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circular

A Visit to Raccoon

Jesse Colin Young Hosts a Visit to Raccoon

There being no cautionary adage about buying a raccoon in a poke, Warner Bros. Records had no guideline in the negotiations which brought the Youngbloods into the goodly company of Burbank.

As Jesse Colin Young tells it from his side of the bargaining table: "The Raccoon label came into being from our desire to have artistic control of our own records. Warner Bros. were interested in the Youngbloods. So we asked them to make records of ourselves and our friends. They said, 'Great—go ahead.' And that was it . . ."

In the months since the signing of that carte blanche, an elfin array of albums has marched raffishly in the otherwise orderly ranks of WB product. Charming. Madcap. Occasionally bumptious; and at least once bewildering. All of them coat-tailing their celebrated patron, the Youngbloods. And none of them, except Jesse and the Youngbloods, hugely commercial.

The procession stepped out on the right foot with a Youngbloods' album, *Rock Festival*. However, a cold eye for whimsy might have perceived a portent in the over-all visual pun which adorned the record's jacket. A distant drummer was tightening his snares 'way off in Northern California's Marin County.

Rock Festival was followed by an ingratiating debut album—Jeffrey Cain, singing his own songs, with a dab of spoken poetry for Raccoon's fillip of difference.

Raccoon's Kenny Gill album came next, a taut and enigmatic essay in jazz. Too lofty to be questioned. Too heavy to be picked up, hence impossible to put down.

And the charming and elusive and very well reviewed debut of

Michael Hurley, an album captured by its title, *Armchair Boogie*.

Then there was Joe Bauer's *Moonset*, a puzzler by the Youngbloods' drummer. Burbank took an aspirin before its bath.

A Label Without a Label

Raccoon was flexible, so it seemed, to a fault, and predictable only in its unpredictability. No single definitive label embraced the range of Raccoon product, save that which bore the smug and pointy face of the little animal whom Mexico calls "el bandido."

Warner Bros. Records, forever attempting to be innovative and daring, was abruptly thrust into conservative shock by comparison with Raccoon's free-headedness. For treatment, shrewd Raccoon put a couple of reassuringly familiar items in the can for Fall, 1971:—a promising band, *High Country*, in its first recorded outing; and another Youngbloods album, *Ride the Wind*.

Respite and space enough for a couple of quick sighs of relief before the masked mascot struck again. This time Raccoon outdid itself with a delightful outrage, *Crab Tunes and Noggins*.

CT&N got few reviews. It was simply too, uh, *elusive* for the writers to describe; and as the sole example of a hitherto unknown genre, it was blessed with blithe immunity from criticism. Jaded by all else, a few esotericists proclaimed it enchanting. But the spell it wove did not register in cash.

Alone at Last

Having been turned every way but loose, Warner Bros. now cocked a timorous ear, and lo! there was sweet balm upon the air. After six years of being name-giver and singer-instrumentalist with the Youngbloods, Jesse Colin Young issued the third solo album of his career. Long awaited. Much heralded. *That* kind of coup and recoup.



Jesse Colin Young



Pet raccoons enjoyed a brief vogue on Warner Boulevard.

But inevitably there were rumbles up the chute of more Raccoon product on the way—another Michael Hurley album, Jeffrey Cain's second set and a package of good time music by and about *Banana & the Bunch*, an *in* item of direct appeal to Youngblood cultists. All of this falling somewhere between ecstasy and despair for the lean veterans of sales and promotion, who, when mothers and masters and stampers have done their drudging, must keep the vinyl from backing up to flood level.

At this precise moment, *Circular* elected to enter upon the scene. Its gaze ever on the sparrow, *Circular* volunteered gallantly to trace back along the obscure trails of Northern California to the very source of Raccoon's distinctive muse.

Rented Bulk

It is not entirely inaccurate to say that an expedition was mounted, in the spirit of the golden age of journalism. Stanley and Livingston. Nelly Bly. Misadventures at the airport. A telephone call from a bar called the Silver Dollar. Lost between Point Reyes Station and Inverness. Hairbreadth escapes from plunging into the black waters of Tomales Bay. Incidental visit to haunted Russian Orthodox Cemetery. Then up, up, up! Paved roads yield to rutted gravel, narrow and humped. The expedition curses Hertz for equipping it with the bulkiest machine in its fleet, to be squeezed along these trails from whence there may be no return except in reverse gear all the way back down the mountain.

A light in the night. And the rewards for daring enterprise—the warmth of the Young house and family.

Jesse Colin Young lives and works on the side of a mountain. His house, designed to have a low

impact upon the environment, the veritable wilderness around it, is 50 yards from his pentangular recording studios, but walking a hundred yards the other way from the house the visitor may peer over the summit and out upon the Pacific.

Unstressed, Unstrained

In this idyllic setting, Young and his friends, including many of the artists on Raccoon, and, of course, the Youngbloods, discharge their creative energies, unimpaired by the stresses and discomforts of the city.

