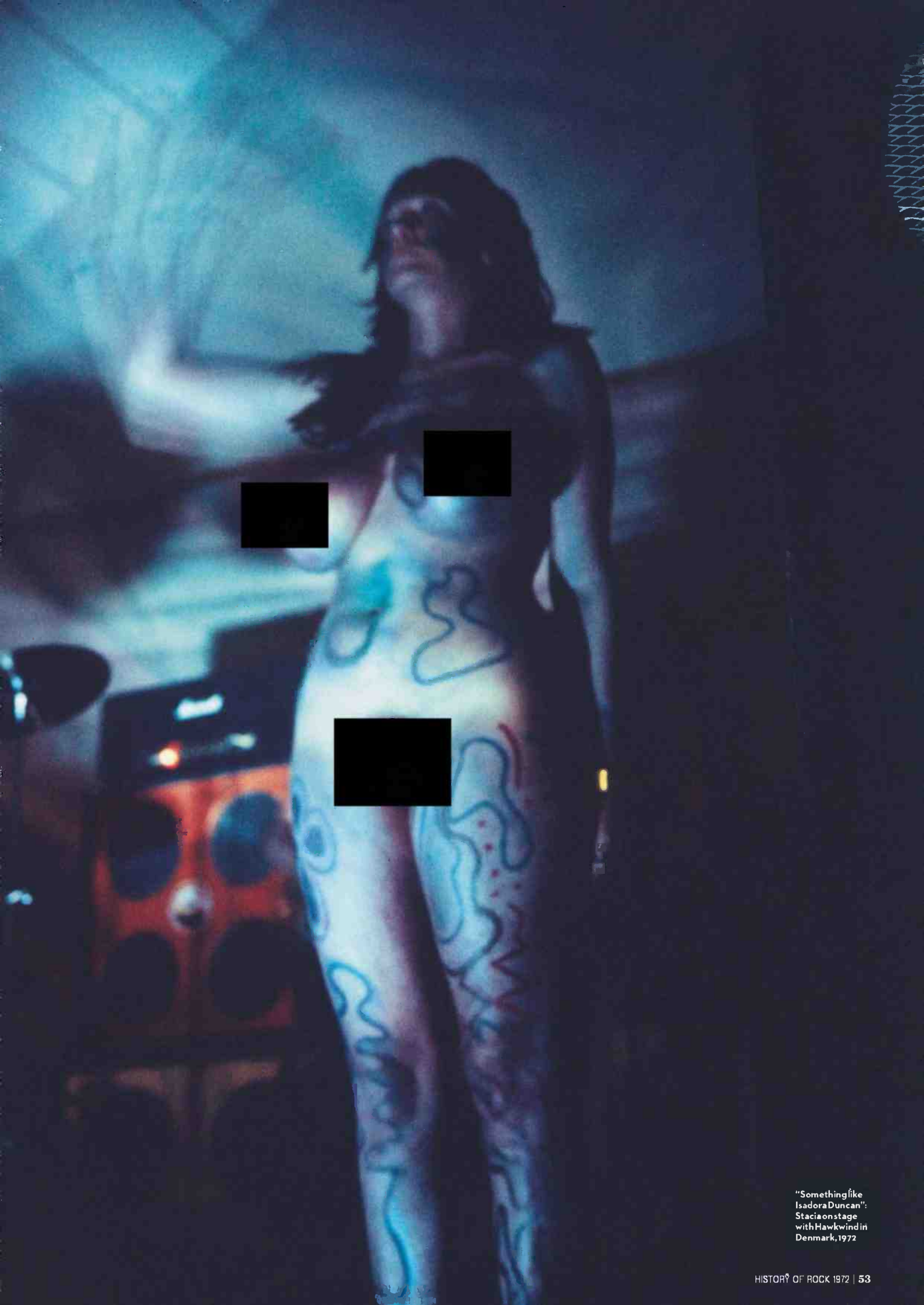


"Something like Isadora Duncan": Stacia on stage with Hawkwind in Denmark, 1972

which is what that industry is about. All generations have had some sort of revolutionary feeling in them, but this is the first that isn't based on any political deals or programmes. Consequently it's the job of the musician to put these feelings into music that people can recognise. Gigs seem to get into a very ritualistic, tribal thing where people come to lose their personal identity and expand their consciousness collectively."

Probably the greatest link the band have with the underground is through playing numerous benefit gigs for various organisations. Trouble is, though, as the group become more successful, more requests for them to play benefits pour in. Obviously this presents problems.

"Quite honestly, the benefit scene has got completely out of hand," said Brock. "Because so many bands don't do them, people rely heavily on those that do. Then when you can't manage, all of them people say you've sold out.

"Also there are a lot of rip-offs at benefits when you just can't tell where the money has really gone. It's a pity, because there are so many people who are really into nice things but can't get the bread to do it that we feel we should try and help as best we can."

> "We've never pandered to public taste, never compromised"

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 15 —

SUPERFICIALLY HAWKWIND MAY be thought of as one link in a growing chain of space consciousness. The title of their last album, *In Search Of Space*, is an artfully ambivalent indication of the ideas they reflect. On the one hand is the space out there past the Van Allen belt, the ethereal space with which one associates their music. On the other is the search for space on our own little planet.

The relationship between the two meanings is one that Hawkwind is very much involved in. For while this new age of mechanical space travel suggests unlimited horizons, the situation upon Earth promises the opposite.

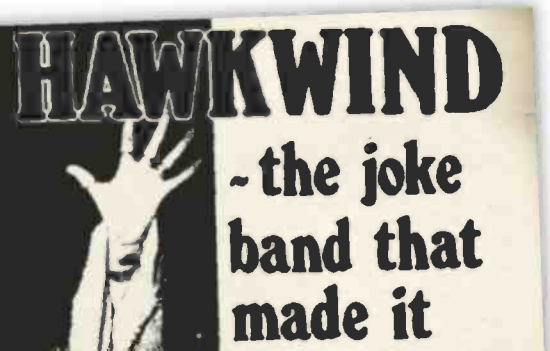
The alternative widely prophesied is between severe restraint on material growth or destruction on a worldwide scale. The fact that doomsday is all too viable sets the background for the group's activities. They regard Hawkwind as primarily a mobile communications system which can function through its music.

It sounds a vague idea, but that flexibility is probably its main strength. A concrete ideology could be easily attacked. As it is, the group speaks of its efforts at communication as helping to spread the new consciousness, which is fair enough since, until it has replaced the old, no one will know what it actually is.

There is a little more body behind the group, though, than a few peace signs and well-meaning pleas for love and brotherhood. *In Search Of Space*, which was their second LP, included a formidable booklet called *The Hawkwind Log*. Beginning with a creation myth, this log sketched phenomena from many corners of time in an effort to show man in some kind of perspective.

It came uncomfortably close to overshadowing the rest of the album package, although the music's appeal increases steadily as the rhythms become memorised. The log writer was Bob Calvert. Currently he's in the country, recovering from a more recent psychological adventure – or more accurately in this case, misadventure.

Hawkwind, being more of a community than a compact unit, are able to carry on gigging with their musical lineup down to six – Nik Turner (alto sax, flute, audio generator and vocals), Dave Brock (vocals, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, audio generator), Lemmy (bass guitar), Del Dettmar (synthesizer), Simon King (drums) and Dik Mik (audio generator).



With Calvert out of circulation, Turner, Brock, Lemmy and manager Doug Smith were the only Hawkwindites to assemble for interviewing purposes. The log and last album cover, I suggested, seems to contain influences from Buckminster Fuller – in particular the use of phrases like "Space Ship Earth".

No, they said, it's more a question of moving in the same direction at the same time. Calvert is not the sole reason for their involvement in space: it had been thriving even before he joined the group.

"It was like that all the time," confirmed Doug Smith. "It was just that someone had to be the Captain. They had always played space music and spaced-out music."

Smith devotes a great deal of energy to describing the group, their music and their significance. Since they don't regard themselves and their ideas as too sacred to laugh about once in a while, listening to him isn't the ordeal it may sound. He has some coherent ideas about the inevitability of a small minority acquiring financial power on behalf of a far larger section of the population. It is the consequence of Hawkwind's need for better and more ambitious equipment to extend their musical ideas, and thereby their attempts to spread awareness.

"There's no political motivation behind it. It's a moral motivation," Smith mentioned.

"Politics of freedom," added Turner, to murmurs of approval.

The group has a reputation for possessing "grass roots support". This they have achieved without allowing the build-up of a dividing barrier between group and audience. The people many musicians would call "fans" Hawkwind call "friends". In Doug Smith's words, it's "a joint awareness of people together".

"The audiences have changed now," amplified Lemmy. "They don't say 'me'. They shout 'us'. It's a growth of a collective consciousness."

The group is very concerned to create an environment in which to play to an audience. For instance, they are working on a space opera that will use mime, dancing, lights, film and chemical smoke.

Their space opera has suffered various setbacks, but is expected to be operative by the autumn. Calvert's notes for it are stimulating, referring prominently to the visual effects the audience could be subjected to. Its basic theme revolves around the dreams or fantasies experienced by seven space explorers in suspended animation. *Andrew Means*

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 12 —

IT WAS A rather hot and sticky trek across country, and the one thing that kept the stragglers shuffling was the narrowing proximity of music. Over the next hill, round the next bend, the army of the new age had gathered half a million strong.

The Isle of Wight was being graced with some of the greatest names in rock. Backstage the superstars were standing on each other's feet; front stage the people were suffering from an overdose of adoration.

And outside the wire fences some minor-league band from London had the arrogance to play a free set for people who couldn't, or wouldn't, or didn't choose to pay the festival fee. It was Hawkwind's first major assault. Word spread about this bizarre travelling circus that played outside the gates or in the street; that blocked up pavements and made noise where byelaws said noise wasn't meant to be.

It was a joke. Hawkwind – the people's band. It would never pay the rent, and it would never reach the vast majority of normal, well-adjusted people's people who naturally wanted their entertainment dotted with sequins.

Hawkwind grew. Nothing could stop them. The myth developed. There's a Hawkwind cult now that is almost as vital to their gigs as the music. No matter which part of the country they play in, the audience is basically the same. Every gig is a stage for local fantasies. Bottled-up extrovert tendencies explode into fancy dress and painted faces, as if some messiah had given the sign.

It's a precarious position for a group to be in. Hordes of dedicated teenagers regard them as the revolution personified, and with "Silver Machine" slicing through the chart some of them must be ticking off the days to the takeover with increasing impatience. So much is implied by Hawkwind that if you think of them as just a rock band you're deceiving yourself. The regimented peace signs flashed from the audience imply more than that, and so does sax and flute player Nik Turner's preference for

Hawkwind – sans Dave Brock and Robert Calvert – in Denmark, May 1972: (l-r) Simon King, Nik Turner, Lemmy, Del Dettmar, Michael "Dik Mik" Davies, unknown and Stacia

ambiguous music. You can suggest everything, and say nothing. If you do it carefully you achieve more than you ever would if you laid down dogma.

The success of "Silver Machine" is like a vital chapter out of *Animal Farm*. It makes Hawkwind an altogether more powerful prospect than they were two years ago as a group for Isle of Wight outsiders. Their expanding reputation and financial assets must have boosted the expectations of their friends and followers. Yet understandably their single hasn't affected the group in the same way.

In the words of Doug Smith, the group's visionary manager, they regard it as two fingers in the air to a music business that used to write them off. Nothing more. It doesn't trigger plans for a coup d'état, because there never were such plans. The group's more conscientious members – Dave Brock (guitar), Nik Turner (sax) and Del Dettmar (synthesizer) – insist that their objectives and activities will remain much the same as before. They aim at the head. Once people are given the incentive they will undertake their own metamorphoses.

This ability to plant their myth in to popular imagination has played a large part in their making. Hawkwind is a movement, not just a group. In a quite mundane sense, they have a reputation for having one of the largest retinues in the music business. Far more important is the empathy they achieve with many reaching in the same direction as themselves. Some eminent people are apparently interested in their ideas, among them Sir Patrick Moore.

The fact that they are now hot news has made little impression upon their gigs. At Hastings last week the atmosphere was much as it had been at similar gigs four weeks ago.

Dave Brock managed to break a couple of guitar strings and Lemmy even succeeded in doing the same with a bass string. The result was that they played part of the set out of tune, to the discomfort of Doug Smith.

But hang around at the close of one of the gigs and watch the way friends and followers religiously make their pilgrimage on stage and how they sidle past the speakers and the roadies and the rubbish right up to Nik Turner's side. Turner sits and peers vacantly around the hall, while the little half-circle around him shuffle uncomfortably into incredulous conversation.

Probably the only aspect that comes out in their gigs and which bothers the bulk of their audiences is space, but the other subjects are there waiting to be explored. Maybe their teen following comes to hear heavy lift-off music, but it's impossible to ignore the imaginative ideas of the group and of Bob Calvert, once a performing member and now purely a writer of their material.

If their preparations work out and the audience plays its part, Hawkwind's first major bill-topping concert – at London's Rainbow next Sunday – should reveal how far their ambitions to project an environment go. *Andrew Means*

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 12 —

FOR A GIRL brought up by nuns, to strip off on stage before hundreds of people may seem somewhat anomalous. But Stacia, who performs with Hawkwind, goes into her act with no inhibitions and firmly but gently discounts any suggestion that she falls into the "stripper" category. Not that she scorns strippers. She would not dispute that "maybe 99 per cent" of such ladies' acts are motivated by erotic content. "But some of them are real artists," she says.

"And they must fulfil a need," says Stacia with benign tolerance. She is certainly not prepared to pass any adverse judgement on them.

Stacia categorises her act with Hawkwind as "freeform dancing". "It's something like Isadora Duncan," says Stacia. And modestly adds, "Though she was a million times better than I am. But she is my idol."

Stacia regards her original motivation in disrobing as a means of overcoming an inherent shyness and lack of self-confidence. "I was always conscious about my height," she says. "I'm six foot tall, and when I was younger [she's still only 19] I was always stooping to disguise my height."

Stacia, who comes from Exeter, had a variety of jobs before she joined Hawkwind. She worked as a bookbinder, in a garage, and in the record shop of a department store in Exeter.

"But I was always interested in dancing and acting," she recalls. "Another of my interests was classical music – Delius, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Dvorak. That was when I was about eight.

"Then I listened to The Beatles, and jazz stars like Stan Getz, Billie Holliday and Dizzy Gillespie. Dancing and acting were my main interests, but I was really too big and heavy to adopt these as a career. I first heard Hawkwind at the Isle of Wight Festival – the one with Jimi Hendrix. Then I met them again when I went to London, where they were rehearsing – at the Middle Earth.

"Then they went back to the West Country again, and they were playing at the Flamingo, Redruth when I got up on stage and started dancing. It was one of those impromptu things that just happened. I wasn't wearing any clothes on that gig; I had just covered my whole body in paint.

"No, people watching did not regard it as a sexual thing. Hawkwind don't attract that type of audience. They reacted to my dancing as an expression of freedom. That's when I started to do occasional gigs with Hawkwind. By then, I had started to wear costumes. Before that, it was just paint."

Stacia does not always disrobe. One gathers that she reacts to the music as the mood takes her. Stacia admits that other suggestions have been put to her. "Somebody once approached me to do a pornographic film," she says. "I reacted quite violently – not physically, but verbally. I would never contemplate anything like that."

And how do the male members of Hawkwind treat Stacia? "I regard them as brothers, and they treat me like a sister." *Laurie Henshaw* •

GETTY

"Something has really clicked"

LED ZEPPELIN are massive in America. But as they're keen to point out, they have been for four years. We join the band's entourage on the East Coast as they lay waste to Long Island ("It costs $5,300 to hire Madison Square Garden..."). Earlier in the year, Robert Plant explains how they wrote their fourth album. "Burst into laughter," he says. "Preserve it on tape."

IAN DICKSON

— NME APRIL 29 —

THE ROAR OF the crowd still rings long in the ears of Led Zeppelin. Record success continues to turn 'em on but nothing stands against the motivation of this four-man crew to get out and make music. Led's larynx, Robert Plant, particularly exudes an enthusiasm for his vocation that one rarely encounters among the rock hierarchy.

Why, only the other afternoon I encountered the man himself and Zeppelin's master-at-arms, Richard Cole, conducting a rip-off raid on Kinney Records' vast library of tapes and albums and the singer conceded that "music is serious... but let's dig it".

I took the opportunity to talk with him, and like a wide-eyed kid having been given the freedom of Selfridges' toy department, Planty carefully stashed his loot in a corner and placed an Arthur Alexander album on the office stereo.

"Arthur Alexander... now there's a name to conjure with," he smiled as the smooth voice of the almost forgotten rhythm-and-blues singer filled the large room and obliterated all nearby conversation. Accepting a welcome drink, Plant removed the filter from a cigarette and confessed, "You know what? This record sounded much better then than it does now."

He was, of course, referring to a time in the early '60s when the style and songs of Mr Alexander and his contemporaries helped, in some small measure, to blueprint the format of those British groups who were to completely change the entire course of rock music. »

"The spirit within the band is just fantastic": Robert Plant on stage with Led Zeppelin, 1972

In fact, I have the strangest feeling that at one time or another a younger Robert Plant possibly offered his own interpretations of "Anna" or the like around the noisy Brummie club and ballroom circuits.

Plant may have gone on to much bigger and better things since those far-off days, but I find it refreshingly to his credit that he still hangs on to that all-important sense of urgency that initially made him get up and sing. Today it safeguards him from complacency and stagnation.

"Whenever possible I really like to get out there with the kids," he told me, at the same time taking the trouble not to give the impression of some kind of condescending antihero. "Only in that way," he continued, "can I get to know what the record buyers want. That's how I make up my mind – from how the public makes up its mind. For me, in fact, the most successful concert is the one when everyone is up on their feet, smiling, yelling and getting into the music. Personally, I don't like things to be too straight-faced. The idea of people just sitting down and getting turned on without showing any signs of response – it's just too melodramatic."

Like the rest of Zeppelin, Plant laughs at persistent rumours that each and every album or concert is their farewell, although some of the stories he naturally finds irritating: "The fact is, we don't flog Zep to death. Just like John Lennon once said, 'If you're on the road too long it becomes painful.'"

Plant further echoes the sentiments of the band's drummer, John Bonham, in pointing out that Zeppelin have set their own pace, one which allows them sufficient freedom and creativity. With discretion the band face the public only when either (as a recording act or as an in-person attraction) they feel they have something new and exciting to offer.

He told me, "Speaking for myself, I've always got the motivation to work, but like the rest of the band, I don't want to charge around the country every night. What's the point? We only tour and bring out an album when we want to. But as most people realise, we're always popping up all over the world to do concerts. Whenever possible we always return to those places."

Plant is proud, and quite rightly so, of Led Zeppelin's past achievements. "We were the first band to take over and play the Empire Pool, Wembley and present non-rock side features like circus acts – although the pigs didn't quite manage to get it on," he said with a laugh, referring to one of the interludes at the memorable Wembley bash.

Since they first became airborne, Zeppelin have of course been the subject of a certain amount of controversy, ranging from them being described as the definitive all-electric band, purveyors of cock rock, to the manifestation of Jimmy Page's won personal ego trip.

I asked him about it, but again Plant didn't show concern. He wrapped it up effectively: "A lot of people draw their conclusions without seeing enough of the band. If we came over to them as being just a raw body, well then, it's OK."

Of the four Led albums – all of which immediately turned gold – it was their fourth which for the first time minutely revealed the full spectrum of their collective talents.

"Music is very much like a kaleidoscope," said Plant. "And I feel that particular album was just a case of us stretching out. It was a very natural development for us.

"I like people to lay down the truth. No bullshit. That's what the feather in the circle was all about," he pointed out, drawing my attention to one of the four symbols that went up to make the album's title. A lot of the tracks on that album came from various moods where we just got together and started to contribute to various basic ideas."

Undoubtedly a great deal of the success of the fourth album can be attributed to Robert Plant's maturity as both singer and writer. Take into account, for instance, "The Battle Of Evermore" and "Stairway To Heaven". He told me, "In the case of 'Battle', I had been reading a book on the Scottish Wars immediately before. It was really more of a play-letter than a song, and after I wrote the lyrics I realised I needed another completely different voice, as well as my own, to give that song its full impact. So I asked Sandy Denny along to sing on that track.

"I found it very satisfying to sing with someone who has an entirely different style to my own. While I sang about the events of the song, Sandy answered back as if she was the pulse of the people on the battlements. Sandy was the town crier – urging the people to throw down their weapons.

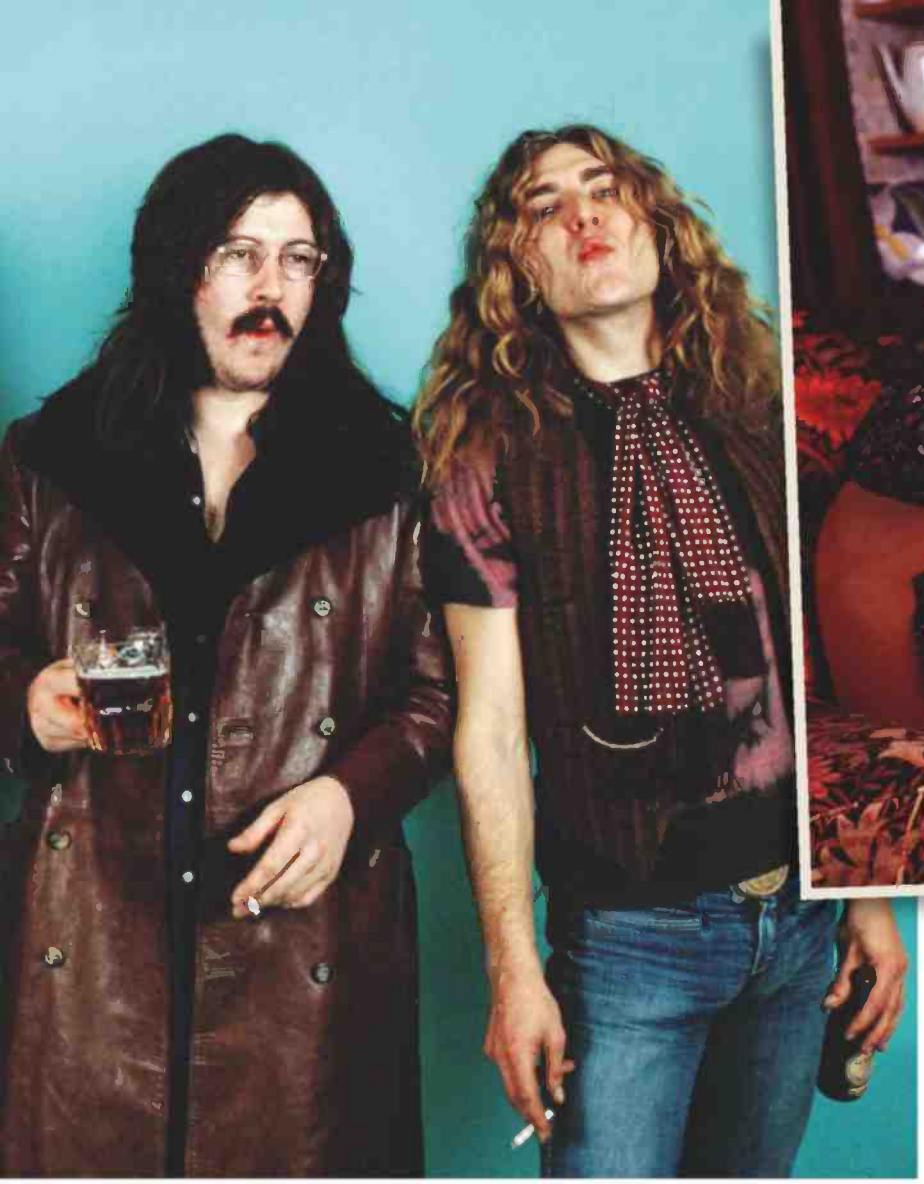
"'Stairway to Heaven' was the result of an evening when Jimmy and I just sat down in front of the fire. We came up with a song which was later developed by the rest of the band in the studio."

Much of Zeppelin's appeal has been by virtue of their consummate ability to produce material hanging on instant riffs – a characteristic they developed to great lengths on "Black

December 7, 1972: Led Zeppelin – (l-r) John Paul Jones, Jimmy Page, John Bonham and Robert Plant – backstage at the Hard Rock Theatre, Manchester; (inset) Sandy Denny, the "completely different voice" Plant needed for "The Battle Of Evermore"

"Whenever possible I really like to get out there with the kids"

CAMERAPRESS/HEILEMANN



Dog", which, to the annoyance of their plagiarists, includes instrumental passages which are almost impossible to copy.

"They're really attuned to all those time skips," Plant explained with devilish delight, "they" being the rest of the band. "These things aren't intentional, just little whims which we'll no doubt expand on the next album.

"When they're doing these kind of time-skip riffs in the studio, Jimmy, John and Bonzo suddenly come up with something like that passage on 'Black Dog': play it, fall about all over the place for about 10 minutes in fits of laughter. Play it again. Burst into laughter. Then preserve it on tape. It's as simple as that."

Sessions for the new album are underway, and without disclosing any secrets, Plant did say that it would include some things of interest. Like all major acts, Led Zeppelin have suffered from bootlegs and in return attempts have been made to cut a live album officially (the last being during a recent tour of Japan), but Plant told me the sound balance was just as bad as the bootleg. It was therefore rejected as unsuitable.

He added wryly, "You know, we've recorded ourselves at the Farm on just an ordinary Revox, and achieved a far better sound." There must be a moral in that statement.

And with that he was up and off to grab another armful of albums.

Roy Carr

— MELODY MAKER JULY 1 —

THE NOISE CAJUNKED, and beefed outwards, filling each corner of the circular, space-aged Nassau Coliseum, Long Island, New York State. Sixteen thousand people didn't know whether they were coming or going. Many danced, crazily, while others just stood, stared and smiled.

Led Zeppelin had been off stage four times. Four times they had fled under the archway to the side of the stage, and four times an unnatural din of screaming and cheering and unbelievable begging had brought them back out.

Now their set was approaching four hours in length – four incredible hours of the most wonderful music. Jimmy Page was on his toes, shaking and trying to pull out a last batch of magical notes. He'd pulled so many that evening, it seemed inconceivable that he could maintain such a peak. But something tricked him, and he spun round, ran across to Robert Plant, bursting, and slamming chords. Plant smiled, threw his head back, and the band rocked so hard you'd have thought there was no tomorrow.

It was one of the most amazing concerts I'd seen from any band, at any time. Nothing had gone missing; it had been the complete act. There had been power, climax after climax, beauty, funk, rock, boogie, totally freaked passages, and such constant, snarling energy that on this evening Led Zep could have provided enough human electricity to light half of America.

Does anybody really know how big Led Zep are?

So you'll get reports of English bands doing "well" in America, and the reports will be long. You'll hear about the Stones, Elton John and the Faces before you hear of Led Zep. Somehow somebody forgot Led Zeppelin when they were writing home. And yet for four years Zep have been slaying America. For four years they have met with the dooming criticism that they could never do as well again, and yet they've come back, and done better. This present tour will more than likely go down as their best ever. They are playing better than they've ever played in their lives.

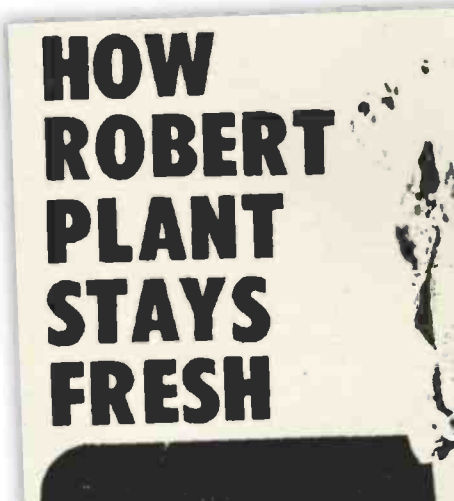
The people know it. The scenes are just ridiculous. Auditoriums and halls are being sold out without any advertising. Led Zep are delivering the coup de grâce. Unfortunately it's being shadowed by the Stones tour, and the garbage that The Moody Blues are the top band. But don't believe it. Led Zeppelin are the ace outfit.

Strange how the Zep became unfashionable back home. Sure, they sell albums, and they can fill the Empire Pool – but where were all the trimmings, where was the real flash, the excitement?

It was in the audience, to be sure, but for some reason the media took it all with a pinch of salt. That Led Zeppelin are possibly the biggest band in the world never figured. And that's a sad mistake.

It figures here, mind. Here Zep are truly recognised. Why do you think they come so often? Money, sure. But also because Zep are a band that »

REX FEATURES



love playing and here there are no inhibitions. They find their audience. Here they play their best.

"The scenes have possibly amazed you," said John Paul Jones. "But this has been happening for four years now. I think we all feel a bit annoyed that nobody really knows it back home. Do they really know what we're doing?"

This feeling is common within the band. Why, you might say, should they worry? They do well, the audience – which is the main thing – shows just how big they are. Why should they bother about wee small England and its fickle ways? Well, they're English, and like most people, they also have egos. They'd just like England to know what they're doing.

"Our egos have been hurt," says Rob Plant. "They really have. For some reason English critics have never told the truth about us. For some reason they've been out to get at us a bit. So things are clouded over, and nobody gets to know what's really happening. There's been so much bullshit printed it's just untrue.

"We read pages on some band – name not mentioned – saying just how big they are here. You ask the people here just how big they are. We know. You see, it makes the English press look ridiculous."

"It's so annoying," added Jones. "Here we are slaving away and getting consistently incredible reactions, and nobody back home can care anything about us." He shook his head. "It's just not right."

Don't get the idea that Zep are just peeved little boys, with a chip on their shoulders. It's not the case of them having their own ideas as to how big they are. That position can be seen in a matter of seconds over here. Zep are ace – there are no two ways about it.

"Maybe," said Plant. "If we were as big in England as we are here, I wouldn't be able to walk down a bloody street without being stopped," he laughed. "Don't know if I'd like that or not."

THE SCENE WAS the Waldorf Astoria Hotel on a sickening, heavy, hot New York day. Manager Peter Grant was stood with two house detectives in a corridor. His huge frame dwarfed them somewhat. There had been some trouble over the amount of people visiting Bonzo Bonham's room, and as per usual, a hotel had it in for long hairs.

The night before had seen the band play the first of two concerts at Nassau. They were overjoyed at how it had gone.

"Something has really happened this time," said Plant. "Something has really clicked. It's fantastic; the spirit within the band is just fantastic."

Plant is a cheery character, forever jigging and rocking around, spreading a laugh or two with the first colourful Brummie accent I've ever heard. Talk centred on Wolves, and the rise to fame of Midlands football teams. Derby and Wolves could indeed rule, and it was a God almighty shame that Forest has sunk to such depths as relegation.

Page was quietly going about his business, and then in a fit of laughter Bonzo appeared. The grizzly King Drummer. An honest lad who likes to swing sticks like fury and drink at about the same pace.

"You wouldn't believe what bloody trouble was goin' on with my room." It appears that trouble forever surrounds dear Bonzo.

Pretty soon the line of limousines was poking its way in and out of the absurd traffic towards Long Island. The three cars were in radio contact with each other, and the state of the traffic soon decreed that somebody's house could not be visited.

"Make sure the spare ribs are driven to the Coliseum," came a message over the radio.

Now the Coliseum is a strange building. It sits seemingly in the middle of nowhere, looming like a space research centre, circular and concrete. Why didn't they play Madison Square?

"Because it costs $5,300 to book that place," says Peter Grant, "and that's just absurd. This is a great place, and this is where the kids live. Shame there aren't places like this in England. It's getting absurd over there now. There's nowhere to play. But we're going to be playing somewhere in England at Christmas," he said. "I think it will be good. I can't tell you where it is yet, but I think it will be good.

"You know I wanted to put the band on at Waterloo Station? You know, that massive area before the platforms. I thought it was a great idea – you know, we could have Led Zeppelin specials coming in on the platforms. It was going to work, but the station authorities said there was one late train that would get in the way. Shame, it would have been great; imagine Led Zep playing Waterloo Station – a completely covered hall, and good acoustics."

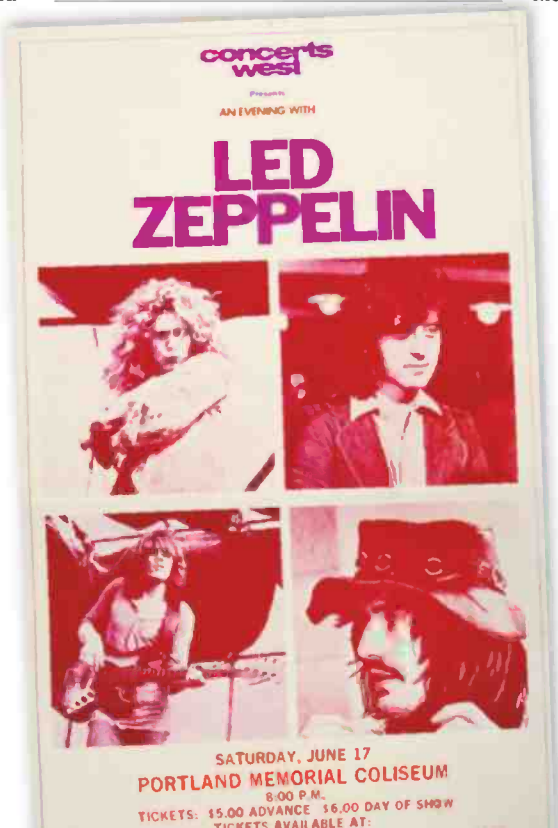
They've got a nice PA there.

The Coliseum was beginning to fill, and when I walked out with Plant he was met with a load of hand shakers. "Just want to say you're the best band in the world. You just are. I just want to say that," said one lad. "Ta very much," said Plant, and gave the guy a backstage pass. "You're the best band in the world," said another. And they really meant it.

Martin, one of the famous crew of Led Zep roadies, was squeezing Plant's lemons in the dressing room. A half-dozen lemons, mixed with honey and tea to feed the Plant voice. How it kept going that night was amazing.

Bonzo was just carrying his sticks, and the clothes he'd arrived in. "I got stopped backstage somewhere, you know, and they wouldn't believe I was with the band. They said, 'Where's your stage clothes?' I said, 'Where's me what?'"

> "We're getting incredible reactions, and nobody back home cares"



The time was right, and the band made its way out of the room, and stood in a large hall backstage. The excitement just round the corner was thick as 16,000 people made ready. There was that hum, that frightening hum.

An electrical tone was started. It sounded like the rising drone of a bomber. It got louder, louder, till it filled the whole place, and the band walked onto the stage. The place collapsed and the band, without hesitation, kicked into rock. Page stabbed out a riff and Plant yelled and squealed, and glory, all hell broke loose.

Page is the complete guitarist. He captures every emotion that sears through his head, and channels it through his arms. Whether it be a chord, a riff or a gaggling neckful of notes, he is perfect. And when technical ability might just swamp feeling, Page finds a dirty dischord, and lets it cut ugly and messy through the tapestry. It sort of jerks your body and throws you, and then he finds a true line again, and weaves on in a straight, sharp direction. Their music has indeed got better. There appears to be a deal more open-ended excitement about the unit.

Page is in fine fettle, swaying on his heels, and then shaking his mass of hair into a blur of tangles, which are picked up by the many spots and turned gold, and then white. Plant gets all very sexual, and mouths heaves and sighs, and frenzied guttering down the mic. And then he forces that screaming voice right out, Page ends the riff, Bonzo falls silent, Jones stops, and only Plant's crazy voice insults the silence.

May 27, 1972: Zep play the Oude RAI exhibition hall in Amsterdam before heading off on their eighth tour of North America

Three acoustic numbers give people time to breath, lie back and relax. John Paul Jones exhibited a new electric mandolin that gave a good colourful feel to songs written on Welsh hillsides.

Then they all upped and left dear Bonzo.

He remained, and delivered the most wrecking drum solo you'd ever imagine. He beat the thing so hard, with sticks and hands, that I thought his arms were going to fall off, or maybe the kit would shatter. His object was to reach grumbling thunder, and that he did, a sort of crazy stampede of drums, and sharp, slashed cymbals. It went on over 15 minutes and he wouldn't stop.

Bonzo would cool it all down to just one motion – he was leaving out what was already bopping in everyone's heads. Everyone knew what Bonzo was playing, but he wasn't playing it – if you can see what I mean. And then he struck back, and with no nerves at all just smacked everything till it hurt, and hurt. The tempo doubled, and doubled again, and his anguished face and black hair was wet through and streaked with burning skin and sweat.

His final crescendo was just not true. I stood and shook my head in disbelief as he panned everything in sight. Toil and troubles, it just hubbled and crumpeted out in a monstrous form. Peter Grant was shaking his head too, and Jim Page, who had snuck back onto the side of the stage, was also staring with admiration at Bonzo. It exploded in one mass of fire and flesh, and Page jumped into view again, and played with his buddy.

The Coliseum just couldn't understand it. They got up and for five solid minutes applauded Bonzo. It was heart-warming; it almost made you want to cry, such was the emotion about, such was the pleasure, and enjoyment of applauding something that had been so incredible.

"Someone once asked me what technicalities I applied to my playing," Bonzo had said to me. "I said, 'Technicalities, what the hell are you going on about?' I said, 'This is my technicality,' and raised my hand in the air, and let it fall. Head to drum, that's what it is, head to drum.

"I'm not trying to be any superstar. I just do my bit as one quarter of Led Zeppelin. When I have a solo I don't ever imagine drummers around watching me. I don't try and impress people. I don't try and perform the most amazing changes in tempo, or make people watch me. I just couldn't do that – it would take away the essence of Jimmy's guitar, and Robert's voice. John Paul and myself lay down a thick backdrop, that's what we do."

The place was in a fever now of sheer adulation. It couldn't stop, and it didn't. The band stonked into 'Whole Lotta Love", with Pagey experimenting with the bizarre via the reverb unit. He stood there, on his own, slashing and playing loud. The chords were held in the amps, and then shot out with echo, just as he hit another. Then he took a cello bow, and scraped and banged it across the strings.

Now we're backstage, and the band run off, but Bonzo's saying they've got to do another, and the screaming is really painful on the ear from outside. John Paul Jones takes the stage on his own, and sits at an organ. From that he delivers a medley of songs, some old, some new, some forgotten, and then into spine-chilling religious chords. It sounded like the Phantom organist, rushing forth with colossal organ chords, and then Jones broke into "Amazing Grace".

Soon all the band were back on stage and Page laid a boogie out, and Plant growled "Boogie Mama", and what a boogie it was. It was like some stoked-up train belting on into the night – Bonzo being the pistons, Page the driver, it gouged into everybody's head.

Things were coming fast and furious. Next thing you know they're into "Peggy Sue" and a rock'n'roll medley. And America goes wild, and dances.

So now we're into the limousine again and Plant is shaking his head. "They'd never believe how good it is here back home. They'd just never believe what happened tonight."

The way they had been applauded. The way the whole place had begged every last thing out of the band. The way the band had given everything they had, and still wanted to give more. Can you believe how big they are?

"They say Jethro Tull are brilliant on stage," said Jones. "Well, he does the same bloody thing every night, the same gags, everything, the same. Each of our gigs is treated differently; we don't have any set, religious rehearsed thing. And what you've seen tonight has been happening for years here."

It has been a memorable evening. The memory of Plant there twisting and turning, and screwing himself up on stage. Singing boogie, and singing rock, and singing ballad, and singing his heart and head out. Of Page being the guitarist, of Bonzo and his drums, and of John Paul Jones on the most pungent bass, and organ avec a difference. And the audience loving every second of it like no audience I've ever seen. *Roy Hollingworth* •

GETTY

"I've sold 18 million records in a year"

Bolanmania is a mixed blessing for T. REX. New problems include management limbo and record company hassle. New friends include Ringo, John Lennon and Mick Jagger. "The pressure of the whole thing is phenomenal," says Marc Bolan.

"We always had commercial potential": Marc Bolan and his congas-tapping sideman in T.Rex, Mickey Finn

— MELODY MAKER MAY 6 —

HOW IS IT you and Ringo are so sympathetic to one another? I don't know. You always get illusions about people in the business, who you think you'll get on with, but you never do – at least, I never do. One gets a great barrier, in fact, with everyone one thinks one is similar to. It's always the people I least expect to get close to that I end up friends with. It happens. It's not contrived.

Is it that you're probably expecting too much? Probably. I'd really like to meet Edwin Cobblers 'cos he's such a groove and he writes really like me, and you get there and there's this cat going, "Hey, man," and all that. It just doesn't work. You both sit there going (*whistles slowly and stares around the room*). Or you're frightened to play songs 'cos he's gonna stare or somethin'. A lotta that goes on.

Are you conscious of the fact there's a super-elite among pop musicians at a certain level, a sort of exclusive club? I don't think there is.

Don't you? Not the ex-Beatles, the Stones? No. No one that I know knows anyone.

I'm just thinking on the lines that when you were in LA Jagger came to see you. Yeah.

And when you were in New York there was Lennon. Do you get the impression that »

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA/PHOTOSHOT

these people check you out, vet you for membership, so to speak? This is total journalese now, isn't it? That's not the truth. The truth is, there are so few people, um, visible that one can learn from automatically, so one can only go to the ones that one knows... When I saw Lennon we just got on fine. He's not a close friend of mine or anything, but we just immediately had a nice thing, and I'd make a point always in New York of ringing him. But John Lennon doesn't represent to me what you said, any more than I represent a superstar. I like his chords. And he has a lot I can learn from.

But three years ago, when you were Tyrannosaurus Rex, the likelihood of you meeting on such a basis, was negligible. Oh, I wouldn't have approached him. And he probably wouldn't have known who I was. He does now because he reads about me or something. And obviously there is a competition artistically. Before, people of that calibre didn't have that many people to worry about when they put a record out. Now they have to consider T. Rex and possibly... I don't know, who else?... There must be someone else.

If John Lennon, or Bob Dylan, or the Rolling Stones, bring out a new record, is one of your first reactions to size up the strength of the new competition? Sure, I listen to all those things. When they're new I tend to listen to them all, as everyone does, but I don't think of it as inspiration. The first Lennon album, the sound of it, influenced me incredibly – the drum sound. Very much. I heard his new one and I enjoyed it very much, but there's nothing on there that would influence me. I heard "Tumbling Dice" the other day for the first time, and I'm not sure, personally speaking, that they couldn't have put out another track as a single. "Tumbling Dice" doesn't strike me as being the strongest thing. But they still boogie so well. I was very excited for them to hear that that energy is still there, 'cos a lotta people have been saying it isn't.

Bolan and Ringo Starr promoting the ex-Beatle's highest-charting UK single, "Back Off Boogaloo", in March 1972

Survivors of the '60s British rock scene? They're fragments, aren't they? But I think for them that's a great pain – I might be completely wrong but they seem very aware of that all the time, that they've been there so long, and also that they're not obviously as big as they were. They're very aware, like Dylan, of not being the spearhead of something, and that's a downer.

Can you ever buy the idea of The Who as the greatest rock'n'roll band going? I wouldn't put The Who in the same class as the Stones! No way. That's Kit Lambert's idea. The only thing where the Stones have never compared with The Beatles is they could never write as good songs, nowhere near, and that's still a problem with them. It's very hard for them to write. They come up with some great songs sometimes, but it's hard for them. They don't just knock 'em out. It takes ages and ages and ages. It's not the playing, I don't think. They're just not that important any more; I think they're finding it difficult to live with, in the context of 16-year-old kids. That's who they were important to, that's what they were about and that's what Mick still wants.

Having heard their new album, it's apparent they were aware of T. Rex, Slade and others. I know. The beginning of "Tumbling Dice" is a bit like "Get It On". In fact, they played it to me and watched my reactions. They watched my face, they watched my feet, they watched it all, which is great. I do that all the time. It means they're trying. They wanted to find out what I'd do on hearing it, and I do that every time someone walks into a room; I watch what they do all the time. We have great talks, Mick and me, great talks.

But maybe they've left it a little late. I dunno. Not musically, but like who is their audience? You're paying to see a phenomenon, and if it ain't a phenomenon any more... You ain't gonna tell me, for instance, that one can sit through an hour of Paul McCartney and really vibe peak.

No one can come to a peak on it 'cos it's a bummer, man. You can't hit a concert I'm doing at this point in time and not get off on it, 'cos I'll make 'em! I'm still fighting. But after three years not working I ain't gonna go out there and do a whole number, 'cos I'm not gonna know. You can't go back to it. There's no way it can be redone. Once it's gone, once you lose that train of doing it.

Like, there's 400,000 advance orders on "Metal Guru". I mean it, it's – phenomenal! But if we didn't put a single out for a year it would be different, I guarantee you. It would still be a monster Number One immediately and

MIRRORPIX


LIFE AT THE TOP

everything, but there'd be something gone. Like, the Stones' album cost a fortune, man – and now Kinney have gotta get their money back. Their advance was two million dollars, and they were offered much more by RCA. RCA offered them five million dollars or something like that. They ended up with quite a lot, but what I got was not very short, which is something to think about, on one hit in America.

We were offered five million dollars, which is two-and-a-half million quid, by a jive company, but you can't. You can't play these games 'cos it ain't no good. Like, as soon as you got your money, end of story.

CBS offered a fortune, but what do I want with CBS? That's the thing. I just didn't wanna know. I don't like what they do with Dylan – all that about "We're not gonna promote *New Morning* without ads, really killed that album, stone dead. And putting out "Wigwam" as a single ain't too hip. I mean, hang about! C'mon!

If you're big you can go with anyone and sell records, but you must think of longevity. You've got to think of five years' time. I stayed with EMI purely because they're geared to working with T. Rex. They've done it for a year and a half and they're totally equipped, and they paid what I asked, so it was cool, and I felt obligated artistically. We got the most they ever paid for anyone, I think. It was worth it. We got it back in a day, I think. That whole period was so lucky for me.

I sit here and think I've sold 18 million records in a year and two months. Two records I didn't want out have both been enormous with no promotion from me at all; "Debora" doesn't even get played much. "Metal Guru" is coming out and it'll be a monster. You know, when I saw that movie [of the Wembley concert] it was weird, 'cos I felt exactly like what you'd written, but that wasn't me. I was looking at this thing up there. That's to do with me not going out any more. To have every single person look at you and point is very weird, very odd, and it gets so more and more.

I can really sympathise with Ringo. Electric fences and dogs, and all that. I'm beginning to really understand that, which is cool, but you mustn't let the kids see that side, 'cos they don't understand. To them you're not real. *Melody Maker* comes out every Thursday, they see the picture, and what do they know? I'm something that lives in a television.

The only saving thing is that I'm slightly like what I'm supposed to be like. Can you imagine not being like it, being a manufactured product, and every time you went out people said, "Oooooh!" (*gives a knowing look*). Like, Alan Ladd was three foot tall and was always eight foot in people's minds. At least I wave at people and poke me tongue out. For whatever reason, it's history now. It just is, and we can't change it, even if we wanted to.

Do you ever feel a need to justify what you've done? I feel I'm justification enough. That I exist is enough, for me. Any more than that, it gets very debatable.

Why should you be more successful in Britain at this point than, say, Slade or Black Sabbath, successful as they are? Um, because we've caught the public's imagination at the right time. We are a band that started out as an LP group, basically, and who always had commercial potential. I was always considered to be slightly literary, slightly mystical if you want, which I am no less – I'm much more perceptive, in fact, than I ever was. Because I don't choose to talk in long stanzas and poetic, flowery prose doesn't mean one's any the less a poet; but I proved my roots by doing that.

And then we were always considered the sort of band that was never really as big as it should've been right at the beginning. I mean, we had a week of being very big right when we first started, but it began over three years to wane. All I did, I think, was fulfil a lot of people's ideas about how maybe we should go by doing exactly what I wanted to do.

It's the old story of putting guitar, bass and drums behind everything. Not like with Dylan, though – I've heard people say that – but 'cos we grew into it. But without sounding arrogant, I've written some very good songs. I'm a good songwriter. There are better, but there's a lot worse, man, I wanna tell you.

> "I put myself on view in the right places and people said, 'Hey!'"

I think everyone who's a good songwriter has peaks of writing special songs. It's never continuous, ever. We all write less special songs. What is exciting, and what makes one stay with an artist, is a pretty consistent standard. I wouldn't put a bad song on an album. I'm not sure I write bad songs, actually; I don't think I ever have. But I've written a lot better than others, by my own evaluation.

It's not you that's changed; it's the public and the environment? Everything. Yeah. I steered myself in an environment where it would change, didn't I? I put myself on view in the right places and people said, "Hey!" There was a bubble. And then someone comes along and says, "Record that," because pieces of plastic get it out to people who can't be there, and then the machine starts. Or it doesn't, depends where you are. It can be put out and nothing happens. But 95 per cent is 'cos it's bad promotion in that case.

Why would you say The Beatles made it at that particular point in time? Why did the chicken cross the road? You see? To get to the other side. That's really it, man. They did what they did 'cos they loved it when they started. They were all in skiffle groups. But suddenly, you realise you've got to get a job, and then it becomes something else. Once you get to this stage it's... hard, man. There ain't no two ways about it. And if you're gonna lame out you'll lame out. Every moment is a choice. The pressure of the whole thing is phenomenal.

Like, that thing goes out that I'm supposed to be at Lincoln – nothing to do with me, out of my hands! But I don't know how many thousands of people are going to hear about that, and you don't know what reasons they're going to say for why they thought I hadn't turned up. The might say, "Oh, that Marc Bolan asked for too much money," or "He pulled out," and it's nothing to do with me! I've never even heard of it, right? But that's going on, and now I'll have to think about it and how to deal with it. And there's millions of those. It affects any career. Obviously has to.

I've worked eight years for what I've got now, but in the end I don't know what it's worth, how I'm gonna come out of the whole thing, and what sort of shape I'm gonna be in. I just know that those things are against the natural way I ever did anything, and the reason I've been successful is I've never screwed anyone.

The gods are strange. They take it away, baby, so fast. With no disrespect to the Probys, for example, there's many people you can think of that were very big at one time. And yet he disappeared. Why? The reasons behind it are not what they seem to be. It's a law of balance. Someone points a finger at you and says, "You've got it." Then you get what you wanted, but whatcha gonna do with it? Every day, man, so many people scraping hits out of you, and you're there chopping 'em off.

Do you think the critics are going to embrace you like they did Lennon and McCartney? I honestly don't care. Like, take the poetry book (*Warlock Of Love*). That goes out and it's not reviewed in one paper, and it was very successful for a poetry book. Now that makes the guy at *The Times*, or one of those things, obsolete, man, as far as I'm concerned.

It's like Grand Funk in America. That got ripped off rotten, but one can't deny their success. How one adjusts to that is something else. Had we not had the groundwork of three years of making friends on the papers, having people be slightly sympathetic towards me and knowing that I'm not a creep, it might've been different, 'cos when it happened everyone knew what'd gone down. It'd been since '65, man. But you'll notice with the Wembley reviews not one of 'em actually reviewed the concert. They just said what went down, which is the way it should be.

Critics... You know, someone asked me today what "Metal Guru" is all about. And I said I don't know. He said, "What's a metal guru?" and I said, "Well, like a jeepster, actually." So he said, "What's a jeepster?" I said it's like riding a white swan, and he went, 'Oh.' He wrote it all down. You see, it's just enough that it is. I can sit down for hours and tell 'em all about it, give people like that guy answers they wanna hear, but it's a waste of breath. For me, it's not abstract. "Metal Guru", in the context of that song, is about godhead, I suppose. "*Metal Guru, is it you? / Sitting in your armour-plated chair*". The other line is: "*You're all alone without a telephone*". »

I mean, God isn't gonna have a telephone. I don't want telephones, so he ain't gonna want one, is he?

It's very hard, because one never knows outwardly how people look at things. I mean, I wasn't the "electric warrior". Electric warrior is a thing out of a story I wrote, an Ice Age warrior. I didn't feel it necessary to explain to people that fact because at some point that story will come out. I mean, what's "Tumbling Dice" all about? Y'know, if a guitar sound or a lotta bass drum doesn't turn you on, there isn't much point in listening anyway. If someone doesn't like what you do, it's really tough; they shouldn't listen.

Or just because one is successful that doesn't mean they should necessarily feel inclined to dissect what you do. Donald Peers was very successful in his time, I believe, but that doesn't mean I've got to go out and buy all his records and start dissecting. No downer on him!

Do you – like Lennon, say – use music as a means of putting across some form of message? I have done on the new album. Every song is a message, but it's very hard for me to describe… And, personally, Lennon's thing for me was slightly too political. Rock'n'roll is basically an up, and I like music to think to, obviously, and I don't listen to just anything, but I found it slightly depressing as an album. It would slightly limit the times I would play the record. Rock'n'roll is enough if you pick up a guitar and play it well; that's enough of a message. There are many tracks on my album that are, shall I say, autobiographical. "Ballrooms Of Mars", that's one track.

> "Have you heard the new McCartney? He's lost, man, he's lost"

Do you ever listen to Slade, Black Sabbath, the Faces, and your other contemporaries? Sure, I check everyone out. I listen to everything. I know Slade ain't about to be competition. Have you heard the new McCartney? He's lost, man, he's lost. He's no idea what he's gonna do. Ringo I love, because he's fine and he'll never let me down. I only see George occasionally. I don't know much about him. We're not overly attracted to each other, but he seems quite a nice cat. Lennon I get on fine with, but he's sad, just sad. There's a great sadness about him.

Do you get the impression that the Faces and Rod Stewart backed off from competing with you? I'm not aware of them at all, actually. Honestly. I'm aware of Rod 'cos he had a big record. I never saw any competing going down – and I know when someone is competing with me 'cos I get worried, you get a feeling down here, of excitement. I know I never considered that with him, but we might compete for the media. Whoever is behind him was trying hard. Remember that phrase? "We don't wanna put singles out, we only wanna make albums." That seems to be the overall approach. And then suddenly they make singles again a year later when they aren't as big. I like all the Faces very much as people, but I never… Rod's albums are better, obviously, much better than theirs. I've felt that much more in America.

Tell me, what is *your* real strength in America? Very new, but very big. We've got a gold single now for "Get It On", and that album is gold this week. "Telegram Sam" came in at 61 the first week. It did 250,000 the first three days. You see, what we haven't done, and I hope the people respect it, is we made no attempt to hype it. I mean, there are so many groups – and I won't mention the names – that I read so much about and are supposed to be big there. That single got to Number Eight in the singles charts after six months, and the album's been in the charts, I think, 40 weeks.

What clinched it in the States for you? The tour, really, but all the good promotion as well. I wanted to find out what had gone down and the people just weren't aware of what was happening. I went round all the radio stations and said, "How come?" They hadn't really heard "Get It On" there, but slowly it just happened. We never hyped anyone there, either, you see. But every concert we played was totally sold out. That last tour was incredible. We did 100,000 in a week on the album after that tour.

The audiences were much less primed there, you see. We'd never been on television. They didn't really know what we looked like. It's growing very fast there for us, because they're very into the commercial thing. They can see what's happened here. I think, if the thing is done correctly, it could be phenomenal there. I just didn't wanna say, "Hey, we're T. Rex making it in America," and all that – 'cos it's been done so many times and I don't think it means anything. If someone doesn't have the intelligence to look at *Billboard* and *Cashbox* and see the placings, well… But in America I let them see all the Number Ones here, and keep seeing them, till suddenly they couldn't deny it.

Y'know, I keep all the music papers every week, as I'm sure many people do. I've got papers from '62. I've got a great room full of music papers! But I only ever go back on anything months, years, later. I used to refer back to what guitar someone had in the old days – I still do, actually. It's normally pictures. I'm very into pictures, and hand movements, all that sort of jive. I don't do it any more, that's the sad thing.

When I had five years in Tooting or wherever it was, I didn't have much else to do but drool over Les Pauls. At 9.30 every Wednesday morning I used to go to Tooting Broadway to pick up the music papers and I used to have a coffee. I was very embarrassed about going places – still am, actually. Then I used to go and read 'em on the

train home. It was bliss, man. Heavenly bliss. But going to America got me out of the habit.

When "Hot Love" came out we left Britain when it was Number One and came back when it was Number One. For the first time I began to realise it all goes on without you. I thought we'd go away and be totally, instantly, forgotten, 5,000 miles away. We came back and it was exactly the same. I'd always felt that had I not read my music papers it would be all different.

How's your relationship now with John Peel? Fine. Fine. I see John no less than I see anyone. Most of the people that are my closest friends I haven't seen for months, especially when they're working as well. It's hard to liaise. The last time I saw John was three months ago, and that was fun. I send him a lotta postcards.

There's a feeling that there's some estrangement between the two of you? My relationship with John was always strange. We're not really compatible people, although we love each other very much. We have a bond which is unbreakable, basically, as we started virtually unknown together and both attained success from nothing. We always had differences of opinion. We're both over-sensitive towards each other. I mean, just our taste in records is very different. There are many things. But we've never lied to each other. We've always been very straight.

You see, any time I get off at all now I tend to stay at home on my own, just because I don't want to see people in general, not necessarily John. Normally, the times when you do want to see the people they're not around. Often I've rung John and he's been away. He understands, of course he does. At the beginning John helped me incredibly, and when you see something like this happen... I wouldn't say he feels left out or anything, but the thing has grown much bigger than any of us ever thought. Times have just changed, you know. The thing about John is that he has a great mind and a really good head. He will always surprise everyone, always will.

Have you changed, do you think? Well, I'm still the same little boy I was. I still get off reading music papers. I still get off on guitars. There's this great block, you see, between the kids and the pop star, which doesn't exist, man, in reality. I don't think I've changed since I was four years old. I think I was hipper when I came out, when I was born, than when I'll go back. You just get sadder. You see more pain and suffering. Life is loving people, screwing people, having affairs with people, seeing old friends, going back to your old home where you used to live, going to school... but you end up disliking yourself most of all, probably.

You're the one that in the end you don't like. Everyone is cool but you. Your deficiencies bug you: the fact that your ears might be a little big and you wanna chop 'em off. As a kid you get into those things. Chicks – all this stuff hangs you up, which is rubbish, but that's the one thing in the end that consumes you, and if you get over that one it becomes a mental thing: the fact that you're too quick with people, or you didn't give someone a chance.

What do you think you will have left behind as an artist and musician? I'm inclined to think it will be more than people will give me credit for, because I don't think I've actually done my thing yet. It probably won't be music. Writing, I would think, in 10 years' time. All this will be classed as a phenomenon alongside the other phenomenons, as it's being now. I span a lot of spectrums. I'm right in the middle of it all. I've written some very fine melodies, I think. "Cosmic Dancer" was a very nice melody. I did a string quartet recording just for myself, and it sounded very fine. I was very impressed, much more than I expected to be. And there are many words I've liked on songs. I think people will always pick pieces. They pick the "*newspaper taxis*" and all that stuff. There's a line in "Rip Off": "*I'm a creature in disguise/There's a man with a whip on his silver hip/Living between my eyes*". I think that's a very relevant line. I very often flash on it.

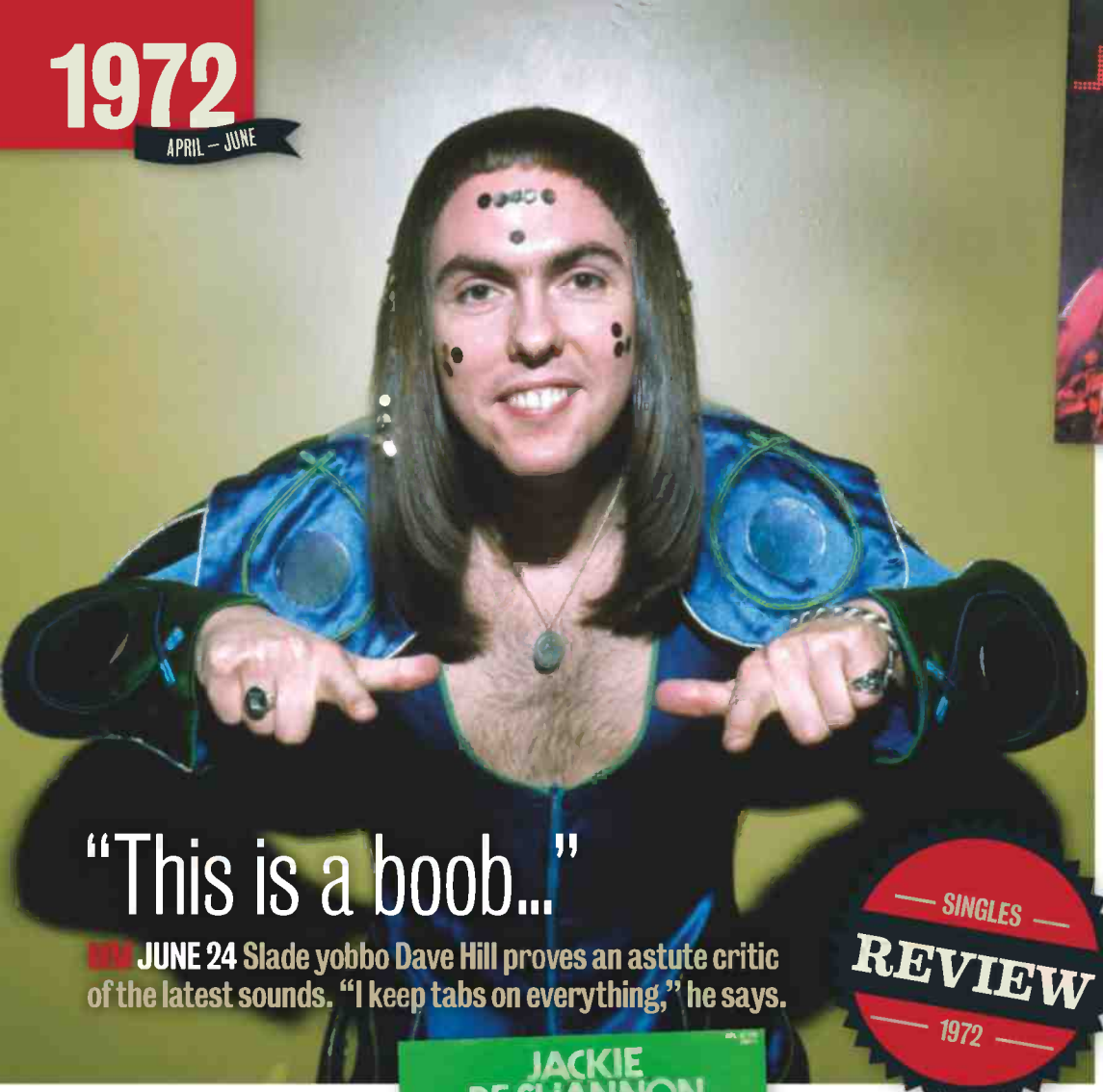
"All this will be classed as a phenomenon alongside the other phenomenons": T.Rextasy in full effect

You think, therefore, that people will pick up on the lyrics and the imagery rather more than the music? People tend to. Yeah, I tend to.

I know that the music business thinks that through you rock'n'roll is boogying again? Sure, I think so, too. But, y'know, all the music is exactly the same. Everyone thinks the same thing. It just depends how you do it. We're all flesh and blood, supposedly. At least, so the rumour has it.

Chris Welch and Michael Watts •

REX



"This is a boob..."

MM JUNE 24 Slade yobbo Dave Hill proves an astute critic of the latest sounds. "I keep tabs on everything," he says.

SINGLES REVIEW 1972

Free Catch A Train FROM THE ALBUM *FREE AT LAST*, ISLAND

It's Free. The style of the lead guitar and the singer's voice gives it away. Is this their new album? From the sound of it they are back into the Free kind of music. I would like to get to see them on stage. I have never actually seen them, but their music to me is very similar. Everything they do is pretty much the same.

Roxy Music
Re-Make/Re-Model FROM THE ALBUM *ROXY MUSIC*, ISLAND

This sounds like something from Crimson. That sax player from Crimson. It's the same style. I don't find anything in the voice, but there is something about it, though. It's a "Jumping Jack Flash" kind of beat, a Stones/Crimson sound. Very unusual. There are a lot of influences on it. That was a Beatles riff from "Day Tripper". This must be a very mixed-up band. I don't know who it is but it's very interesting.

Beach Boys You Need A Mess Of Help To Stand Alone FROM THE ALBUM *CARL AND THE PASSIONS – "SO TOUGH"*, WARNER BROS

The Beach Boys. I love their music. *Surf's Up* was their best album. Is this their new album? It's very typical of the material from *Surf's Up*. It's like a continuation of that album. Virtually everything The Beach Boys do is good. I think they are more a recording group than a live act. Their numbers seem to me to be too difficult to perform live. They are one of the greats, though.

The Who
Join Together TRACK

The Who. I keep tabs on everything, you know. This is the third time I have heard this single and each time I like it more. To me The Who never have to be as good as their next single. They are established.

Creedence Clearwater Revival
Someday Never Comes FANTASY

I don't like this at all. The backing is inadequate. Creedence? I really never thought it was them. It isn't the kind of rocking material you expect from that group. They have done some incredible tracks in the past but this is a boob. They've blown it with this one.

Jackie DeShannon
Vanilla Clay ATLANTIC

It's a good song. I haven't caught the voice. It could be someone I know really well. On the first hearing it sounds good. A pleasant song but I don't know who it is.

Marc Bolan
Hippy Gumbo TRACK

Is it a chick? Melanie? It sounds a bit like Bolan, but there are no riffs. This must be an oldie re-released. It sounds dated. It sounds like something from his Tyrannosaurus Rex days. It will be a hit.

Jonathan King
It's A Tall Order For A Short Guy UK

That intro sounds like Betty Wright's "Clean Up Woman". There's a change of key there. It don't go nowhere, man. I don't hate it but it doesn't knock me out. It's got a commercial touch about it.

Neil Young
Old Man REPRISE

You don't have to tell me who this is. I have always liked Young's voice. Some of the songs on his *Goldrush* album were great. He writes lines into his music which are really commercial. I like this, but it sounds similar to "Castles Burning" or whatever it was called ["Don't Let It Bring You Down"]. My favourite of his is "Only Love Can Break Your Heart".

Roger Cook
We Will Get By REGAL ZONOPHONE

A nice voice. I know that voice but I don't think I've ever heard him sing so high. Roger Cook? I like it. He is breaking away from the Blue Mink sound. A nice song. It will be interesting to see what the outcome will be.

GETTY (2)

"Sounds like Topol!"

MM JUNE 17 Black Sabbath man Tony Iommi recognises melody, strings and Rolf Harris.

The Mamas & The Papas
California Dreamin' PROBE

The Mamas & The Papas (*after a few bars*). I like it. I like a lot of things they do. I like the tune and treatment. I'll give it five. The Mamas & The Papas is a nice one to start with.

Clem Curtis
I've Never Found A Girl (To Love Me Like You Do) PYE

I've heard that sound before, but I can't think who it is. It's a nice record and would do well in discos, and it might just possibly make the chart.

Dave Clark & Friends
Rub It In COLUMBIA

I've no idea who this, either. Dave Clark? Well, it's a lot different from what he has done previously. It might be OK for discos. I don't like the guitar work; it could have been better. It doesn't sound like Dave Clark at all, but it does sound like something I've heard before.

Mick Grabham
On Fire For You Baby UA

The guitar sounds like George Harrison. It's pleasant, but I don't think it will make the chart. I've never heard of him.

Rolf Harris
Tutankhamun COLUMBIA

Rolf Harris (*immediately*). It sounds like a theme for one of those Bob Hope road movies. I bet Tutankhamun never thought he'd make the chart. But this one might. It's a good novelty with a topical flavour, and Rolf has had previous hits – so this could make it. But it does sound like a piece of film music.

Keith Michell I Only Want To Say
FROM *JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR*

Jesus Christ Superstar... It sounds like that fellow who did "If I Were A Rich Man" – Topol. I like the strings; they sound nice. But I don't care for the changes in the middle part. It's very dramatic, but I don't think it quite comes across. I think it's a bit overdone emotionally. It would seem to be more suitable as an album track than a single.

The Congregation
Jesahel COLUMBIA

I've no idea who this is. It goes on a bit, doesn't it? There's a nice acoustic guitar sound but it's a bit monotonous. Those changes at the end are a bit corny. The Congregation? I preferred their "Softly Whispering I Love You".

The Cats
Swan Lake BAF

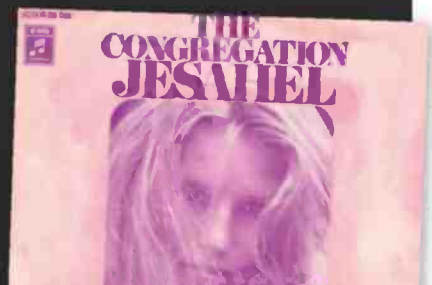
Take that off! It's spoilt a beautiful melody. The Cats? Well, they've got the right name.

Chris Hodge
We're On Our Way APPLE

It's very well produced. I like the instrumental sound. As far as the record as a whole goes, what is there to say? I can't say anything fantastic about it.

American Spring
Good Time UA

American, isn't it? But it reminds me of an recording made about five or six years ago – something from the rock'n'roll era. It might do well in America, but I don't think it will do anything special over here. It's quite pleasant, but they should have done it four or five years ago. The voice is nice, but it could have been heard on something more up to date.



ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

ALBUMS

Roxy Music Roxy Music ISLAND

Kari-Ann stares, with lustful expectancy, teeth bared and surrounded by frosted deep-pink lips. She reclines on a counterpane of silvery satin in a halternecked pink-and-white swimsuit, built strictly for the boudoir. There's a pink rose falling from one hand. A gold LP nestles beside her.

And all that is just the cover of an extraordinary album, from an extraordinary group. Roxy Music is a concept which not everyone will latch onto at first, but which is as rich in performance as in promise, carefully calculated yet simply oodles of fun. The music on their first album consciously displays echoes of pretty well every style of pop and rock, but it's not a hotch-potch and they're not just a British version of Sha Na Na. Despite their general '50s orientation, the result is thoroughly contemporary, and they use their awareness of earlier modes to inform and reinforce their own unique ideas.

"Re-Make/Re-Model" (the first cut) is a good place to meet them: over a steady, thudding beat, Bryan Ferry declaims his lyric with the throwaway insolence of a Lou Reed. Eno's synthesizer bubbles and squeaks around him, Phil Manzanera's guitar winds up through the gears to peak revs, and Andy Mackay's alto gibbers and judders. The short instrumental breaks contain echoes of Duane Eddy, The Beatles, Cecil Taylor, King Curtis and Robert Moog – tossed out as humorous asides.

Ferry's compositions have an almost visual appeal which is beyond everyone else in rock these days. "2HB", for instance, is a homage to Humphrey Bogart (including the famous "Here's lookin' at ya, kid" line), yet uses thoroughly contemporary means – like alto with echo-repeat, and electric piano loops reminiscent of Terry Riley – to build the mood of a smoky Moroccan nightclub. "Sea Breezes", too, is startlingly visual – and not just through Eno's VCS3 wave noises. Ferry's wistful melody, embroidered by Mackay on oboe, conjures all kinds of half-forgotten movie fantasies.

"The Bob (Medley)" is a portrait of the Blitz, with fearsome synthesizer noises, while "Chance Meeting" has a fascinating fade, the fuzz guitar screaming over lightly skipping bass. "Would You Believe" develops into a Belmonts doo-wop groove, with more raunchy plastic-reed sax and some great singing – Ferry seems to have half a dozen different voices, none of which sound remotely like anyone else. Best of all is "Ladytron": it begins as a little love song, with flickering castanets, but soon shifts into a "Johnny Remember Me" groove, all echoing hoofbeats and Manzanera's guitar flying over the top like the horsemen of the Apocalypse.

OK, there's a debit side too. Pete Sinfield's production is generally good, but the overall sound tends sometimes towards mushiness ("Re-Make" has nothing like the energy of the take they did for *Top Gear*), and the inclusion of Mellotron strings on "If There Is Something" diminishes the song's impact and invites totally unnecessary and misleading comparisons with King Crimson, whom they resemble not one whit. But take it from me: Roxy Music can bring pictures to your head like no one else, and they've only just begun. Hold it right there, Kari-Ann – I'm just finishing this martini, and then... *Richard Williams, MM June 24*

"Everyone was playing with their pants off"

The ROLLING STONES have (finally) finished work on *Exile On Main St*. Keith Richards and Mick Jagger discuss their work in France ("the froggies are thieves"), and a pop scene in which they are grand old men. "I never felt I was part of the Swinging Blue Jeans era," says Mick.

The Rolling Stones laying down backing tracks for *Exile On Main St* in the basement of Villa Nellcôte, near Nice, France

(C) DOMINIC TARLE

— NME APRIL 29 —

FROM LISTENING TO the entire four sides of the new album, it's evident a lot of time and great deal of personal effort went into achieving the somewhat complex final mix-down. How long, in fact?
KEITH RICHARDS: About three months. The backing tracks were cut very basically in the basement of my house in the South of France using the barest of equipment, so therefore the mixing was done in the opposite manner, using a lot of sophisticated studio equipment.

As far as I'm concerned it didn't seem any more complex than any of the previous Stones albums. I suppose that's because it's a double album. The overall process of recording and mixing just went on a little bit longer.

Was there much overdubbing done on the original backing tracks? No, not very much. Basically, the instrumental work is pretty well the live sound that we got when we recorded the songs in my basement. Except for little things here and there, the vocals were the only things that were put on afterwards.

I've noticed that on the individual track credits, various members of the group constantly switch instruments. Both you and Mick Taylor play bass, Jagger adds some guitar and producer Jimmy Miller sits in on drums. How did all this come about? Well, making this album was a much more relaxed affair than usual. Not being done in a proper studio, it was a question of whoever was around just picking up the appropriate instruments and laying down the tracks. For instance, I might do the bass part or Mick Taylor might pick it up and play. Then Bill Wyman would turn up three hours later, but we'd laid down what we wanted to, so it wasn't worth doing it all over again. A lot of the tracks were cut with just three of the Stones there. It was as simple as that.

On some of the tracks you are heavily featured on guitars, bass and keyboards. Was this intentional so as you would have a showcase to display your versatility? No, not really. Again, it was just a matter of who was available to record at that time, for the sessions were very loose. As you know, we cut the record at my house, so I was there all the time and I just kept on blowing. Therefore, on one of the tracks, I've done all the guitar parts. Just overdubbing them one after another.

Unlike most guitarists you never appear to push yourself into solo prominence on the Stones records. Seemingly, you are content to work within the context of the group, only coming to the fore to accentuate a riff or tear off a couple of choruses. Do you prefer this as opposed to indulging in lengthy guitar workouts? I don't think in terms of lead guitar or rhythm guitar. I just think in terms of guitar players. I mean, on some of the tracks on this album we've got four or five guitars going and they're all playing different licks and counter figures. We're not into that trip of "you're the lead guitarist and I am the rhythm guitarist".

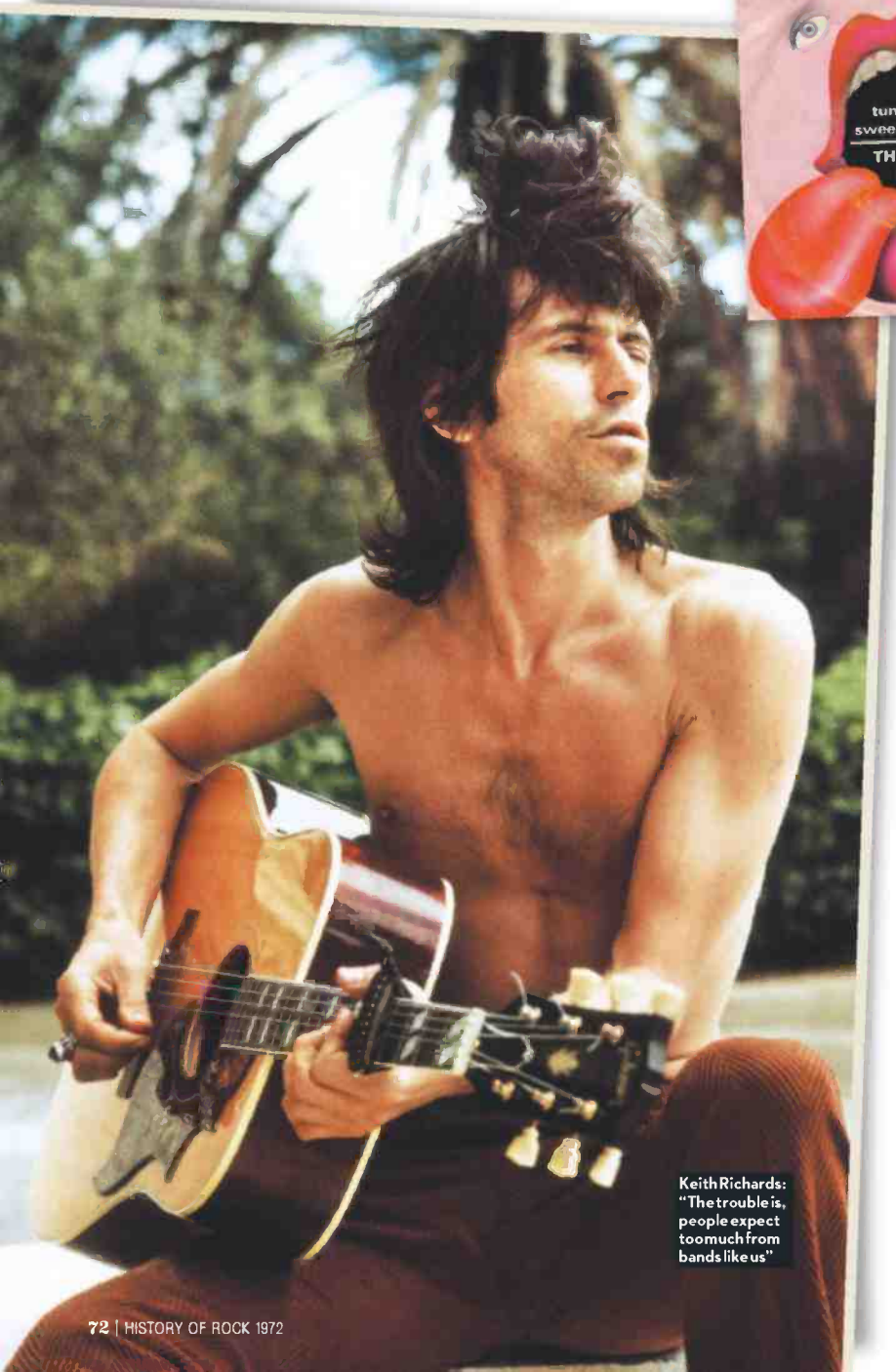
On the various tracks you utilise a lot of diverse guitar tunings – do you encounter any difficulties when reproducing these sounds on stage? Yes, I use a lot of old… a lot of old blues tunings all the time. I've been into that since I first used them on the *Beggars Banquet* album. And since then I've been using these tunings more and more. When I use them on stage I find that it can prove to be quite a hang-up, because I have to use no less than five different guitars all with different tunings and I'm always forgetting which one is which. Quite often I pick up the wrong one and have to change it very quickly for the guitar with the correct tuning for the number we're playing. Also I have to contend with the heat and the atmosphere, which quite often puts them out of tune.

Do you look upon the Rolling Stones as being more of a "songs" group, instead of a vehicle for everyone's individual virtuosity? Yes, we do concentrate on the songs. We're into making records and we make the best records that we can and everybody plays what they think will be the best thing that fits in with either the sound or the song.

Apart from the handling vocal on "Happy", have you ever had the inclination to sing on more tracks? I did "Happy" just because I happened to have that together, and it would have taken another four or five hours for Mick to have learned it. Mick said, "Well, you do it 'cos you know it." And so I did it. I mean, I did sing lead once before on the *Let It Bleed* album.

There's a noticeable similarity between both your vocal styles? That's the Dartford accent, you see.

There are 18 tracks on the new double album. How many songs did you in fact record during the sessions for this release? Virtually everything that we wrote and recorded is there. I think that there were about three or four tracks


© DOMINIC TARLE

Keith Richards: "The trouble is, people expect too much from bands like us"

left over, which we consider more as demos. If we wanted to use those particular songs in the future we would undoubtedly cut them again. They are songs but we didn't finish them off in terms of complete recorded performances.

The overall feeling I got from the album was that everyone was playing out more and obviously happy with the outcome. Was this mainly a natural progression? A progression in that we use the two horns and Nicky Hopkins permanently in the band. I suppose the main difference for us is that nowadays we don't cut a record as the five Stones, but as an eight-piece band.

I noticed that on most tracks Mick's voice was very warm and infinitely more authoritative (*Laughs*) Yeah... it's probably the whisky.

"I Just Want To See His Face" isn't the usual kind of material one might expect from the Stones, in that it's more or less a repetitive chant sung against a percussion backdrop. How did this track materialise? It was just one of those things that kind of happened on a session and went on for about 10 minutes. We just chopped the most interesting part out of it and threw away the rest.

Apart from "Tumbling Dice", there are perhaps some more immediate tracks on the album which would have made an obvious single. Did you intentionally choose a more subtle song like "Tumbling Dice" that has the effect of growing on you? I agree, there are some more obvious singles on both the albums, but then that always happens. You'll always find those songs that are very simple and grab you immediately, then there are those that get you after a couple of weeks and you suddenly realise, "Ah, that's so and so's new record."

Do you always find it a difficult task choosing a single from all the material that you have recorded? Yeah... 'cos everybody has got their own ideas about which song is the best choice for a single. If everyone in the band drew up a list of their personal choice from the five songs which a single should be picked, they're usually the same five. So really it's just a question of pulling out what we think is the most immediate from four or five tracks.

After being so closely involved with the lengthy overall project – writing, recording and mixing – do you encounter any difficulty with regard to programming the tracks for the album? We usually just play around with the tracks by bunging them on to tapes in a different order to see how they feel. On this particular album, we ended up putting all the acoustic-sounding things like "Sweet Virginia", "Torn and Frayed" and "Sweet Black Angel" all on one side because they seemed to fall together. While on another side you'll find the more uptempo rock things.

Personally, I feel that on some of the tracks – mainly the uptempo rockers – you faithfully recaptured the same kind of intensity and urgency that the band had when recording your first two albums. Was this arrived at subconsciously? It's very hard to say, but I know what you mean. Everything was very loose when we recorded it, because as I have already said, it was cut in my basement and not in a studio, so it's a very basic kind of album. It was 120 degrees; everyone sat around sweating and playing with their pants off. It was almost like a rehearsal.

You don't release as many records as in your formative days. Do you still have the same kind of motivation to write and record, or has it now become more of an effort? No, I find it just as pleasurable as ever to get songs together and record them. As long as the Stones are diggin' what they are doing then they'll put it out for everyone to hear. I think as soon as they stop diggin' it they'll collapse. Everyone digs to play just as they did 10 years ago and as long as we've got that kind of spirit we'll keep on.

What kind of material can we expect to hear on your forthcoming tour? I expect it'll mostly be made up of stuff from this new double album, and probably one or two things from the last one, because we've got Bobby Keys, Jim Price and Nicky Hopkins with us.

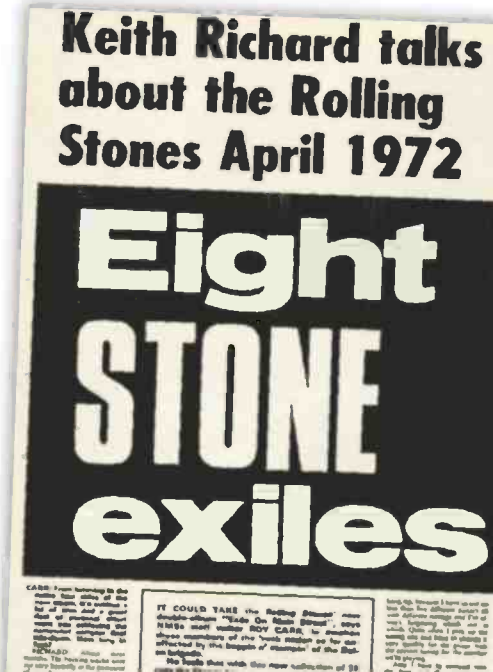
Will you also use some of the back-up singers who appear on the album? No. But I did hear a rumour that Martha Reeves might be kicking off the first half of the show and she did say that she'd sing with us. Though nothing has been fixed yet, we might also have Stevie Wonder with us on the tour because he now fronts his own band. I wouldn't swear to it, because you know how things change, but it looks like Martha and Stevie will go on the road with us.

> "A lot of the tracks were cut with just three of the Stones there"

What immediate plans have you to release albums by other artists on the Rolling Stones record label? I've got a few tapes coming from a few new bands in England, because I haven't heard what's going on in England for the last year. So I've got this little campaign going to hear a few new bands. Quite honestly I'd really like to get some new bands and they all sound so very much alike. I'm hoping that I'll find at least one band whose album we can put out in the summer. The advantage in having your own label is that you can put out albums by other artists. That's the reason why we put out the Howlin' Wolf album and *Jamming With Edward!*, but basically, we like to get a really strong act together and put their records out. However, you've got to maintain the standard that you set with your label, it's no good just putting out anything.

As a band, the Rolling Stones through their own music have always acknowledged their basic influences like Chuck Berry and other Chess Records artists. Do you feel that a lot of artists fail to admit this and state just how important these artists were? Most of those artists, like Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, are still working. They're still around and so if people want to pick up on them they can.

Your American tour is set. So what plans have you got for the Rolling Stones to appear in England? I'd really like to do one of those big festivals this summer, if only to fuck up this bloody Night Assemblies Bill, so as we could see what they'd do about it. At the moment, it's just a matter of timing. It would be nice to do Lord Harlech's thing, but the timing of it might be a bit difficult for us because at that time we would be rehearsing for the American tour. It would involve flying from I-don't-know-where to the gig, playing and flying out again almost immediately. However, I'm trying to talk everyone into getting that thing together, so that's a possibility. If not, perhaps we can do something in August after the American tour. »



Mick Jagger at Nellcôte: "I think I was there for at least three of the basic tracks"

You undertake approximately one tour a year. Would you like to do more gigs or are there too many hassles involved nowadays? I'd like to do more gigs. A tour of America is so arduous that it knocks you on your heels for the rest of the year... I mean, this one is going to take two months and take up the whole of June and July. At the end of it I very much doubt if anyone will feel like undertaking an English tour. They'll all feel like crashing out for a month or so. But I'm sure we'd like to get back together again in the autumn and tour England and Europe. That would be nice. The trouble is that people expect too much from bands like us. *Roy Carr*

— MELODY MAKER MAY 20 —

MICK JAGGER IS late, of course. But then does anyone expect him to ever arrive at appointments on time? A chick who was his secretary once told me, "If he says he'll be there on Tuesday at two o'clock, he'll be there at exactly that time – a week later." Its a great moody. But in their heart of hearts journalists like the game of cat and mouse. Even if they're sometimes not the cat.

But... "Only got back from New York yesterday and I'm still feelin' zonked." Jagger bips like some conquering prince across the expensively white, fleecy carpet in the capacious office of the managing director of WEA Records (alias Kinney, alias Warner Brothers). He glances at the surroundings, sniffs, and then flips open his can of beer. It's not lost on him that several years back this same office belonged to Andrew Oldham.

The beer, the big bowl of crisps and the large plate of brown sandwiches are provided on the table. For this Tuesday afternoon he's required to perform before an audience of cassette mics and scribbling biros. "Interviews? Naaah!" he replies in that comic cockney accent. "I've 'ad six months of 'em in LA, 'aven't I?"

He sees the photographer shaping up. "Gonna 'ave me pitcher taken, then?" He flicks his hand through his hair and sits forward on the leather sofa. You can see him quite unconsciously reacting in his face and body to the lens. As ever, he's compulsive viewing. He's talking about the music scene in the States. "Ah," he says, grimacing, "the difference is there's no poppy thing there, it's all rock."

What about the David Cassidys, I said. "Naaaaah, there's only 'im, and 'e don't sell records." The tone of disdain is heavy. "I've been listening to Humble Pie over there and they're great, they're really heavy players. And [Latin rock group also signed to Kinney] Malo, that's a good band."

And T. Rex? He hesitates, his mouth screwing up at the corners.

"I dunno... 'E's alright. I don't wanna be rude about the band; I dunno... it all depends what standard you're judging them by. When I saw 'em in LA I thought the best bit was the acoustic numbers, when he just sat there with his guitar. It was great. But the band! Y'see, there's no pop in LA, no teenybop. You can get away with it up to a point. Marc Bolan can get away with it, but there's only him. If you don't have a good rhythm section, forget it. You gotta be reasonable, man; to play in front of 15,000 people, like there was at the Palladium. In the old teenybop days you didn't 'ave to play very long. S'matter of fact, I don't think he did."