On the evening of *Circular's* arrival, Jesse was conferring with Stuart Kuchins, who manages the several enterprises and careers of the Raccoon folk. There are long-term ties of loyalty amongst Jesse and his associates. It was from Kuchins that Jesse Young borrowed the guitar he played on his first album.

When Kuchins left, Suzi Young served supper on a magnificently carved table, the work of John Bauer, Joe's brother, who has a studio a few miles away. (It was John who carved the *Crab Tunes* cover illustration.)

Jesse told *Circular* about his career, its disappointments and frustrations, as well as accomplishments. He said that his own first albums as a solo artist had earned nothing for him, and this, in part, had prompted the concept of Raccoon. Too, he had overcome a strong antipathy to the fussiness of production and engineering techniques, in order to translate "artistic control" into a complete working reality. His objective, to make Raccoon productions a self-contained local activity, has become fully operational, as he described it.

In this serene place, he spoke of "working hard without getting uptight." Of being able to work "at the fine edge, with tensions in balance." To *Circular*, its tensions

completely overloaded by the trip up the mountain from freeway and San Francisco rush hour traffic, the thought of *working* in that natural sanctuary seemed a sacrilege.

Call for Gear

But in the morning, early-ish for a musician, Jesse Colin Young was up and on the phone to a supplier, ordering microphones and other gear. By 11 a.m. he was down in the frame building which houses the studio and an apartment where, *Circular* gathered, Suzi's brother Scott Lawrence, had lived until recently. (Scott plays piano on Jesse's album, *Together*.) Suzi's nephew Gabriel, now five months old, was born on the floor of the studio, which affords an insight on the relative remoteness of the location, as well as a perspective on the closeness of the Raccoon community.

The control room is fitted with an eight-track board, and Jesse chatted about his equipment, his learning problems and his approach to keeping the studio sound as close to live performance as possible, partly achieved by recording all of the parts of a track at once. As he talked, he did odd jobs, repaired a chair, swept the studio, copied some tapes which had been recorded the previous day and shooed his daughter Julie, 3, back to the house and out of the way of the scheduled session.

Shortly after lunch, the Youngbloods began to arrive. Banana, who has a smaller studio with two-track recording gear in his former guest house—Raccoon Studio "B." Earthquake, who ran the board during the afternoon sessions. Joe Bauer.

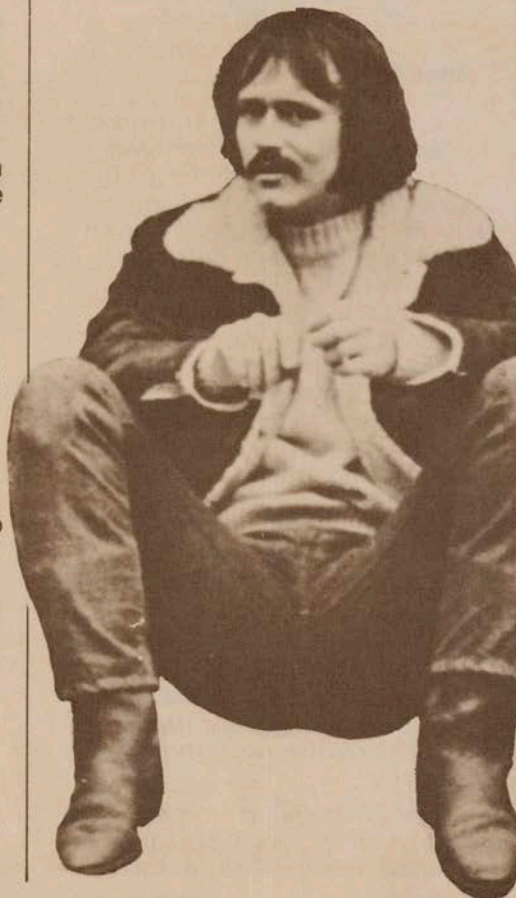
And droppers-in, including Jeffrey Cain, whose new album *Circular* was privileged to hear during the visit.

The Youngbloods were into country music that afternoon. Banana was picking a mandolin while Jesse

played guitar and sang. Somehow all of the Raccoon eccentricity had turned completely around to make happy sense, up there on Buck Point. And the Burbank terminal for all this effort began to shimmer eerily. Fantasy and reality constitute a subjective and unstable polarity, or so *Circular* began to feel, along with the stirring of an impulse to defect and join the Raccoon irregulars.

Time, then, to leave—or not at all—and retrace the trail which had led away from—from, surely from civilization?