He pulled hard on his beer, then resumed: "I dunno, I don't listen to rock 'n' roll music nowadays. There's nothing much I listen to except for gospel music maybe. Have you heard of Dorothy Morrison [sic, actually Norwood]? She's gonna be on the Southern part of our American tour, doing Albuquerque and such. She sends us these great letters, endin' with 'the Lord be with you' and all that. She's really sweet."

He went off into a long explanation of one of her songs, "The Singing Slave", sounding unaccustomedly excited. Then he had another thought.

"John McLaughlin! I like 'im. The things McLaughlin does are fucking great. God, I remember him in the old days. I used to see him leaning against the pillars in the Marquee, stoned out of 'is 'ead." He made the appropriate motion, as if he were holding a guitar.

"But I like the stuff he did with Miles Davis, which is the other rock band I listen to."

By a chain process, the conversation arrived at the name of (violinist) Don Harris. It seemed he played on the new album: "He played a few notes, and I liked it, but the rest of 'em said, 'Oh no, oh no.'"

There was Dr John, too, "doing some great stuff". None of that went down, either. But then, there appears to be some idea that there's not much of Mick Jagger on the album as well. Not so, he says sharply, his lower lip jutting out in alarming fashion.

> "There's not much I listen to except for gospel music maybe"

"I was there for a lot of the time in France. I think I was there for at least three of the basic tracks."

And what about France? "Ugh, I didn't enjoy it at all, fucking drag it was."

His expression of disgust is comic. "Everyone else liked it. But it was too hot, and the fucking froggies are thieves. Thieves. The only place that's nice there is right out in the country, but you've got to get there. I suppose it was OK 'cos we were really thrown together. If you think the album's good then it wasn't a waste of time."

The album, *Exile On Main St*, should have been out by now, but they've put it back to May 26. It's down to Allen Klein, he says. That was why he was in New York: "He claimed he had two tracks on it. We said we were gonna pay him, but it wasn't enough."

A settlement has now been reached. "Let this be a warning to all up-and-coming English guitar players," he adds, wagging his finger. Insouciant was the right word.

We talk about the Stones' albums since *Satanic Majesties*. If this one is really boogying, he says, the last one was "a bit London". "It should've been called 'Too Long In London'," he mutters.

I tell him I think the albums have become successively better since *Beggars Banquet*. He shrugs.

"Did you know," he replied, "that *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed* were recorded around the same time?

"And that there are always tracks not used on one album carried over to the next, like 'Sister Morphine'. 'Sweet Virginia' and 'Shine A Light' on the new album are both from the *Sticky Fingers* period." There's 50 hours as well of unreleased material, which he thinks they're going to put out.

Looking back, didn't he think *Satanic Majesties* was a little inconclusively experimental – the Stones' version of *Sgt Pepper*? Frankly, he didn't.

"*Satanic Majesties* was the mood of the times. You can't play or write outside the mood of the times, unless you live on a mountain – and even in the South of France I wasn't that out of it I couldn't get the *Melody Maker*. In those times it was flowers, beads and stars on yer face, that's what it was. In fact, I'm rather fond of that album, and I wouldn't mind doing something like that again."

So between him and Richards he was the more experimentally inclined?

"Well, in a partnership one of you has to be. I'm just as much a rock 'n' roller as Keith, but one of yer has to be that way else it'd be too much for people to take."

I wondered why they hadn't both written outside the songwriting partnership. Naaaah, that was just an ego thing, he snorted.

"I don't like people saying, 'This one is mine!' It doesn't matter what anyone fucking says. Then you get in the position of wanting to be known for your greatness. As long as you can work with someone... you've got to 'ave someone to bounce off. You can't bounce off yer old lady like you can yer songwriter."

I said I'd heard it took them ages to write a number. He looked sideways at me: "Ooo you 'earing this from, then? You getting these impressions from out of the air?" He grinned at his sarcasm. "It's balls. No, I write 'undreds every day. Writing 'em all the time, I am."

There was also an impression, materialising out of thin air, that he liked to go in the studio with everything planned, or at least worked upon. "Ah, well, that's right, whereas Keith prefers to be more spontaneous. That's our only disagreement." He chewed on the thought. "No, I wouldn't call it spontaneous if you've been there for 10 hours on one riff."

He made a face of mock disgust. "'E just goes in there with a riff and if nothing 'appens he goes back the next day. It's alright for 'im. I have to write the tune!"

There were songs, though, that they wrote independently. Like "Sympathy For The Devil"? "Yeah." He nodded disinterestedly. "I wrote that – but it's a bit of a bore going through who wrote all the songs 'cos I have to think about it. 'Sympathy For The Devil', that was a big drag that song." Because of its connotations at Altamont? "Not really. It's all these young rock 'n' roll singers who come up to yer and say, 'Are you still into that devil shit?'"

The naughty reputation again – black magic, sex and drugs? Well, he said, there were only a few references to drugs on this new record. This was a very undruggy album for the Stones. There was something about speed, and one line about "cough mixture".

"That's a heavy aspirin song," he mumbled, like some Mile End skinhead. Christ, he's cracking up me and the photographer. I said I'd like to clear up a point, and asked him why he deliberately appeared to mix down his vocals. On "Tumbling Dice", for instance, the words were often lost. For the first time he began to look concerned.

"I think they used the wrong mix with that," he said slowly to himself. "I'm sure they did. I dunno..." He looked up. "Well, with the fast ones I really like me voice to be part of the band, but with the slow ones I generally like it upfront a bit. I think it all started in the Andrew Oldham days, when I couldn't really sing." He laughed. "He mixed it down so I wouldn't get big-headed. It's a matter of tradition."

By now Jagger seemed to have warmed to the idea of an interview, so I put to him the concept of the Stones, like The Who, being survivors of the early-'60s rock scene in Britain. "Ugh, it's 'orrible," he exploded, "to be the Grand Old Men. If all this talk gets any worse I'll be getting another band. I dunno why, but it's not nice to be asked that question. It makes us sound like survivors from a holocaust.

"I s'pose I should be grateful that I survived the Swinging Blue Jeans era, but that was the era before us, I always believed. I never felt I was part of it, the Swinging Blue Jeans and that, doing me Top 20 hits every evenin' on stage. Whenever I used to see them play they were just all them, standing in line together, doing their hits. I think they were something else. We played in a different way."

There was the question, too, about whether they appealed to the young teenage T. Rex audience. "Aw, I don't have to do everything twice!" he shot back. "We don't have to go back to those people. Why," he looked sardonic, "some of our audience are much younger than I am. Many of the kids who dig us in America are 15 years old. Christ, in Italy they're nine! Here it's students. That's who The Who and Zeppelin get as well.

"Naaaah, there's nothing happening 'ere. The music is negligible, it's all nothing. There's a lack of originality, and that's why I don't care about it. I'm not interested in going back to small English towns and turning on the 10-year-olds. I've done all that.

"We've always had a much older audience than that here anyway. We played to the Richmond art school lot, and they were 18 to 21. I've considered our audience to be students, and that's who was there when we played Manchester, Newcastle and the rest on that English tour last year."

What would he do if he decided to jack in the musical business? Films?

"If I jacked that in, I'd jack it all in. I've been wanting to jack it in for years. But, I dunno." He hesitated. "I'd like to do something completely different. There's too much pressure being in a group; if I don't wanna do something, they do and vice versa. I'd like to take a year off and study."

Study? "Yeah." Back to LSE? "Naaaah. I've got a few projects." He looked reticent. "I think it's all just talk," he said finally. *Michael Watts* •

> "You can't play or write outside the mood of the times"

1972

JULY – SEPTEMBER

ALICE COOPER, T. REX, THE FACES, GENESIS, ROXY MUSIC AND MORE

August 3, 1972: Little Richard at rehearsals for the London Rock'n'Roll Show in Wembley Stadium

GETTY

"Ideally we'll do Elvis next"

MM AUG 12 The London Rock'n'Roll Show is a mixed success.

CHUCK BERRY WAS the undisputed star of the giant Wembley Rock'n'Roll Show on Saturday, after 10 hours of music – while Little Richard blew his prestige with a flop performance that drew boos, jeers and slow handclaps.

Said promoter Ron Foulk: "Richard told me he gave the worst performance of his life. I couldn't understand it. For me, Bill Haley was the king of rock'n'roll."

Bill was obviously knocked out by his reception, which was accorded a rock pioneer who gave a "musicianly" and unpretentious performance. Cheers for "Razzle Dazzle" and "Rock Around The Clock", with two encores, were only to be equalled later by Chuck Berry.

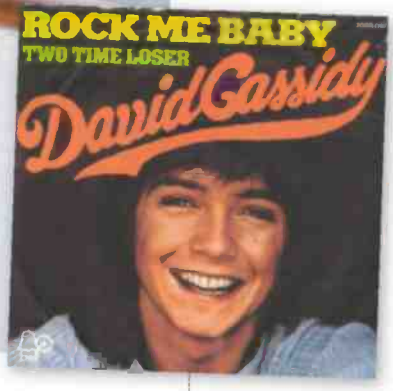
"Obviously we had a lot of problems at the venue," said Foulk. "The main one was that we could not offer one-price tickets. There were several prices. You can't push people around, and the stadium people realised that after the first half-hour. We'll do another concert at the Oval, Kennington, in September, but whether it's a rock'n'roll show, I don't know. Ideally, we'd like to do Elvis Presley next, but we haven't done anything about that yet."

Foulk paid tribute to the fans at Wembley and said: "They told me there would be a lot of trouble with a rock audience, but there wasn't. I was very happy about the concert."

There were about 60,000 at the stadium to see Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Bill Haley and Jerry Lee Lewis plus others. Said Foulk: "A film was made of the show, but I've no idea when it will be shown yet."

The Oval concert will be on September 16 and the following day another concert will be held at Nottingham's Trent Bridge cricket ground. "We plan to put on the same concert at both grounds," Foulk told the *MM*. "It will be a similar bill to the concert at the Oval last year with the rock acts." Last year The Who and Faces headlined the bill at the Oval and raised cash for Bangladesh refugees.

September 6, 1972: singer, *Partridge Family* star and multi-instrumentalist David Cassidy in London



"The nearest thing to the King of rock'n'roll"

NME SEPT 30 He's this and "a good fuck" besides, according to one young lady. Look out, London. Here comes American heart-throb David Cassidy!

THERE ARE AN astonishing two million, worldwide, fully paid-up members of the David Cassidy fan club. In Britain, although the club has been in existence a mere 10 weeks, there are already 10,200. With more than a thousand requests to join per week, it's a big business.

One British teeny magazine which was the first publication to realise the enormity of Cassidy's appeal a year ago started to run a "David Cassidy Writes For You" column. In the past year the magazine in question has more than doubled its circulation. While all credit cannot be taken for just the column, an obvious part has been played in upping circulation figures.

Even the hip *Rolling Stone* carried a feature on the "boy wonder", finding a reportedly tarnished image of Cassidy and publishing an almost full-frontal nude picture. He since admits to regret at having had it taken. In the article one young lady by the name of Jill was quoted as reporting Cassidy "a good fuck".

Cassidy's record producer, Wes Farrell, compares him to Elvis – "He's the nearest thing to the King of rock'n'roll." And professionally Farrell has never been regarded as an idiot.

According to available information the first instrument Cassidy took up was violin, later discarding it in favour of guitar and clarinet. His "favourite" instrument, however, is listed as piano – until he took up drums, that is. It's all very confusing, but evidently he's able to play all these instruments.

One of the most traumatic experiences of his childhood was an eye operation, which was successful. Before that he had an eye muscle that was malfunctioning. Another traumatic experience was the divorce of his parents, Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward, who split up when David was seven. His father has since remarried, and Cassidy's stepmother is actress Shirley Jones – who plays the part of his mother in the *Partridge Family* series.

At the age of 18 David Cassidy decided to split and go to Florida to play in a band. He never went, however, as mother Evelyn had been offered a part in a play entitled *And So To Bed* and David auditioned for the show and got a small bit part.

His first "big break" was with a Broadway production *Fig Leaves Are Falling*, which was a mammoth flop but which indirectly led to his landing the part in *The Partridge Family*. As in the best fairy stories, he was then "spotted", went to Hollywood, and subsequently landed some TV acting. You may have seen David Cassidy on British TV before the *Partridge Family* TV series – he has appeared in *Bonanza*, *Ironside* and *The FBI*.

When he first heard about the part of Keith Partridge, apparently he didn't like the idea. He told his agent he didn't want to do it and only changed his mind when he found out there might be an opportunity in the show for him to play guitar and eventually make records. Wes Farrell only auditioned him for a singing part in the show out of "kindness" rather than anything else. He never expected Cassidy to be able to sing. For his audition Cassidy sang Chicago and Crosby Stills & Nash material.

Although Cassidy's official age is given as 22, rumour (nasty and wicked, perhaps) has it that he is in fact 24. *NME*'s Pamela Holman, who interviewed him earlier this year, asked: "Are you really 22?" Answer from Cassidy: "Yes."

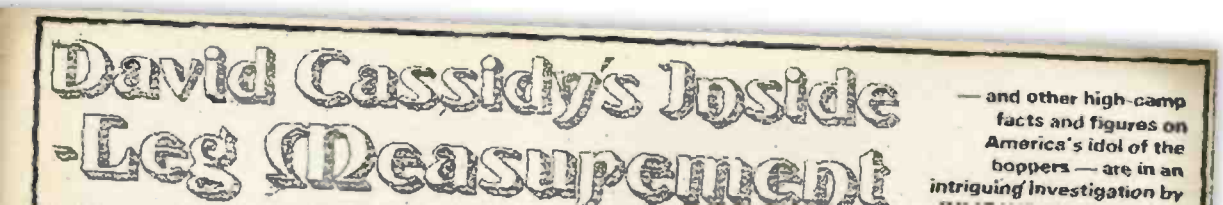
Every actor in a TV series has a stand-in who works on the set for him. Cassidy's is a girl – 23-year-old Jan Freeman. Evidently Cassidy is not the least embarrassed about having a female stand-in.

For his *Partridge Family* audition Cassidy sang Crosby, Stills & Nash and Chicago

Musically his tastes vary: "I like jazz, blues and rock," he says. The singer he most admires is Paul McCartney. Spare time is rare, so his love or sex life, which is reportedly so active, has little time to gain momentum. There was a steady girlfriend but she is no more – "There wasn't the time to develop a good relationship," he says.

And as for hobbies or sports (other than birds, that is) we do know that in his time Cassidy has taken up everything from dancing and tennis to karate. And a note for astrology fans: Cassidy was born under the sign of Aries.

GETTY



"The easiest job I've ever had"

MM JULY 29 Introducing former serviceman and aircraft toilet fitter Bill Withers.

September 5, 1972: Bill Withers, who served eight years in the US Navy before quitting in 1965, poses for a portrait in Los Angeles

MAGGIE BELL LIKES him, and nearly three million Americans like him enough to put his new single at the top of the US charts. A year ago he was making toilet seats for Jumbo jets. But now he's very famous, and rather rich.

He's Bill Withers – a bit of a phenomenon. A 34-year-old "under-educated, unread" man who plays a pretty cheap guitar, and talks a lot. Rumour has it that Buddah Records chief Neil Bogart gave Withers a gold-plated toilet seat to mark selling a lot of records for the little company. Bill doesn't really care; he just wants to sing. "It's the easiest job I've ever had in my life. Man, it becomes a good world when you get paid for enjoyin' yourself."

When I stumbled into Bill he was being plagued by the nasties. He was swearing, and cursing, and giving heavy tongue to a poor callow youth. The youth was a young, hip agent who'd booked a load of dates for Bill, and therefore reckoned he was Bill's mate.

"Hey look, sonny, you know where you had me playin' on Monday night? You know where you damned well had me playin'?" The youth didn't really remember.

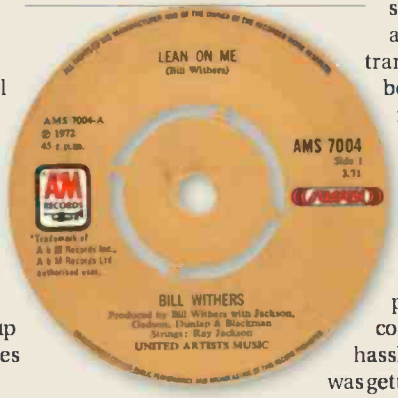
"Well, sonny, you had me playin' a chow hall at a Naval Air Force Base in Maine. They'd only finished serving the guys up chow when I got on this stupid stage. There was no public there 'cos they weren't allowed in. Man, I served eight years in the goddamn Navy, and I ain't gonna put up with being booked into places like that.

"Look, kid, I'm getting on to be an old man. Ma belly's fat, and ma chest's sagging. I ain't come into this business all wide-eyed and silly. I've lived. I don't want any crap any more. I don't want agents and hangers-on bustin' into my dressing room and sayin', 'Hey Billy, that's cool, man.' If it carries on like it is, then I'm out, and I ain't jokin'."

The poor kid was shaking, and attempting to mumble apologies. But he couldn't do it, so he sort of made himself vanish very quickly. The first time I ever heard Withers was on a beautiful evening round at Maggie Bell's. She played the whole of his first album, and I remember her saying: "Did you ever hear anything quite as good as that?" It was indeed a remarkable album. Withers treats rhythm and blues like he'd invented it. There was one track, Nilsson's "Everybody's Talkin'", I remember, and that was just imperial.

When Withers came out of the Navy a few years ago he decided he wanted to be a singer. He moved to the Hollywood district, and got a job at an aircraft factory. He saved enough money to get a recording licence, and picking musicians from names on the back of album sleeves, he made a demo tape, and took it around. A while passed, and the demo was heard. Then a short meeting took place in a company office. Withers was told: "This gentleman here is Booker T; you're going to make an album with him."

> **"I'm a newcomer, sure, but I'm an old, wise man. I've seen crap"**



Booker (of the MG's) told Withers he'd better write some songs. Withers did, and the first album transpired. And then Withers became famous. And the rigmarole that surrounds fame is killing Bill.

"You know I played the Bitter End the other week and I couldn't even go to the toilet because of all the goddamn agents, and promoter and record company people just hassling around me. Everybody was getting into the thing."

His single "Lean On Me" had sold two million, was riding No 1 in the US charts, and heading for another million in sales. "Everybody is trying to get me on some sort of list. Everyone wants to instantly bag me, instead of saying, 'Hey look, this is what he does.' Christ, and they are people I love, they are really nice people, but I cannot stick what they're trying to do."

Withers was sweating with some sort of passion and fury. "Christ, I'm so goddamn grateful to everyone. I really am. Christ, I feel like getting down on my knees and thankin' everyone for getting me to this position, I really do, but I'm no kid, I'm not gonna have some kid fresh out of college booking me into show halls, and slapping me on the back. No, he can just get out."

He'd just finished playing a set in Central Park. He's soulful, is Bill. He just sits on a stool with a guitar and funks about, while this goodly band behind him thrive on his energy.

Letting a song hang, letting it hang with a back-funk, rather than "Ya feel aright?" is the Withers trick. He simmers a heck of a lot, and teases because he's got that lovely magic of being able to leave out the obvious – leaving you to fill that in, if you see what I mean.

"I suppose everything is working out just like I wanted it to, but the problem's arising because the business is treating me like a young newcomer. I'm a newcomer, sure, but I'm an old, wise man. I'm uneducated, but I've seen life, and I've seen crap, and I'm not going to take any more. I know that these people who come and say 'beautiful Bill' ain't gonna talk to me if my next album don't sell. I can see through all that.

"It really makes me sick, all these cheap little maniacs hanging around me just 'cos they wanna be seen. Well, I ain't gonna let these cats beat me down. This is still the easiest job I've ever had, and if you can ride the idiots in this business, then it's darned pleasurable."

It's all been a bit strange for Withers. He actually got laid off at the aircraft factory but his music made it just in time. Now he gets to ride in big limousines and gets invited to fancy dinners, and has somebody to carry his guitar. And he stays in flash hotels – but he's 34, and he remains the same as he always has been. It doesn't pay to mess with Withers, because he's seen it all.

"You know, this business is just like the Army. You get some sergeant comin' up to you, and he says, 'Son, you can have three stripes on your arm if you go out into that open field, and strafe those Japs, and creep round the back of 'em and shoot them up the ass.' If you're a wise man you just tell that sergeant where to go. And then you tell him that you just wanna be a good private."

Roy Hollingworth

GETTY

Still Bill

June 30, 1972: Alice Cooper at the Empire Pool, Wembley, for the final date of the Killer tour

"On stage I'm Mr Hyde..."

ALICE COOPER is America's newest superstar. In the charts, "School's Out" is a hot teenage anthem. On stage it's all hangings and doll mutilation. Off it, he's a lovely guy: "If I believed everything I'd heard about myself, then I'd kill myself."

— MELODY MAKER JULY 1 —

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, you've seen him electrocuted, you've seen him hanged, and now you're about to see him fired from a cannon. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Alice Cooper! The cannon had just arrived from Warner Bros, Burbank, and stood impressively in the large ballroom at Alice's surrealistic Connecticut mansion. Alice fondled the barrel, and burst into a scared laughter.

"I'm a bit worried about this one. Got a feeling that when I'm shot from this, I won't come back, literally speaking." The forever-present can of Budweiser found its way to his mouth, and he swigged, deeply.

A big roadie picked up a horrible-looking dummy and fed it, legs first, into the cannon. Then he began cranking, and the massive springs that run down the barrel were pulled tight. Then the barrel was aimed into the air, and POW! »

GETTY

The barrel jerked and the dummy shot out, looking grotesque and deformed in flight, its arms and legs boneless and spare.

It travelled for about 20 feet and crashed into the floor, skidding on its backside for another 20 or so feet, and came to a horrible, messy rest.

Obviously bearing in mind that the dummy was soon to be replaced by himself, Alice grimaced. "When we first did the hanging stunt, it took them three days to get me on the gallows. 'Alice we've really got to hang you now,' they kept saying. Well, I don't know how long it's gonna take me to work my head up into climbing inside that. Still, it's going to be fun."

And fun is the essence of Alice Cooper, although this strange, straggly black figure is most certainly no joke. Alice is a superstar – a real, genuine superstar. He is currently enormous business throughout America – possibly the biggest American rock'n'roll act, actually, and certainly the most strikingly different. He is the complete breakaway from the sophisticated, lame policy of stateside rock. Alice is ugly, rude, creepy, sick, sexually insane, and a scourge and menace to the minds of middle-aged America.

And underneath all that – he's a beautiful person.

Greenwich, Connecticut, is per head of population perhaps the richest community in America. As you drive down the thickly wooded lanes that dip and twist around the town you could well be in some lavish corner of Sussex. Incredible houses peep out from behind the trees, and even the mailboxes are built with loving care. Alice's place is just round the corner from Bette Davis, and Jack Warner (*not* the loveable copper) lives opposite.

"Galise" is the name of the place; also the name of the chap who built it. From the first impression, Galise was an extraordinary man. It's a dead ringer for a Vincent Price film set. Built during the '30s, it incorporates the unmistakable style of a man with money and a sadly demented mind. In the dark hallway lurks Alice's late, lamented Electric Chair, and next to that the skeleton of a pinball machine. Through to the left the eye catches an ever-so-slightly swaying body, hung by the neck from a noose in the ballroom.

Immediately above in a bedroom, lies Yvonne, seemingly asleep now, her long, lithe body, relaxed and motionless. She is naked, and almost child-like in sleep. But one can sense the menace, power and veins of evil running through her body. At any moment she could awake, and with one blow kill. For Yvonne is a snake, you see. An 11ft-long lady, weighing 40 pounds.

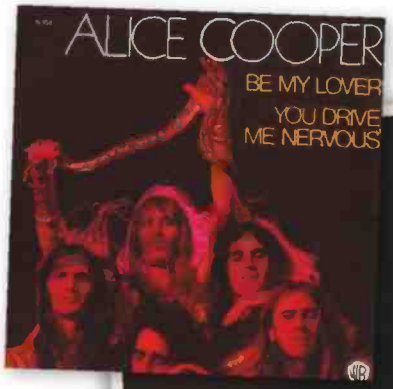
She lies in a glass case, and shivering in one corner of it is a little white rat. It's eyes are filled with terror; no matter where it treads, it treads on snake. For some reason Yvonne hasn't touched the rat, who's been in the case for a few days. But it knows it's doomed. It really knows.

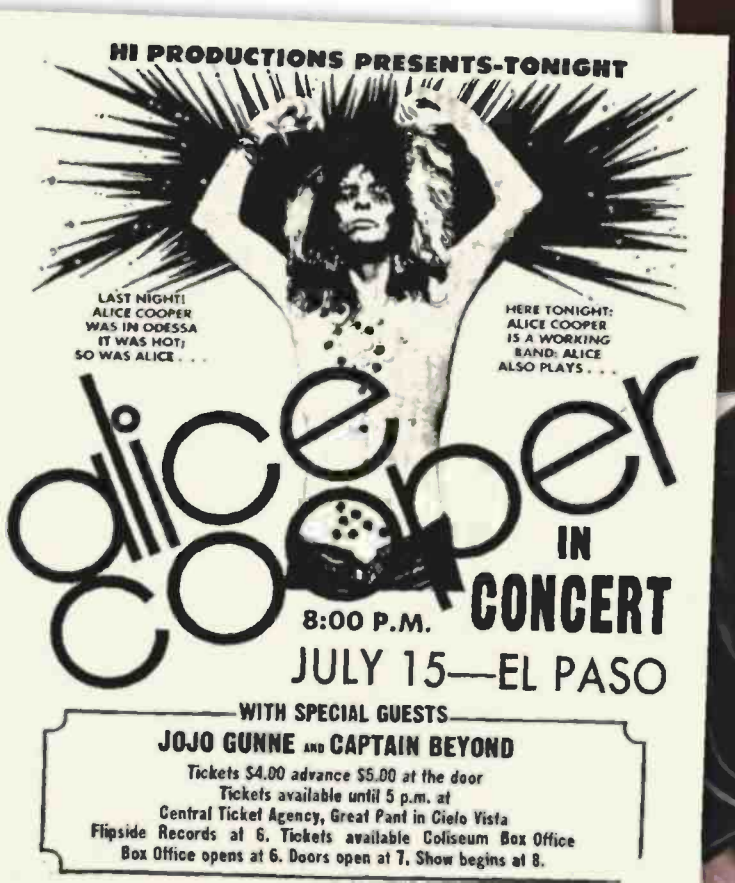
Now along the dark corridors upstairs. Every now and then there is a creak, and the lights in the old candelabras flicker. The sound of crazy talking comes from one room. That's Alice's room. He sits surrounded by cans of Budweiser, watching a Marx Brothers film on a very small television.

"Hello, please sit down," he says in a very brisk, charming fashion. "Found a Marx Brothers film – it's fantastic."

He's dressed in a matt-black zip-up top, and jeans studded with rhinestones. The fly-hole is broken, and held together by two large, white safety-pins. Alice smiles. "Have you seen the cannon? Jesus, it's fantastic."

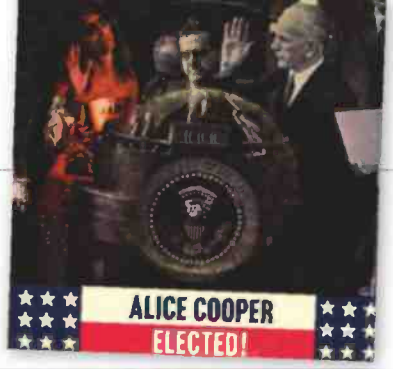
Without makeup he looks quite normal. His hair's a shade ratty, but his voice is calm and unaffected. Drummer Neal Smith lies on a bed watching television, too, as Alice cracks another can open, and gives off an air of sheer normality. Alice zips himself up, and trucks across the room, his yellow painted boots a bit wobbly, and his nonexistent chest and stoop give the appearance that





Alice Cooper in December 1972: "I drink beer all day... It helps me create"

PETER MAZEL



at some stage he was hollowed out, and they never put back the stuffing.

In a moment we're in the back of a giant limo, purring down the lanes – Alice wearing a black cowboy hat, and carrying a can of Bud. "I drink beer all day. I drink it as soon as I get up, before breakfast, and I've forever got an open can. I drink a case a day – which is about 25 large cans. Beer puts you in a good state of mind – you don't get drunk on beer, just sort of permanently high. It's a nice, safe feeling somehow.

"Yes, beer helps me create…'cos I'm hooked on the stuff," and he breaks out laughing.

The limo pulls in front of a restaurant, and out we get in the middle of Greenwich. It's like Tunbridge Wells on a Sunday. Alice clumps into the building, sits at a table, and orders… guess what? He starts talking about England.

"The reviews, and receptions we got over there were real strange. I thought it was off; I thought the English would be more open to what we are doing. I mean, the English are far more cultured than Americans; they've had theatre for hundreds of years, and there we were with theatre, and rock'n'roll. And yet they seemed bewildered, and afraid of the energy we had."

Energy? "Yeah, I mean Elton John has energy, but it's not so obvious, not so pow, if you see what I mean. After Carole King and James Taylor there had to be somebody with a burst of energy, and that's Alice Cooper. But I just couldn't understand what happened in England. I mean, the biggest entertainer in England on a family level must be Danny La Rue – so I really thought they'd dig what we did.

"Not that we've ever done drag. We are not a drag act. Sure, we wore eye makeup ages ago, but it was more a *Clockwork Orange* thing. We're a musical *Clockwork Orange*, and we've been doing it for eight years now. When I saw the film I really flipped. I said, 'Hey, that's what we've been doing for years now. It was great seeing it."

Did you ever imagine you'd be so successful?

"No, never. When it happened, it sort of caught us on a low. We'd been at it for years, always doing this theatre/hard-rock thing. Christ, way back in '66 I had a bathtub on stage, with me in it. People had always talked about us; we'd always made some impression."

I know what finally converted me to Alice – it was recognition of the fact that he was really laying out good hard rock. Alice's new album, *School's Out*, sees the band embark into fields of music you'd have never expected from them. There's a heap more music around, and delicious production from Bob Ezrin. "We work with Bob like Elton John works with Taupin. It's more than a producer/group thing. He's a genius.

"When we wrote 'School's Out' we never reckoned on strings and that. But Bob put them in – strings and horns. He made them just tasty. They haven't taken a thing off the hard-rock approach. You see, we've hit a level now that people know its Alice Cooper."

School's Out sees the emergence of a new Cooper concept. After the last performance of *Killer* – in London this week – the new Alice Cooper show will be taking to the road.

It's going to take the form of a Broadway spectacular – 10 dancers, a choreographer, a pit orchestra, lavish backdrops, and touches of *West Side Story*. And, of course, the cannon.

"Gutter Cat Vs The Jets" is a tremendous Cooper interpretation of Bernstein's *West Side* score. It's a gas on the album, and its colossal, outrageous stage treatment looks set to stop something.

"It's a drama thing, I love drama. People don't realise that our greatest influences were maybe the James Bond films – ie, the John Barry dramatic scores.

"Our humour is there, and people know our humour. But on stage, whatever we do, we mean. So I'll chop up a baby, and the audience nervously laughs it off – well those in the audience who are close enough to us will. We have a strong urge to get across to people, you see. We do things for the public; the public are always in our minds."

Alice talked about the early days in Los Angeles. Everybody was doing Grateful Dead, Love, and Jefferson Airplane-type stuff. Alice saw no reason to slip into that – as most of the other bands were becoming dreadfully boring and samey.

"It all came to the state where music was the main thing; they'd just stand and play music. It was inconceivable to them that icing could be added to the cake. And even though it was mentioned, they shrugged it off as not being cool."

But Alice kept to his guns, and at least people were leaving his gigs and not just saying, "Yeah, it was great." They were leaving not knowing what they had seen. "You couldn't define us," said Alice, "and you still can't."

Eventually the audience caught up with Alice, and began to believe that he was actually serious about what he was doing. Then the change occurred, and suddenly Alice was very big.

"You can only hear so many guitar solos, you know," said Alice, picking a shrimp to pieces with his teeth. "You can only hear so many brilliant guitarist playing brilliant riffs, before one day they all strike you as being the SAME. Sure, we play those riffs – but look what's going on top of the music. We're entertaining. We keep away from all other groups, we keep right away. That way what we come out with couldn't be anybody else but us."

> "We seem to be a vehicle for people's exaggeration and fantasy"

Does Alice feel he has a heavy, evil image?

"Mmmmmmmm. I don't know. So many people see evil in us. At interviews we'll sometimes go out to insult people. If Glen [Buxton] doesn't like a guy, say, we're all so close that we'll all put the guy down. We love destroying people we don't like. But if I believed everything I'd heard about myself, then I'd kill myself.

"We seem to be a vehicle for people's exaggeration and fantasy. They'll say they saw us doing things on stage which we didn't do at all. This biting the head off a chicken bit. Christ, I've never bitten the head off a chicken… Maybe a leg or two. But not a head," Alice laughed.

There was also the tale about him having kittens on the stage and hacking them to bits with a sledgehammer. "Whoever thought that one up must be sicker than me? Besides I'd use road drills. No, seriously, the Alice you see here, talking to you, is OK. You're comfortable, and eating, and you're happy. But on stage Alice is a sexually freaked creature. I'm two people – on stage I'm Mr Hyde. Everybody likes to see a Mr Hyde. Everyone would like to release their Mr Hyde at some time.

"I release things for people. I act out their fantasies, and it's a great release for me too. You see, I don't have to answer to anybody up there on stage; anything goes, and anything is legal. But we do not condone violence in people. If they can see us up on stage doing violent things – doing things for THEM – then they won't go out and do it in the streets.

"There's got to be more theatre," Alice had said. "It's got to happen; it's all been too still for too long. Groups have got to go out and form an image. Christ, images are fantastic. The Beatles had an image. The Stones have an image. The people who are making it now are people with images – like Rod Stewart.

"I see something more than most people see in rock. I see something artistic, and – although I hate to say it – cultural about what we're doing. We're at least a stimulus."

Alice smiled a friendly smile. He's no fool; he knows what he's doing. And what's more – he's a beautiful person. *Roy Hollingworth* •

1972

JULY – SEPTEMBER

BOWIE ZOWIE

Rainbow, U.S. for Britain's high-priest of Camp - Rock

DAVID BOWIE'S

"If we have theatricality it comes through from us as people": Bowie in early Ziggy guise, 1972

GETTY

"I held on. I knew it would happen"

Finally, DAVID BOWIE is the star he always knew he should be. As an entourage of Lou Reed, Iggy Pop gather round, Bowie discusses the path to his latest creation, Ziggy Stardust. "I'll get him out of my system," he says. "And then we'll don another mask..."

— NME JULY 22 —

THREE CHANGES OF dress and a kiss from Lou Reed. The waiters were horrified.

Jill and Lyn are 17 and they're into Bowie. They've both seen David work three times in as many weeks. They've both got *Ziggy Stardust* and neither of them like Marc Bolan. Jill says she likes the way David looks. She doesn't necessarily think he's good-looking; she just likes the way he looks. They and me and a sweaty hallful of other people saw David Bowie and the Spiders From Mars work Friars in Aylesbury at the weekend. The phantom waver of the Ziggy banner put in an appearance as well, and it was alright, the band were altogether and Ziggy played guitar.

The Spiders are a surrealistic vision of a rock band. Trevor Bolder's silvered sideboards hang several inches off his »

face and Woody Woodmansey's hair is an orange Vidal Sassoon duck's ass similar to David's. Through the show at top speed until the final encore of "Suffragette City", where David pulls off his most outrageous stunt and goes down on Mick Ronson's guitar. David is gonna be huge.

The day after the gig he's holding an extended press conference at the Dorchester Hotel, held especially for the planeload of American writers flown in for the weekend. In the foyer everything is frosty, air-conditioned elegance, in slow motion after the sweltering dusty street. Down the mirrored corridors of the second floor through the door into a suitably chic room where assorted media people are eating cakes and sandwiches and drinking tea and/or scotch.

Lou Reed and his band are there, all the Spiders, and curled up in a corner in a Bolan T-shirt, eye shadow and silvered hair is Iggy Pop. When I got there David was wearing an entirely different outfit. Before I left he'd changed into a third.

David's wife, lithe and crew-cut, is smoothing things down, getting together drinks and being assaulted by Lou's roadie. When I arrived, he'd just bitten her in the stomach, and as she's very slim, the bite had gone direct to her abdominal muscles and everybody was falling about. Woody pours me a sumptuous Johnny Walker Black Label and peach juice. Lou Reed is talking quietly to David. He's wearing shades and maroon fingernails. Periodically, horrified waiters enter to deliver yet more scotch and wine and sandwiches.

"I wish myself to be a prop for my songs. I want to be the vehicle"

***NME*: At the moment, the most popular rock journalist words appear to be funk, camp and punk. To what extent do you think you've brought these words into essential usage?**

Bowie: I think it's most probably due to the general inarticulacy of the press. They're very small-minded. They do indeed revolve around those three words.

Not revolve around. They crop up... Yes they do. Funk, I don't think I have anything to do with funk. I've never considered myself funky. Would you say that? I wouldn't...

Would you want to be? Yes. It's a muddy kind of thing. Camp, yes I understand the camp thing. Once upon a time it was, I think, put down in the category of entertainer but since the departure of good old-fashioned entertainers the re-emergence of somebody who wants to be an entertainer has unfortunately become a synonym for camp. I don't think I'm camper than any other person who felt at home on stage, and felt more at home on stage than he did offstage.

Nobody ever called Jerry Garcia camp. No, right, but he's a musician and I'm not a musician. I'm not into music, you see, on that level. I don't profess to have music as my big wheel and there are a number of other things as important to me apart from music. Theatre and mime, for instance.

You say you don't consider yourself a musician, but for somebody who's producing music of a very high grade, I would reckon that you're entitled to be called a musician. OK then, I'll shift my emphasis. I wouldn't think I'd ever be considered a technocrat on any instrument. I have a creative force which finds its way through into a musical form.

You were saying you didn't consider yourself to be a musician. In that terminology, in that definition: that a musician is a virtuoso on his instrument? By no stretch of the imagination. I play a good alto, I played a bit actually on the Mott album, which is quite pleasing for me, having not touched a sax for a long time.

You used it on *Hunky Dory*? Yes, but just for a few phrases. I used it quite heavily on the Mott thing. [Mick Graham: You used it on stage] What? Yeah, I did a James Brown thing for a couple of gigs. We did "Hot Pants" and we blew a bit. We did it at some of the gigs where there seemed to be a lot of mods, so we thought we'd throw it in... I ad-libbed most of it.

I remember five years ago trying to run a blues band and failing completely because people were standing at the front shouting, "Geno! Geno! Play some Tamla!" Oh yeah, but I was a great soul merchant, a James Brown merchant. I've always dug his very funky things, but I've never considered that I was capable... I'm never gonna try and play black music, because I'm white. Singularly white!

There's a distinct kind of white funk. Velvet Underground, for instance. Going by that as a yardstick of funk and not Albert King, wouldn't you say that what you are doing is into a certain kind of funk? Yes, I couldn't put my finger on what it is. Of the rock'n'roll things that we write, they would definitely be in the Velvets bag, because that's my biggest influence in rock'n'roll, more so than Chuck Berry, the archetype.

I'd say that Lou Reed was to you as Chuck Berry was to the Stones. Yes, very much so, that's a very good analogy, and I agree with it entirely. In fact I've said the same myself on numerous occasions.

The second preconceived question I came with was that rock'n'roll is increasingly becoming a ritual. Instead of the very down-to-earth stance of, say, the Dead, it's becoming very much of a spectacle, very formularised. I've not seen many bands where I've noticed that.

Alice is a very extreme example. I think you come into it to a certain extent. I think Bolan does. Sha Na Na in their own particular way also... Well, you must firstly tell me your feelings on this before I quite know what your question is...

I have mixed feelings about it... In some cases it works. I think it works when you do it, but sometimes I get the feeling that the audience is being excluded. Yes, I feel that a great deal more theatre does not necessarily mean props. As you saw with us, we were using no props. We're not into props. If we have theatricality it comes through from us as people, not as a set environment or stage. Like playing an instrument, theatre craftsmanship is something that one learns. There are going to be a lot of tragedies and a lot of clangers dropped over the next few years when a lot of bands try to become theatrical without knowing their craft. I'm a very professional person, and I feel that I contribute all my energies into my stage performance, that when I'm on stage I give more to an audience than to anybody else when I'm off stage. I've worked hard at it. I was with a mime company and I've had other theatre experience. What I'm trying to say is that it's important to know about the things you do and to have learnt it, as it is to learn your instrument. As the theatrical expression evolves, a lot of it is going to be on a secondary-school amateur-dramatics level. There will only be the odd bands who have the knowledge to master their theatre. Iggy has natural theatre. It's very interesting because it doesn't conform to any standards or rules or structures of theatre. It's his own and it's just a Detroit theatre that he's brought with him. It's straight from the street. Remember we have only been on the road for three months, so it's still coming together, but I wish myself to be a prop, if anything, for my songs. I want to be the vehicle for my songs. I would like to colour the material with as much visual expression as is necessary for that song.

One thing I've noticed is the way you use words, like in "Andy Warhol" where you transform the word "wall" into Warhol. I mean, the way you listen to speech and incorporate it into sound. One can say a sentence to three people and it'll take on an entirely different meaning for each of those three people. I think if any of my stuff becomes at all

surrealistic it's because that's the purpose of it. It's to give people their own definitions. I certainly don't understand half the stuff I write. I can look back on a song that I have just written and it means something entirely different now because of my new circumstances, new this or that. I get told by so many people – especially Americans – what my songs are about.

You had better watch out or you'll have your very own AJ Weberman rooting through your garbage. I have one already! He's not quite at garbage level yet, but he's certainly very adamant about what I mean. It's disconcerting to say the least. Alarming. But America is made up of academics. They're very Germanic in that respect. Because they are so subconsciously aware of being a new nation that has no accepted roots in the old world, they strive for their own culture as fast and as quickly as they can. Whatever isn't needed is soaked up by the media and becomes part of the American way of life. They're terribly self-conscious about everything. The level to which rock music has become an academic subject is just incredible. I could walk into a shop and see row upon row of books about any aspect of rock. I mean writers about rock. I mean writers about writers. There are even books on Meltzer. Layer upon layer. It's a build-up. They're making their own culture.

Another line of yours I wanted to ask you about is in "Five Years". You said, "*I never knew I'd need so many people*". Basically what it means is realising the inevitability of the apocalypse, in whatever form it takes. I was being careful not to say what form it would take, because that to me would be incredibly sad, and I just tried to get that feeling over in one line. It's like the things you flash on supposedly when you're dying, running down the street and...

His whole life passed before him... Yeah, really, it's like that, the grasping for life.

Do you feel worried by people who regard you as a guru? I'm not that convinced, at the moment, that I am anybody's guru. I know there is a lot of interest in what I'm doing, and we seem to be getting our goodly fair share of exposure, but I'm not convinced that we are leading any particular cult.

But it's happening almost in spite of you, people examining your albums almost line by line. OK, well if this is going to be an inevitable situation with the chronicles of rock, and one must presume that it will be, then I would strive to use that position to promote some feeling of optimism in the future, which might seem very hypocritical related to "Five Years". There the whole thing was to try and get a mocking angle at the future. If I can mock something and deride it, one isn't so scared of it. People are so incredibly serious and scared of the future that I would wish to turn the feeling the other way, into a wave of optimism. If one can take the micky out of the future, and what it is going to be like... It's going to be unbelievably technological. There isn't going to be a triangle system, we aren't going to revert back to the real way of life. That's not going to happen. It's certainly not a new thing. My god, I haven't got any new concept. I juggle with them, but what I'm saying, I think, has been said a million times before. I'm just saying again that we've gotta have some optimism in the future.

"Five Years" struck me as an optimistic song. It is, it is. The album in fact should be taken that way. "Starman" can be taken at the immediate level of "There's a Starman in the sky saying boogie, children", but the theme of that is that the idea of things in the sky is really quite human and real and we should be a bit happier about the prospect of meeting people.

On the second side of *Ziggy Stardust*, the songs seem to go in a cycle. But when you play live you don't necessarily play them in that order. I must admit I speculate on the prospect of a show which would be Ziggy Stardust, but the way I want to do it requires a lot of planning and we haven't had time for that. I'd rather leave it alone until it's gonna be done properly. I don't want to do anything unless it's gonna be done well.

In the other room I saw a tape box of the Mott album. The only title I recognised was "Sweet Jane". That's right, Lou came down. I've got Lou singing it at the moment. I've got to put Ian on, but he doesn't know the lyrics yet. »

July 16, 1972: manager Tony DeFries beams in the background as his clients David Bowie, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed pose for the US press at the Dorchester Hotel, London

So you recorded it with Lou Reed singing on Mott's backing? Lou phrased it so Ian can pick up how it was.

How does it sound when Mott play it? Fabulous, it's really good. I'll play it for you. The album is fabulous. They've never written better stuff. They were so down when I first met them.

They were having troubles with Island, weren't they? Oh, everything was wrong. Everything was terrible, and because they were so down I thought I was gonna have to contribute a lot of material. Now, they're in a wave of optimism and they've written everything on the album bar one Lou Reed number and the "...Dudes" single I did for them. They were being led into so many directions, because of general apathy with their management and recording company. Everybody was very excited about them when they first came out and then, because they didn't click immediately, it fell away. When I first saw them, and that wasn't very long ago, I couldn't believe that a band so full of integrity and a really naive exuberance could command such enormous following and not be talked about. The reactions at their concerts were superb, and it's sad that nothing was done about them. They were breaking up, I mean, they broke up for three days and I caught them just in time and put them together again, 'cos in fact all the kids love them.

[At this point, Bowie put on the rough tape of the Mott album. First cut was Lou and Mott's "Sweet Jane". It sounded the best Mott I've heard. While it was playing, Reed entered the room. I hoped to get him to join in the conversation but he just came over and kissed David.]

REED: That's it. [Exit]
I was hoping to get a two-way interview.
BOWIE: That was a two-way interview.

Next week: The mind-shattering conclusion of this glitzy, super-neato interview. Be there or be square! *Charles Shaar Murray*

— NME JULY 29 —

THE STORY SO far: Lord Ziggy and his pals are holding court at the Dorchester, drinking, looning, doing interviews and generally having a day of good jolly superstar fun. In addition to getting her midriff bitten by Lou Reed's manager Ernie, Lady Ziggy (alias Angie Bowie) had fun by sinking her teeth into the generously proportioned left breast of American rock historian Lillian Roxon. Among a welter of other happenings which even Lou Reed doesn't want to discuss, this reporter (a shy, young small-town kid bewildered by such extravagant debauchery) continued his epoch-making interview with David Bowie. We enter the conversation after David Bowie and Lou Reed had conducted what Ziggy described as "the shortest interview on record".

BOWIE: I like to see people pretending.

***NME*: You retired after "Space Oddity"; would you ever do it again?**
BOWIE: I can't envisage stopping gigging for the next year at least, because I'm having such a good time doing it. I've never enjoyed it more. I feel I'm one with the band I'm working with and that hasn't happened before for me. I've always felt I was dragging people into doing things. I had a band once before which had the same lead guitarist.

Yeah, I saw you work at the Roundhouse once with Country Joe about two years ago. That Roundhouse gig was the kind of thing I cite, in that I was into something there that the band wasn't into. They were very much still only wanting to be musicians at the time, and it came off as no more than everybody dressing up. Was that the one you came to where I was wearing a silver superman suit?

You weren't. You did [Van Morrison's] "Cypress Avenue". We did one at the Roundhouse about the same period when we appeared very much the same as we are appearing now, and that was with Mick Ronson. I was in a cartoon strip and we all dressed up as a different superhero.

Who were you? No one in particular, but superhero-type figures. We had silver suits, the thing I used to wear for "Space Oddity", that silver catsuit which is exactly the same as this. It hasn't changed at all in three years, if you think about it, but it's different material. I was in silver lamé and blue silver cloak and silvered hair and blue hair and the whole thing, glitter everywhere. The whole thing was on that scale.

Were they ready to cope with it at the time? No, they weren't. We died a death. And, of course, the boys said, 'Look, I told you so, let's get back to just being a band again.' That's the period that broke me up. I just about stopped after that performance, because I knew it was right, I knew it was what I wanted to do, and I knew it was what people would want eventually. I didn't know when, though, so I held on. I knew it would happen, because I've always been excited about seeing things that are visually exciting and it's always knocking me out. I like seeing people pretending. I have a great imagination. I'm not a vegetable. I like to let my imagination run wild and I thought, 'Well, if that does that to me, it has to do it to other people as well, 'cos I'm just a person.' I'm not quite that much of a superman. And, anyway, I'm glad I stuck it out, really.

Could you name four or five specific records that influenced you early on? Yes, "Alley Oop" by The Hollywood Argyles – just a feeling that came from it. I'm afraid I'm not very technical on things like that and all I can say, at best, is that it was a feel that I had an empathy with. I don't know what it was, whether it was the zaniness of the record, or what.

Is that the one about the caveman? Yes, and that was Kim Fowley as a matter of fact. He was the Hollywood Argyle that did it, and I loved parody because...

Zappa? Yes, I admire Zappa, but there again I prefer Charlie Mingus. I like my parody to be a little softer because I'm a pacifist person by nature and hostility in any form, even on a mental level,

June 15, 1972: Bowie and Spiders Mick Ronson and Woody Woodmansey perform "Starman" on *Lift Off With Ayshea*

REX FEATURES

I find not endearing. I think Zappa may have a problem with feeling that he was not accepted on a Mingus level and he had to find himself an audience. I don't think he's ever forgotten that.

But "Pithecanthropus Erectus" is not quite the same as "Brown Shoes Don't Make It"? Well, that's the strength of my view on parody. I'm a softer person by nature. I'm not hostile. I don't believe I'm an aggressive performer either. I like the situation that seems to develop with the audience, which is generally on a very human level and they're quite friendly. It's neither screamy nor rebellious: it just has a good feeling to it. I love my audiences. I think I've not been to too many gigs where the feeling is not nice. It's a very warm feeling I get from audiences.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't there one cut on *The Man Who Sold The World* that is a parody of Marc Bolan? Oh yes. Yes. That was "Black Country Rock". I Bolanised it. I do that to a lot of people.

Apart from the obvious one, "Queen Bitch", which of the others are notably parodic. I did a lot of Newley things on the very first album I made, *Love You Till Tuesday*.

That's a very strange album. Has it been reissued? It will be. It's been out once. They brought it out when I had "Space Oddity", but it didn't do so well. I expect they'll bring it out in a few weeks' time. I guarantee they'll bring it out. Other songs – d'you want some more songs? Of course "Waiting For The Man", I'll have to say that one. In fact a lot of Lou's material. Especially that one because it sums up a lot of his early writing and his writing has changed considerably since those days. I think his new material on the album that we're gonna do will surprise a lot of people as well. Its miles different from anything he's ever done before. On "Waiting For The Man" I think Lou captured, for me better than anyone else, the feeling of New York, that particular area of New York that he was living in, and those times.

The other great New York record of our times is "Summer In The City". Yeah, I agree with that. I was a devoted fan of the Spoonful. I loved them. Another record was the Mingus *Oh Yeah* album, particularly "Ecclesiastic", which I drew an enormous amount of pleasure from. I felt it very 1990s – very 2001 – that whole album. I was into that sort of jazz. Before Santana came, I was into the English scene and I was never able to relate to that stuff because of my earlier interest in Coltrane and Mingus as well. A lot of Zappa's things flatten me, actually.

> "It's a very warm feeling I get from the audience"

Any of Zappa's stuff make it with you? *We're Only In It For The Money*, because I mean I saw huge potential in that area for Zappa, but I don't understand Zappa and I'm not that intrigued by him to try to unwrap his problems or try to find out why.

Were you ever tempted to get into James Taylor thing of autobiographical songs? Yeah, I had a spasm of that, but thank God I got out of it.

Out of all your material, with which songs do you feel most comfortable? D'you ever listen to any of your stuff and think that you could have done it better if you'd done it later? Oh yes, lots of times. A lot of *Man Who Sold The World*, although that was one of the best albums I made. It was a whole traumatic period.

What's gonna be the next post-Ziggy development? Have you started to think about a new album? No, not at all. I'm still totally involved with Ziggy. I probably will be for a few months, getting it entirely out of my system, and then we'll don another mask.

Thanks a lot, and I hope you and Ziggy will be very happy together. Oh, no. I hope YOU and Ziggy will be very happy. Ziggy's my gift to you.

It had been the last interview of a long day of raps, zaps and varied craziness, and I was keeping David from an immediate departure to enjoy a fortnight's holiday. So we shook hands and said our farewells. David's alright, you know. He may even be the "shining genius" his ads say he is. Whatever, he's a gas. Long live Ziggy Stardust! We needed him.
Charles Shaar Murray

— DISC JULY 15 —

"YOU CAN ASK me if I'm bent," said a somewhat subdued Spider From Mars, "but I'll only say no." Not looking in the least bit bent, Mick Ronson had lately suffered at the hands of an interviewer who apparently was interested in such matters and was prepared for the worst.

The Spiders From Mars are the musicians who work with David Bowie, and who are every bit as outrageous in appearance and style. David once said that he has one of the best-dressed bands around, and he wasn't exaggerating. Now, his ideas in dress are being copied fast. Gary Glitter and Sweet are only two of the bands who have jumped onto the idea, but neither seem to have the panache or the grace of Bowie and his boys. When all three bands appeared on last week's *Top Of The Pops*, the Spiders and David underplayed their hand to fine effect, so that they retained the aura of being the real thing, and not an overdone paste glitter imitation.

Neither do the Spiders come over as stooges for David. They are talented musicians in their own right, and the band work as a team. Mick Ronson, like the rest of the band, comes from Hull. He came to London two-and-a-half years ago, after he and Woody Woodmansey had both been playing in a regular blues band called The Rats. Mick heard that David was looking for a guitarist and so came down to see him. He was asked to play on David's appearance on the John Peel show, although he didn't know the music, and as things worked out, he stayed. David has much to say in praise of his band, who've been working with him now since *Hunky Dory*.

"I didn't know a lot about Dave before I came down, but I had heard 'Space Oddity', of course, and I liked that. I'd been playing in this blues band and just being a serious musician. I'm still serious about my music, but not in impressing just a small group of people. I'm out to impress everybody, make it a show and give them their money's worth.

"We did split up for a while, last year, because everyone was battling against each other musically, but now it's running very smoothly."

Bowie's appearances with the band aren't just like any other group's set, as you'll know if you've seen them. He and the Spiders make a production out of it, each person integral to the movement and music. "We get to a gig very early to set up the sound balance, and the lights, then we eat, taking it steady, then put on the makeup and then roll onstage at the last minute. It all takes about four hours. We build up nicely to it."

It was David who put forward the ideas on clothes to the group, and although they might have been a bit doubtful at first, they have realised the impact the costumes have on the audience: "When we were first talking about it, I had a few different ideas, but I think I was caught on an off-time. I had a lot on my mind then. I can get pretty stubborn at times, but once they were made it was fine. Some people think that we're bent because of the clothes, but that doesn't worry me. People just like something to talk about. If you want to be successful, you've got to be prepared to do things you might not otherwise do, taking the rough with the smooth, and be prepared to be talked about. You can't let it affect you.

"Actually, it makes me want to be more outrageous if anything. I like shocking people. If we didn't want people to talk about us then we'd come onstage in jeans. We want to excite kids, make them feel good, and make them feel they can't take their eyes off the stage."

It would appear that this policy is working, as the band get bigger audiences everywhere, with hundreds being turned away, and Bowie finally getting the praise he has deserved for so long. All the adulation for David doesn't affect the feelings of the Spiders at all.

"It doesn't worry us Dave getting the limelight. He's the draw, it's his show. Basically the people come to see Dave and he's good. He is an outstanding showman, a true artist. I'm learning a lot from him. He has taught me how to present a group and how to keep it together. If it wasn't for David I'd still be a run-of-the-mill blues musician. We're all very close, but not as close as has been rumoured!" »

It has also been rumoured that with a gradual fading of T. Rex publicity, David and the Spiders could ably fill a gap in the entertainment quota. Although not similar to Bolan in musical style, they have the same confidence and showmanship that make the grade: "Well, Marc Bolan had a lot of dedicated fans and he is Bolan, as we're the Spiders. I'd love it if we took off like that. I admire what they have done. Bolan has gone out of the way to give the kids music they can relate to, with simple sequences. I'd like to think we could be different. It's an older audience that we have."

Apart from the group work, Mick and David have been co-producing Lou Reed's new album, following Reed's seeming dissatisfaction with his last, which was produced by Richard Robinson. Both Mick and David have been into Lou's music for a long time. I have been blasted more than once by samples of his sounds while visiting the Bowie.

"We are concentrating on the feeling rather than the technical side of the music. He is an interesting person, but I never know what he's thinking. However, as long as we can reach him musically it's alright."

It's not settled if Mick or David will be playing on the album; they are putting all their energies into the arrangements.

They have also just finished working with Mott The Hoople on a new single and are to begin arrangements on an album. David and the Spiders have cut a track that might well be their own new single, but it won't be released until "Starman" has climbed as high as it's going to. As it's just gone into the US charts and is selling a lot here, it may be some time before we hear the new one. *Rosalind Russell*

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 15 —

"HE'S A REAL star. Not in a sort of record business style, not a Rod Stewart star, if you like, or a Cat Stevens, but… a Marlon Brando or James Dean-type star. I see him more in that category of large-scale untouchable. It's like he doesn't quite belong here. You know, he's got those odd eyes. It's very curious." (Tony DeFries, David Bowie's manager).

"I'm not content just to be a rock'n'roll star all my life. The reason I'm trying to be one at the moment is so that I can get off. Even now, I've got onto other things, great massive plans for the future!" (David, a protégé of Mr DeFries).

"One night I'm going to turn up at a Bowie concert. I've known him for a long time and all of a sudden he's like I should get down and kiss his feet." (Rod Stewart).

The moment he hits the stage of the Rainbow this week it will be apparent to one and all in that audience that David Bowie is much bigger than Homer and the Monuments ever were. Not just because from the tip of his spiky, carrot-coloured hair to the soles of his shiny silver boots he looks a star, and not just because he's made it voguish to be theatrical. Listen, the boy's got talent. He's come a long way from the Bo Diddley beat and heavy harp work on "Unwashed And Somewhat Slightly Dazed", which is second track, side one, of *David Bowie* on Decca.

We thought it an auspicious time to chronicle the rungs of the ladder in the rise and rise of Ziggy S. For instance, here are some facts: born David Robert Jones, 40 Stansfield Road, Brixton. Attended Bromley Technical High School. Left school at 16 with two O-levels in art and woodwork. Is an ex-mod. Reads Genet and Hubert Selby Jnr. Played sax, and led a number of groups, including David Jones & The Lower Third and David Bowie & The Buzz, with whom he had a Marquee residency supporting The High Numbers ("we did my material but I wrote very much like Pete Townshend").

"I spent all those formative teenage years," he says now, "adopting guises and changing roles. One moment I was a musician and performer, the next a mod, just learning to be somebody."

Before he made "Space Oddity", in fact, which set him on the course along which he's currently progressing, he was a directionless soul moving in an artistic limbo. He had his own mime troupe, Feathers, with an acoustic guitarist named Hutch and a ballet dancer called Hermione ("Letter To Hermione" is also on *David Bowie*).

For a year and a half he was also a member of the Lindsay Kemp Mime Company. He'd gone along to one of the performances and found one of his albums was being used as interval music. He felt so flattered he went backstage, and eventually ended up doing productions, too. And then he wrote "Oddity".

"It was my own idea of protest. I wanted to be a newspaper. I think I still think a little like that. I didn't actually want to give too many views. I wanted to present the images of today, the images by which we set our standards and live, and I wanted to present them in a song.

"You see, the emphasis placed on what people are saying, and whether they're profound or not, annoys me a little, 'cos I don't want to be profound. The aim of an artist is just to investigate. That's all I want to do: investigate and present the results."

The fact that the record got as high as Number One here (and was an underground classic in the States) had a paradoxically near-disastrous effect on his life. He'd previously been doing the folk circuit, but was now suddenly booked into ballrooms and such venues as made money for a hit artist. The environment was wrong. He was appearing at Meccas in front of teenage kids who wanted whatever the current big artist was. Unfortunately, the happening thing was David Bowie's "Space Oddity", but nobody realised David Bowie was a folk singer and "Oddity" was just a freak song that he put in his act.

"It was very hard. It was 1969, and I went on in front of these gum-chewing skinheads. As soon as I appeared, looking a bit like Bob Dylan with this curly hair and denims, I was whistled and booed. At one point I had cigarettes thrown at me. Isn't that awful? (*A big grimace*) It turned me off the business. I was totally paranoid and I cut out."

He decided, he says, to just exist as a person again, and not a performer, and got involved with an arts lab, held at the Three Tuns in Beckenham High Street, near where he now lives. He was dogged, however, by his image, which pursued him spectre-like in the shape of audiences who turned up essentially to peruse a pop star.

It was such a bad period, he explains, that he's blanked most of it out in his mind. The awfulness was compounded by his father dying at roughly the same time. The steady slide into public oblivion was halted by Tony DeFries, a young lawyer who has subsequently become his manager. He consulted him in 1970 to see if he could straighten out the tangled financial situation in which he found himself.

Bowie recalls the occasion well: "He said I can get you out of that, and I just sat there and openly wept. I was so relieved that somebody was so strong about things.

"I was always stronger than everybody else around me, more determined and wanting to do more things, and everybody else was mousy and didn't want to take any risks. It was like going up a hill trying to drag kids with you – "Oh, come on, will you!" (*He mimes dragging someone by the arm*) – and nobody would go with you. And there was this pillar of strength. It was like everything was going to be different."

And it was, of course. He made *The Man Who Sold The World* for Mercury, and then the two really got into their stride. DeFries negotiated a new contract with RCA, and then early last year took him on a promotional tour of the States. He cut *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*, which is expected to break in a big way when he tours America in September (he plays Carnegie Hall on September 28).

> "I don't want to be profound. The aim of an artist is just to investigate"

In Britain the forthcoming concert on Saturday was sold out so quickly they're staging another the following day. I understand both shows will be large-scale production events with dancers and mime.

In this scheme of things his public persona, with its overtones of camp, has been decidedly crucial, although I think theatrical is a much more apt adjective in the context of his stage act.

He says he didn't want to have to dress it up, but unfortunately it did seem that to make the kind of breakthrough he needed he had to initially put on a few trappings.

"It was very naughty of me on a lot of people. I know." He doesn't look a bit contrite, all the same.

To this end he has gradually simplified his appearance, dispensing with the long gown that was featured on the cover of *The Man Who Sold The World* and cutting off the long hair. He'd set something in motion, he says, and he wasn't really quite sure which way this monster was developing.

Little by little he has stripped himself down to become a performer who couldn't be copied, unless by outright imitation. "It was like *Top Of The Pops* the other night. Everyone came on in what they thought was David

Bowie, and David Bowie came on and he was none of those things. He was just a person who performed."

But the campness?

"I'm not incredibly aware of it. I've always been camp since I was about seven. That's not a pose, really. I was outrageous then, only because my interests weren't centred around obvious seven-year-old interests, like cowboys and Indians. My things were far more mysterious. I would pull moodies and say things like, 'I think I'm dying,' and sit there for hours pretending I was dying. I'm a performer, you see, but people only think in terms of camp these days."

Had his avowed bisexuality made any difference to his public reception?

(*Much laughter*) "The only thing it ever did was to sell albums! As soon as your article came out in *Melody Maker* people rang up and said, 'Don't buy the paper. You know what you've done? You've just ruined yourself.' They said, 'You told him you were bisexual.' I said, 'I know, he asked me!' Nobody is gonna be offended by that; everybody knows that most people are bisexual.

"And I bought the paper and it looked alright. But from then on, the way the other papers picked up on it and just tore at it like dogs at meat! They made this enormous thing out of it."

I said I thought much of his appeal lay in his sophistication. But the last thing he wanted, he replied, was to be sophisticated. He knew people like that, and it was one thing he was not.

By general rock'n'roll standards he was, though, surely? Well, he said, he'd never been involved much with rock people before, and he didn't know their attitudes until he recently started to meet them. There was all this stupid, exaggerated studiedness that they obsessed themselves with.

Bolan, he said, wasn't camp, he was prissy. Prissy and fey. But that was right for the age group he wanted to appeal to, 'cos they were all fey. He'd been fey himself at that age, pouting and mincing around.

He hadn't seen Marc since he'd become T. Rex, but he'd known him quite well before because he'd mimed on a Tyrannosaurus Rex tour. They'd been terribly wary of each other, he recalled; embarrassingly wary, he'd imagine, to people looking on.

"We'd sit at opposite ends of the room just looking at each other. It was a very kinda moody thing, I suppose, on an infantile level."

But he'd seen a spark there. He knew Bolan would be enormous one day. "We were just terribly polite to each other all the time. I'd never say we are competition to each other 'cos we're at opposite ends of the spectrum. We might just have happened in the same period."

He broke off as a little reminiscence struck him. "The funny thing is, he made Steve Currie get his hair cut as soon as I got mine. Marc was furious because Steve and the rest of T. Rex came to see me at the Central Polytechnic and they asked if they could come to my party afterwards to tell me how good they thought we were. Marc was mad about that. And then I heard a week later that Marc had made Steve Currie get his hair cut! (*Great laughter*)

"Marc has always dealt in extremes, you know. He has his own fantasy worlds, he really does, in which everything is extreme. He's lovely. He's so terrifically aware of image. That's what I meant by prissy. He really is engrossed in his own image."

Another thought hit him. "June [Bolan's wife] had it in for me the first time we met, you know, and she realised I was making records. She hated it that Marc was playing lead guitar on "Prettiest Star". She came along to that session, sat on a chair, and said, 'I think it's awful. I think the song's a drag. I don't think Marc should be playing on this at all. He's got so much work to do, you know, he really doesn't have time to do your sessions.' This war's been going on for four years now!"

He laughed again. He really can be delightfully malicious at times – unexpectedly so, because he's mainly gentle and somewhat vulnerable. I asked him if Bolan, though, was more committed to his music than he was to his. He paused, looked serious and finally said he thought that was true in a way. "You see, Marc only has his music, I think that's probably the difference. He's seen me as a mime as well, he knows my areas stretch out, and so my conviction for music probably isn't as strong as his. He's totally holding on to his music, a totally convinced performer. I can't see myself always being a rock'n'roll singer.

After years of false starts, Bowie finally connects, early 1972

Talking of other rock singers, he said he'd gone to see Presley at Madison Square Garden. They hadn't met because he could imagine what he was like as a person… "a very nice, uncomplicated kind of guy" – and that wasn't the Elvis Presley he wanted to meet. It was the image.

He thought it was superb for him to have come out of ice and all that. Although, he reflected, he'd never bought any of his records. Little Richard had always been his idol, as far as rock'n'roll idols went.

Lou Reed, whose second album he's currently producing at London's Trident Studios, he'd met at a party. He was fascinated by his stories of the streets, which was why he also adored Jacques Brel. They both worked on a similar level. It was very basic stuff.

Lou had said this fantastic thing about Andy Warhol, he remarked – he was laughing again. He said they'd once thought of designing an Andy Warhol doll. You know, you wound it up and it did nothing. He thought it was a pretty good joke, Bowie. He hadn't actually met Warhol himself until after he wrote that song about him. He'd always been fascinated by his artwork and he wanted to see if he could get near to his character without meeting him. Afterwards, he said to himself, he didn't do a bad job.

But there were shades to him that he hadn't been aware of before. Lou had told him he was incredibly strong. Once he'd wanted Nico to tickle Lou, so he's grabbed Lou's arms behind his back and got quite a buzz out of getting her to tickle him. "Lou is a well-built guy and he couldn't break free from him. He says he's like a demon. His strength is incredible."

Bowie's meeting with him had been very peculiar. For an hour or so they hadn't said a word, and when he played the song to him, he walked out of the room. Warhol eventually came back and said, "Well, that was great, thank you." He put on a tape recorder and sat taking pictures with his Polaroid, peeling them off and leaving them on the table. Then they'd sat looking at each other for a bit and all these other people began talking, until suddenly Warhol caught sight of his shoes, a pair of Caterpillars, and he went, says Bowie, bonkers about them.

"I'd forgotten that he used to be a shoe designer before he was a commercial artist, and he went on about that, and that broke the ice. It was fascinating. He has nothing to say at all, absolutely nothing. And he has this white, pudding face. He looks slightly out of this world, really inhuman." *Michael Watts* •

GETTY

"I could buy your house, man. So be careful"

MM JULY 22 Marc Bolan wrestles with his first post-superstardom album, *The Slider*. "I'm not promoting it," he says. "It doesn't feel it's like my *Imagine*."

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

"I'M JUST DOING what I did before the lunacy; I'm not doing any business. I make a point of walking down the streets now, which I never did; even though I get a bit hassled sometimes, it's nice. I went down Petticoat Lane the other day, where I used to work when I was about eight, and it was weird but so nice. I was heavily disguised. I had my hair up like a samurai warrior, with a knob on top and chopsticks through. It's the new phase, man. I went into my grandma's tea shop and had a cup of Rosie.

"One reason I haven't done interviews for a time is I've been very worried that every time I open my mouth I'm having to defend myself, against people that have done things without my knowledge. Now it seems I have to clean up all the mess that went before me. I now guard my words, whereas I didn't before. I believed people wouldn't print 'em, which is wrong 'cos they're gonna have to. I shouldn't have said them in the first place. It's just teasing. I'm given to making extravagant statements all the time. I've never been ruthless in my whole life, ever. I'm honest. Not Honest Harry, but honest by my standards. No one I know thinks I'm ruthless, but I only see my friends, so I don't know.

"The only thing I don't like about all this crap is that it confuses the record-buying public, who don't wanna know any of that stuff about me, other than what's in that plastic they buy.

"You know, I don't know if I'd rather just give the whole thing up. Seriously. That court case business really destroyed me. I had two weeks when I was such a mess, 'cos I'd never felt like that before. I was changing managers at the time and I was very emotional. I'm a very emotional person.

"I'd cut all the tracks for *Slider* and I just said, 'Screw it!' I did a Brian Wilson. I said, 'F—— the album! Don't wanna put it out. I just don't wanna record ever again.'

"And I went away for about a week, came back and played the tapes, and thought they were great. So there you go. I'm not promoting it. It doesn't feel it's like my *Imagine* album. It's the only album in which I've said what I think I am.

"Things change around you when you become successful. I've not changed as a person. I've never spoken to someone. I didn't sack [publicist] BP Fallon – he left. He had nothing to do. He wanted to leave very badly. He felt he'd done what he wanted to do. We'd been through the beginning of the thing to the growth, and he was just like coming in and sitting down and talking to the *Sheffield Standard* or something.

"It was right that he left, 'cos he was vegetating almost, and he's an active young man. But I was very sad. It was not an artist-press agent relationship, which is why I didn't replace him. Everyone around me I consider personally before I even shout at them. I still see him. Of course it would make him sad, 'cos it always looks very easy when you're in the middle of a whirlpool madness. When you're suddenly outside, nothing happens.

"I believe it's a small thing, but that through being a Marc Bolan or a Mick Jagger one does change things, insofar as people can't deny you. For me to come from the background I do – a poor, working-class background – and now being able to get five suites at the Hilton, means something. I remember once going there when I was 15 to see a friend, an actor, and the doorman threw me out – and at that age, especially, that gets you. I went back recently and they wouldn't let me in again, either.

"I said, 'I want the manager,' and pulled out a $100 bill and said, 'You do take American money, don't you?' – made him hold it, went and got the manager and just said to him, 'I understand exactly what you do. You think I'm some little punk, which I probably am, but meanwhile I could buy your house, man. So just be careful.' And he went all red and apologised. But I didn't get in. It's irrelevant, because next week someone else might go in and he might let them in without doing that number.

"I went down Petticoat Lane the other day. I had my hair up like a samurai warrior"

"The business needs rock'n'roll from anybody; me and Bowie, of course they're trying to play us off! They can do whatever they want. If David and I did a concert, I'm over there and he's over here.

"Obviously we're very much bigger because we're two years ahead of him, and it's not the same riff, either. Him and I would meet in the middle and have a jam anywhere, and that probably would be the best part of the evening. Whatever they want, I don't care. They say Dave Clark is going to topple The Beatles – that's as bullshit as you possibly get, yet it was played up, even nationally, press-wise.

"Now that's bad, almost evil, to do that. And that's why I welcome David, 'cos at least I know he's a cool cat. He's a hip dude, which is groovy.

RETNA

It's good to have good people about. All I want to see is good hit records in the charts and good albums by good people. But if it's full of Eric and his milk carts then I dunno what's happening.

"There's always The Beatles and Stones. But at the moment they are trying to get someone to run alongside T. Rex, which I think is admirable. David is into a whole different school to us.

"I think if Alice Cooper ever happens, David Bowie would be much stronger, 'cos he's a much better writer. I've always said he should stay there on one line, but he tends to lose interest. If he can hang out long enough he'll be fine. I think 'Prettiest Star' is one of the best things he's ever done. It was daring at that time, 'cos after 'Space Oddity' it would've been easier to put out something with a strange Mellotron sound. But I'm pleased it's happening for him. He's suffered the fate of people like myself and Rod Stewart. People say for eight years you're going to happen and you never do. It's horrible if you're living in Balham or somewhere like that. I've always wanted rock stars to look groovy. You can even wear a denim jacket if it's got an Apollo's head on the back. But I never wear clothes on stage that aren't functional. That's why Pete wore a boiler suit for years; it's easier to play.

"No one ever wore that glitter under their eyes before. So it's becoming theatrical, but it always was. The thing is the artists are doing it now, whereas before it was dictated by managers. Ha, I see Jagger is wearing glitter now. But in two months it'll all be over, 'cos everyone is looking the same. I've done my bit and that's it. On the last four gigs I was dressed very plainly.

"Despite what's been said, I shall never give up gigs; because that's the way I need to communicate with people. I never said it, anyway. I said it was getting hard to work and we'd have to rethink the way we did it security-wise, in terms of working out a structure to play in; not before 5,000 people getting crunched up. I'd like to play in a big stadium and charge about 25 pence a head, maybe a football ground.

"And then I'd like to use other people on gigs: another drummer, back-up singers – Howard and Mark, or maybe a couple of black chicks; I want to spread out. I'd like maybe to find another guitarist to play unison things, to get off on each other. I still don't believe we've even started, but you check it out – every time a single of ours gets below Number 12 on the charts, someone says T. Rex have passed their peak.

"I'm not a journalist when I write. I record the events in my life. If you see something on the news, you're seeing it all the time and I don't think one really wants the same coverage in rock songs. Lou Reed? I've only heard several tracks at parties. I never liked The Velvet Underground. The singer always sounded like a bad copy of Dylan to me.

"There was a period when I covered everything in a very poetic style. The images were poetic. They're no less now, but they relate to people rather than the landscapes of my head.

"Ask me what poets I haven't read? *Beowulf*... I was reading him when I was nine. But Rimbaud was the first poet that really rocked me. When I read him I felt like my feet were on fire, and that, in fact, altered my whole hairstyle, ha!

"I'm told all romantic poets have a death wish, and I'm definitely a romantic poet. Let me sum up: I feel like a rock'n'roll star who's writing for the people as long as they want to listen. If they don't want to listen, I'll become a poet."

Interview by Michael Watts

"It's a song about me"

MM JULY 22 Marc Bolan talks readers through the thoughts and feelings behind each track of *The Slider*.

Metal Guru

"Metal Guru" is a Festival Of Life song. I relate metal guru to all the gods around. I believe in a God, but I have no religion. With "Metal Guru" it's like someone special; it must be a godhead. I thought how God would be; he'd be all alone without a telephone. I don't answer the phone any more. I have codes where people ring up at certain times.

Mystic Lady

"Mystic Lady" has lines in it about Bobby Dylan. In the letters in your paper they were saying he was dead. I feel close to him 'cos he's a nice man. I met him two months ago at someone's house. I didn't expect him to know who I was.

Rock On

"Rock On" was written in a Cadillac going between gigs in a place called Chevy Chase, outside Philadelphia [it's in Maryland].

The Slider

The album was originally gonna be called "Rabbit Fighter", which is one of the other tracks, but this came through. "Slider" sounded much more sexual, sort of raunchy young man. I wrote some of the lines when I was about eight, actually: "*All schools are strange*". Lyrically, I really like it.

Baby Boomerang

"Baby Boomerang" was written in New York. I adore this. This to me is like writing a Dylan song: "*You're talking with your boots/And you're walking with your mouth*". It's one of the best things I've written this year.

Spaceball Ricochet

It's totally a poem about my life: "*I bought a car/It was old but kind*". In the film we used a 200-quid, beaten-up 1948 Cadillac, which is lying outside Ringo's house somewhere. I bought it off him and I haven't picked it up. It's the only car I've ever driven. I drove it down an aerodrome when we were shooting.

Buick Mackane

"Buick Mackane" is like Zep Rex. It's like yer heavy rock, it's one of those. It's dynamite. Buick Mackane is a chick. If you wanna get inside a chick, man, it's gotta be called Buick Mackane to get off with me.

Rabbit Fighter

"Rabbit Fighter" has got the best guitaring I've ever done on a record, I think.

Ballrooms Of Mars

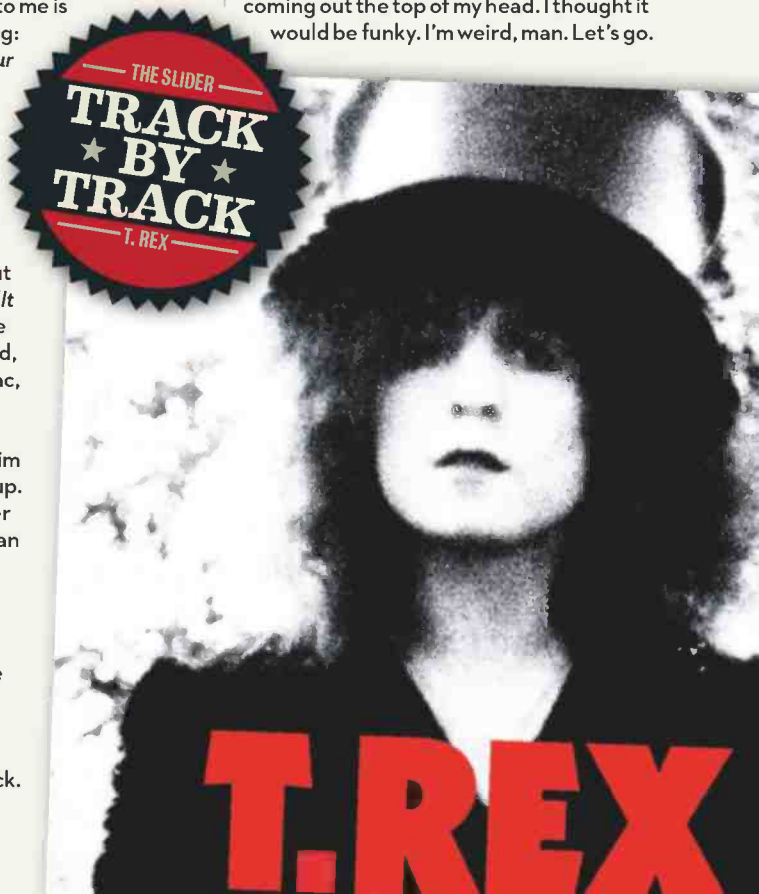
A very personal song. Dylan and Lennon get in there, and Alan Freed. "*I'm talking 'bout night-time/When the monsters call out*". I believe Bob Dylan of all people knows about that night-time thing. It comes through in "Johanna". There are no real monsters, I believe, but I think one can make them. I've manifested creatures when I was into magic, but it comes from here, baby; it's up there. The Lyceum always looked groovy, and this is that barren landscape, like a big Lyceum ballroom made of silver. All the astronauts get up there and leave the whatsit, the module, and it's like "*dum da da da da*" – all this jiving and riffing going down. What would happen to the world? Rock'n'roll is here to stay, mothers.

Chariot Choogle

"*Pasolini toad*" – Pasolini is dynamite, man. You see, I do get all the journalism bit in, but I do it in a different way.

Main Man

"Main Man" is a song about me: "*As a child I laughed a lot... Now it seems I cry a lot*". I've never cried so much in my whole life as this last year. "*...giraffes in my hair*". That's a *Top Of The Pops* flash about having giraffes coming out the top of my head. I thought it would be funky. I'm weird, man. Let's go.



October 30, 1972: the New York Dolls backstage at the Empire Pool during the Wembley Festival of Music - (l-r) Billy Murcia, Johnny Thunders, David Johansen, Arthur "Killer" Kane and Sylvain Sylvain

"We knew we had PIZZAZZ!"

Something unusual is happening in New York City. *MM*'s reporter encounters a SUICIDE performance and sits down with the spectacular, self-confident NEW YORK DOLLS. "We were just flawless," says guitarist Johnny Thunders. "We were rock'n'roll"...

GETTY

— MELODY MAKER JULY 22 —

THEY MIGHT JUST be the best rock'n'roll band in the world. And whether you believe that or not, you're going to have to take notice of them… The New York Dolls. Musically, they hurt, because they don't have any manners. They can't play very well. They pout, and swank, and shake their bums with the hellish rhythm thrown up by their drummer, who wears driving gloves and smacks about like a madman.

The singer, a lovely young replica of Mick Jagger, shouts as though each word were a swear word, and the rock-a-boogie swears on to meet its evil end. These are young New Yorkers, seemingly unimpressed with the switches and swatches of progressive music – as is their growing audience. Not for them any boring, endless singer-songwriters; not for them any polite sobering up in the quality of rock.

Not for them any attention to what old men are flogging off as hip. No class, little discussion, just stuff wild and unsubtle. And it makes wholesome sense. The New York Dolls are a five-piece with no manager, no record company, no publicity unit, and precious little equipment, and yet their quest must be logged.

For in them, and their kind, lies the rebellion needed to crush the languid cloud of nothingness that rolls out from the rock establishment, and falls like endless drizzle on the ears. They are growing up within the hot swathe cut by Alice Cooper. They have picked up on the remnants of things that have been misused. They sound like a cross between The Deviants, Pretty Things and very early Rolling Stones.

In other words, the circle has indeed turned. The need for wildness and arrogance is back again, as much as it was during the '50s. A need to enjoy without inhibition. The Dolls are one of the possibly many bands – mostly very young – who are crawling out of the shadows cast by their elders and, with sneaky cheek and brash egos, pulling notes of scorn against the establishment.

Their music may sound like drivel, but whatever it is, it is indeed alive – and you can see an audience dance themselves dead and blur their minds crazy to it. A rock musician may be likened to a footballer. He's at his best when young. The mature years over 25 meet for more stylish eclectic play – the sting in the tail becomes a wise glow in the eye. After 28, the style begins to dim, and then even being wise cannot match the impact of youth.

And rock must be young.

Being wise also fails to throw up any sort of ugly, but fiery, ego. Confidence becomes a substitute for that character, but egos, no matter how sickening with their arrogance, make for colour. The Dolls and their like have colour, the colour that is now being lightly painted in pastel shades by their elders. The youngsters paint with blood.

It's rather like changing one's hobby from cock-fighting to chess – growing old, that is. The music follows suit – watching the New York Dolls is like watching not just a cock-fight, but a dog-fight – in drag.

They don't have anything to say of importance offstage. They aren't talkers, they don't have any amazing concepts to drawl on about, they just want to play what the people want to hear. Really, it's as simple as that.

The first time I saw them was at Greenwich Village's Mercer Arts Centre, and they did everything right. They played Bo Diddley's "Pills" in a very brash way, dressed in a variety of clothes, women's shoes and vampy makeup.

Guitarists Johnny Thunders and Sylvain Sylvain were high on treble and big, fast chords – few riffs, just rock and blues, nicely out of tune in places, and evil. It owed nothing to the respect electric guitar has got over the past few years.

Singer David Johansen is a young, bubbling spot of Jagger, but instead of straight copying, he just camps naturally, and shouts like a bitch. Then there was strange, supine bassist Arthur Kane, blond, and with white makeup, tights, high-heeled shoes, and a mouth full of surly posing. He struck loud patterns, while drummer Billy Murcia drew savage percussion.

You hear this band for a minute, and there's one thought in your head – you want to dance.

And the people at Mercer leapt up and down, sideways and went well crazy on the floor as The Dolls' music got louder, and sawed about the room. It's simple music, just rock and blues, but it's played right, and played with monster arrogance.

They look young, too. No lazy, bored 30-year-old in jeans, picking notes and their noses, but kids having a great time, playing heavy rock like it had just been discovered. They're going to make great singles, are The Dolls. Now they live in an attic, just on the Bowery, in a dimly lit, seedy area, where activity consists of pool rooms, and standing with little or totally lost ambition on street corners. Bo Diddley was on the stereo, and a couple of big dogs filled the stale air in the attic with doggy smells.

A couple of ladies are busy in dark corners, and the toilet is a sink. For the Dolls, money is hard come by, but even with a little, luxuries like cans of Budweiser can be bought.

They were formed in January of this year. "Three of us knew each other, two of us didn't," said Johansen. Their first gig was a political benefit party – they don't know what politics were involved – but an ad in *The Village Voice*, plus a shoddy picture, launched them. There was something about the "ad" – a little magic maybe.

> "We don't try and offend people, but somehow we do offend"

"I think we all felt something was lacking in music. It wasn't exciting any more to us. Everyone was hanging about on stage, being morose as well… We didn't dig that. We reckoned what bands were lacking was PIZZAZZ. We knew we had PIZZAZZ, we knew what we wanted to do. We wanted to play rock," said Johansen.

Being young, what had they picked up on; in other words, what were their roots? "Well, we picked up on anybody that was really good. The Stones, Kinks, Pretty Things, Pink Fairies. Oh, and James Brown. And so our music has a lot to do with the way we were brought up. The time is right for some good rock again… Some good things are going to happen."

Did they ever imagine that people would actually like what they played? "No, not really, what has happened has been pretty amazing. I mean we haven't even got any equipment, except guitars and harmonicas."

A few weeks ago somebody described the Dolls as "subterranean sleazoid flash", which is maybe getting quite close to the core.

"I think that, on a social level, we try to be inoffensive – but it doesn't work. We don't try and offend people, but somehow we do offend.

"You see, we don't want nobody laying down any rules. We don't want to get involved with corporate enterprise. At the moment that makes for hard living. Where do we get money? Well, basically we hassle. We've been picking up about five dollars for the gigs at the Mercer."

Five dollars?

"Yeah, and sometimes less," said Johansen.

"Alice Cooper is possibly the better of the top bands, but really the music scene to us didn't have much going for it – except money. Sure, there was money, but there was no vitality. I know if I was 13, I'd be off on Alice Cooper like crazy. Alice to me would be the greatest."

Offers have been pouring in from all angles to sign the band. "We haven't accepted any. We're waiting to hear the whole situation on everything. What's a good record label?"

Thunders cuts in. "Yeah, nice people being interested – the more the merrier. You should have seen us last night, we were just flawless. You know, everyone was dancing. Rather than have them sit there listening,

we want them dancing on the floor, we want them getting off to us. We're rock'n'roll.

"Sure, we have few technicalities about our music, but, my God, we have feel. We don't attempt to be a type of Segovia with guitar work, but when we play, everyone casts their shackles aside and dances. We're play things; kids want to have us."

Johansen: "The thing about rock today is that you have to impress somebody, have to relate to them. It lost a lot when it became just like that. They forgot that you also have to entertain people."

And with a couple of gigs a week, the Dolls are entertaining. "*Is it a crime to fall in love with Frankenstein?*" is a line from "Personality Crisis", one of their self-penned items. "The lyrics are high," Johansen tells us.

New York, says Johansen, has a lot of good musicians. "But they somehow find difficulty in playing together – in a group. We didn't have any trouble at all. We were a group from the start – a proper group. It's got to the state where it's all we want to do."

So the next week down the Mercer, the crowd was twice as big and there were twice as many people dancing. The Dolls are making it in an old-fashioned way. There's no hype – they're just the best new, young band I've ever seen. Yes, young. *Roy Hollingworth*

Suicide's Alan Vega performs "A Punk Mass" at the Project of Living Artists, Greene Street, New York City, May 1973

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 21 —

WEDNESDAY 10PM, THE Mercer Arts Centre, Greenwich Village: and now for something completely different.

The Mercer is an extremely comfortable Arts Lab that has thrown up several names, including Dustin Hoffman. It consists of a maze of concert rooms and extremely modern theatres. Way in the back in the Oscar Wilde Room, a strobe light flicks slowly, picking out a stage that contains only one mic and three keyboard machines.

There are a handful of people in the room. They don't talk, and the strobe just flicks. Its electrical flick is hypnotising.

Then two figures appear – one is dressed lazily in casual clothes, the other is dressed to kill. His face is covered in glitter. His clothes are shoddy and black, and on the back of his leather jacket is jewelled *Suicide*.

Yes, this is Suicide, a two-piece that make appearances every now and then. They are appearances to remember.

The only music – as such – comes from the manipulation of the keyboards. The power and effect is startling. First a drone, keeping both there, and then ingeniously spinning more webs on the top. It's loud – but needs to be, for the song about to be delivered consists of only two chords.

It is a heady, stark trip. The starkest trip I've ever seen. The singer stalks the stage, and at full volume shouts words about love through the speakers. The chords just ooze up and down, and they are sludgy and dirty, and the texture gained is so right as to be richly exciting.

It's like having a claw rip down your back. It lurks onwards, and the singer jumps off the stage and crawls over the floor. "I love you," he sings in this evil voice.

After about 15 minutes of this same number, somebody made to leave, was harassed by the singer first, and finally fled through the door. The door should have been locked for full effect. It was hell inside there.

One by one, people left as the dirge grew onwards. It was a pleasurable case of just how much could be taken, of possibly the most frightening blend of music going around today.

It was fascinating – how two people could create such a thick wall of sound and atmosphere was an unbelievable achievement. It roared, and groaned, and the singer smacked himself on the head with the mic a couple of times, and then fell in a heap in a corner – and whimpered.

Was this the end of music as we know it?

Oooooh! It was creepy.

The next number was so vicious that I put my hands over my ears. It clawed into the air with such malice. So dramatic, so well done. Really, it was incredible.

Suicide were certainly the most awful sight ever – and yet, in the most bizarre way, it was a therapy for the mind.

What has rock created? In New York City it has created things that reach from the pinnacle of obscenity, through hapless-lazy rock'n'roll, to boredom, and to sheer musical vomit.

It's like it being in a sewn-up sack. It doesn't know how to get out, and it most certainly doesn't know where it's going. *Roy Hollingworth* •

Peter Gabriel in 1972: "There is an element of escapism in it, but there is nothing to do with the drug culture"

"We've started to take control"

They failed as pop songwriters. As a theatrical rock group with elaborate lighting requirements, GENESIS are doing very well indeed. "The energy flows in," says Peter Gabriel, "and we push it out".

— MELODY MAKER JULY 15 —

PETER GABRIEL IS a quiet and nervous chap. He sits twisting his hands while his eyes bore from a high forehead that might indicate supreme intelligence, or is simply the result of shaving part of his scalp.

He ponders awhile, then out comes a rush of sentences, a message to the outer world. Get it down quickly; because transmission may suddenly cease, and Peter will be winding himself up inside again.

"Try beer," I suggested. "It helps you relax." Peter shook his head.

"Coke," he said faintly. "I'll have a Coke."

Not bad going, because Peter, the flute player who will take on a motley audience with menacing verbiage, had thrice refused refreshments, even while his fellow musicians were gladly absorbing lager.

It never ceases to cause surprise that the most extrovert characters on stage prove to be mild-mannered, gentle souls away from the glare of footlights and strobe. There was Jimi Hendrix, PJ Proby, Arthur Brown, Keith Emerson, all a blur of flaming guitars, ripping trousers, blazing helmets and flashing knives whilst on public »

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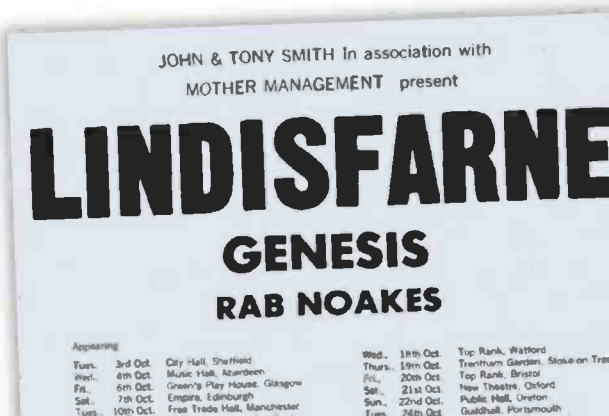


display. But behind the scenes – just plain old-world courtesy every time. And Peter Gabriel, who can hold an audience with hypnotic ease, and launch into the most powerful flights of fantasy, has none of the brashness normally associated with the hard-gigging rock musician. Peter and Genesis have come a long way since their debut album under the auspices of Jonathan King, who produced them back in the dark ages.

Their music and attitudes have changed, improved, and progressed, until they have reached that most exciting time for all groups, when they haven't quite cracked the publicity barrier, but are enjoying the much more worthwhile and rewarding acclaim of genuinely appreciative audiences.

For Genesis have their fans, who know about the music, and the lyrics and the act, and plot their course through the clubs and corn exchanges. They cheer when Peter launches into a brief resume of the plot of "Musical Box", one of their most emotive pieces. And they leap to applaud when the lights explode to the music with brilliant timing.

What struck me most about the band, after not having seen them for a year or so, was the strange aura they managed to sustain, even within the municipal confines of the Watford Town Hall. They seem to be super-relaxed, or floating, which probably stems from the habit of the guitarists in sitting down to play. Even delays between numbers do not seem to matter. The audience knows the next piece will be equally complex.

The strongest interplay seems to come between their remarkable drummer Phil Collins and Gabriel, probably because Phil has a strong personality and Peter used to be a drummer. In fact, Pete still hangs on to a solitary bass drum which he raps from time to time, between singing and fluting.

The feeling and excitement of a band that is happening musically, and knows it, is only rarely experienced. It happened for Led Zeppelin, The Nice, Jethro Tull and a few others when they were just starting out as support bands or local club attractions.

That feeling is happening now with Genesis, although they are not entirely convinced that success is just around the corner. How do they feel about "success", how will the band evolve? And how do they feel about such contemporaries as Alice Cooper and David Bowie? Peter, Phil and guitarist Steve Hackett assembled to talk this week in London, just prior to a lightning assault on Holland.

"Yes, our style has changed a lot – evolved in the last year," said Peter, sinking onto an uncomfortable stool and wobbling slightly.

"It changed when Phil came along and Steve joined on guitar. And it will change again, because we will be doing all new stuff for our next album. It's the only time we can get to write – when we work on an album. We hope to have a new show by January, which will be a complete musical presentation."

Said Phil, "We'll be using back projection with a big screen behind us. What we've got at the moment is very basic as far as lights go. A lot of light shows are just rubbish, with pretty patterns playing on the band. We went through a period when one of our roadies left us and the lights just didn't happen. It was bad karma. But with lights – anything dramatic that helps the music is valid."

Peter began to muse. "Originally we tried to do folk-type numbers, and it's all worked up to a crescendo. Now we've got an act we've started to take control of the audiences. In the past, we bodged our way through things.

"I suppose it started for use at the legendary Friars, Aylesbury. That's where people first got to know us. It's all built up mostly through gigs rather than publicity. People seem to know our numbers, and those who dislike our music the first time, pick up on us later."

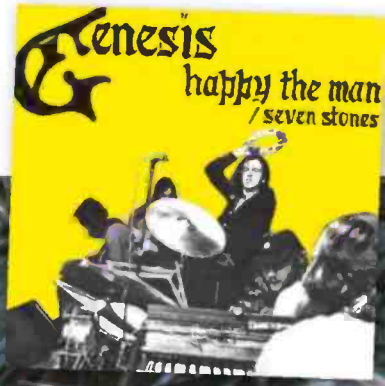
> "It was hard to get across on a single what the band is all about"

"Happy The Man" was their last single release, and it didn't knock me out. But after hearing it live, it's a song I constantly whistle, in tuneless fashion. Said Phil, "It was hard to get across on a single in three minutes what the band is all about."

So what is the band all about?

"I don't consciously think about it all as an act," said Peter, whose stage movements have a balletic quality that could earn him an audition at Covent Garden. "A lot of it is based on fantasies, without them taking over from the music. There is a lot of freedom in the music. Nobody has to compromise too much. In our writing, we are trying to do something that hasn't been done before, and that is to write a combination of sections that match.

"We have a number called 'Musical Box' that is composed in this way. It's quite a complicated story – about a spirit that returns to bodily form and meets a Victorian girl. He has the appearance of an old man and the relations with the young lady are somewhat perverted, so he gets bumped off into the never-never."



"We like to create a moody, dreamlike quality in the music": Genesis in 1972 – (l-r) Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, Phil Collins, Steve Hackett and Peter Gabriel

CAMERA PRESS

Who's the leader of the group? Peter?

"No! We just squabble. We have a democratic system. There are five in the group and three represents a majority. When we are on stage, we really feel the energy coming off – man." Peter laughed. "That sounds American. The energy flows in, and we push it out. We need success to get the band into the next stage. And anyway, the band is £14,000 in the red at the moment." *Chris Welch*

— MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 23 —

A PARTICULAR QUALITY OF certain successful groups has been their ability to create moods, to take an audience a little further than the surface excitement of an insistent rock beat. Their entire performance is calculated to one end – to grab and disturb listeners, to play upon their emotions.

Genesis are such a band, and as a result of abundant ideas and novel approach, they have gained an almost fanatical following, who enjoy the jokes, delight in perversity and will boo the band the length of the motorways. During two years existence of their present lineup, they have gradually developed a personality that appeals strongly to connoisseurs of eccentric English rock. And when Peter Gabriel, partially shaven lead singer, coolly suggests that loyal fans might care to barrack performances, instead of giving vent to the usual standing ovation, they oblige with good cheer – and boo.

The history of Genesis is now fairly familiar. Suffice to say for those who know naught of their works that the core of the band came from Charterhouse school, where Peter and friends had daydreams of writing hit songs for Dusty Springfield. They were encouraged by an old boy who used to visit the school – Jonathan King.

"There were four of us songwriters," says Peter; "Tony and Mike of the present group and Anthony Phillips. But our songwriting was marked by a tremendous lack of success. We were writing straight songs. I think we had one cover version that was recorded by Rita Pavone's brother.

"We tried to get a band together as a vehicle for our songwriting, and that also failed. We went flogging our wares around the business, and most people turned us down. The Moody Blues showed an interest, and then we met Strat (manager Tony Stratton-Smith). There was a time when we heard of an American group called Genesis, and we changed our name to Revelation. We then heard they had disintegrated and switched back to Genesis."

The group recorded its first album with Jonathan King in 1968, but it bore little resemblance to the present-day Genesis and so they like to call their latest album, *Foxtrot* (Charisma), their third, although it's their fourth. "We tried to write some structured songs in those days," recalls Peter, "but the publishers didn't like them at all. This was before we went on the road, and we were playing for our own pleasure. I suppose our ideas were fairly idealised and a bit over-romantic. Initally the band was a vehicle for writing and it has developed as we have gained experience. We started out with a small, hard core of followers, who gave us a good welcome wherever we went."

How did Peter explain their appeal? "It was the flights of imagination and the lyrics probably at first. Now it's a bit different as we have a more extreme stage act. It's all been there for two years, but we have tried to improve on it."

Peter emphasised that the ideas in the band came from each member. "They're not all mine, you know – it's a very democratic system."

Part of their development has been an increasingly clever use of lighting in the desire to make their show visually exciting. "We have a fairly integrated light show that relates more to the music than most. Lights are often trimmings and they get in the way of the band. They don't convey the different moods with different colours."

But Genesis plan to change all that. "We're going to get two light towers, two on stage and two in the audience. And we want a white circular backcloth. It's a pet idea of mine to have semi-circular backcloth which will hopefully give us a large reflective surface."

How close were Genesis to their audiences? "We had a great night at Aylesbury recently when we asked the audience to boo instead of cheer. Then last night we played at Greenford and it was easy to recognise the Aylesbury contingent – they were really abusive. They really are a great audience! They like the concept of our music and we like people to like us – it's very simple.

"We like to create a moody, dream-like quality in the music, and we use our stage act to enhance the moods. We don't appear to have much humour but there are things we laugh at and we are putting more humour and more subversion into the music. There is an element of escapism in it, but there is nothing to do with the drug culture, which I don't like. We should be able to create and sustain moods on a natural level. I don't think drug-induced states are valuable.

"Sometimes we like to say that the audience enjoys the music, but really the music enjoys the audience. Personally, I like to see any response that people want to give. If people want to dance they can. I think that's great. On the whole, people are inhibited, myself included. Any expression to music is pleasure. Genesis brings express relief. Well, it works for me. I can get completely engrossed in the music. Rhythm for the body, and stuff for the mind. The power of music is unlimited. In the future, music will be used to heal, whereas now it often makes people sick." *Chris Welch* •

A touch of Gilbert & Sullivan

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

MM SEPT 30 Album four from Genesis.

Genesis
Foxtrot
CHARISMA

Once in a while there is an event on the album front, an occasion when a new release is greeted with eager anticipation, and not just perfunctory acceptance. *Foxtrot* is such an album.

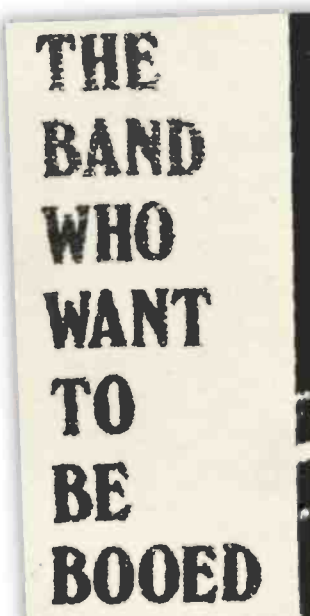
A milestone in the group's career, it is also an important point of development in British group music. For Genesis have reached a creative peak with this collection of songs. The lyrics are absorbing, and range from the social comment of "Get 'Em Out By Friday", to a mixture of myth and fantasy.

There is a kind of gripping menace in the combination of Phil Collins' and Peter Gabriel's vocals, while the band interprets the themes with great care and ability.

The creation of moods is the basis of Genesis, and they have managed to transfer those in highly successful fashion from their stage art. Tony Banks' Mellotron and other assorted keyboards play a great part in setting up the atmosphere, while Phil Collins' fine drumming holds the arrangements together and pushes them along. In some respects there are detectable similarities to Yes in their concept, and one theme in particular reminds me of "Sweet Dreams".

But in the main there is great originality in their work, and pieces like "Time Table" have a quality of beauty. The lyrics of "Get 'Em Out" are particularly good: "*I represent a firm of gentlemen who recently purchased this house and all the others in the road/In the interest of humanity we've found a better place for you to go-go-go*". There is a touch of Gilbert & Sullivan and Victorian irony evident here.

Between them the band summon up a remarkable array of instruments which give a sweeping grandeur to the sound. *Chris Welch*



"We're eclectic, certainly"

On the road with, and introducing the members of, ROXY MUSIC. They are enjoying success with "Virginia Plain", a pop-art collage that cues up this inspiring new band. "It's a whole American Dream thing," explains singer Bryan Ferry. "And a way to meet Pan's People."

»

Roxy Music at the Royal College Of Art, London, July 5, 1972: (l-r) Andy Mackay, Paul Thompson, Bryan Ferry, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera and Rik Kenton

REDFERNS

— MM JULY 29 —

ALMOST A YEAR ago to the week, Bryan Ferry sat in a council flat in Shepherds Bush and explained his timetable for the next year. He had this band called Roxy, and he said that they were going to make it "in as civilised a way as possible."

All he wanted was the best management, the best agency, the best record company and a large bag of gold coins – and if he got them, he knew the band would be very good, and very popular. One year later, their management is EG, their agency Chrysalis, their record company Island – and their first album's at Number 29 in the *MM* chart. They're playing the best gigs (with Alice at Wembley last month, Bowie at the Rainbow next), and in November they're off to the States. Their first single comes out this week and if it doesn't make the chart, then it'll be the first thing that's gone wrong in 12 months. For if Roxy Music go very much further, they'll be one of the great success stories of modern times.

One imagines that countless hard-gigging pros, up and down the island, are swearing their heads off at the way Roxy have taken off. After all, only a couple of the band's six members have any real experience of life on the road. Dues paying, as far as Roxy is concerned, has been virtually eliminated by a combination of imaginative excellence and intelligent strategy. And these two adjectives – imaginative and intelligent – pretty well sum up where they score over the muddy morass of mediocre pickers truckin' nightly up and down the M1.

A large part in the success has been played by John Peel – who, with his producers John Muir and John Walters, has given them regular airtime since the very early days. They're playing Crystal Palace this Saturday, with Edgar Winter, Osibisa, Stone The Crows and others. Certainly, many new listeners will become ardent fans through exposure to their blend of witty visual style and Ferry's strange, compelling songs. There can be little doubt that they're moving the music forward, stylistically and aesthetically, while reaffirming the strength and validity of its roots.

Bryan Ferry is wearing a somewhat distracted air these days. His album's in the chart, he's moving house, he's trying to write some new songs – too much to be taken in at once. How does it feel, Bryan? "Couldn't tell you. I feel in a complete void at the moment… very unsettled. It'll get better when we go to the States… the travelling will be more interesting."

Facts: he comes from County Durham, is 26 years old, and studied Fine Art (painting and sculpture to you) at Newcastle University. Started singing in soul bands, notably Gas Board, and then returned to painting. Won a scholarship from the Royal College Of Art, exhibited his ceramics, and veered away again in the winter of 1970, when he began teaching himself to play piano, and started a period of intense writing which produced most of the music Roxy Music plays today.

Their single, "Virginia Plain", exemplifies his approach to writing, which freely criss-crosses between the visual and aural arts. It's based around a painting of the same name which he did years ago, and which is itself a three-way pun. The name, of course, comes from a brand of American cigarettes – and the painting consists of a large cigarette pack, with the motif of a girl, placed at the end of a plain; so the cigarettes are Virginia Plain, the girl is Virginia Plain and the plain is Virginia Plain. How it translates into the song is rather more complex. "The painting was a sort of throwaway watercolour," he says, "and the song has lots of little images and throwaway lines. The painting was done in '64, and although the song was written this year, it reflects the feeling of that time – I was up in Newcastle, living with a guy who'd helped Warhol to make the Marilyn (Monroe) silkscreens. It's a whole American Dream thing, living up there yet constantly thinking about Warhol's Factory and Baby Jane Holzer. It's got some other things in it now: Vegas, Nevada, Route 66…"

The sharp-eared will catch the line "*Baby Jane's in Acapulco / We are flying down to Rio*", which reflects how Bryan can translate cinematic references to song (as he did in the album's "2HB"). There's also a few seconds of motorbike noise – shades of "Leader Of The Pack".

"It's a bid to get on *Top Of The Pops*, actually… just a way to meet Pan's People. I think a single is necessary; after all, most of the best things in pop have been done in that medium. We've always wanted to make them, and I don't want people to think it's a cop-out – that's silly. There's nothing wrong with being commercial if it's good, like The Who and the Stones. I'd like our single to be thought of in that area."

Will it be a hit? "It could be much stronger. We did a live version for the BBC yesterday which was full of power – thick and rough. But the record has some fine bits. Oh, I don't know what to think of things any more."

Bryan wants to make their second album much quicker and cheaper than the first – which itself wasn't expensive to make. "We'll just do a couple of takes on each number to get a 'live' sound… There weren't enough mistakes on the first album. It'll be much wilder." He's frustrated by the fact that he can't hear properly what they sound like on stage – "and people say we're much better live than on record. I never expected that – I always expected that we'd be a recording band, really. But I'm really pleased about it."

Andy Mackay would have made a great hipster, had he been born 25 years earlier. Almost over-endowed with cool, he'd be great in a zoot suit and a naked-lady tie. As things are, Andy adds a lot to Roxy Music, in terms of style. His playing isn't secondary, though. As befits a fancier of King Curtis and Earl Bostic, his contributions are trenchant and memorable.

He began musical life as a teenage oboeist in the London Schools Symphony Orchestra and didn't take up the saxophone until he went to Reading University, where he took a pleasant course which combined Music with English Literature (How? "Old English madrigals"). Unusually for a reedman, he had no jazz influence whatever and played in a college soul band called Nova Express, as well as joining the university orchestra. He also became heavily involved in avant-garde music and began to organise concerts with guest artists from London. Among his influences at this time were Morton Feldman and John Cage.

Leaving in '68, he hung around London for a while before splitting to the East, which "was the obligatory thing to do that year". Coming back, he did odd jobs before leaving again, this time for Italy. He stayed a year, practising and writing music, and teaching English. Returning, he met Bryan in January '71.

"I knew I had to be a musician, and I wanted to be a rock musician. I suppose I could've been a classical oboeist, but it didn't seem free enough; and I couldn't have supported myself by playing electronic music – also the audience is very limited, the only way I could be a musician was in rock – but with people who had a lot of ideas. The way we tackled it… we could have gone on the road and played all the colleges, but very early on we decided to do it the other way, to do only what we wanted. Being on the road for the first time is great – I haven't enjoyed myself so much in years."

Andy is very much involved in the band's visual style. "Last year I'd have been very surprised to find that what we're doing now is so much in fashion. It seemed very remote then – but now, it's a feeling that's around that we happen to represent. We'd got it all worked out by the middle of last year, so it's not just something we've jumped on all of a sudden.

"If the single is a success, we'll attract different kinds of audiences and we'll be freer to do more things. Already there's pressure, because people are expecting certain things from us… I just hope that it's pressure to come up with creative ideas."

While the rest of the band were mixing the B-side of the new single, Brian Eno was sitting in the control

Roxy working on second album *For Your Pleasure* with producer Chris Thomas (far right) in AIR Studios, central London

booth with a set of log tables, a notebook and a rapidly blunting pencil. "I woke up this morning," quoth he, "with a theory about prime numbers." The column of numbers in the notebook grew apace.

With stripey-dyed hair and pallid maquillage, Eno operates the band's synthesizer, prepared tapes and other electronic aids. He also does a nifty line in back-up vocals. Having spent his early years near a USAF base, his interest in rock is long-term ("We used to get the new American records from the PX stores"). At art school in Ipswich in the mid-'60s, he discovered the properties of the common, domestic tape recorder – and within three or four years had amassed no less than 30 such devices.

"I realised that there were certain areas of music you could enter without actually learning an instrument, which at my age I certainly wasn't about to do." At Winchester School Of Art between '66 and '69, he made himself president of the Students' Union and spent the union funds on hiring prestigious avant-garde musicians to come and lecture – mostly to himself. He also collaborated with some of the famous men: Cornelius Cardew, Christian Wolff, John Tilbury and Morton Feldman. Influenced by Cardew's piece called "Schooltime Composition", Cage's book *Silence* and the Systems Artists ("Their emphasis is on the procedures rather than the end product"), he was brought to Reading University to lecture by one Andrew Mackay.

Years later, when Andy had just met Ferry, Andy and Eno bumped into each other on the tube, and Eno was invited to join the group, playing Andy's VCS3 synthesizer. Now he uses four tape machines at home, transferring the results to an Ampex cassette machine for gigs. Soon he'll be getting a new synthesizer, incorporating a memory circuit which will retain any sequence of notes, up to 256 in fact. It'll also have various custom devices, including phasers and phase shifters and "a device which gives the effect of quad in two speakers – honest!"

He's also about to acquire a special long-delay echo unit, with a repeat of up to 15 minutes. "At the moment, I'm mostly interested in modifying the sound of the other instruments. You get a nice quality – the skill of the performer, transformed by electronics. Neither the player nor I know what each other will do – which means you get some nice accidents."

Apart from possessing one of the finest drum kits I've ever seen, Paul Thompson was, until the arrival of Rik Kenton, the only member of Roxy Music to have been through the rock'n'roll mill, and to whom life on the road wasn't something of a shock. Paul is from Newcastle, and started playing before he left school. He worked in a shipyard for a year, and then played with various bands – The Influence, Yellow and Smokestack among them. He came down to London with Smokestack early last year. "But it fell to bits after a while, and I went back home and did nothing." His determination rebuilt, he returned to London a few months later and worked on a building site while looking around for a band.

He and Roxy Music met each other through an ad in the *MM*. "Wonder drummer required for avant-rock group," it said, and after an audition he was in. On the face of, it doesn't seem a band any self-respecting heavy funk merchant would associate with. Not, in fact, drummers' music.

"I'm not into drummers' music," says Paul. "I'm into group music, something that comes out of a unit. I'd never played anything like it before, but I'd always wanted to do something out of the ordinary. I can't stand the heavy bands that just play riffs – only Led Zeppelin are good enough to get away with it. I try to play melodically as well as rhythmically, and I try to create my own licks. For instance, when drummers go right round the kit, they almost always do it clockwise. It seems to be the natural way. So I sometimes try it anti-clockwise – and it sounds really interesting."

> "There's a feeling around that we happen to represent"

At first, Paul was rather reticent about wearing makeup and strange garb on stage, having been brought up in the jeans-and-sweatshirt school. "I was a bit reluctant at first, because I'm basically shy – ahh! – but I've lost that as the group's got better known. With all the other bands I've been in, when we walked on stage nothing happened. With Roxy Music, »

GETTY

the audience takes notice right away. There's an immediate impact."

Phil Manzanera's association with Roxy began when he was invited to be the group's sound mixer. Soon he replaced David O'List – and his bejewelled shades are now an integral part of the group's teen appeal. Born in London, he spent his childhood moving between Cuba, Hawaii and Venezuela, which ensured he was exposed to the youth culture of North America.

"The first 45 I ever had was 'Teenager In Love'," he says. "I was brainwashed, and I've never recovered. I used to watch all the old *Shindig* shows on TV, and I started playing guitar when I was 12 – 'Wipe Out' and things like that. Nothing too difficult. I was completely swept up by the Beatles/Stones thing. That provided a lot of the impetus for me."

He came back to go to Dulwich College, and formed a group with bassist Bill MacCormick and drummer Charles Hayward. It was the psychedelic era, they were known as Quiet Sun, with a heavy Soft Machine influence, because Bill's mother knew Robert Wyatt's mother, and they were into the Softs right from the "Love Makes Sweet Music" single. "When we got Dave Jarratt in on keyboards, we started experimenting with time a lot. But it fizzled out – no interest from outside, and no work." MacCormick, of course, is now with Wyatt's Matching Mole. Phil auditioned for Roxy through the famous *MM* ad that also attracted Paul Thompson, but the band was looking for O'List and found him. Phil saw them play a party, though, and was still interested – so they planned he should mix their sound at gigs. He'd never done it before and was completely baffled by the mixing equipment – but fortunately O'List left in time and Phil was invited to join.

His influences on guitar were originally George Harrison and Chuck Berry – more recently, Randy California, Lou Reed and Jimi. "McLaughlin's not an influence – at a certain point I decided I'd never reach that stage of technical ability. Roxy Music fits in with my ideas of playing guitar, and with my limitations. I think people are getting fed up with long guitar solos, because very few people can maintain that level of creativity for any period of time – those who can are mostly playing jazz anyway. Perhaps after playing with Quiet Sun for a long time, I'm reacting the opposite way – getting into songs and simple rock'n'roll music. I like to be economical, and I'd rather play two bars of something nice than half an hour of something mediocre."

"So many things from the past have been forgotten"

RIK KENTON'S ROLE, as Roxy's bassist, is generally to mesh with Paul Thompson's drums to provide a tough, tight platform over which the instrumental lunacies of the front line can stretch unworried. Rik started off playing organ and guitar in Nottingham about five years ago, with local bands like Woody Kern. It was mostly soul music and jazzy blues, until he came to London in '69 to audition for a band called Mouseproof, on bass for the first time.

"That band wasn't far away from what's happening," he says. "The guy was into tapes and stuff, but he wanted a three-piece band and it wasn't that successful. I played with them for a long time – their manager was Jack DeJohnette's brother-in-law, by the way."

From Mouseproof he joined Armada, meeting crazed American tenorist Gary Windo – "who taught me a lot about the technology of music. Just playing with him was an experience, he's quite a musician." Armada was another jazz-influenced outfit, and through meeting various new friends, including ex-King Crimson drummer Mike Giles, Rik began to get into the aspects of bass playing exemplified by the great Richard Davis. The band lasted 18 months and then he met Leigh Stevens, formerly guitarist with the American prototype heavy band Blue Cheer.

"Leigh was a big influence because he was a side of rock I'd never met before. I played with him for about three months – we didn't do any gigs, though. It was hard to get on because Leigh didn't seem to want to and, although he's very talented, he didn't have any confidence. That finished last Christmas, and while I did a lot of auditions, I couldn't really find what I was after. Eventually I got together with Roxy through knowing Pete Sinfield and the people around the King Crimson scene. I'd heard the album and I liked Bryan's songs and voice, and Andy's oboe-playing. So when Graham left, I joined!"

Nerve-rackingly, his first gig with them was the Lincoln Festival on May 27. "Being on the road has given the band a lot of soul," he says. "From the outside it may not look like a musicians' band, but it is – it gives me a lot of scope, because the music varies so much and I'm called on to do different things. There are four lead instruments, so I have to be careful not to overplay when I'm supposed to be laying down a rhythm feel, but at other times there may be only me and Phil playing. As Bryan gets more confident on piano, it'll loosen up even more!" He's a great admirer of melodic bass players – McCartney, some of Jack Bruce's work and the Motown session men in particular.

"I keep making discoveries about the Motown guys. A lot of bassists forget about dynamics – for instance, the pinnacle of a phrase should be louder than the rest. It's also something to do with playing near the bottom of the fretboard, to give a certain depth."

Rik believes that Roxy's greatest strength is its all-encompassing attitude. "In Bryan's voice, we've got something that's identifiable straight away, so we haven't got to keep the music straight in order to retain a 'Roxy sound'. That's one of the reasons why there's plenty of room for the band to grow. It's very stimulating." *Richard Williams* •

MM JULY 1 On the road with the evolving Roxy Music roadshow. "So far, everything we've tried has been fairly successful," says Bryan Ferry.

PAUL THOMPSON'S TOM-TOMS ground slowly to a shuddering halt as Eno's synthesizer simulated the sound of Firestone Wide Ovals being pushed past their limit around a fast curve. The short final chord was almost obscured by the cheers and clapping. This was last Sunday night at the Greyhound in Croydon, South London's answer to Manhattan and Spaghetti Junction rolled into one.

It could have been several places over the past few weeks, because almost everywhere they've been, Roxy Music have been greeted with the kind of warmth all new bands crave, but few ever achieve. To those who've watched the band's progress closely in recent months, it comes as no surprise that audiences are taking to them without being told to. Roxy's brand of skiffle is altogether too good for anyone to miss – a lovely blend of surprise and satisfaction. They seem to combine so many good things into one tightly compressed package: good writing and playing, humour, dazzling visuals, and shocks galore. Anyone who puts them in a rock-revivalist bag is missing the whole point.

Bryan Ferry, writer, singer, pianist and embryonic cultural superstar, explains: "Only two songs on the album – 'Would You Believe?' and 'Bitters End' – use elements of '50s and '60s music. And 'Bitters End' is quite serious – the ambiguity of the doo-wopping in the background, which gives people a certain image, against the words, which are strange and not at all the kind of thing you'd usually find in that musical context.

"Actually, 'Would You Believe?' is the most restricting thing we do – far less satisfying than the

July 5, 1972: performing at the Royal College Of Art video studio in London while making their first promo film

BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS

rest – because it's a very set thing, a little cameo with no room for improvement or interesting improvising. It's very much something we have to act through, and if we're not in the mood there's not much we can do."

The rest of the songs abound with references to earlier pop – like the "quotes" on "Re-Make/Re-Model" or the Joe Meek-style production touches on "Ladytron". Ferry says: "It seems to be nice to have something that is rich in variety, and so many things from the past have been forgotten. It would be terrific, for instance, to have real violins on stage playing like the strings on 'Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow'.

"We're eclectic, certainly, but it's not so much cribbing – these elements are used with a point, and that's the strength of the group." What's really surprised him is the way these back-references are going down with an audience which is presumably too young to have heard them the first time around: "At some places they've been very young indeed, but the reaction has been amazingly good. We want to get through to different people on different levels, so whereas one person, maybe a Hampstead intellectual, would say, 'How camp!', a kid would respond by saying, 'That's weird!' The kid would probably get the bigger kick."

"We want to get through to different people on different levels"

Obviously, it's all been happening very fast for the band. Only four months ago, they had no manager or agent, and had played only a tiny handful of generally abortive gigs. Now, with a brand-new bassist (Rik Kenton), and a brilliant debut album behind them, they're playing Wembley's Empire Pool tomorrow night (Friday) as the sole support to Alice Cooper. "So far, everything we've tried has been fairly successful," Bryan says.

It's particularly enjoyable for the three members who haven't been on the road before: reedman Andy Mackay, electronics manipulator Eno and Ferry himself. Ferry's responses are coloured by his experience as a painter and sculptor: "It's strange to do something and be cheered for it, when you're used to a cool reaction to anything you've ever done before. It's much nicer this way, and the audiences really do seem to appreciate the fact that we perform, rather than just play."

The songs in their current repertoire come almost exclusively from the period between September '70 and May '71 when Bryan wrote a great deal. But now he's having trouble finding the time and space to write. "I can't work while we're on the road and I can't write at home, because I work best late at night and the neighbours go spare. What I need is a semi-detached bungalow in Esher and a few weeks off to absorb some information from outside." Bryan recognises that life on the road can lead to the kind of introspection that manifests itself in so many supremely boring songs.

His official biography states that he names Duchamp and Warhol as two significant musical influences. Bryan thinks it's too bald and sounds pseud, and elaborates: "Someone like Picasso develops a style and then flogs it to death. Marcel Duchamp was a kind of will-o'-the-wisp of art, lending his hand to all kinds of activity – which one would wish to emulate. Warhol's idea is to make art with as little effort as possible – he's an ideas man, really. And if you have faith in an idea, it is easy to make it happen. The main thing about our music is still its surprise. It would be terrific to have the second album sound nothing like the first. We're not the kind of band to find a formula and then stick to it. That's deathly!"

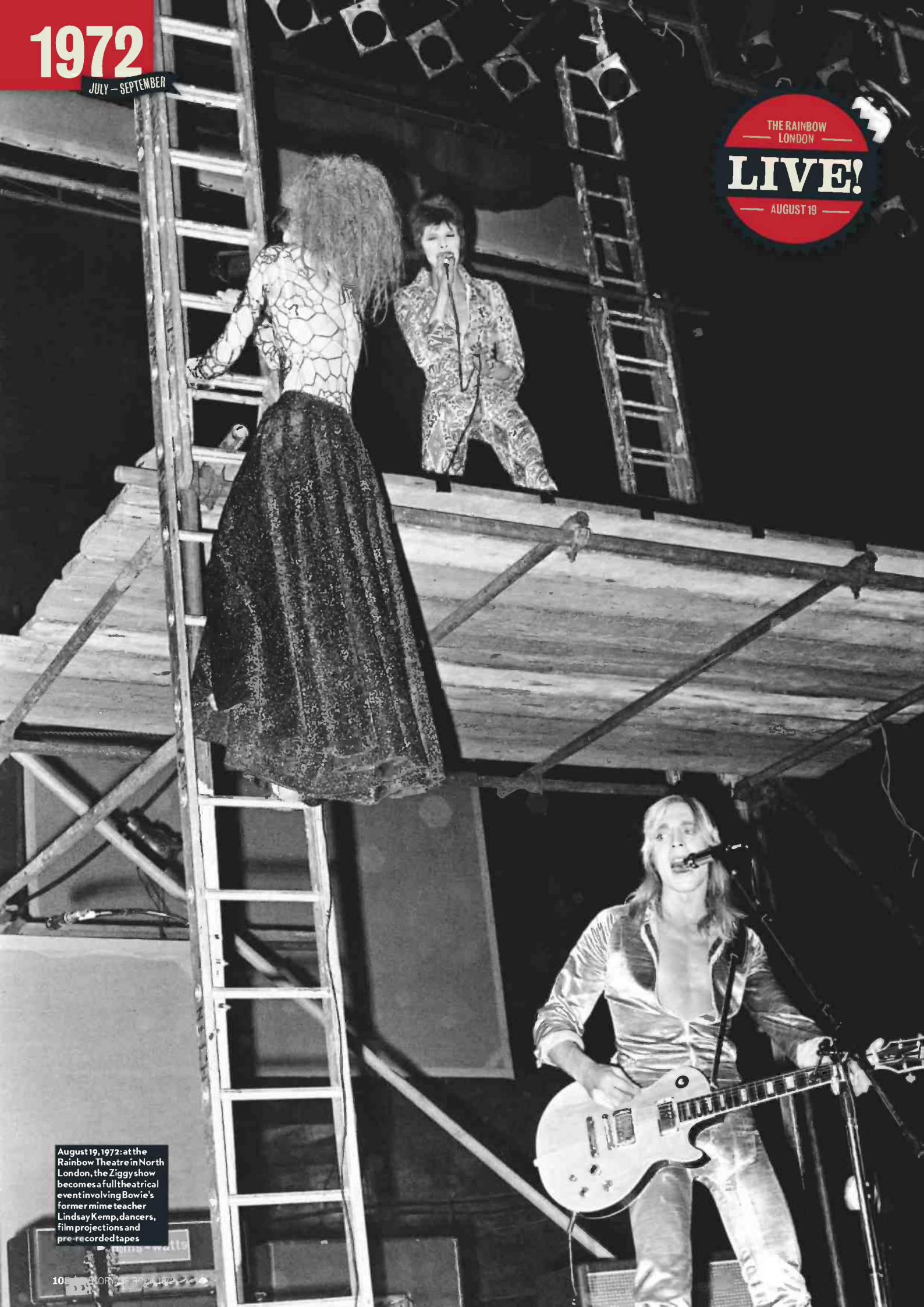
Future plans include their first single, a Ferry song called "Virginia Plain", to be produced (like the album) by Pete Sinfield this month. The song's based on one of Bryan's paintings, in turn inspired by the cigarettes of the same name and by former Warhol superstar Baby Jane Holzer. What about success then, Bryan?

"There are so many unknown and uncontrollable factors. Most of the band have this approach of inspired amateurism, and as long as we can retain that we'll be alright. The Rock Machine is quite a tough beast and very conventional. We've got to keep up the energy to question how things are, and shift them around to how we feel they should be, into our overall scheme. But, at the moment, I just think going up and down the M1 for the first time is very enjoyable.

Richard Williams

Roxy Music: the sound of surprise

THE RAINBOW
LONDON
LIVE!
AUGUST 19



August 19, 1972: at the Rainbow Theatre in North London, the Ziggy show becomes a full theatrical event involving Bowie's former mime teacher Lindsay Kemp, dancers, film projections and pre-recorded tapes

"He left the stage a giant"

Throughout the summer, DAVID BOWIE inspires adulation with his Ziggy show – becoming the authentic star many in the press suggested he might be. Correspondents from *Melody Maker* and *NME* filed their reports. "He has stuff going for him that most people haven't even thought of yet..."

— MELODY MAKER JULY 1 —

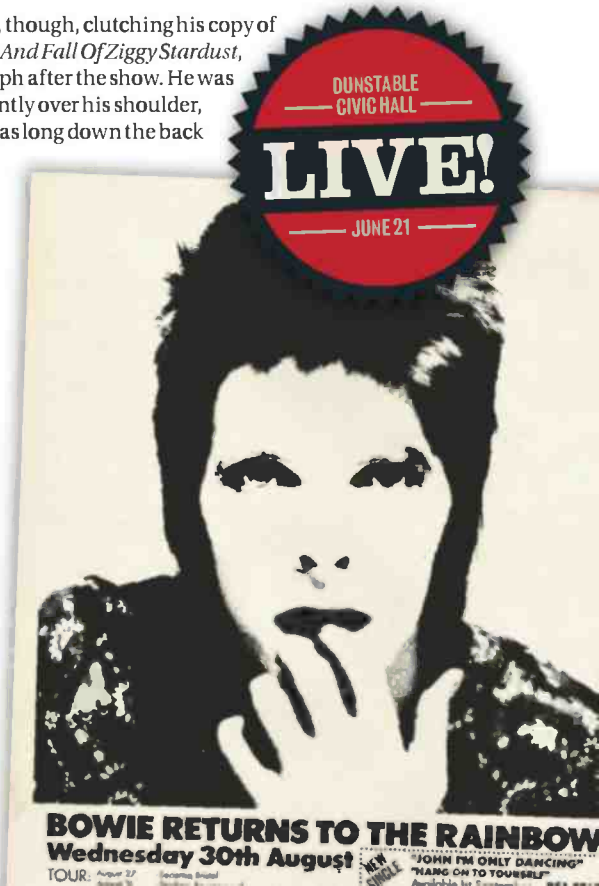
IT WAS RAINING the night Jim met Phil. They were total strangers to each other, but Phil had asked Jim for a cigarette, and well... one thing led to another. They've become very good friends. Phil still recalls how Jim's hands had trembled, though.

They'd gone along to see David Bowie in Dunstable. Great fans of Bowie they were, and Jim had almost to pinch himself when he first heard such a grand person was actually coming to that place. He hated it there. Privately, his mother confided that he found it difficult to make friends at work.

That Wednesday night he was there, though, clutching his copy of the new David Bowie album, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust*, which he hoped David would autograph after the show. He was wearing his red scarf, flung nonchalantly over his shoulder, and his red platform boots. His hair was long down the back but cropped fairly short on top so that it stuck up when he brushed his fingers through it. He hated that it was dark brown. He'd promised himself that when he eventually split to London he'd have it done bright blond. He was just turned 19.

Phil was one of the first to arrive at the Civic Hall. He'd stood in the queue for an hour and a half to get a ticket, so when he was inside he rushed quickly to the front and stood beneath the stage. He waited patiently while the Flamin' Groovies went through their set. He was to say later, in fact, that they were quite super, but after all, he'd really gone to see Dave, hadn't he?

He was so excited, Phil can't remember exactly what Bowie came out wearing, but towards the end of the performance it was certain that the outfit was white satin shirt and trousers, the legs »



tucked into glistening, thick-soled white boots. He looked like *Vogue*'s idea of what the well-dressed astronaut should be wearing. Dare it be said? A delicious space oddity.

A lesser hunk of glamour might have been upstaged by guitarist Mick Ronson with his maroon sequinned jacket, red lipstick and hair dyed peroxide as a '50s starlet, but though oohs and aaahs were directed his way, teenage hearts went fluttering out to David; for can anything dim the splendour of this ravishing creature whom all Britain is learning to love?

The newspapers were to report subsequently that this performance was one of the major turning points in David Bowie's incredible success story. The man from United Artists Records, who knows what he likes, was quite sure of that. He said afterwards that DB was definitely the biggest thing around.

> "Can anything dim the splendour of this ravishing creature?"

To those who had seen his act before this year the format was not new. That's to say he started the set rockin' like a bitch before cooling down somewhat with "Changes", a song of mixed tempos, and then the darkling, apocalyptic message of "Five Years", which owes something lyrically to Lou Reed ("*I think I saw you in an ice-cream parlour / Drinking milkshakes cold and long*"). And then the acoustic passages with Mick Ronson ("Space Oddity" and "Andy Warhol"), culminating in a solo version of "Amsterdam", a febrile account of rough trade, as delightfully coarse as navy-blue serge.

"Now some golden oldies for you." He announced the number as written by Jack Bruce and Pete Brown. All his fans, of course, needed no telling. "I Feel Free", ripped out of the stereo PA system, choreographed by the flickering strobe lighting; it's not what you do, it's the way you do it. My, how they clapped and whistled.

The band returned for an encore. It was "I'm Waiting For The Man". But something rather strange was happening up there on stage. During the instrumental break, Bowie began chasing Ronson around the stage, hustling him, trying to press his body close. The attendants at the exits looked twice to see if they could believe their eyes. The teenage chickies stared in bewilderment. The men knew but the little girls didn't understand. Jeees – us! It had happened.

It should be recorded that the first act of fellatio on a musical instrument in the British Isles took place at Dunstable Civic Hall. How do you top that? You don't. You get off stage.

After the show was over, scores of people were still milling around. Over the loudspeaker system *Hunky Dory* was playing. The autograph hunters were crowding round the dressing-room door, but he wasn't seen to emerge. Moist-eyed boys still hung around. After a while, Jim and Phil left the place together. *Michael Watts*

— MELODY MAKER JULY 15 —

WHEN A SHOOTING star is heading for the peak, there is usually one concert at which it's possible to declare: "That's it… he's made it."

For David Bowie, opportunity knocked loud and clear last Saturday at London's Royal Festival Hall – and he left the stage a true 1972-style pop giant, clutching flowers from a girl who ran up and hugged and kissed him while a throng of fans milled around the stage. It was an exhilarating sight.

Bowie is going to be an old-fashioned, charismatic idol, for his show is full of glitter, panache and pace. Dressed outrageously in the tightest multi-coloured gear imaginable, Bowie is a flashback in many ways to pop-star theatrics of about 10 years ago, carrying on a detached love affair with this audience, wooing them, yet never surrendering that vital aloofness that makes him slightly untouchable.

On Saturday, the magic was boosted by an unadvertised appearance by Lou Reed. The American jammed with David and his group, and although mutual admiration societies like this are often disappointing ego trips, an electrifying heat came across that stage as David and Lou roared into "White Light", "I'm Waiting For The Man" and "Sweet Jane". Their obvious admiration for each other's style was great to watch. Bowie did the back-up vocal work to Lou's haunting singing, and though his words were hard to pick up, Reed's presence was terrific. In black-sequinned top suit and gold shoes, he stood with feet tripping into a neat criss-cross movement at the breaks in his songs – rather like The Shadows used to do in that much-mocked leg-crossing stage movement.

There was something beautifully earthy, cool and all knowing about Lou Reed, and the crowd who had come mainly to see Bowie were obviously in love with the memory of Lou's Velvet Underground history. Reed now needs to strengthen his simmering popularity here with a full-scale tour of his own. The time is now.

But this concert still belonged to Bowie, legs astride as wide as possible, his face painted incongruously to project a Danny La Rue profile and his diction quite splendid. His music naturally comes mainly from the *Ziggy Stardust* hit album, but little on this record equals the canny "Changes" from the *Hunky Dory* set, or the classic "Space Oddity". At the start the sound was imperfect, but once this settled Bowie came over powerfully, oozing with histrionic confidence, with Mick Ronson turning in a potent lead guitar.

"Star Man", "Five Years", "Andy Warhol", a straight solo on "Amsterdam" and a superb encore, "Suffragette City", were the high spots of a show which saw Bowie dressed in two outfits, obviously revelling in stardom, strutting from mic to mic, slaying us all with a deadly mixture of fragility and desperate intensity, the undisputed king of Camp Rock.

The concert, presented by Friends Of The Earth to save the doomed whale, also featured Marmalade and the JSD Band. It was Hughie Nicholson's last night with Marmalade and he will be sorely missed. Dean Ford is singing extremely well and the group knits together now even better than they did on the momentous *Songs* LP, but Nicholson's guitar work has been a brilliant cornerstone, helping their music across the bridge from straight pop to something more adventurous. Plagued by sound problems, Marmalade still made it through a splendid show, with a newish song called "Save The Whale" showing their punch and verve.

Surprise of the night were compere Kenny Everett's latest raves, The JSD Band. The commercial presented them as the most exciting discovery since early Fairport or Steeleye, and so great was their impact that no one will quarrel. They went down a storm with their unique mixture of Scottish reels and hard rock, and Lindsay Scott's violin was staggering in its speed allied to ideas and rocking attack. He must be the best rock/folk fiddler in the land.

Bowie, Marmalade and the JSD Band put on a superb night's music, because all of them have roots. Like Marc, Bowie has been a long time coming, but a more certain Bolan-chaser I never saw. At the end, two "Ziggy"

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
LONDON
LIVE!
JULY 8

Lou Reed is a surprise guest at the RFH

GETTY

banners were extended by fans over the balcony. Bowie has arrived – a worthy pin-up with such style. *Ray Coleman*

— NME AUGUST 26 —

GOING TO THE Rainbow these days is definitely an outing, an excursion, something of a treat. Unfamiliarity breeds respect, and though the cheerful hippies who used to sell you hot dogs and guide you to your seat have been replaced by bored-looking usherettes, there's still that thrill as you wait for showtime. Mr and Mrs First Nighter... this is your life.

David Bowie's show is definitely a spectacular in the grand tradition. A Bowie concert is your real old Busby Berkeley production. Bring on the dancing girls – or rather the Astronettes with Lindsay Kemp, wheel on the dry-ice machine and put some mystique back into the whole deal.

Opening act Lloyd Watson proved that the blues do indeed go on, and on, and on, and on. He's a good singer and plays fair slide, but his original compositions are really dire. Harsh though it may be, I'm afraid that Lloyd does not have the weight to play a gig like this. All he did was to ensure that the bar did good business.

With their performance at the Rainbow, Roxy Music proved that they are now in a major band not just in the eyes of publicists, friends and a few partisan journalists, but to audiences as well. Starting out with their glitzy teenage hit single "Virginia Plain", they played a tight, neat set of songs from their spiffy first album. Each number earned a successively warmer response, and Phil Manzanera's guitar temper tantrum went down especially well. They closed with "Re-Make/Re-Model" and went off to a standing ovation – well, a few people were standing up to clap and lots more were calling for an encore. Onwards and upwards – and here's looking at you, kid.

Lou Reed later described Bowie's set as "amazing, incredible, stupendous – the greatest thing I've ever seen". While Lou is not exactly the most impartial of observers on things Bowie, he knows a good show when he sees one, and this was perhaps the most consciously theatrical rock show ever staged – and, by the by, it made Alice look like a third-form dramatic society. With a multi-level stage, a light show, sawdust on the floor, the Spiders in all their glory and a backstage Matthew Fisher playing piano, it could hardly fail, and it didn't.

Right from his entrance, walking through a cloud of dry ice up to the microphone to sing "Lady Stardust" (while the face of Marc Bolan was projected onto a screen by his side), Bowie provided a thoroughly convincing demonstration of his ascendancy over any other soloist in rock today.

With perhaps the finest body of work of any contemporary songwriter, and the resources to perform this work to its utmost advantage, there really isn't anything going that tops the current Ziggy show. Other, more basic performances have got me off more and higher – Hendrix, the Dead, Berry, Winter, Steeleye and the Crows to name a handful – but David Bowie has stuff going for him that most people haven't even thought of yet.

And he's got nice legs, too. *Charles Shaar Murray* •

Flourishing theatricality

Bowie's songs of self-transformation assessed.

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

David Bowie The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars

RCA VICTOR

The cover of Bowie's new album has a picture of him in a telephone booth looking every inch the stylish poseur. Style and content have now become inextricably tangled in Bowie's case. Campness has become built-in to his public persona. I mean that, however, in a far from derogatory sense. The main preoccupation of David's work is not directly gay sexuality, though that element is there, as with a flourishing theatricality and dramatic sense.

On *Ziggy Stardust* this is apparent even with a song like "Five Years". Ostensibly about the death of the world, Bowie turns it into a "performance" by virtue of his gift for artful mannerism and by creating a convincing mise-en-scène (a cop kneels at the feet of a priest and a soldier is run over by a car after it is announced on the news that the Earth has five years left). It would also go some way towards explaining why this album has such a conceptual-sounding title.

There is no well-defined storyline, as there is in "Tommy", say, but there are odd songs and references to the business of being a pop star that overall add up to a strong sense of biographical drama. On one track, "Star", he sings about playing "*the wild mutation of a rock'n'roll star/I'd send my photograph to my honey/ And I'd come on like a regular superstar*"). Then "Ziggy Stardust," the title track, is about a guitar superhero who "*took it all too far*". ("*Making love with his ego, Ziggy sucked up into his mind*").

> **"Bowie has this uncanny knack of turning a whole album into a torch song"**

The final track is simply called "Rock'n'Roll Suicide" – it speaks for itself. In the space of three songs he thus suggests the ascent and decline of a big rock figure, but leaves the listener to fill in his own details, and in the process he's also referring obliquely to his own role as a rock star and sending it up. There are many layers to Bowie the artist, but he has this uncanny knack of turning a whole album or stage performance into a torch song.

Ziggy Stardust is a little less instantly appealing than *Hunky Dory*, basically because that album was written with the intention of being commercial. This one rocks more, though, and the paradox is that it will be much more commercially successful than the last, because Bowie's bid for stardom is accelerating at lightning speed.

Michael Watts, MM July 1, 1972

David Bowie The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars

RCA VICTOR

With most of his material either dealing with the flashier style of city living or looking far into the future, Bowie must rate as our most futuristic songwriter. Sometimes what he sees is just a little scary, and perhaps there's a bit more pessimism here than on previous releases, but they're still fine songs.

Like the first track, "Five Years", about the imminent death of a decaying world, is a real downer to start with, but Bowie brings a new approach to the rather overworked theme.

Certainly all the tracks, written by Bowie with the exception of Ron Davies' "It Ain't Easy," are never less than entertaining. "Soul Love" features some withdrawn sax from Mick Ronson [sic], "Ziggy Stardust" deals with the destruction of a rock star, while "Hang Onto Yourself" is a real little sexual gem. Also included is Bowie's current single, "Starman".

Mick Ronson (guitar), Trevor Bolder (bass) and Mick Woodmansey (drums) handle the backing all through.

Of course, there's nothing Bowie would like more than to be a glittery superstar, and it could still come to pass. By now everybody ought to know he's tremendous and this latest chunk of fantasy can only enhance his reputation further.

James Johnson, NME June 3, 1972

"It wasn't easy": in London, Lou Reed reflects on his pre-Velvet Underground position as an in-house songwriter for Pickwick Records

"I just like rock'n'roll"

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 22 —

LOU REED arrives in London to make a solo album. While there, he accounts for the forces that made him, and the novel-like structures of Velvet Underground records. Might he re-form the band? "You couldn't recreate what went on then," says Lou. "It's dead."

THE BIG SPEAKERS at the far end of the small, narrow room are about to burst. Guitars wash across them, while a kettle drum cracks and a gong explodes in slow motion, like a flower opening, aaaaoooommmmm!

Inside those speakers, a man is going mad. Lou Reed leans forward, lights a Marlboro, and empties a glass of beer into his face. "Someone's gotta speak for those people," he says.

Lou Reed made his first record when he was 14. His group was called The Shades, changed to The Jays when they found out that somebody else already had the name. "Our lead singer couldn't reach the microphone – they had to put him on a stool," he says. "We played shopping centre openings, things like that. Typical teenage hoodlum band."

The Jays were in the tradition of the New York vocal groups of the '50s. "The Ravens, The Diabolos, The Cleftones, The Jesters... I used to go crazy for records like that, the street-group sound."

One of his all-time favourite, he says, was only ever popular on his block. It was called "Why Can't I Be Loved," by Alicia & The Rockaways, and he proudly drags the words out of his memory: "*Why can't I be loved / Why doesn't someone take me / If I've been asleep / Won't somebody come and awake me*".

"I fall down when I hear those lyrics," he says. "I don't think that a lot of our contemporary poet laureates are nearly up to songs like that."

For The Velvet Underground's fourth album, Lou wrote a song called "I Found A Reason" which was based on that old sound. It even had a solemn speaking bit in the middle. And on his next album, which he's finishing right now in London, there's a tune called "Love Makes Me Feel Ten Feet Tall", which is another attempt to regain the directness of the sound of his adolescence. "I just like rock'n'roll," Lou Reed says.

After school he became a professional songwriter. They'd tell him that, before lunch, they wanted five surfing songs, five hot-rod songs and a couple of ballads. "It wasn't easy," he says.

It couldn't contain him, though, and he wrote a song called "The Ostrich" one day, when he was stoned. "I decided to make up a dance, so I said, 'You put your head on the floor, and have somebody step on it.' It was years ahead of its time."

The day after writing it, he was reading the fashion pages in the old *Herald Tribune* and noticed that ostrich feathers were the latest fad. "An act of God!" So he rang up *Vogue* and told them about "The Ostrich" and they, being intrigued by people with long hair, photographed the group Lou had put together for the occasion, which also included a new friend called John Cale. They recorded the song, and even lip-synched it on Dick Clark's TV show in Philadelphia. But it never happened.

What came out of the association between Reed and Cale, though, was The Velvet Underground, in all its eventual legendary splendour. It wasn't long, of course, before Andy Warhol picked up on the sound, and made them a spoke in his whirling wheel.

Reed remembers those days, in '66 and '67, with considerable affection. Andy would be asked to bring a piece of his art to a show in a gallery, and he'd surprise his hosts by carting along the Velvets. They'd play for the art patrons, says Lou, and »

Reed between the lines

PHOTOSHOT / MICHAEL PUTLAND

The most gifted writer in rock

MM DEC 2 Reed's second solo LP, under the VU microscope.

Lou Reed *Transformer* RCA VICTOR

Is knowledge necessarily beneficial? That's the question this album poses for me. If "Walk On The Wild Side" had been cut in '66, when I didn't have a clue that "Jackie" is Jackie Curtis and "Candy" is Candy Darling, would I have been as helplessly beguiled as I was then (and still am) by "All Tomorrow's Parties" and "I'll Be Your Mirror"? This is no longer the first Polaroid print from the New World: nowadays, we've all got maps.

But Lou Reed is still the most gifted, personal writer in rock, and anything he does is necessarily of great interest. *Transformer* has its ups and downs, and I'd say that the general level is rather lower than his initial RCA solo album, but it obviously does its appointed task of reflecting where Lou's brain has travelled during the past year or so. "Upfront" is the key phrase this time: nothing needs to be shrouded in metaphor or obliquely alluded to. If Lou wants to write a gay lib song, as he does with "Make Up", he can be completely explicit: "*We're coming out, out of our closets*". The result is heightened by the use of carefully crafted arrangements (using strings, voices, tuba, Dixieland band, etc), and some may think that the settings are, indeed, too neat and precise. "White Light/White Heat" was so surprising because art was couched inside a matrix of rock, whereas now he's taken the Bowie route and gone all out to create art-rock. They're two very different things. Nothing much against Bowie ("Jean Genie" is terrific), but whatever else he may have achieved, he's never proved himself capable of making really satisfying rock'n'roll; all too often he simply titillates, and the Bowie/Ronson production work here lures Reed into the same trap.

Lou is a rocker and the role now chosen ill becomes him, however liberating he may find the new surroundings. The beat tracks here are "Andy's Chest", which has a lot of the old mystery and menace, a really cutting vocal, and a fade-out ("Swoop, swoop... Oh baby, rock, rock") which is the album's finest moment; "Satellite Of Love", a very humorous '50s-style group song which reminds me of an old doo-wop classic called "Guided Missiles (To Your Heart)"; and "Walk On The Wild Side", a beautifully controlled production number (here, the "gimmicks" like the string bass and baritonic sax solos coalesce in a valid way).

I'm unhappiest about the rockers: "Vicious" is a parody of former glory, while "Hangin' Round", "Wagon Wheel" and "I'm So Free" simply never take off – oh for Clem Cattini or Les Hurdle! "New York Telephone Conversation" is, at 1.31, an amusing skit on the behaviour of the girls who frequent the back room at Max's; "Perfect Day" is pretty and nothing more and "Goodnight Ladies" attempts to come on like Kurt Weill or *Cabaret* but ends up plain boring. Of course, you should buy *Transformer* – after all, it's still the second-best Lou Reed album of 1972 (not counting the Velvets' live LP). But it seems to me to be an album for two kinds of people: David Bowie fans and those who heard about Lou this year (sorry, maybe that's one kind of person). Anyone who's heard "Heroin", or "Femme Fatale", or "Here She Comes", or "I'm Set Free", or "Rock And Roll", or "New Age" knows that he can – and will – achieve something of greater worth than this, whatever he might be thinking at the moment. *Richard Williams*

Lou Reed is rare among his contemporaries in that he'll actually admit to the content of his songs. He knows that they have secondary levels of meaning and that many of them connect up, and when some listener comes to him and asks him, say, if the third album was a complete story, he positively glows with affirmation.

"I've never known whether it worked for other people. There's been a limited amount of feedback... I've been kinda isolated. I've always written with the idea of putting songs into concepts so that they relate to one other; I always thought of these things like chapters in a novel, and that if you played the first three albums all in order it would really make huge total sense.

"No one ever seemed to pick up on the that, and why should they? I don't put out that many albums anyway, so by the time Chapter Three arrived, you had to go running back to the archives to find where Chapter Two left off."

His efforts were also sabotaged by poor recording on the MGM/Verve albums. On the third album, for instance, the crucial "Murder Mystery", with its parallel vocals split by the stereo, is virtually unintelligible.

"The whole idea of it was that one person's saying one thing on one side, and the other person's giving an example of it, or doing the opposite. So that if one person's saying something funny, and the other person's saying something sad, you might laugh and cry at the same time... which would really be fun, if you could do it. I tried my damnedest to get it so you could hear the words, but most people have told me that the track doesn't work. We never did learn to record as a matter of fact."

The odd album out is *Loaded*, which was edited and mixed after Lou had left the group during their stay at Max's Kansas City in the summer of 1970. He hates the overall sound, and the severe editing of tracks like "Sweet Jane" and "New Age" ("They took a song that I'd worked on for a year and ruined it") but even worse is the random sequencing on the tracks.

"There were some people there, who were very intelligent, who picked the order of the tracks so they didn't make sense." His bitterness is old, now, but it's still evident. After all, the album was a piece of himself.

Reed talks of his former colleagues in the original band with great fondness. "Nico is the kind of person that you meet, and you're not quite the same afterwards. She has an amazing mind, and *The Marble Index* is just one of the milestone albums. It's like nothing else you ever heard.

"And John (Cale) – well, I only hope that one day John will be recognised as... the Beethoven or something of his day. He knows so much about music, he's such a great musician."

Oddly enough, the three of them are all in Western Europe at this moment; Lou and John in London, and Nico living in Paris. But the thought of a reunion concert meets with a small shake of the head. "It's a nice idea, but you couldn't recreate what went on then. It's dead. Even Max's is dead, full of people who shouldn't be there. Some nights, I guess, something happens and the magic starts again... people do strange things. But it's over."

Lou is working in Morgan Studios, in the wilds of Willesden. "We came for a change of pace. We thought it'd be interesting to get out of the New York thing... also we were very impressed with the sound of certain English records. It was a certain sound we were looking for, and we listened to a lot of records made in different studios. For what he heard, Morgan fitted. We knew we'd be isolated... like nobody comes into the studios here, there's no great parties going on. It's just making a rock'n'roll album."

The continuity from the previous albums will be there but, he says, less obviously so. "I don't feel like doing Chapter Six any more, and I don't feel like doing another Chapter One. They vaguely relate, and that's enough."

He's used British musicians: Caleb Quaye, Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman, Clem Cattini, Paul Keogh, Les Hurdle and Brian Odges. He's really

within a couple of minutes half the people would have left, by the nearest exit. But half stayed, transfixed.

Was the art crowd attracted to them by the sheer outrageous grotesquery of the music? "No no no. It was never grotesque, I thought it was beautiful."

Very few people, he adds, managed to come out of the Warhol scene with their own identities intact, because Andy's presence was so overwhelming. "It's not something I'd have missed, if I'd been outside of that, and had seen what was happening. I'd have cut my arms off to be part of it. It was just so fantastic..."

Little did he know, he adds, that he'd have to spend the next five years establishing the fact that The Velvet Underground could exist in its own right, without the crutch of Warhol's patronage.

"Now there's no more Velvet Underground, so I don't have to work at establishing that."

But what about the group led by Doug Yule, which came over to Britain last year? "I don't follow 'em," he mutters.

pleased with what they've done, and as the tracks are played back, he points out little guitar riffs and bass runs with genuine delight. And his fans needn't worry. The album is rich in the kind of content we expect from Lou, each track a little photograph of someone we once knew.

"One of these days, I'd like to do an album in which all the characters from my albums meet up," he says, suddenly.

Behind the camera-lens, his eye is steady... steady... Click.

— NME AUGUST 12 —

"ALICE COOPER REALLY doesn't make it as a drag queen," says Lou Reed. "I mean he's so ugly. Iggy, now Iggy's really very beautiful, and so's David, but Alice..."

The former mastermind of The Velvet Underground shuddered delicately and inspected his maroon fingernails, which were chipped around the edges. Talk to Lou Reed, they said. Since his outward appearance was rather forbidding, and two previous encounters had proved slightly less than productive, the idea had been that, instead of a formal interview, a sumptuous lunch with plentiful alcohol would induce the saturnine, taciturn Lou Reed to give forth with intimate revelations concerning his lifestyle and music.

What actually happened was that we all got pissed.

"When he's not being troubled by things around him, he's a very generous person with time and conversation," was what David Bowie had said of Reed, and with these words ringing in my ears, we went out to lunch at a plush Italian restaurant. Lou had just bought some clothes at Liberty's, and was enthusing about his "new drag". "Isn't it heaven?" he drawled.

Once ensconced at a comfortable table by the window with RCA's genial Geoff Thorn to act as referee and pay the bill, things moved into high gear. Reed was determined that we would get into the liquors, and get into them we did. It is only recently that the songs Lou Reed wrote five years ago for The Velvet Underground have become noticeably influential. David Bowie and Roxy Music have paid their dues to Lou, and the tortured, violent guitars of Reed and Sterling Morrison have taught many to extend the boundaries of their instruments.

"What I was writing about was just what was going on around me," says Reed. "I didn't realise it was a whole new world for everybody else. Everybody else is now at the point I was in 1967. Makes me wonder where they'll be in five years' time. Come to that, makes me wonder where I'm at now."

One of Lou's best known is "Venus in Furs" from the *Velvet Underground & Nico* album.

"I saw the book (by Leonard Sacher-Masoch) and just thought it would be a great idea for a song. Now everybody thinks I invented masochism."

Despite the ads, Reed is not going to return to Kingsound – the King's Cross rock venue. He didn't like the hall, and found the dressing rooms cramped and crowded.

"You're in there trying to find a place to change into your drag and put on your makeup and people keep coming up to you and offering you joints and rapping to you, and it's just intolerable."

Lou's girlfriend is coming over from the States soon, and he's looking forward to seeing her, because things are getting a mite chaotic at his Wimbledon residence. Seems that some of his friends began smashing up the house but his landlady didn't mind. She thought he put some life into the place.

As the meal grew progressively more and more bizarre, we switched to grappa, using chablis as a chaser. Lou recalled the time when, as a hitchhiker, he turned to desperate measures and lay down across the centre of the road. The first car to stop was a police van, and far from getting his lift, he got busted. "If it'd been me in the car, I would have kept right on going," he said. "They'd never catch me, and the experience of running somebody over..."

I pointed out that on the Velvets' live album, Lou told the audience they didn't play "Heroin" any more, but that he played it at King's Cross.

"Oh, we just didn't feel like doing it that night. Besides, I never mean what I say." What? "Oh, I never keep to things unless I actually promise. I told some journalist that I was very hung up on cowboys. If I saw him today I'd probably tell him I was really aggressive and that all cowboys are a bunch of assholes. I'm really very inconsistent."

After that, an almost total disintegration sets in. I remember Reed drawling that Englishmen were really sexy because they didn't have hair on their chest, and Geoff Thorn opened his shirt to prove the contrary.

Unlike at the Dorchester with Ziggy, Lou's outrageous clothes and painted fingernails left the waiters at the restaurant rather cold, but then they weren't Lou's type anyway. The following day I was still drunk. A lot of people have learned a lot of things from Lou Reed, and there's a strong possibility that they can still learn a whole lot more. His new single "Walk It And Talk It" is a remixed version of a track from his album, and wouldn't it be a gas to see that on *Top Of the Pops*?

If Ziggy isn't too outrageous for the BBC, then it's about time we saw Lou. After all, he was the man who started that brand of outrage way back in the swinging '60s. We may even see where everybody else will be at in five years.

Charles Shaar Murray •

> "I never keep to things... I'm really very inconsistent"

"I'd like to do an album in which all the characters from my albums meet up"

PHOTOSHOT / MICHAEL PUTLAND

REX FEATURES

A Bowie-revitalised Mott The Hoople in the TV studio, 1972

"We've got more aggressive"

At the start of 1972, MOTT THE HOOPLE are a passionate band, going nowhere. The intervention of David Bowie with "All The Young Dudes" changes their fortunes completely. "He said, 'If you want to split, then split,'" they remember. "'But please do this number first.'"

— NME SEPTEMBER 16 —

WHEN THE NEWS was first released that David Bowie had written and produced the single "All The Young Dudes" for Mott The Hoople, reactions were mixed. Some people were knocked out with the whole concept, while devout Mott fans wondered whether they had "sold out".

Did Mott really need Bowie, the latter faction reasoned? The simple answer (and the correct one) is yes. Without Bowie there would be not Mott The Hoople today. Without his help their very fine new album would perhaps not have reached such a high standard. And over and above everything else, Bowie has given Mott a new confidence in themselves and injected a new enthusiasm into their music.

Lead singer Ian Hunter was delighted with the new album when I met him at their new record company CBS – where it was blaring away in the turntable. ("It should be played loud," says Hunter.)

"You can't compare it to our other albums – this one is how Mott should have sounded all along. David likes a very perfect album and this one is so much cleaner and clearer – after the mugginess on previous albums. In the past we just didn't know how to record. I think we could have done this album a year ago if we'd had the right producer."

Hunter talked to me about each track… starting with "Sweet Jane", the Lou Reed composition – and other than Bowie's "Dudes", the only track not written by the band: "About the same time as 'Dudes', Bowie played us a riff and we leapt on it, wanting to know what it was. It turned out to be 'Sweet Jane'.

"Mommas Little Jewel": "Overend wrote this with me while we were still at Island. We recorded it then but it was too fast – it's one of David's best tracks. He really has got the knack of knowing what to do – just a little thing makes all the difference."

"All The Young Dudes": "There's a jerk in the tape here just before it starts – I like a jerk, it's cute, makes you think."

"Sucker": "I don't think anyone has noticed Mick Ralphs. I know certain people who play guitar notice him, but if people can't relate to the guitar solo on 'Sucker' then there's something wrong. It's funny, with guitarists, the emphasis often seems to be on speed – but character is important, and I think Mick's guitar playing is very individual."

"Jerkin Crocus": "This is a lady who is good at pulling. The title was taken from a girl Overend knew. It was written fairly recently – just before we went into the studio to do the album."

"One Of The Boys": "David liked this a lot. We did it at the time of the 'Dudes' session, and towards the end of the second day we knew 'Dudes' would be the A-side. It was written just before the Circus tour. Again, Mick had a riff – and usually that's how it works. We got the phone effect at Trident – there's a bit I like where the track dies away and you hear it come out of the phone receiver."

"Soft Ground": "Verden had this in his mind for three or four months. And when something's in his mind it totally absorbs him. He lives it. It came out at rehearsals – just before the album."

"Ready For Love" – "After Lights": "Although on the album they are two songs, it's really just one song. Mick wrote it, and there are two hook lines. You think it's all over – and then it goes into the next hook line."

"Sea Diver": "Writing songs is almost a perversion. Most writers can go six months and not get a song. They panic – and then suddenly they start again. That's what this song is about."

Album and single aside, the best thing Bowie did for the band was to keep them together. Hunter explains: "We were looking for material, and David sent us a demo of 'Suffragette City'. Anyway, we split up in Switzerland. So Overend phoned David to thank him for sending the demo and told him the news. David went quite mad on the phone about it, and Overend rang me and said Bowie thought the group was great and shouldn't split.

"At that time we'd all heard David's *Hunky Dory* and dug it, but didn't want to form again because we were so pissed off. Pissed off with being told we'd be put on half wages… and they were taking our lights away.

"Anyway, three hours later Bowie rang Overend again and in that three hours he's written 'All The Young Dudes'. He'd said to Overend, 'If you want to split, then split – but please do this number first.'"

It was after a gig at Guildford that Mott came under the management of Tony DeFries, and Bowie offered his help with the album. "CBS were at the gig and Tony said he wanted to manage us. And David said, 'If you want me to write a song or produce you, then I will!' He didn't want us as an extension of his personality. He wanted people to understand he was helping and not taking over. He even wanted us to have co-producer credits on this album.

When it came to making the album David had some numbers and so did we. We played him ours and he said they were OK – he liked the stuff we'd written. The basic arrangements were done by the band, then David set about embellishing it. He's been a great asset just when we needed it."

For all the help Bowie has given the band, the most refreshing thing is, as Hunter says, the fact that the band are exactly the same as they always were. I asked Hunter if having Bowie as a producer would be a permanent thing – or if this album was a one-shot idea.

"Nothing is ever permanent in the music business, but as far as we're concerned the relationship with David is amazing, and he wants to carry on. He genuinely digs the band – he needn't have had us; after all, the band was over."

Hunter denies any allegations that Mott are now portraying a camp image. "The last thing we want to be called is camp," he says, and certainly looking at him swigging back a glass of scotch, a mop of curly hair flopping around his shoulders, he looks anything but camp.

There's only one person – who can do that well and that is David. And he's not a fairy. It's just that what he does on stage he can do infinitely better than anyone else. We ain't fairies – not one guy in the band is. And we figure we've got to lay back a bit on stage so that our audience will lay back on looking and start listening." *Julie Webb*

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 28 —

"**I HATED 'JOHN I'M** Only Dancing'. We all hated it but David said, 'Don't worry. You'll get to like it.' And he was right. David is a very sage fellow."

Buffin, the smartly suited young drummer with Mott The Hoople, has an engaging smile and a clear-eyed view of his world. He speaks his mind without malice and talks about the fortunes of Mott with refreshing frankness. Their recent success with "All The Young Dudes", written for them by David Bowie, has posed problems for Mott as well as giving them a new lease of life. Many imagine the band are in such close cahoots with Bowie that they have relinquished the qualities that gave them original fan following.

There has been much confusion about images. But Mott are not going "glamorous rock", an expression which in its abbreviated form has gained current usage. There was no rouge about his cheeks as we conversed this week, and there was a notable absence of tinsel from his brow.

"We're no different from working with Bowie," declared Buffin with good cheer. "We don't wear earrings and have new hairstyles every week. And our stage act is no different from what it has been in the last two years."

What has been the difference then?

"We do more quality things now. The main effect has been that David gave us our self-respect back. Over the last year or so, we had become a sham. We didn't want to be just a caricature of what people thought we were. Now our numbers are better – and they are better played."

How close was the band to David, apart from having the same management?

"We don't live in each other's pockets. What happened was, we were in Switzerland when the band just about reached the end of its tether. We jacked it in and went to see a John Wayne movie at the local cinema, after our last gig. Back home David heard about us splitting up and he thought it was a shame, and wanted to help.

"There had been nobody around the band to give us any inspiration and there had been no light at the end of the tunnel. None of us had such an ego that feeds itself. We needed to be helped along. We couldn't even write songs because it seemed like there was nothing to write about.

"We kept away from the press because there was nothing more to be said after we had bared our breasts to the whole country! And anyway people don't like to see groups airing their dirty Y-fronts in public. They

would prefer to hear about the gloss and glitter. We don't hate the press, because they have helped us a lot in the past, even unwittingly by slagging us off."

Will the band maintain its association with Mr B?

"It was great to have a hit single, but now the group would like to have a hit with one of our own songs. We don't want to lose contact with David. As a producer, he is magnificent.

"Guy Stevens [their first producer] was inspirational, but he was so erratic. He was incredible at starting things but would not always finish them. David is inspirational as well, but he is also very workmanlike."

What effects had there been on the group's audience, since their change in fortune?

"Oh, there are lots more girls in the audience now. We used to have a sea of male faces in front of the stage. We get some of the Bowie crowd as well. He attracts the late teens and early 20s."

Do they expect a Bowie camp show?

"I don't know. We've had some ideas for our shows that haven't always come off. At the Rainbow we wanted to bring on Billy Fury, Adam Faith and John Leyton. We wanted to have them appearing in a series of flashbacks, singing their old hits. Ian Hunter knows Billy Fury – and he's looking great; about 18 years old!

"Adam Faith was having his tonsils out, so he couldn't do it, and we didn't know how to get hold of John Leyton. Then we couldn't get Billy. It was a bit presumptuous of us really to ask them, and it all got blown out. But we thought people like Billy had a hard time in the '60s, and were put down as Elvis copyists. But they were incredible rock artists. Cliff Richard too.

"One thing we have noticed in the reaction to our shows it that a lot of kids are there for the hit record. The evening goes alright, until we play 'All The Young Dudes' and then we hit the jackpot. In the old days we'd go out and they would cheer from the start. Now we have to wait until the end of the evening for someone to break a chair."

Buffin grinned. "Actually, not so much desecration goes on these days. When we played at the Albert Hall they alleged some damage was done. We never saw it. But we paid for it. After that, there was always a little clique who were not there for the group really, but just to cause some damage. It became the done thing, which was a shame. It's died out now, but in a way, it's a bit frightening for us not to get that instant reaction. And that is because the music has changed, it doesn't hit from the word go."

At 22, Buffin has a premonition of becoming "an old veteran", and says it's a bit frightening, which will amuse those of the rock generation pushing 30. He looks back on the early days of Mott when it played out west in Ross-on-Wye, with long-toothed nostalgia.

"We had lots of different names then. One of our earliest names was Savage Rose And Fixable." Buffin paused to allow expressions of disbelief to die away.

While it has probably been recounted on many previous occasions in countless interviews, for the sake of the new generation, not to mention the old generation – whence came their present unlikely name?

"It was an American story by Willard Manus, called *Mott The Hoople*. We met the author's secretary out in the States once, purely by chance. She was knocked out we knew the story, and told us Manus was now living in the Greek Islands.

"The story is a black comedy about a character called Norman Mott. He was a Hoople, which is a kind of wandering miscreant. When we started up, we had never actually read the book. We just couldn't get hold of a copy. We just used to say vaguely to people who asked, 'Oh, it's just the name of a book.'"

This reminded Buffin that their old record label, Island, are putting out an album of ancient material.

Mott The Hoople in 1972: (l-r) Pete Overend Watts, Verden Allen, Mick Ralphs, Ian Hunter and Dale "Buffin" Griffin

> "This album is how Mott should have sounded all along"

"It's going to be called 'Mott's Greatest Misses'. It's very naughty of them, but what can you do? I remember when we first started out it was like the *Clockwork Orange*. We were playing flower power to all the local heavies beating the hell out of each other. We came from the backwaters, and their idea of a night out is to come home covered in blood with a few teeth missing. I suppose we do tend to look on those days with rose-tinted spectacles!"

Pause for Buffin to laugh and explain the state of his nose. But its interesting alignment with the rest of his face was more due to an accident on a building site than any violent reaction to a Hoople performance.

The main difference he had noticed from the days of Savage Rose And Fixable was the inflationary spiral affecting the group business.

"It's so much harder to start a band now. It's got to the stage where it's not enough to set up your equipment up on stage and do a gig. You need a huge PA and road crew to go with it.

"And audiences are used to hearing bands like Roxy Music and Yes with fantastic equipment. It used to be hard enough to get an amplifier and guitar together. All the time the rock machine is getting more sophisticated. I don't know how young musicians can cope with it.

"And it's a naive assumption that groups can ask for less money. With the present inflationary spiral, everything has gone up. And to ask groups to take a cut in wages to help the scene is like asking the ETU to take a wage cut. We worked it out that it costs us, on average, about £500 for every performance, before you include the cost of hotels.

"And when we did our last tour of England, it was frighteningly apparent how little money there is around in the country. The kids have just not got any money. Either they are unemployed, or their parents are unemployed. In Doncaster we met eight kids who had saved up to buy one of our LPs – between them. And they couldn't afford to get to the gig either.

"I don't know if it's a feasible idea, but we thought of organising Student Union cards that gave a discount to kids who were unemployed. If they were issued the cards, they could get into concerts at reduced prices. The situation will get even worse when Value Added Tax comes in. There will be a 10 per cent increase in the cost of entertainment. It's not so bad for kids down South, but when you get to the North – it's frightening."

Meanwhile, what of the future for Mott?

"Well, our stage act is becoming less frantic. We were in a rut, but the whole aim of the band now is to go upwards. That's why we broke up, to escape the rut." *Chris Welch* •

REX FEATURES

What's Mott?

WE'RE NOT CAMP, ANYWAY, SAYS HUNTER. THAT'S BOWIE'S LINE - AND HE'S NO FAIRY EITHER. HE'S A GREAT PRODUCER BUT

"We'll show Marc Bolan a few tricks"

The FACES continue their American campaign, with an eye on the state of things back home. Their unrehearsed approach continues to yield results. "All I do," says Ronnie Lane, "is plug the old guitar in and play it."

— NME SEPTEMBER 16 —

"'ANG ON. I'LL wake up in a minute," says Ian McLagan for the fourth time. It's 3.30 in the afternoon and Mac's struggling through an interview. As a rule, he's something of a talker, but right now he's only been out of bed half an hour and his mind's a little foggy.

The night before, the Faces had been down at the studios, doing nothing in particular, just trying out a few possible ideas for their next album. In fact, it isn't due to be recorded until after the band's next American tour, when they'll get down to making the finished product in Los Angeles. But still McLagan thinks working on odd bits and pieces is a valuable exercise.

Now though, this afternoon, his eyes spell "hangover" in big letters. He blinks out of the kitchen door at the bright sunshine, makes some coffee, takes some pills of a mildly rejuvenating nature and tries to think clearly. We stick to fairly simple stuff.

"The thing is, we've never rehearsed for recordings before, never even considered it," he says, talking of the recent sessions in the studios. "It's bad really, 'cos when you think of it they're more important than gigs, because they're going to be confronting your ears the whole time. We thought we'd go down to the studios with an open frame of mind to see what we could do and what would come out. If we got bored with an idea after five minutes, we'd drop it and move on to something else. In fact, the number of ideas we came up with was amazing.

"We should have used this system to start every album. Sometimes, in the past, things have been a little too forced. There's too much pressure if you start thinking you've got to make numbers that have got to be Number One hits..."

The results, according to Mac, were more ideas than actual tracks, but a few numbers had been kicked around, like the old Impressions number "Fall For You" which Mac said he "would like to stick in »

MICHAEL PUTLAND/PHOTOSHOT

"It's good that Rod's got his own thing going": Rod Stewart on stage with the Faces, 1972

somewhere". Also, he thought the overall feel of the album would be rock'n'roll. But that was hardly world-shattering information. What were the other albums, then?

"Well, I suppose the last one was rock'n'roll," he replied, "but I don't think the first two had any kind of overall feel. They were really just bits and pieces. Basically we have just two types of numbers – the rockers that steam along and are good for stage, and then the low-down, quiet sort of things. On *Nod*, the rock side dominated, and I think it will on the next – I hope it will, at least."

Mac is gradually warming up, becoming more articulate. Gradually we get on to talking about Rod Stewart, and I mention the recent suggestion that Stewart's singing is better on his solo albums than on those with the Faces. He half agrees: "I think his own albums definitely bring out the best in his voice. It's natural really, simply because they are his own albums. They don't necessarily make him a better singer, but I think he's a bit of a folkie at heart and we're a rock'n'roll band, if you like.

"If everything fell apart tomorrow I could almost see Rod down at the Crown Folk Club in Twickenham doing the old acoustic guitar bit, staring up at the ceiling… Well, perhaps not, but I don't think he's satisfied just singing rock'n'roll. He's been singing that for quite a long time, and before that he was singing a bit of the old folk.

"Like in the band, I don't think any of our musical tastes have changed that much, but with Rod maybe they've reverted a bit to his original ideas – a bit Jack Elliott and all that. I like to hear him sing rock'n'roll, but his voice has got so much subtlety as well. People knock it and say it sounds like an old rusty gatepost or something… and, well, it's true, but that's his voice. The way he uses it can be very subtle; there's a lot of innuendo – if that's the right word."

With so much attention paid to Stewart, and with Mac along with Kenney Jones seemingly the quieter in the group, I wondered if he ever felt a little left in the background. "Yeah, I do now and again, but it suits me quite well. I mean it's all fair; Rod can do what he can do. Like there was a similar idea with Steve [Marriott] when I was with the Small Faces. A lot of emphasis was put on Steve and in a way it did him in the same way it can do Rod in. At the same time, Rod is very level-headed and it ain't going to go to his head… I don't want to say like Steve… but he was younger and Rod's been through a lot more.

"Of course Steve's been through a lot more now as well, but in the old days it used to cause a bit of friction. And I think it's good that Rod's got his own thing going, doing his own albums, and that's one of the reasons the set-up works so well. Like, if I had so much going in me the best thing would be to split from the band and do my own album or something… but Rod can do it, at the same time realising that it's the band which is what it's all really about. Without the band, Rod wouldn't get to sing his solo stuff onstage; it's a great set-up."

Continuing on the same theme of the Small Faces, he pointed out: "I've been with Kenney and Ronnie for seven years now and I always celebrate on November the first, 'cos that's the date I first joined them. A few bottles are opened. Rod and Ron have been together just as long, and even now, it helps. It's good to play with the same people for such a long time, because you can rely on certain musical things happening. Also, we know each other's jokes."

As for Steve Marriott, though, Mac says he hasn't seen him for a long, long time. "I'd like to," he says. "I still feel close to him. A lot of his musical influences are the same as mine, but then at the same time there's nothing much to say. It's a load of water under the bridge really."

At this point he decides it's time for another coffee and also brings his portable stereo down to the kitchen. He plays a few records and talks a bit about some Chuck Berry sessions he was playing on recently. One of the things that impressed him about Berry, apart from his music, was his total disregard for the ways of the music scene as a whole… the way he thinks of "Chuck Berry only" and doesn't bother himself with any kind of trends. I suggest that it's been a bit the same for the Faces.

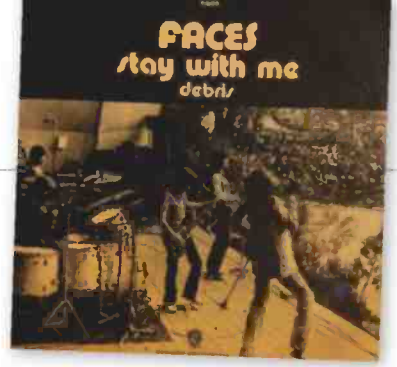
Mac agrees. "If we concerned ourselves with what other bands were doing when we started, we would have gone well under," he says. "A big thing was made of the drink thing with the Faces, and I think it made a change because all the other bands would be smoking and would go onstage in a kind of euphoric state. Drink isn't so introspective. I mean, I tend to be a bit introspective myself, but a few drinks soon loosen me up."

On gigs as a whole, I suggest, their sets tend to vary in quality to a greater extent than most bands.

"I'm on the inside and it's difficult to tell," he replies, "but I wouldn't have thought so. It's a fair comment but it doesn't seem like that to me. If it comes across that way I can only put it down to creative genius… Oh no, what am I saying?" He breaks into a smile.

"We do tend to rely quite a lot on the excitement": the Faces onstage, 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY



"But to me, all gigs seem much the same. I'm not saying I'm bored or anything, but we always put as much into each one. The one thing that really pisses me off, though, are encores. I'd like to rub them out forever. It's like you do a whole set and you get nice applause and then you say it's the last number and everybody gets on their feet and starts screamin'. It's like... for fuck's sake... if they'd done that earlier we would have had more fun out of the whole set.

"I don't want to get into a big thing about 'the overwhelming feedback, man' or that waffle, but we do tend to rely quite a lot on the excitement. Hey, would ya like another coffee?"

Well yeah, why not... *James Johnson*

— MELODY MAKER SEPTEMBER 16 —

BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL, Beverly Hills, California: "Steve McQueen phoned up, said he wanted seven tickets for the show," said Rod Stewart, his head poking out of the pool like a bullet with a nose. "Now that's a BIT much. I mean, two's enough, ain't it?"

He could gatecrash it, Rod, you know, jump the fence on his motorcycle.

"Just let 'im bloody well try." The nose threw up a few bubbles as it sank under the water.

Smart little Ron Lane strolled into the pool area, looking smart as a razor in a pale-green three-piece suit, and ligging shoes. Like a true Englishman, he changed behind a tree, wrestling with a towel as he dropped his trousers. Ron then plonked into the pool, exhibiting the grace of a sack of potatoes. Faces afternoon recreational period was under way.

"Want to go down and see the stage before the gig, Ron?" asked Ronnie Wood.

Lane was drying himself and lighting a fag. "What's the point really, what's the point?" he said. "All I ever do is walk on stage and plug the old guitar in, and play it. I don't have to rehearse that. There's no point. I'm not like that."

"That's your bloody trouble," said Stewart, nicking into the conversation. "You've still got yer volume controls set for the Marquee Club. You know you Sellotaped them into position, and you ain't moved 'em since."

"Aw, go away will yer," said Lane, all smiles, his saturated head shrunk to the size of a peanut.

It was all rather splendid, was this. I mean, the Beverly Wilshire was THE hotel in Beverly Hills. Frogs' legs on the room-service card, a few really nice beds, and aged millionaires beside the pool, toasting aged bodies in the stinging Californian sunshine. There's a guy with six chins – each one representing a million dollars. And it must have cost around the same amount to get rid of them. Posh.

"You know Marc Bolan's goin' tonight – we'll show the lad a few tricks, eh?" – Stewart, smiling. "No, he's a grand lad is Marc, a grand lad. Must be strange for him bein' big in England, and being nothing here. If he wants to do it, he'll 'afta work for it. I think he knows that. He'll 'afta do it here mind, really, otherwise he's gonna run out of things to do in England. You really do 'afta make it in America, you know. You really do. Wish people could understand that."

Mac McLagan appeared. "You won't believe what I'm goin' to wear tonight. You just won't believe it."

The night was rolling up sharply – the night for the band playing the famous Hollywood Bowl. The place had sold out within 90 minutes – no mean achievement. And here in deep chatter were the Faces. Laugh-a-minute lads. "You know," said Rod, "I could be laying half-asleep, and mopin' by this pool, and I'd hear those lads comin', and there'd be a smile as wide as a half melon across me face. That's what it's all about."

It's true, there's something about the Faces and Rod Stewart that's about as natural as turn-ups on an accountant's trousers. It's all a lot deeper than most people would ever realise. There is an unsigned mental pact, an occasional glance, a nod, a wink. I've never quite seen such a relationship within a band. On the outside it's a gas to call them loonies, ravers, lads with a glass and a song. It's not only a gas, it's true, but when you delve a little deeper, each and every one of them knows exactly where they are at.

> "You do 'afta make it in America, you know. You really do"

Even with red-hot stonking fun, there's got to be discipline, and even though that discipline is stretched to breaking point at times, it's always there. That's why it pays off for the Faces. Stewart is a laugh, and a bloody fine singer, but he raves and worries, and gives more than you'd ever realise. If you start putting him down for arrogance or flash you're doing bad business, because Stewart has earned each sequin on his jacket, 10 times over. And it's worth remembering that.

So they don't play England much? Well, however dear the little island can be – and believe me it's no dearer to anybody than Stewart and the Faces – it can also be hellishly stifling, especially in the creative field. The Faces made it in the States, remember. England – as a whole – didn't want to know Stewart all that much until the USA pumped him up to an idol. Here they can breeze, and cruise, and gas, and do what the hell they want to do – and there are few around that will bite their backs.

You should be thankful that it's an English band plundering the rock'n'roll Midas. It's not just the Faces; the biggest business, the best music, the only valid progression is coming from England. America's got nowt – except Alice, and that's the truth. Here the kids look to England for the kick in the groin, and you can't blame English bands for wanting to play audiences as desperate as that.

TIME PASSED. STEWART appeared in the hotel lobby, his lady by his side, a silver-spangled suit on his body. He was cheerful and a mite cocky as he loped into the limousine. Wood and Lane were up to tricks, too. Mac appeared in a baggy, rumpled morning suit with matching sneakers. Kenney Jones was reserved.

There were about four limos, flanked by two bike-riding outriders, who cut holes in the traffic, pulling their cycles in and out of the line, busily making sure that the convoy wasn't halted. Christ, you'd have thought Nixon was on his way across town to declare war, such was the drama. Hollywood flashed by, a blur of neon, and streets paved with electricity. That quiet walk down Wardour Street to the old Marquee seemed a long, long way off. "It's a case of bringing back the old glamour," said press chief Mike Gill as one of the outriders slewed his cycle to a halt and stopped traffic from crossing the path of the convoy.

The Bowl was eventually reached, and stood there, looking somewhat ridiculous in a kilt, was a lone bagpiper who was hired to entertain the audience with "Amazing Grace" and other stirring tunes before the lads took to the stage. It's impressive, is The Bowl. Seemingly a natural amphitheatre lined with seats, reaching right up and around, as far as the neck could turn. It's dark and you can't see anybody, but you know you're surrounded. There's noise and chatter in the night air.

The Faces run out of the dressing room, there are arms pushing you, faces looming up, people shouting orders. "Right, 'ere we go," says Rod. There are suddenly 20 times more people backstage, each with a job that seemingly consists with keeping each other off the stage. It never worked.

And then... SHAZAM! It was like having acid thrown over your eyes – a sheer white explosion hit the stage, which was coated in solid perspex, throwing the light back up in misty bands of white. Stewart's sizzly suit was on fire; Wood was a mess of colour. The stage was a mirror of light; searchlights swept the crowd. Now this was Hollywood. The band kicked their machines into action. Wood smashed and screwed a chord and then "Memphis" and the Faces are a-rockin' and a-rollin'.

If I hadn't stayed and witnessed the following at the Hollywood Palladium just two days later, then I would have said the Bowl was a great Faces gig. As it turned out, it was good, but not great. Despite Rod's striding out, and frequent slide tackles across the slippery stage. Despite Ron Wood's punchy, raunchy, slashed guitar, it lacked energy. It was enjoyable, but it didn't grab your neck and twist it for 90 minutes. Instead, there were times you found yourself not watching the stage, even maybe talking.

But it was enjoyable, and it was fun. The lads have got their own bar on stage now, stacked high with Blue Nun, and other sprightly nips, and manned by a smartly decked-out barman. At frequent intervals the band would amble up to the bar, while Wood screwed out a break, or Rod got into some dramatic parts. »

Despite what was lacking musically – the crowd were eating it right up. "Come on down from there, come and get round the stage," shouted out Rod. They did just that – a bad move because the security boys pounced – and when they pounce in America, they pounce like animals. So there was much shoving and pursuing through "Miss Judy's Farm" and "Maggie May", Stewart sprawled across the stage, or getting up and dashing around the whole stage area like Denis Law with a loose ball in his eyes.

When they finished, a roar filled the air, and they came back for two encores. A beautiful achievement for the Bowl – but something had been lacking. There had been this emptiness.

Now the Faces are known to like one helluva party and that was the plan for Sunday. A tricky plan, and the boys were warned about it. I mean, they were going to get the crowd boozed on punch and champagne before the gig, and they had taken full responsibility for anything that happened. It was an extremely nervous Rod Stewart travelling in the limo to that gig.

"I think I'm gonna be sick. I've never been so nervous, I'm all here and there."

There's only one way to get Rod back in the land of the living – football. It seemed bizarre nailing along the boulevard in LA, sat in the back of a tasty limo, passing the flashiest scenes on Earth, and talking about Old Trafford, Denis, the Baseball Ground, and the true art of selling a dummy. Bizarre.

As soon as we got to the Palladium you could smell booze, and sweat. It was about 100 degrees inside, and rising. Stewart was feeling better, but still wanted to be sick.

He needn't have worried one bit. They were so darned good they were illegal that night. For a start, it was an ideal gig. It was like a larger version of a Locarno ballroom, and was stacked to the roof with kids. "If they ain't feelin' good on 1,500 bottles of champagne then we're off home," said Rod.

The place pressed on you. It drew a river of sweat from under your armpits. The audience was pressed right up against the stage, right under the chins of the band, and wailing like hell for music. It came from the very opening patterns of "It's All Over Now," loud and so brash, and glory was it swinging. They just hit a swing, something that got your whole body jigging, and kicking. Oh, what slang and swearing it was – and yet it was goodtime. There's a line between something being vicious and menacing, and vicious and fun. The Faces – on this night – had all the pressure, all the evil you wanted, and yet the final product brought a smile to your lips, and not a sneer.

Everyone knew it was really working. There was Ron Wood playing some extraordinary guitar. It's amazing how Wood has developed a style that's totally his. His bottleneck solos are a joy to behold, hot rashes of metal scraping and rutting away, a fag burning twixt his teeth, his legs striding a busy pattern across the stage. Then there's Lane, a sweatmark covering the whole of his back, chugging away, while McLagan and Jones shift and rip it up. "Miss Judy" bit hard, while there was no stopping "Memphis."

Stewart in a yellow spangled whistle, threw his head back and smiled, then walked to the back of the stage, leaving the band playing at this utterly uncanny pace.

"These four guys are my life," he said, picking out the backbeat with his arm and shaking his head. "Can you feel that?"

Feel it? You'd have had to be made out of bricks not to have felt the swagger going about on there. The audience was out of its head, the stage was out of its head, and the backstage people were wearing out shoe leather by the inch. Even the Faces' bar looked like running low, the Blue Nuns being raped in quick succession as the heat began to swell.

"You know, man, the Stones died a death here the other month," said a guy backstage.

Stewart was back on stage on his knees delivering "Maggie" in a voice that looked fit to shatter his throat. Then he was up, his arms around Lane. "Twistin' The Night Away" and "Feel Alright" were the killing encore blows; it was a wonder anyone was left standing. It was complete and utter enjoyment. The Faces' own party and there hadn't been a spot of trouble. What a beautiful band this is.

"And we're tired out," Ronnie had said earlier. "We've got to lay off after this tour – lay off until we're bored. Then come back and boogie." *Roy Hollingworth* •

GETTY

October 29, 1972: the Faces in their dressing room before the Wembley Festival Of Music at the Empire Pool, where they top the bill after the Pink Fairies and the New York Dolls

Indeed, every song tells a story

NME JULY 22 Faces aside, Rod Stewart's latest solo album, his fourth, gets a rave review.

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

Rod Stewart
Never A Dull Moment
MERCURY

As a cursory listen to any of Rod Stewart's solo albums will reveal, there are many aspects of his music which are simply shut out of his work with the Faces. *Never A Dull Moment* is a lovingly crafted work which concentrates on Stewart's sensitivity as an arranger and as an interpreter of intensely varied material both from his pen and from the pens of others.

When listening to the Faces, it's all too easy to forget that Rod Stewart has one of the most expressive voices that any of us will ever hear. The thunderous rhythm-and-booze that the Faces produce seems to limit Rod to the raucous and demonstrative aspects of his style, and thus, I fear, does him a severe artistic disservice.

The Faces have never produced music with the depth of feeling and range exhibited on *An Old Raincoat Will Never Let You Down*, *Gasoline Alley*, *Every Picture Tells A Story* and now *Never A Dull Moment*. The dilemma is this: on his solo albums Stewart can take songs as differentiated as "Street Fighting Man", "Man Of Constant Sorrow" and "Handbags And Gladrags" and show us what these songs have in common, while simultaneously respecting the individual identity of each song, whereas with the Faces, every song ends up sounding uncomfortably like its predecessor. *A Nod's As Good As A Wink...* tends to sound like one exceptionally long Faces track, but *Never A Dull Moment* duly realises that, indeed, every song tells a story.

It features the usual Rod Steward solo album studio band, which has with some justification been called the best studio band since the one Dylan assembled for *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*.

Exact track-by-track details are not available as I write, because my copy arrived without a sleeve, but somewhere in there are Ron Wood (lead and slide guitar), Micky Waller (drums), Ray Jackson (mandolin), Martin Quittenton (acoustic guitar), Speedy Acquaye (congas), Dick Powell (violin) and sundry Faces.

None of the songs have been picked out for single release, and none of them leaps out at the listener as readily as "Maggie May" did, but "True Blue", written by Rod and Ron Wood, and "You Wear It Well", written with Martin Quittenton, seem the most instantly appealing here.

"Interludings" is a very brief acoustic guitar instrumental written by Ron Wood's brother Arthur (who, with Keef Hartley and Jon Lord, had a brilliant but neglected mid-'60s band). Of these "True Blue" is a typical Stewart opening cut in the tradition of "Gasoline Alley" or "Bad'n'Ruin", dealing with one of his perennial lyrical themes, that of the prodigal son.

"*I gotta get myself back home*", he moans, against a steady descending sequence blocked out by Quittenton's acoustic guitar and some driving rhythm section work.

"Lost Paraguayos" is an acoustic carouser about a Mexican jail, with Rod chuckling delightedly between the lines.

"You Wear It Well" sounds similar to "Maggie May", and "Italian Girls" begins with a Bo Diddley mumbling bass solo against the acoustic guitar before charging off into the song, the melody of which derives from traditional sources.

On each of his last three solo albums, Stewart has featured an obscure Dylan song. Perhaps "Only A Hobo" from *Gasoline Alley* was the most successful of these, but here "Mama You've Been On My Mind" is real sweet, with Wood's pedal steel shining in the background. But next time, Rod, could you see your way to doing one of Dylan's better songs? I'd love to hear you sing "Positively Fourth Street".

For some reason, most performers fight shy of singing Jimi Hendrix songs, probably because of the difficulty of getting the guitar leads right.

Here Rod does a beautiful reading of Jimi's "Angel" from *The Cry Of Love*, and effortlessly surmounts the problem by concentrating on the vocal and leaving the guitar to play rhythm. He soars through the chorus with a grace that Hendrix would have dug, and I hope this spurs a few more people on to record Jimi's songs.

"I'd Rather Go Blind", the Etta James song that was a hit some while back for Chicken Shack, is one of the few recorded examples of Rod's excellence as an interpreter of slow blues, others being "Blues Deluxe" on the Jeff Beck Group's *Truth* album, which is a variant on "Gambler's Blues" that ends up as a showcase for Beck and Nicky Hopkins, and "So Much To Say" on Immediate's long-deleted *Blues Leftovers*. "Blind" is the most moving performance on the whole album, and I'm glad that it's part of the Faces' act.

Rod does a beautiful reading of Jimi Hendrix's "Angel" from *The Cry Of Love*

Lastly, a tribute to one of Rod's idols, the late Sam Cooke, on "Twistin' The Night Away", an effortlessly swinging performance of the R&B classic, which ends the set with great good humour and a nice solo from Wood.

Never A Dull Moment? Well, almost never. This is an album which is going to give me a lot of listening time over the next few months, and I'm glad it's in the house. I just wish that one day the Faces will make an album this good. *Charles Shaar Murray*

1972

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

JOHN LENNON, WINGS, BLACK SABBATH, PHIL SPECTOR AND MORE

Keith Moon will play the drummer

MM OCT 28 Ringo Starr and other musicians act in a new rock movie.

DAVID ESSEX, WHO plays Jesus in the hit musical *Godspell*, is to leave the show to make a new rock film with Ringo Starr, Keith Moon, Billy Fury and The Everly Brothers.

Called *That'll Be The Day*, it has a screenplay by *Evening Standard* writer Ray Connolly, and will be a "definitive picture" of the story of young people growing up amidst the pop boom of the '50s and '60s.

Shooting commenced this week on location at a holiday camp on the Isle Of Wight, and the rest of the cast includes actresses Rosemary Leach, Rosalind Ayres and Kim Braden. The story revolves around a group called Stormy Tempest & The Typhoons. Billy Fury plays Stormy and Keith Moon will be the drummer in his group. David Essex plays a young boy growing up in 1958 who gets bored with school studies and opts out of society, joining up with his friend, played by Ringo. In one scene Ringo gets beaten up by Teddy boys.

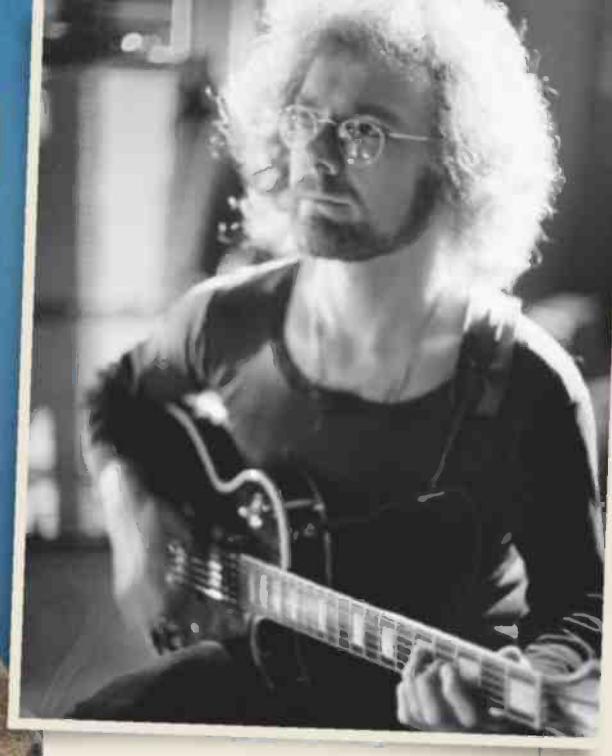
It is hoped many top rock musicians like Pete Townshend and Jeff Beck will help supply music for the film, and a soundtrack album will be released to coincide with the film's issue next spring. *That'll Be The Day* is being directed by Claude Whatham, a top television director, and produced by David Putnam, Sandford Leiberson and Roy Baird.

Fictional band The Stray Cats in *That'll Be The Day*: (l-r) Keith Moon, David Essex, Karl Howman, Paul Nicholas and Dave Edmunds

1972

OCTOBER–DECEMBER

"We're all counting on this being a long-term thing": Brian Eno and (right) Robert Fripp



MM NOV 4 From out of an improvised King Crimson session comes... Fripp & Eno, a meeting of minds in a small studio, with some nudie playing cards...

"That one cost £2.80 for the tape..."

BEFORE KING CRIMSON'S recent appearance on the German *Beat Club* TV programme, percussionist Jamie Muir asked their roadies to go outside and collect a large sack of leaves. Then, during the set, while John Wetton was playing a quiet bass riff, Jamie took the sack, upended it, and spilled the contents over his kit. As someone said recently: Dada, we're all crazy now.

Jamie's kit in itself is enough to qualify the new Crimson for a place in the surrealistic stakes alongside Han Bennink, John Stevens and Frank Perry. It's like nothing you have ever seen before. He doesn't play it all the time, either. To say that Jamie is a "multi-" instrumentalist is to say that he can make music out of anything that comes to hand. There's his whirly-pipe, for instance: a length of rubber tube with a coil and a tremendous mouth-piece, which he blows and simultaneously whirls around his head.

Maniacal, certainly. After all, when Jamie was with the ill-fated and underrated magic band called Hurts, he once re-coaxed a drum solo at the Marquee by sitting on the edge of the stage and screaming at the audience, who fled. Believe this: if King Crimson can make their old fans listen to their new music, they'll have struck a giant blow for progress. If they succeed, it'll prove that audiences will invest in the avant-garde, and the wax will be used for utter inspired lunatics like Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Cecil Taylor.

The major part of their German TV set was totally improvised, just like the first set on each of their three nights at Frankfurt's Zoom Club, which was their first-ever gig. Bob Fripp played me the TV tapes round at the good Captain Eno's flat in Maida Vale the other night, and it was impossible not to be impressed with the predacious unity they've already achieved, prior to their English tour.

Eno's studio is situated in a tiny room, not much bigger than a closet – it contains several tape recorders, an amp and speaker system, loads of leads and tape-snippings hanging over everything, some model aeroplanes and funny pictures, many reels of tape, and the Captain's collection of... uh, "connoisseur's" playing cards.

With practised ear, he manipulates Revox and Ferrographs to bring us the sound of King Crimson live in Bremen. Fripp's had a busy day, ending with he and violinist David Cross opting out of all the decision-making in the band, but he's filled with enthusiasm for the music.

The tape begins, and it's obvious that this Crimson is not for those of nervous disposition. The five musicians positively tear into each other, throwing ideas around like confetti, feeding and developing phrases with avid skill. At first, the rhythm section is what catches the ear. "They're the two most ferocious drummers I've ever worked with," says Fripp, as the combined efforts of Messrs Muir and Bruford threaten to ignite Eno's machinery on the spot. It's hard to tell who's playing what, except when Bill's laying down straight funk and Jamie's embroidering it with tinkling percussive effects, but their combined power is awesome.

"We're trying at the moment to play 5 over 4," says Fripp, by way of metrical explanation. When it works, the strength of it almost tears the band apart."

Wetton's bass guitar, too, catches the ear: his very sound is bloodthirsty and cursing, and his inventiveness in a pointillist duet with Fripp's guitar is astonishing. "I call it the Crimson Lurch," says Fripp. "It catches you in the neck."

> **"I call it the Crimson Lurch. It catches you in the neck"**

Eno, too, is impressed. "I heard Family a while back, and I thought, 'That's my favourite bass sound.' When I heard these tunes, I was amazed to hear the same sound again. Then somebody told me it was the same guy."

Fripp's guitar and Mellotron are, right now, much as ever they were. Bob knows that he's got a long way to go as a soloist – there's no self-delusion here, and he's going to make it.

Cross is the youngest and least experienced Crimsonite, and at the moment it's showing a little. Lack of confidence comes through on violin and flute more than on most instruments, but the music on the tape attests to his protest.

"You see," says Fripp, "we're all counting on this being a long-term thing. We're planning to stay together for two or three years – and

David is someone I know I'll want to be playing with in 1974. You just watch."

The major portion of the 13-minute TV set is the free improvisation titled "Vista Of Operating Theatre Under Ark-Light", and it ends with a written composition, in comparatively recognisable Crimson vein, called "Larks' Tongues In Aspic".

The tape really shows only one facet of the new band. Bob hasn't played us all the songs (ie, vocals), but there'll be plenty for fans to savour on the tour. "Don't judge us on the very first gig. It's improving by gargantuan leaps – and it'll never be bad, anyway, because at its worst this band is very professional. But the third night in Frankfurt... well, it really happened."

As the tape ends, Eno is already connecting another majestic treat. He pulls out a small spool, threads it through the Revox, and explains it's something he taped from a radio play, the voice of actress Judi Dench speaking a single phrase. He made eight tapes of it, at slightly differing speeds, and then re-recorded them together. They begin together, and then gradually shoot out of phase until the effect is like an aural hall of mirrors.

The phrase Miss Dench speaks is "You don't ask why", just that, but the multi-tracking turns its meaning a thousand different ways. This may sound like something from Pseud's Corner (or a John and Yoko test pressing), but it's utterly mesmerising: "*youyou do-don't ah-ah-ah-ah don't a-ask whywhywhy don't ah-ask you-you-don't...*"

For Eno, the highlight comes when the voices come back, for a split-second, into phase. He also insists on inflicting our ears with one of his "snake guitar" pieces overdubbed by himself through his own equipment. Initial worries give way to pleasure as his fuzzy rock'n'roll licks pour forth.

"That's my Sterling Morrison sound," he says with some satisfaction. Fripp grunts: "I've spent months trying to get that sound in the studio. How'd you do it?"

Eno explains, to Fripp's amazement, that he feeds the guitar straight through his tape machine – which, by all the laws of wattage, should explode under the strain. That they don't can be attributed more to luck than expertise. The evening's highlight, though, is on the next spool: 20 minutes of music recorded, in Eno's room, by himself and Fripp.

The theory and practice of the music were as follows: Fripp, on guitar, laid down a bass drone, modulating into different tonal areas twice over the length of the tape, which Eno subjected to various forms of echo and tape delay that I don't understand. And this produced a dense, shifting groundswell over which Fripp then improvised a top line – once again with electronic assistance.

The result is somewhat between Terry Riley's "Rainbow In Curved Air" and John Martyn's longer guitar pieces – which is to say that it's utterly, magically riveting.

The listener is totally absorbed as the guitar wheels, spins, cries, bleeds, soars, turns back into itself, climaxes and dies away. It is, without doubt, a complete triumph.

Eno's theories on tape delay were published in book form on March 6 – and five days later, 3,000 miles away, Terry Riley published his own theories in America. They were almost exactly the same. "What an example of creative confluence," chuckles the Captain. "Actually, shortly afterward I found out that John Cage had discovered the same things years ago. But he was a creep, and anyway he didn't know how to use it." What a joker.

This tape will, they hope, be used on Island's experimental HELP series with another piece they're recording soon. "It's my idea of how to make an album," Eno commented. "That one side took 40 minutes' work and cost £2.80 for the tape."

"We're hoping," added Fripp, "to bring the album in, mastered and complete for £100." Contrast that with the five-figure sums Crimso's own albums have cost to make.

"Also we'd like to arrange some gigs in the future with both Roxy and Crimson, so that Eno and I can do a set together in the middle." *Richard Williams*

Osmonds fans gather outside a London hotel, November 1972

Fan hysteria on a massive level

MM OCT 28 Two of the three biggest US pop stars, The Jackson 5 and The Osmonds, are set to arrive in Britain.

THE BIG SCREAM is on its way back to Britain – and the biggest scream of all is due to fill the skies around London's Heathrow Airport this Sunday morning when The Jackson 5 and The Osmond Brothers touch down within hours of each other. It's doubtful whether Heathrow will have played host to such a fan gathering since the days when The Beatles returned triumphant from their American tours. For accompanying the Jacksons and Osmonds is the biggest wave of fan worship since Beatlemania.

First to arrive are The Jackson 5. Their plane, Pan Am Flight Number 106, is due to arrive at Terminal 3 at 7.20am. The Osmonds arrive at Terminal 3 at 10.30am. Arrangements have been made for The Osmonds to drive in front of Terminal 2.

Together with David Cassidy, the Jacksons and the Osmonds make up a trio of American acts that have brought back fan hysteria on a massive level. Record sales for The Osmonds alone are toppling records set by The Beatles at the height of their touring days. In Britain alone, The Jackson 5 have sold two million singles and 100,000 albums for Tamla Motown in two years, counting recordings by the group and lead singer Michael Jackson.

First-to-arrive Jacksons will spend the Sunday at rehearsals for the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium, which takes place the next day. Following concerts on the Continent, the group play two shows at Birmingham Odeon on November 9, Belle Vue, Manchester (10), Liverpool Empire... two shows (11) and they wind up with a massive concert at the Wembley Empire Pool on November 12.

Osmonds will be driven from the airport to their central London hotel for an afternoon press reception. They will play concerts at London's Rainbow Theatre (November 4), Manchester Free Trade Hall (6) and Birmingham Town Hall (7). All the concerts have sold out. Concerts follow in France, Germany and Scandinavia.

"Nothing to do with drugs"

MM DEC 2 The new Wings single gets banned – this time for "sexy" content.

PAUL MCCARTNEY – WHOSE "Give Ireland Back To The Irish" was banned by the BBC last February – has again fallen foul of the Beeb. His latest single, out tomorrow (Friday), has been banned by Radios One and Two. Title of the piece, written by Paul and his wife Linda, is "Hi, Hi, Hi", by Wings.

BBC publicity officer Rodney Collins told the *MM*: "The ban has nothing to do with drugs. We thought the record unfit for broadcasting because of the lyric. Part of it goes: '*I want you to lie on the bed and get you ready for my body, gon' do it, do it, do it to you*'.

"Another part goes: "*Like a rabbit I'm going to grab it and do it till the night is done*'."

"Hi, Hi, Hi" was broadcast by Tony Blackburn once last week, but this was a "mistake", say the BBC.

REX

"Rock releases stress"

BLACK SABBATH have returned from the USA. They leave behind delighted crowds – but at what cost to themselves? "We were just four ordinary losers," says Ozzy Osbourne. "We signed and it all happened..."

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 14 —

BLACK SABBATH HAVE always had a hard time. Does anyone really take them seriously? Their music is loud, often lacking in finesse. But it carries an honesty that few bands have today. It has power – and while an awful lot of people are ready to laugh at the music's monotony, there is a hard following in Britain and enough people digging them in the States to make their smallest gigs 5,000-people events.

Ignoring critics, Sabbath have quietly sneaked off and recorded a fine rocking album with depth and shades of sophistication. Made at the Record Plant in Los Angeles, *Black Sabbath Vol 4* is coming of age, a new-found maturity and freedom.

But America has taken its toll on the band. Tony Iommi is ill, and Ozzy Osbourne's complexion shows that some sunshine wouldn't do him any harm. They still carry on, and although future long tours of the States are out, in the immediate future they find themselves in the almost impossible situation of working stateside for three weeks, with two weeks at home in Birmingham before going back again for another three-week stint.

Last week Osbourne looked half-dead. Lack of sleep and jet lag had drained his energy. But he talked excitedly about the band, big venues, drugs, America and their latest LP...

Do you feel your music has fallen into an accepted pattern? I don't know, but a lot of people have told me that we've got our own thing, our own sound. I don't really know myself, because of the next thing. The actual myth and feel of the music is something you're not really aware of when you're so close to it. When we sang "Paranoid" we didn't plan it. We don't plan things, we just do them. We »

CAMERA PRESS

March 22, 1972: Black Sabbath onstage at Cobo Arena, Detroit, Michigan

didn't feel that a lot of people felt like us, but evidently a lot of other people did feel what we were writing about.

I think that was one of the main things why it sold, because at the time there was a lot of shit around with all this violence, which is still around. It's got way out of proportion now, but at one time it was something that was just filtering through and getting at people's nervous systems. We didn't think, "We're masters of the world; we know what everybody's thinking." We just wrote something.

It was mainly Geezer, who is a very intense person, in as much as writing goes. He's the main lyricist. I have done a few things; I wrote the lyrics to "Black Sabbath" and a few of the others, but he's the man. He comes up with some really good things. I mean sometimes I feel, "God what's in his head?" One of the tracks on this new album really freaks me out even now – "Cornucopia". Listen to the lyrics on that. The lyrics on the last verse go, "*Take a life, it's going cheap/Kill someone, no one will weep/Freedom's yours, just pay your dues/We just want your soul to use*".

Is that because of America? Now I feel the band is getting very influenced by the American trip. You know we were thinking of calling this album "Snowblind", but it was very heavy because they said it was to do with cocaine and drugs. We get criticised about drug influences, but if people really get into the lyrics it's an anti-drug thing. Whether we've used it or not, I'm not obliged to say, but what we've seen of it is terrible. It's like people are living in nightmares, and anybody who goes into it ends up like that. Over there when they go in for something... "Get stoned, forget it man." It's like drinking half a shandy to them, getting stoned. They really go overboard; it's a wonder that half of them don't take a coffin to a gig.

Do you never feel that is the reality of dope? I don't think so; I was having an argument the other week in a pub near where I live. This old bloke was saying, "This pop star, he's the cause of all this drug abuse." I said, "OK, but who gave him the drugs, and who gave the bloke before him drugs?" We don't go on stage like freaks; we go on to play music. If you're freaked you can't play. I've tried it; you just can't get it together. You think you're playing great, and then you start losing it and, man, it all falls down. I just don't touch it any more. I think as soon as the world... although it's too late now, but if the world gets it together then the kids will do the same.

This world – I don't know. I've sat and thought to myself, "Look how long the world's been here, and man, now they've found a way of destroying the world by just pushing a button and they can wipe out the whole thing." At times I don't think it would be a bad idea. I was looking at the news the other night and there wasn't one thing good. Everything they spoke about was a bomb. Bomb on a plane, bomb in Belfast, bomb in somebody else's boot.

The biggest tragedy of all time must have been the Olympic Games. They even had to mix a thing like sport where a man physically competes with another and race doesn't matter. For two weeks people forget about colour and religion and they just compete as human beings. And then some people have to go and do something like that just for politics. The thing you ought to see is pollution in America. It's terrible. People are walking around looking up in the air, shivering, scared. As if one day this big black hand is going to come out of the sky and choke them.

Your music's a reaction to that? Well, America is the most satanic country in the world. They do anything for a dollar. If you've got a dollar you're in; if you haven't you're out. You're not human over there, you're just another punch card in a computer. It's never heard of to say thank you. "Give me a cup of coffee, me, me, me; feed me... him..."

It's funny, because I've been everywhere and this country is the sanest country out of all of them. I look at my little house in the country here and I think I've bought myself a little piece of heaven on Earth with my kids and animals. I don't want to be a neurotic old man at 85 coughing up soot.

Doesn't rock contribute to pollution with its sheer volume? No, rock is the best sedative in the world. It releases the stress, the anxiety and the hang-ups. If I go onto a stage and there are 20,000 people out there or even one, and if they're digging it and having a good time getting high on the evening and the event, and they're forgetting what's going to happen in the morning when they clock on again, I think I've achieved something

Do you never feel like a jukebox playing the same tunes all the time? Yeah, you feel like that sometimes. Plug a dime in and he'll sing all night. It's such a drag sometimes. Like two days before we went away on the last trip I caught this bug and it just turned me off. Second number of the first show my throat just turned off and I was dead. I had to walk off stage. I couldn't go on. You try to tell a crowd of people that you can't go on.

We go mad now, we do what they call bops. Three weeks in the States, two weeks home, three weeks in the States, two weeks home. I haven't slept since we got back. I got back Sunday, I went to bed on Thursday night, didn't sleep Friday night, didn't sleep Saturday night, didn't sleep Sunday night. It's like you're sitting down and bang you're asleep for two hours and then wide awake all night taking the dogs for long walks at five in the morning through the haze.

CHRIS WALTER

Black Sabbath in 1972: (l–r) Geezer Butler, Tony Iommi, Bill Ward and Ozzy Osbourne

Any plans for doing a solo album? I've been thinking about it, but I'm very limited because I can't play an instrument. I think I'm going to get a Moog and learn to play it, not just instrumental work, but doing a solo album using a Moog on it. Getting some different people to work on it, too. If I used the people I work with now it would just be another version of Black Sabbath.

Would you like to use strings, like on "Changes" from the new album? Yeah, it gets pretty boring for us after a time. We play everything on record that we do on stage. It's good for our ears as well as other people. We like our own music better if we can experiment on albums. That's why Tony likes to play a little acoustic guitar in the studio. Actually, I think Tony is one of the most talented guys I've ever met. None of us have ever been to music college, and if someone put music in front of me now, well I couldn't even read English writing, let alone music writing. But Tony has this natural ability. He'd never played piano before, never before, and yet he sat down and got "Changes" together at the piano after a day.

Geezer has almost got all the things written for an album and recorded a lot of it at home on his little Revox. If he gets the time he'll be doing one. He's got everything worked out, what he wants to call the album and everything. His album will be really something if he does get it together. I've heard one thing he's got together and that was beautiful. I've got to hear him sing as well. Geezer's an interesting guy in that he thought of the "Paranoid" trip and everything.

Do you ever feel unreal, caught up in the "downer" myth? No, not really, but it's strange, I never realised the strength of Black Sabbath. Although I'm beginning to understand it a bit more now. I understand more about the first Black Sabbath album now than I did at the time, because you have to understand the fact that we were just four ordinary losers. We just bummed around in an old Transit van, doing it anywhere, playing at Irish working men's clubs, anything just to get a gig, just to play to people. Then this cigar came walking in the room one day and said, "Sign here." And we signed there and it all happened.

There's always a lot of energy at Black Sabbath concerts. Right, it's good energy. I feel when we do a concert there's so much energy coming off the people if it's happening. Sometimes it doesn't happen, but you can't expect to do it every night. But when it does, it really comes over good. The whole thing comes up to a thing that just blooms into a beautiful energy trip. I'm sure we moved the Albert Hall three foot last time we played there. I don't like going to these concerts where the band tries to baffle you with science. Hop onto a Moog, play 35 violins, it's just nowhere for me.

The only band that can do that for me is Yes. Rick Wakeman, the organist, is the best in the world as far as a keyboard player goes. I rate him a lot higher than Emerson – it's been done before – jumping on to organs with knives. On stage that band is perfect, for a singer Anderson has such a great idea at arranging. It's so perfect.

You still get nervous before you go on stage? If it's a big gig, before I go on that stage I have a couple of hefts of scotch, and sweat... my hands melt! But as soon as they go "Black Sabbath" I walk on that stage and it just disappears. The last Albert Hall gig I was so ill. I could feel this thing coming through the walls. I was feeling, "I've got to go out there into the big lion pit." As soon as you're on stage you just open up. But I'll tell you: if something goes wrong with the equipment on that first number, I'm finished, but once the first number's over, it's cool.

Does the volume you use ever affect your hearing on stage? No, I'm right in the centre of the stage. You see the speaker fans out and it doesn't hit me so much as it would the people at the back of the hall. The people at the front of the hall are better off, actually. I'd say we use volume effectively, like we use a guitar.

Have you ever seen Grand Funk? Now that's volume. They say in America that we are louder than Grand Funk. I'll tell you, if the world ended it would not be that loud! When they came over here they used a 5,000-watt PA at the Albert Hall. The people in the first eight rows had their hair blown out. And they wondered why people were running out holding their heads, with screwed-up pained faces.

> "The whole thing just blooms into a beautiful energy trip"

You get to a point where volume ceases to be creative. Of course. And that loud it's painful, and it's not getting anywhere. It's just noise. There's no co-ordination with their music, there's not even a nice flowing riff, and it's just a great noise. If that guy changes a chord once, he's doing a good run. You can say we're monotonous, but we do have the common sense to write a little bit more variation in the trip.

Yes are so big in America. You think The Beatles were big. We did a gig with them at the Forum, two nights there, and that holds 20,000 people and they packed the place both nights. Man, you could fit the Albert Hall into the dressing room of the Forum. The size of those places – you don't get applause at once, it comes in waves from the back of the hall.

Can you communicate to that amount of people? No, I just have to throw myself at them. I just use a bit more energy and a bit more sanity. The amplification thing over there is amazing... perhaps that's why we're getting a bit too loud for this country, because we've got used to playing to a great mass of people. The smallest crowd I've played to indoors is 25,000 people. On this last tour we went to this open-air festival on Labour Day, which is a big holiday thing. This guy didn't expect what he got. There were half a million people there; we couldn't get to the gig because for 10 miles along the freeway there were abandoned cars. There were cars turned over in the river. It was like someone had said you've got 10 seconds to get out of the city before it's destroyed.

The guy couldn't believe it, man. He expected 80,000 people! There was, like, three toilets for half a million people! It was terrible; they were selling them aspirins to get them stoned. That's what I hate about festivals, the dope trip. Bad news. If you're going to sell something to people, sell them something good.

The new album sounds as if you spent a lot more time and effort on it. This is our first album. OUR first album; in the past we've been limited time-wise, money-wise, this expense thing. If you can afford to put a band in the studio, you can afford to wait. That's why there is so much bad stuff coming out. If everyone was to do a good job on an album there'd be so much more good music around. I pick up an album sometimes and it's so bad. An album is a completely different thing to a show. You can't see me looning around, you can't see Tony's fingers working.

We started recording this album before last Christmas. We've spent a lot of time and a lot of money on it. We took four or five all-night sessions on one track, "Under The Sun", because we didn't feel it was right. In the end we got it right. That's really what we wanted to do before.

Master Of Reality we recorded in four days. The first album we recorded in Regent Sound, on an eight-track machine, in two days from 10 in the morning till six. It was good for the time and expense that went into it. That whole album must have cost £600. It's the people you never see who are behind it all. The Blue Meanies.

This album is just the four of us plus Colin Caldwell – and Patrick Meehan. We had so much fun.

Why cut in Los Angeles? At the Record Plant? What a studio for depth and bass! You'll notice that the volume of this album is a lot higher than the other, and the crispness is so much better.

This album is a complete new step as far as we are concerned, because now it's a new era for Black Sabbath. We're no longer going to use a producer. We experimented a lot on this album. It was like a party with people around at the studio. As far as producers go, no disrespect to Rodger Bain or anything, but we just felt that we couldn't communicate with him in the end. I don't know whether he's got an ego trip that he had made us or something. I think a producer has to be with a band 24 hours a day, otherwise you can't communicate with them. It shows on this album that we enjoyed ourselves. The energy level is there. *Mark Plummer* •

John Lennon and Yoko Ono at one of two charity concerts they organised for NYC's Willowbrook School for children with mental disabilities, Madison Square Garden, August 30, 1972

"People say I'm self-indulgent"

JOHN LENNON returns to live rock'n'roll. Inevitably, it all reminds him of The Beatles and the iniquities of fame. How best to use his influence? And his money? "Believe it or not, people would be happier if you took the bread and ran..."

— NME, SEPTEMBER 30 —

"THAT MADISON SQUARE Garden gig", says John Lennon, nostalgia in his eyes, and his hand stretched forward holding a welcoming beer, "was the best music I enjoyed playing since the Cavern or even Hamburg."

It's 1.30am as we slip into the vacant bedroom to talk and escape the congestion of the entire population of Greenwich Village noisily setting up its rock hardware in the living room next door. The scene is the Lennons' spiffy mid-town hotel suite, 30 floors up from the hot sweat of New York's 7th Avenue and only mugging distance from Times Square. Down on the street the shrill scream of a speeding police car punctures the conversation.

I have been trying to see him for more then a week and he knows it, apologising as he digs deep into a crumbled packet of cigarettes as he sits on the single bed with Yoko at his side.

"Man," says Lennon, continuing the theme, "I really enjoyed that Madison gig." He peers at me like a contented owl from behind the familiar tinted National Health shades perched atop the bridge of his nose. "I mean, you were there. You could see I was on the trip alright. It was just the same kinda feeling when The Beatles used to really get into it.

"Funnily enough, I tend to remember the times before The Beatles happened most of all. Like in Hamburg we used to do this... at the Cavern we used to do that... in the ballrooms the other. In those days we weren't just doing an entertaining thing »

MIRRORPIX

or whatever the hell it was we were supposed to be. That was when we played music. That's what I enjoy and remember best about those days.

"That's the same feeling we got at Madison Square Garden with Elephant's Memory"– Yoko nods in full agreement – "and you know they're such a good band. Stan Bronstein, their tenor sax player, is a real rare one. Perhaps the best since King Curtis, that's what I say."

Having been at the Lennon concert, I more than go along with him in regarding it as an event never to be forgotten. As the minutes ticked into the first hour of a new day, I had seen Lennon push a thick wad of gum hard into his cheek and grind out a boogie rhythm on his Les Paul Gibson as he screamed, "*New York City… Que pasa, New York? Que pasa, New York*", before a demonstrative crowd of well over 20,000 Manhattans plus a few mad dogs and visiting Englishmen. It was magnetic.

The response that night from the animated multitude stompin' madly on their $15 seats had been deafening, and the stream of gut-level licks coming from the stage substantiated all that we felt. Here, for the first time since the fragmentation of The Beatles, John Lennon finally got back to where he once belonged… rockin' and rollin'…pushing his powerful lungs to their limits and then beyond, accompanied by one of the raunchiest punk street bands I had ever heard. When he sat at the piano to sing "Imagine" it was to perfection, and the silence had a magic of its own as the slow chugging intro of "Come Together" slid out of the giant bank of speakers.

The motivation behind this Lennon emotion-packed official reunion with the public, followed a TV exposé by New York's celebrity newscaster Geraldo Rivera, on the squalid conditions suffered by the mentally retarded children of the upstate Willowbrook Institution. In the wake of a violent public outcry, John and Yoko, in collaboration with New York's Mayor John V Lindsay, had proclaimed August 30 a fundraising day and they were personally responsible for raising $350,000 to help alleviate the children's plight.

My mental flashback to the concert passes and Lennon opens a new pack of cigarettes and explains, "There were all sorts of plans to do a world tour, and then the US immigration thing started, so that had to be shelved. Even with the Madison Square Garden gig, though, I can't begin to tell you the weird things that went on before it. Touring is going to be a big problem. It wouldn't be so bad if we could do a tour and not take home a packet of money which only becomes a tax problem, and God only knows what else. The perfect solution would be to do it so that we only cover costs. But then what you do, when do you do it, and who do you do it for?

"In my position it's harder to do something that doesn't earn a couple of million than it is to actually go out with the intention of earning it. Believe it or not, people would seem to be happier if you took the bread and ran. And that's only one of the complications. We just wanna play, but at the moment it's just a hassle. Paul's trying it on one, and it might be working for him. He's got his band together and he's just hitting the road and appearing wherever he can.

"The way Yoko and I were doing it was at the Lyceum, in Toronto, and with Frank Zappa at the Fillmore – until we got together with Elephant's Memory. All we're trying to do is just play without it developing into some weird scene. But it's almost impossible, if you do it a lot."

He pauses, looks at Yoko, smiles, and ponders on his last words. "I don't know," he says again, "if we're prepared to do it a lot." He continues, directing the statement at Yoko. She stays silent.

"It's not because we're bothered about losing the buzz, but you know you get involved with such hassles as who's making T-shirts and who's got these rights; unions, cameras; and before you realise what's happening it soon becomes bigger than both of us. Either that or it's 'forget about the hassle'. But if we do then you get a lot of people ripping a lot of other people off. At one time Yoko and I thought about going over to Ireland to do something, but until we've cleared up this immigration thing we can't leave America. We're kind of trapped. It might prove difficult for us to re-enter the country. It depends which way the wind is blowing.

"On the *Sometime In New York City* album the royalties of 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' and 'The Luck Of The Irish' are supposed to go to the civil rights movement in both Ireland and New York. Angela [Davis'] money is towards whatever she's struggling for, and some more is for the Attica dependents. Whether we can get it out of the 'system' or not is another thing, but we're gonna try. In the end it gets down to what somebody in our position can do to help others."

> "The only way I can describe it is that Yoko was like an acid trip"

He admits he can fully understand the reasons why others refuse.

"You see, I was in there. When you're a child you're surrounded by relatives, and most of us seem to get ourselves in the position where we create a whole new set of relatives… like friends and advisers, however well-meaning. Suddenly you get in a position where you get so much money – and if you're like us you're aware there's a lot of people come out with more. So you go through the whole bit – 'Why did they get more than us? Didn't we do the work? Didn't we write the songs and record them?

"It's the people – whoever they may be – who stay around the fringe of the artist who create a situation where the artist is always in fear of being hit, like Mickey Rooney, by the taxman. Either that, or you spend so much because you're living a life in which you don't even think about it.

"So there you are, living in a limbo where you're constantly worried that you might end up owing – or that someone will come along and take away whatever you have left. The people who get into that position are insecure anyway, like me. They get you up there. You collect it, 'cos you're insecure enough to want to do it. You do it. Then you become surrounded, and scared of it being taken away from you.

"So what do you do? You find you're going round in circles for the rest of your life." *Roy Carr*

REX

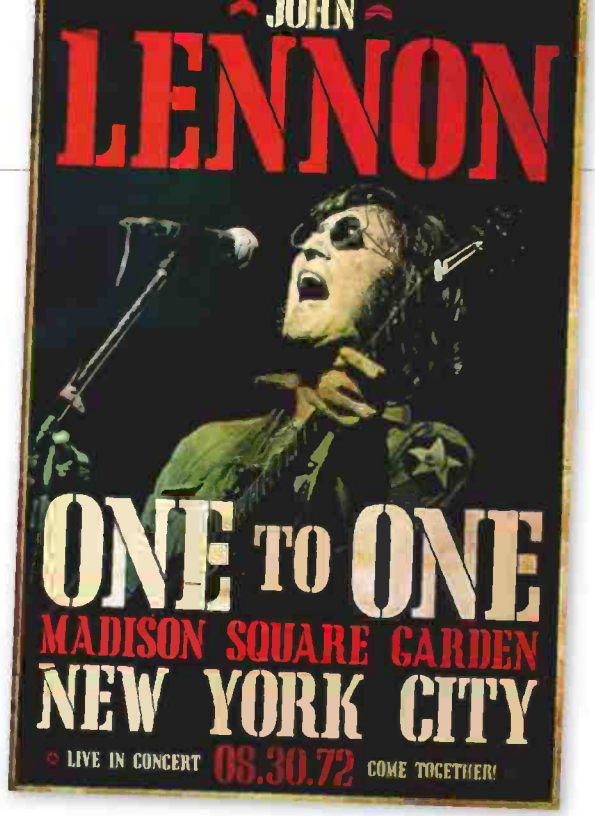
"Until we've cleared up this immigration thing... we're kind of trapped": John and Yoko in Manhattan, August 1972

— NME OCTOBER 7 —

"THE BEATLES HAD a standard to live up to," admits John Lennon, lighting up yet another four-inch link in an endless chain of battered cigarettes. "And for that reason, when The Beatles went into the studio, they had to stay in for at least six months. Today, I just couldn't stand to be locked up in a studio for that length of time."

Lennon's reason is as simple as it is short: "I don't want a standard to live up to."

"You know," he tells me that muggy night in New York, "when the Beatles cartoons come on the TV every Sunday, I still get a kick outta watching them… It's just like leaving home – after that you automatically get on with your parents."



I bring us back to the present and ask: How much has Yoko influenced John, and how much has John influenced Yoko? Lennon displays obvious pleasure at the subject. "She," he begins with an affectionate smile at Yoko, "changed my life completely. Not just physically… the only way I can describe it is that Yoko was like an acid trip or the first time you got drunk. It was that big a change, and that's just about it. I can't really describe it to this day."

I put it to them that an example would be appreciated and they both choose their new album, *Sometime In New York City*, as an illustration. Again, it's John who leads off: "If you really wanna know, Yoko writes all her own chords and music completely. If I can get in a riff or something, then I'm lucky. A lot of people don't know this, but Yoko was classically trained from the age of four, and that, as you know, has its rewards and its disadvantages, in the same way of any training. It's always hard to hit upon specific details, but for instance, the idea for a song like "Imagine" came out of Yoko's influence regardless of what the format of that song was. Half the way I'm thinking, musically, philosophically and every other way is her influence both as a woman and an artist. Her influence is so overwhelming that it was big enough not only for me to change my life with The Beatles, but also my private life, which has nothing to do with how sexually attractive we are to each other."

For Lennon it's time for another cigarette, for Yoko a chance to offer her observations.

"Naturally, my life also changed. Mainly what we give each other is energy, because we're both energetic people and when we're in the company of other people who we might feel are less energetic, then we have to give more. For instance, if we're on stage and John is reading a song really good, and I have to come after him, then that means that I've got to do my very best. So then I do a screaming piece or something, and then John does a screaming piece after that, and then he has to stop me. That's precisely what was happening during our concert at Madison Square Garden. Many of our close friends noticed we were really sparking off each other."

John interjects with his own interpretation: "I mean, I got up from the piano in one number, and Jeezus, it was like following an act or something. Phew, it was just the same as competing in the Olympics when you've really got to box your best. It was really weird."

Suddenly Lennon stops talking, leans over, and with a teasing growl, roars into Yoko's right ear, "Go on, luv, tell him how I influenced yer."

She laughs nervously, tries to ignore his request. "The thing is…" But she can't complete the sentence as she breaks up in a fit of laughter.

"Alright," she concedes.

"That was the question, remember," says John in an effort to redirect her train of thought.

"OK then, I'll answer it. It's obvious, I think, that these days my songs are all rock…"

"And what were they before?" intrudes Lennon, temporarily taking over the role of interviewer.

"Well, I was mainly doing my voice experiments. You know, screaming and all that, but then I got very interested in the rock beat, because it is like the heartbeat. It's very basic and a very healthy thing. Most music, other than rock, went away from that healthy direction and into perversion. That's the way I feel about it."

John: "Just virtuosity."

Yoko: "Actually, I think the most obvious change has been on my side, which is that my musical style changed. Whereas John is virtually sticking to what he's always done. But I adopted rock."

Yoko's last four words prompt Lennon to enthuse "Yeah… yeah" prior to proudly pointing out to his wife: "But I did that Cambridge thing with you. Now wasn't that an adaptation?"

Yoko, unperturbed: "Rock is a whole new field for me and I get inspired so much that I find that now a lot of songs are coming out of me. Also, I think I was getting to a point where I didn't have too much competition. John was always with boys who were working together and therefore in direct competition. That was his situation. I was far more isolated."

She pauses and Lennon takes over the conversation: "It just came to me – for the two of us it was a question of mutual adjustment, with all the joys and pleasures of marriage on an artistic and musical level. However, it's not just the music, or our lifestyle, or where we're living. The whole change is happening in the space between us.

"Yoko coined a phrase. 'Rock Square'… and I was definitely in that box. I would never have admitted it while it was happening, but nevertheless, it was going on. What happens is that you suddenly become exactly what you didn't like about other forms of music, be it jazz or classical or whatever, and then you have to admit that it should really be like this or that. Now, when someone comes along and says 'no', it can be whatever you want it to be. That's a very big change to go through. But after you experience it, then you loosen. You feel free to do whatever you want."

The facts behind Lennon's candour reveal that at the dizziest heights of Beatlemania he lost contact with reality. "That happened many times, but then a lot of other people go the same way. Just being, quote, 'A Star', or whatever it was that happened, made it a little more unreal. So perhaps the periods lasted just a little bit longer.

"Look, a working guy will get lost for a weekend, get pissed, and forget who he is or dream that he's so-and-so in his car. Well, it was just the same with us. But instead of getting blotto for a weekend, we got blotto for two months, trying to forget whatever it is that everybody tries to forget all the time. Instead of worrying about who is gonna pay the milkman, we worried who was gonna pay whatever it was we'd gone out and spent.

"I think that around the time of *Help!* I began to wonder what the hell was happening, because things were definitely starting to get very weird by then. But then, I can only judge it by *A Hard Day's Night*. At that time, we still had one foot in the backyard."

With Marc Bolan today attempting to Xerox the kind of hysteria amongst Britannia's children that John, Paul, George and Ringo patented a generation earlier, I further enquire if Lennon bleeds in sympathy for today's teenyboppers.

"I dunno if I feel sorry for these people or not. But I do think about it. The first thing that strikes me is the things these stars say in the musical papers changes so often. Yer know what I mean: like when they keep on saying, 'We're the greatest.' I mean, when I read about Dave Bowie bitchin' with Marc Bolan, who is bitchin' with Fred Astaire… Actually, it's a bit of a laugh when you're not doing it yourself.

"I imagine it's all down to the fact of the bigger you become, the more insecure you feel. I'd like to think that people could learn from the mistakes others have made. But they don't. It's like you can't tell anybody nothing, ever. I can't learn myself from other people's mistakes. There's nobody I can think of, where he did that, and that's where he goofed. You can sing about it, because that's your own experience, but you can't expect anyone to think along the lines, 'Oh, so they did that and that happened, so we won't do that.' You can't do it. It never works."

Self-indulgent is a put-down constantly aimed at John Lennon, and his reply to such criticism is explicit.

"When people say I'm self-indulgent, it's only because I'm not doing what they want me to do. Simply because they're still hung up on my past. If you've noticed, when they say such things, they don't usually refer to the music. Actually, I got it down the other day. People talk about not what you do, but how you do it, which is like discussing how you dress or if your hair is long or short. They can say what they want, but the artist knows best, anyway. And when you work at such an energy level, like Yoko and me, then you're doomed to be heavily criticised."

The cigarettes have run out, so has the tape, and we've talked ourselves dry. I have a plane to catch at noon and the Lennons have a live TV show to rehearse. New York City… New York City… Que pasa, New York. Que pasa, New York. Que pasa, John and Yoko? *Roy Carr* •

Phil Spector (right) with singer Darlene Love and arranger Jack Nitzsche recording *A Christmas Gift To You* at LA's Gold Star Studios in 1963

ALBUMS REVIEW 1972

"It never snows in California"

MM DEC 2 Phil Spector talks mono, The Beatles and the troubled history of his *Christmas Album*. "It came out the day President Kennedy was assassinated..."

THE LONG LEFT arm of Muhammad Ali snakes out, his fist beating a tattoo of wicked jabs on Bob Foster's tired, puffy cheek. Five thousand miles away, Phil Spector sits, cross-legged and straight-backed, his nose two feet away from the colour TV screen. "Scored!" he screams. "Scored! Scored again! Scored again!"

Suddenly Ali goes into retreat, teasing Foster to follow him on rubbery legs around the ring. His strength ebbing along with his confidence. Foster tries one last time to connect with his opponent's jeering mouth. Somehow, he lands a solid left-and-right combination.

"Missed! Missed again... Look at Ali, he's carrying Foster! He can take Foster any time he wants! He's knocked him down six times, and all they can talk about is him getting cut!

"He's the champ, there's no one better. Get him, Ali... scored again! Scored again!"

Eventually Foster's legs betray his courage, and he tumbles to the canvas for the eighth and last time. Spector bounds to his feet, applauding with a fierce intensity. The TV broadcast is a recording, and Spector saw the fight "live" the previous night at a London cinema, by satellite from Lake Tahoe, Nevada.

"That cut's only superficial," he says, still staring at the screen. "Bundini told me it wasn't nothing important."

Bundini Brown, Ali's trainer, had telephoned Spector in London only hours after the fight. Spector's now waiting excitedly for a call from Ali himself. "He's my friend," says Spector. Ali and Phil – both winners, both stripped of their titles through jealousy and resentment for the way they bucked the system and held up a finger to the establishment.

Phil Spector revealed himself, briefly and unexpectedly, to the British media last week. The reason was the release, this week or next, of his famous *Christmas Album*. The album, originally recorded and half-heartedly released in 1963, was first titled *A Christmas Gift For You* and featured The Ronettes, Darlene Love, The Crystals, and Bob B Soxx & The Blue Jeans, with a memorable Yuletide benediction spoken by the grand master of record production himself.

> **"It went on for months. I never wanted to see him again after that"**

It took between six and nine months to complete and cost in excess of $35,000. The amount of care put into the arrangements and percussion overdubbing was extraordinary. "It went on for months," recalls his engineer, Larry Levine, with a shudder. "I never wanted to see him again after that. Day and night for months."

"All the tracks were made like singles," says Spector. "I did everything that Irving Berlin and Bing Crosby wouldn't want, because I was getting a bit bored with all the '*I'm dreaming of a White Christmas*' stuff. I mean, every year they have to revive Irving Berlin and tell him, 'It's Christmas-time again, Irving.' He must be 180 years old by now."

Spector took silly songs like "Frosty The Snowman", "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer", "The Bells Of St Mary's" and "Parade Of The Wooden Soldiers" and transformed them into pop epics through the use of all the sound components which had built his chart hits with the individual groups. He's never believed in spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar, and every effort was expanded to make this production as grand and perfect as his singles like "Then He Kissed Me" and "Be My Baby". Leon Russell, Glen Campbell, Sonny Bono, Herb Alpert, Nino Tempo, Hal Blaine and Jack Nitzsche sat in Los Angeles' Gold Star Studios for weeks, adding bits until the jigsaw was complete.

The record was pressed, the jackets printed, and thousands of copies were stacked in warehouses, waiting for release in November of 1963. "It came out the same day that President Kennedy was assassinated," Spector remembers. "Naturally, that depressed the whole country. Certainly no one was buying Christmas records – everybody was in mourning, which was only right. Not only was it the worst Christmas of all time, it was also the hottest Christmas in American history. It never snows in California anyway."

GETTY

The record lay like a stunned white elephant. But over the years the demand from collectors and Spector freaks has grown to such proportions that copies of the album, whether on Spector's own label, Philles, or on British London, are much sought-after. You'll be lucky to pay less than a fiver for one in England, while 25 dollars is the minimum price in the New York oldies shops. Spector is aware of this.

"People have been asking me to re-release it for years. Every record label wanted it. So I looked at the charts over here and I saw 'Leader Of The Pack' and 'Let's Dance', and obviously there's a new generation in Britain, and I decided to put it out. I do believe in it, and I love it very much, and I want people to be able to get it without paying £5 for an old copy. It's the same album, same mixes and everything. Just remastered, that's all."

It also has a new cover, with Phil disguised as Santa Claus, surrounded by oddities like a monkey wearing headphones, reading the Bible. It's on Apple, rather than a reactivated Philles, because "I figured that Apple would be the best vehicle for it, here and in America."

Although he may have yearnings to have his own label again, he's reluctant to reveal them. "In those days, I did it alone. I started Philles in 1962, and for three years I didn't even have any promotion men. I had to call guys myself and set things up, master the records and approve them, talk to distributors and accountants... Since then, I've changed my mind about big companies."

He also revealed plans to release many of the old Philles hits on an album, to be followed perhaps by a whole series of LPs – maybe including an album devoted to the many sides by Darlene Love and The Ronettes which have never seen the light of day. There are, for instance, magnificent versions of two Harry Nilsson songs – "Paradise" and "Here I Sit" – which were cut in '65, but kept hidden when he folded Philles after "River Deep – Mountain High" flopped in the States. "People say that I retired because 'River Deep' wasn't a hit in America," he says. "But really I had enough money, and I thought that after the *Christmas Album* and especially 'Lovin' Feeling' and 'River Deep', I'd reached the epitome of what I'd wanted to do in the record business."

He returned in '69, with a Ronettes single and a Checkmates Ltd album for A&M, but since he began working with John Lennon and George Harrison the following year, his only "solo" throw has been last year's single, "Try Some, Buy Some", by his wife, Ronnie.

Against his expectations, the record was a comparative flop. "I thought George had written a great song, and I tried to make it romantic and Wagnerian and big and beautiful. Was I disappointed when it wasn't a hit? There are two ways of looking at it: on the one hand, it's art because it's an expression of what you feel. If it's not successful... well, that's painful, but you also have to look at it as an eight-piece of wax that can be broken and thrown away and you make another one.

"It's like if you have a piece of adhesive tape on your arm, there are two kinds of people: one will peel it off slowly and painfully, so it hurts like hell; the other does it very quickly, just rips it off. They both did the same thing but one suffered considerably less. You have to realise that what you're doing may be art, but what the public's listening to is commerciality."

Wearing his Back To Mono button, Spector is scathing about people who use 16-track studios to cover up their own technical inadequacies. "There's a lot of insecurity involved. They've got 32 tracks, and they'll have 64 soon, and then they'll double that to a hundred-and-something. The way we used to work recording everything monaurally, you had to get it right first time. Today, they can't do that.

"We used to work monaurally – you had to get it right first time"

"We did John's last album in quadraphonic. There's four speakers around you, and I say, 'I can only hear the bass,' and Yoko says, 'I can only hear the strings,' and John says we all have to sit in the middle to hear everything. So there's about 20 of us all huddled together in a heap in the middle of the room... It was really silly.

"All my old records were recorded in mono. I tried to do what somebody like Wagner might do to have the moving lines and everything together. If you try to separate that and make it into stereo, you lose everything I tried to do."

Testing this theory, I played him the new reissue of "River Deep", on A&M. He listened, shook his head, and said, "It's a stereo mix... Listen there, how the strings are separated. It's got no power any more. I didn't do that.

"So people ask me why, when I wear a Back To Mono button, I record the ex-Beatles on 16-track machines. Well, their records aren't really stereo, you know – just listen closely and you'll hear that the sound is all together really. They like that."

In response to repeated requests, he plays the *Christmas Album*, and commentates through it, skipping the stylus from track to track. "'Bells Of St Mary's', I told Hal Blaine there, 'solo... solo... solo...' I wanted the drums on the same level as the strings. He didn't understand at first, but he got it.

"Santa Claus Is Coming To Town": "The Jackson 5 have just stolen the whole thing. That sax solo there... that was when Steve Douglas could really play. There, you hear that percussion? It's supposed to be the toymakers working away."

"Sleigh Ride": "Motown stole that for 'Heatwave'. That's Sonny Bono [playing the horses'-hooves effects]..."

"It's A Marshmallow World": "There's Leon playing piano. Aw, now you've got me all excited. Christmas is funny – everybody loves everybody for two days, then they start killing each other again."

"Winter Wonderland": "There's Edna singing harmony with Darlene. Edna, Darlene's younger sister, is now the lead singer with the Hot Wax hit group, Honey Cone."

"Paradise Of The Wooden Soldiers": "That's Herbie Alpert playing trumpet, with the other guy from the Brass."

"Christmas (Baby Please Come Home": "This bit was meant to be harmony, but Darlene went crazy. I tell you, those kids loved to sing."

He finishes up with "Silent Night", and its spoken message to the fans from the producer. The corny sentiments – "*Of course, the biggest thanks goes to you, for giving me the opportunity to relate my feelings of Christmas through the music that I love*" – should be embarrassing, but somehow it's movingly innocent. "I had to play all the strings on that," he shouts. "The string players wouldn't do it. I said if I was Toscanini or Eugene Ormandy you wouldn't say that! Play it!"

Nearly all the guests at his press conference have departed, the wine is almost gone, and the food trolley's been removed, so he gets out his jumbo and starts fooling around. He sings The Mystics' "Hush-a-Bye", The Robins' "Smokey Joe's Café" and "Down In Mexico", the Everlys' "So Sad", The Elegants' "Little Star" and Richie Valens "Donna". "That was supposed to be a proper ending on the record," he says, "but the engineer faded it too early."

What? Spector smiles – a small secret smile.

He returns to the hi-fi table and pulls out an album bearing that familiar yellow-and-red Philles label. It's a prototype of his forthcoming Greatest Hits album. There are 18 tracks on this one, including all the favourites, but probably there'll only be 12 on the production copies.

He's thinking of getting the rights to "To Know Him Is To Love Him" and Curtis Lee's "Pretty Little Angel Eyes", so that the album will give a more complete picture of his early years. He turns all the lights out, puts the needle down on the first track, which is "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling", and lies down on the carpet, staring at the ceiling as the massed pianos, basses, and drums fill the room. "I played this to one girl before I released it," he says. *Richard Williams* •

back to MONO

"John who?"

Paul McCartney's WINGS are concentrating on "simplicity". Inevitably, McCartney is drawn into discussion of The Beatles, but his journey of self-discovery is moving forward. "I think I'm getting more back to what I'm about," he says. "You know... melodies, tunes."

— NME DECEMBER 16 —

THE TITLE OF the B-side of "Hi, Hi, Hi" is "C Moon". Why "C Moon"? Sam The Sham, in one of his songs, used the expression "L seven"... Which is L, and a 7 means square. So I – in one of my bright moments – thought C and moon is like the opposite. Clever. So C Moon. I just took that, and that means cool. So then the whole song is like, she's cool.

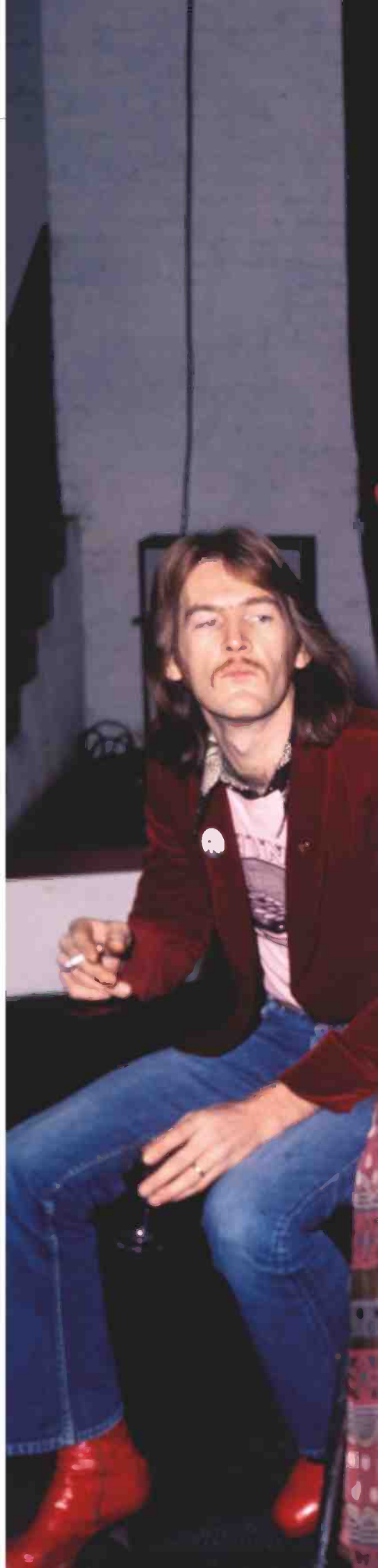
Were these songs written at varying times? "Hi, Hi, Hi" was written in Spain, because we had this tour coming up which we didn't have an awful lot of material for. The European tour. And we need something to kind of rock on. So we did this number. We originally did it different. We've revamped it for the single.

How about the BBC ban on "Hi, Hi, Hi". Were you surprised? Not being quite that thick, we all thought, you know, it might be possible. The story is actually only about sex, not drugs. It's something to sing. I don't care about the lyrics. Not really.

How prolific is your songwriting these days? Pretty prolific. ["He writes millions of them," says Linda.] We've got about 30-odd tunes that we've got, like, done at the moment for the next album.

In *NME* recently, John is talking about... John who? »

PHOTOSHOT



Wings in 1972: (l–r) Denny Seiwell, Linda McCartney, Paul McCartney, Denny Laine and Henry McCullough

McCARTNEY

By ALAN SMITH

The Wings tour bus – used to convey the band around the Continent in July and August 1972 – parked outside Sotheby's auction house in London

PA PHOTOS

John Lennon. He's talking about quite liking the idea of playing with you these days – if you're interested… How do you feel about it? The story, in a nutshell, is that The Beatles broke up, but didn't break up any contracts or anything. So all the Beatles monies still stayed where they all were. All the Beatles rights were still controlled by Klein. So that was the reason I had to kind of stand fast and say, "Well, I don't want him." The only alternative for me was to have Klein, and keep on with the whole thing. So what happened is, we fought the Klein thing, and now I think we stand a chance of him giving all of us – all of us – some kind of release. This means we will get all our own royalties coming to us separately. That was all I wanted. And now, since that's beginning to look a bit better, our relations between ourselves are quite cool now. They're quite good. Once it's sorted out, I don't see any reason why we, maybe, wouldn't want to play with each other.

Maybe it's impractical to think of The Beatles, in the future, as a kind of permanent working unit. But could you see yourselves musically coming together once in a while? That kind of thing might happen, yes. But really, all it's down to is the fact that if you are in a job, and you're treated wrong by the management or by the government, or by someone kind of a bit official – you can either just go with it and think, "Well, this is life, we've got to go in the Common Market kind of thing. So let's go." Or you've got to like dig your heels in and say, "Well, I'm not gonna go." This is the case with the Beatles thing. Really, that's all it's been down to for us. Once that's sorted – which I think may be soon – well then everything's cool. There's no telling what might happen then.

What would you say has been Linda's influence, musically, on you? She helped me simplify. It's mainly a wife's influence… girlfriend-type influence. But mainly, just simplification.

If I were to pin anything on solo-album stuff, it would be that I felt that you were getting into complexities. I felt that there was a kind of raggedness, and that everything was being tried – that you were losing good, solid, rocking melodic direction? That's true, yes. Soul – that's the thing really. With the break-up of The Beatles I didn't dig it at all, obviously. At the end of The Beatles, everything was a bit kind of ragged for me, a bit disheartening. Since that, I think I'm getting more back to what I'm about a bit – you know, melodies. Tunes, simple…

Some people thought you'd be ashamed of your ability to write good melodies. No matter what you say, and cover up and hide and stuff, if you're with a band – even a remotely successful band – for 10 years, when you split up there was inevitably a lot of kind of "He's like a bloody Engelbert Humperdinck" from the other people in the band. I got little remarks like that. Well, you do think, "I'll bloody show you I'm not, mate – I can rock with the best of them, I'm as complex as any of them." And I started for a period, going away from my normal things. Just simple things…

The funny thing is, it's all coming back to that. Right now. Well, I think it always will. See, I think with The Beatles, like that was kind of what I knew. People are always people… No matter how far out everything gets. I mean, underneath Alice Cooper there's a fella. And that's the kind of basic fact behind a lot of what goes on. For instance, "Mary Had A Little Lamb" wasn't a great record, but the funny thing about that is we've got a whole new audience of eight-year-olds and five- and six-year-olds – like Pete Townshend's daughters.

Do you mind that? A lot of people might ask like, "Where the hell are you at?" I can understand why. I think if I was just knocking around the record business and someone made a record like "Mary Had A Little Lamb", I'd think, maybe, "I'm not that keen on it"…

But looking back on it, and looking forward on it, and all of those kind of things – it really works, you know. I mean, on our tour it was really a big number, man. It was ridiculous. I mean, it's only kind of a kids' number. But it's one of those where you can get an audience singing.

Would you regard yourself as an establishment-related artist – as having "sold out your generation to the straights"? No, that's rubbish – all that kind of thing. It's rubbish.

How do you feel about the hostility towards Linda from those who resent her presence in the band? With the break up of The Beatles, everything was explained. It was, "What are the lads doing?" Well, we stopped touring. When The Beatles broke up, I, for instance, just buzzed off with Linda, and we just did what we felt like. We didn't feel like doing any press, so we didn't do any. Then people started coming out with all these, you know, "He's a hermit" kind of things. Naturally, I could read the papers, and I could sit there and think, "Well, I'm not a hermit. They're wrong, obviously. I can tell what I am. I'm not living in London any more – but that doesn't make me a hermit." Because, you know, lots of people live in Glasgow, and lots of people live in Aberdeen, and they don't feel funny. But no one rings them up via the press every day, saying, "You're funny – you live in Aberdeen." So I just didn't feel that I had to answer it. Obviously, the Prince Rainier way of handling this would have been to

say, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is my lady wife, Linda" on ITN... like have a big press conference after we got married and say, "Please understand her, she's human." Now the thing is, I didn't really feel like I needed to do that. But I'll tell you – the people who don't accept Linda are nearly always the people who've never seen the band.

A lot of people who came to see us in Europe were really quite kind of pleased with Linda. I'll tell you, she's really gonna do something. Not in a kind of far-out way, where she's going to make her own albums. I don't think it will get in that kind of direction. I just think that as part of the band. Like I say, you remember when The Beatles started? No one could hardly play anything... Everyone knew a few chords. When you come from obscurity, that's the normal way. I can name a few bands around at the moment where people can't play much, but they can get it on.

I once heard you described as the Nina and Frederick of rock... It's not that kind of thing. It's only a small role she plays, you know. It's not as if she's playing, like, any huge kind of role. I mean, the main role Linda is playing is that she happens to be "my wife". I mean that's the main kind of role thrust on her. In actual fact, I look on Linda, with regard to the band, just as a piano player. She also takes the little bits – a harmony singer. There's no kind of big deal. But you'd be surprised – like the audiences on our tour, you know. She always used to get a clap when she came on, in, like "I'm Your Singer". We were a bit dubious about all this, but she used to get the clap all the time. The clap, of course, is referring to applause.

Does it hurt, these snides against Linda – or don't you give a damn anyway? Linda: Well, to begin with I'm not really pushy, you know... like I want to be a star. I want to play. I'm in it to have fun. The last tour was great fun.

Paul: The answer to this question is that it has hurt her in the past – weep, weep, there are things that hurt when someone says them. For instance, when John married Yoko everybody said, "Bloody Jap." And if you think that didn't hurt them, then you're daft. If you go marry someone you fancy and everyone goes around saying, "She's bloody 'orrible, mate" – it hurts. The main thing that's happened with Linda and me is that since The Beatles have split, we explain an awful lot of what we were doing. If we'd kind of really been careful, like about *Ram* or something, and set up some kind of publicity machine before it all, and tuned all your minds into it – maybe it would have been different. But we just bunged it on your desk and said, "Look – love us or hate us." And a lot of people said, "Well, we hate you then." Fair enough, we hate you – OK. And I think a lot of that's happened by default.

Do you now regard Wings as fully "run-in" – and if so, aren't they long overdue for British dates? Well, there's the British tour in April, and we had our little period of getting it together, because you've got to have that. You need to work yourself in. I mean, The Beatles had three, four or five years before we made a record... We were together as a band. Slade had been together long before they made a record, too, and the Stones were together for a hell of a long time, too, before they made a record.

Linda: It's also a question of getting a bunch of people together and saying, "Hey, now we're gonna be tight, we love each other, we know each other." We just, none of us, knew each other before.

I take it that audiences don't scream at you any more. Any feelings on this? I don't know, you know. I like an audience that raves. We had some real good signs off that European tour. Listening to the tapes, it's obvious we're still pretty new as a band. I'm not going to deny that, either, because it's stupid. There's nothing wrong with it, nothing to be ashamed of. We are very new. In fact, we've turned that thing around in our own minds – and we're chuffed that we're new.

Actually, I feel that in a way that we've got it over people like the Stones... although I don't think we're quite as good as them, yet. But we've got a hell of a lot of room for improvement in our band. And that's always a great thing.

I once read you were very much the kind of person who liked to direct operations. With Wings I can do anything I like, really. They're good – they would just do anything I wanted. But in fact, we don't do it like that. We turn up at a session and we all throw ideas in. I wouldn't be embarrassed to come up to them with material and stuff. We know what it's about as far as that's concerned – it's for all of us, it's just to produce good music. I don't think anyone's that hung up about how we achieve it.

Are you aware you're the only ex-member of The Beatles still producing his own album? I sometimes feel the need for other producers, and sometimes I do use other producers. We used Glyn Johns on a couple of tracks. But we were a bit restricted there...

Linda: You'd like an engineer to get great sounds.

Do you think the George Martin days... We've just done something with George – just the other week. We did a great track for the next Bond film called "Live And Let Die", which unfortunately will not be released for a long time. But it's a good track.

What about the album situation? This next album will be very good, I think. I hate to go talking about this, in case there's 50 incredible ones out at the same time and ours turns out not so hot. But I think ours is good, you know. There's a lot of good stuff on it, some great tunes. It's a bit more melodic, I think. But it bops; there are some great bopping tracks.

Have you added much instrumentation? We have used some added instrumentation, but the best way is obviously for you to hear it. I don't want to go on about it. I think it'll be out in February and I think it'll be a double. The idea is just to get working, working, working, working. So it's all down to a whole load of work, because I like that – doing TV shows, doing work. I wouldn't even mind appearing on *The Mike And Bernie Winters Show*. I read people knocking *Top Of The Pops*, but I'm telling you, I watch *Top Of The Pops* just because it's pop.

In Britain you just don't have anything – and I'd rather watch that than the news any day. *Top Of The Pops*, *Tom And Jerry*... I mean, they may be a bit for kids, but I'm a kid then, because I dig that stuff. I think rather than don't do *Top Of The Pops*, you should do *Top Of The Pops*. Rather than drop a show like this, there should be five more like it.

Is there any restriction on composing within the band? Oh no – Denny's got a great one on the next album. It's really just that if anyone turns up with a good song, OK. If it's a lousy song, then we wouldn't use it. And we've got Denny singing one of our songs on the next album. We're trying to put it around a bit, so it's a nice kind of unit. The thing about our band is, everyone likes to be in a band. There's really not much more to it than that.

We're all from varying parts of the globe, and we're all from varying upbringings. We couldn't be more different people unless we had a few Chinamen in there. We're all pretty different. But whatever we're doing, we're doing it together now. The thing that's eventually going to tell, obviously, is the music. I mean – if we write great stuff; if I write some great songs; if Denny starts writing great songs – great. I think some of the songs we've got are really very warm, very kind of soul, very nice stuff. It's stuff you can sing to.

> "It's obvious we're still pretty new as a band"

Do you still travel about a great deal? Oh yeah, not half. Wouldn't anyone? We go to the Caribbean whenever we can, because that's incredible. That is like, you know, paradise, Jamaica – that's very nice. I like peasants – people-people. We're peasants, too, from all corners of the globe, a gang of peasants who want to be in a musical entertainment. This is the whole idea. It's like in medieval days. A few people just got together and made some music to make themselves happy, and then to make people happy off it. And that's really all it is for me.

I occasionally want to make some little political statements, occasionally want to do a kid's song, but were not to heavily into that stuff. The main thing, still, is just the music. That comes off. If you like, "Hi, Hi, Hi", then you like Wings. *Alan Smith* •

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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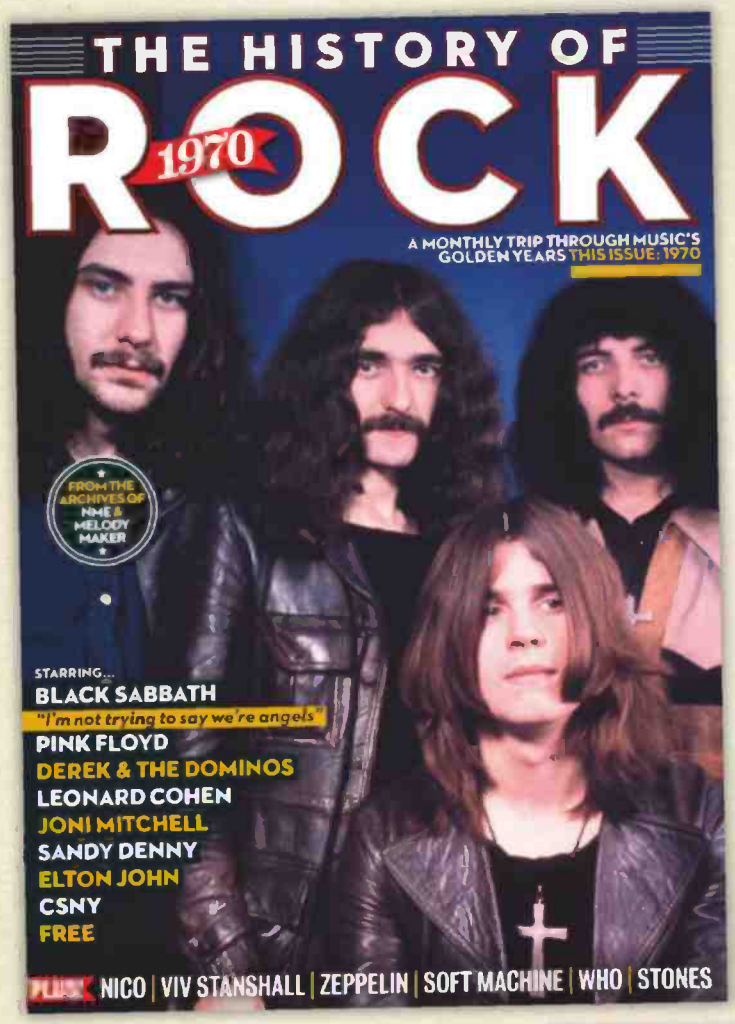

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Readers' letters

MM OCT–DEC Budgie vs teenybop, Lieutenant Pigeon vs Pink Floyd, and much more.

TEENY PROBLEM

How the hell can The Osmonds have the nerve to say that their so-called heavy music sounds like Led Zeppelin or Rod Stewart? Come on, you British music-loving fans. Tell The Osmonds and the Jackson 5 we don't want any of their 10-year-old teenybop music reproduced in Britain!

Go back to America, Osmonds and Jacksons, and leave Britain to their original brilliants, such as Purple, Sabbath, ELP, Faces, Budgie, Zeppelin, Who, Yes, Heep, Stevens and Ash. YEUGH is the only way to describe my reaction.

PETER MOORE, Liss, Hants (*MM* Nov 18)

BOP TILL YOU DROP

I won't pretend to be amazed by Peter Moore's letter in *MM* (Nov 18), because it's only too typical.

"I don't like them, so they're not entitled to exist as musicians."

I wonder if he objects to them being alive...?

"Go back to America, Osmonds and Jacksons..."!

I don't like The Osmonds but I don't have to listen to them. I don't see why I should demand they go away – my sisters get a lot of pleasure from listening to them, and I'm not prepared to deny them that pleasure.

I love The Jackson 5, on the other hand, and if any narrow-minded, bigoted, pretentious brat thinks I shouldn't love them, he's quite welcome to come round.

STEVE SCHETINI, Enfield, Middlesex (*MM* Dec 2)

Is it possible that Peter Moore (*Mailbag*, Nov 18) doesn't like "10-year-old teeny-bop music" because he's not a 10-year-old teenybopper? Think back, Peter, you were 10 years old once. What kind of music did you dig then, if any?

DAVID BAUCKMAN, Wallasey, Cheshire (*MM* Dec 2)

We in the States regard the Osmonds and Jackson 5 as a joke; a money scheme for promoters peddling puerile material to 12-year-old teeny-weenies.

Wake up, England! That's not music; it's the antithesis of music. Do your fans know that this is the sort of muzak my grandmother listens to? Have you lost all taste? England produces so many fine bands (The Move, King Crimson, Van Der Graaf, Kinks, Who) that you shouldn't be wasting your time and money on J5, OB and, lest we forget, your coveted Marc.

PAUL TAKAKJIAN, Los Angeles, California (*MM* Dec 2)

UNDERGROUND STATION

LP WINNER

I remember the beautiful days when asked to define the underground and its music, I could easily reply it was the music of freaks: Woodstock nation, peace, love, etc, Bob Dylan, Paul Kantner, Jim Morrison, Country Joe, Jerry Rubin and Richard Neville.

In the old days it meant something to say you had "turned on". Today you can ask, turned on to what? Camp rock? Glitter rock? Or that frigid brand mass-produced by bands like King Crimson? What happened to those beautiful days of the "alternative society"? Now we have to stomach the whining denials of Jerry Garcia and Country Joe McDonald, who are now questioning whether those days of the San Francisco freak-outs and flower people were at all constructive.

Bob Dylan has all but deserted protest, Richard Neville has retired, Carlos Santana (among others) has cut his hair, and the MC5 remain today a pathetic relic of their former glory, their beautiful naivety shattered.

The two groups who truly represented the underground are in danger. Pink Fairies are refused a platform in favour of Gary Glitter, and Hawkwind are following The Who. Today, we have Alice Cooper and Slade reeking of violence, (I've lost count of how often on hearing Slade I've imagined someone's face under those stamping boots), Bowie and the limp-wrist brigade, and ELP and their musical elitism.

Well-organised festivals are a laugh. How much organisation went into Woodstock and the Isle Of Wight? Little or none. It was beautifully chaotic. From the one road that led to Woodstock, now a dozen or so lead from it.

GAVIN DUNNETT, Wick, Caithness, Scotland (*MM* Dec 2)

GENESIS REVELATION

Until October 24, I had heard nothing of Genesis and was still listening to Bolan and the Boppers. After that evening I was completely changed.

Genesis are a very underrated group and deserve more than the little publicity they get. Not only are they original, but they sing such imaginative lyrics. It also shows the older generation that not all bands are thick drop-outs.

So come on, everybody, if you get the chance to see Genesis at a gig anywhere, snap it up. You will see how good they are.

ANDREW DYER, Palmserston Way, Alverstoke, Hampshire (*MM* Dec 30)

MAC TO THE IRISH

So Mr J Neill of Co Armagh, Northern Ireland, is "disgusted" after reading the Paul McCartney interview in *MM*. I read the interview too, and McCartney said, "I'm in Britain, and I'm British, and what I'm complaining about isn't something I have to go to Ireland to complain about... Ireland happened and I thought, 'I'm going to say something about that', and the best way to say something is via song."

I sympathise with reader Mr Neil, but to suggest that Paul go to a place where, at present, insanity reigns, clearly indicates that it is he, and not McCartney who "hasn't got a clue".

To visit Ireland, as you suggest, Mr Neil, would be jeopardising Paul McCartney's life, and that, old son, whether you like it or not, is just not on.

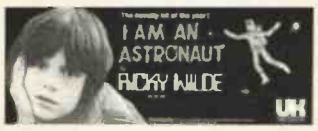
MIKE BRETT, Gadebridge Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts (*MM* Dec 30)

OLDIES AND MOULDIES

Hasn't anyone noticed the similarity between the Pink Floyd's "Interstellar Overdrive" and Lieutenant Pigeon's No 1 single "Mouldy Old Dough"?

JOHN LORD, Maylands Avenue, Breaston, Derby (*MM* Nov 18)

"The Jean Genie"..... David Bowie's new single. Written on the road. Recorded in New York. Mixed in Nashville. The first single to come from Bowie's triumphant American Tour.



GETTY

Coming next... in 1973!

SO THAT WAS 1972. Hope you camped it up. But that's far from it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1973!

PINK FLOYD

THE ONE-TIME UNDERGROUND darlings attempt to reconcile themselves with their past, via the medium of their *Dark Side Of The Moon* album. "Money is the single biggest pressure on people," they decide. And play a benefit show for Robert Wyatt to acknowledge the fact.

NEIL YOUNG

THE RETICENT BUT intransigent singer-songwriter turns film director. Along the way, he dispenses sound advice. "British bands want to be the answer to this or that," says Neil. "By then you've forgotten the question."

BOB DYLAN

WITH THE RELUCTANT voice of his generation as he films Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett And Billy The Kid*. The *MM* is reluctant to engage with the artist directly. "You're scared?" asks Kris Kristofferson. "Shit. I'm scared and I'm making a picture with him."

PLUS...

DAVID BOWIE!
BOB MARLEY!
PUB ROCK!

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

THE HISTORY OF ROCK 1972

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1972.
"Keep your 'lectric eye on me, babe"

Relive the year...

DAVID BOWIE CREATED ZIGGY STARDUST (AND IGGY AND LOU WENT ALONG TOO...)

THE ROLLING STONES RELEASED *EXILE ON MAIN ST*

LED ZEPPELIN LAID WASTE TO AMERICA

...and **MARC BOLAN, CAN, PAUL SIMON, MC5, THE FACES, BILL WITHERS** and many more shared everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

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