Where *Circular* awaits now, with secret glee, for *Banana & the Bunch* to drop from the vines or stalks on which such treats surely grow. It's really all in where you're coming from . . . — **Leonard Brown**



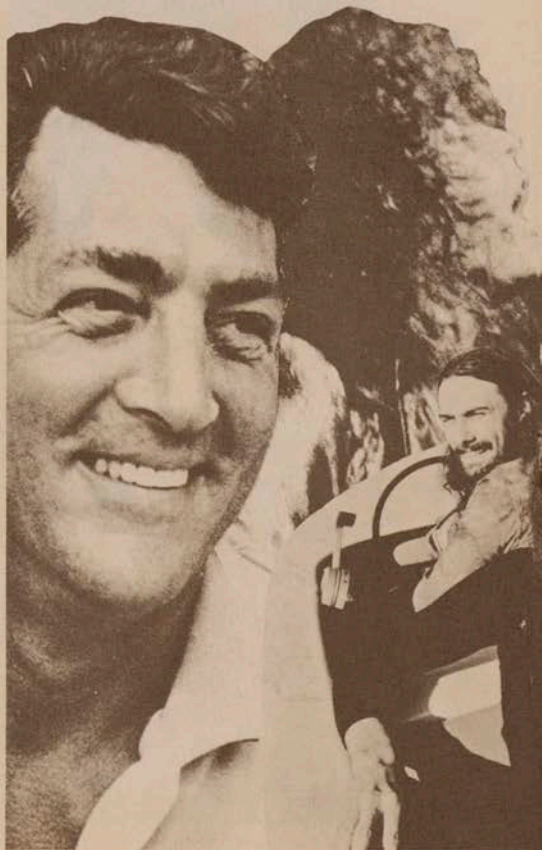
Feb's Figures

Accounting fans know how little accountants hit the limelite. There have been, for instance, no great rock accountants. No outstanding presidential accountants. No top notch accountant has ever made Pope.

No wonder, then, that Warner/Reprise's obscure accountants each month snatch this space to show off how accurately they've counted during the previous month (February, 1972) all the catalog albums (as distinct from such then newbies as *Harvest*) that WBR's sold during a month.

February had 29 days and 40 tops, viz:

1. *America* (New in Jan.)
2. *Faces/A Nod's as Good as a Wink* (#2 last month)



3. T. Rex/*Electric Warrior* (8)
4. *A Clockwork Orange*/Sound Track (—)
5. Peter Yarrow/*Peter* (—)
6. Dionne Warwick/*Dionne* (—)
7. Jethro Tull/*Aqualung* (3)
8. Black Sabbath/*Paranoid* (5)
9. Dean Martin/*Dino* (—)
10. Jimi Hendrix/*The Need of Love* (—)

Top Twenty

11. *Summer of '42*/Sound Track (10)
12. Neil Young/*Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (7)
13. Neil Young/*After the Gold Rush* (6)
14. Van Morrison/*Tupelo Honey* (15)
15. Alice Cooper/*Killer* (1)

16. Alice Cooper/*Love It to Death* (12)
17. Grateful Dead/*American Beauty* (28)
18. Jimi Hendrix/*Smash Hits* (—)
19. *Black Sabbath* (9)
20. Neil Young (17)

Top Thirty

21. *Best of Peter, Paul and Mary* (32)
22. Black Sabbath/*Master of Reality* (20)
23. Doug Kershaw/*Swamp Grass* (—)
24. *Association's Greatest Hits* (24)
25. Frank Sinatra/*My Way* (—)
26. KRATFE/*The First Edition's Greatest Hits* (27)
27. Jimi Hendrix/*Electric Ladyland* (—)

28. Jethro Tull/*Stand Up* (14)
29. Joni Mitchell/*Ladies of the Canyon* (—)
30. *Best of Bill Cosby (Vol. 1)* (—)

Top Forty

31. Les Crane/*Desiderata* (11)
32. *Crazy Horse* (—)
33. Dean Martin/*For the Good Times* (—)
34. Bill Cosby/*Wonderfulness* (—)
35. *Deep Purple in Rock* (36)
36. San Sebastian Strings/*The Sea* (35)
37. Jimi Hendrix/*Rainbow Bridge* (—)
38. Alice Cooper/*Easy Action* (—)
39. Jethro Tull/*Benefit* (13)
40. Dean Martin/*Greatest Hits (Vol. 1)* (31)



Items

The Pendletones?

★ Forthcoming from the Beach Boys, who are working on it between moments of their current tour, is an album billed as *Carl and the Passions—So Tough*. Carl and the Passions was one of the names the Beach Boys called themselves before they settled on the Beach Boys. Before that they were (ulp) the Pendletones, named after the shirt-makers. This album features a good dose of rock and roll, say



those who know, but it's *not* an oldies concept album a la *Ruben & The Jets*, just as *Surf's Up* was not exactly a stomp record. *Carl and the Passions—So Tough* will be packaged with *Pet Sounds* as a two-record set. You all remember the *Pet Sounds* story, don't you? Meanwhile, the Beach Boys are planning to record in Europe this summer, another first for the group. And *Smile* is still in the wings, waiting for the BBs to find time to complete it.

Sabbath Sessions

★ Currently tripping the heavy fantastic in the studio are Black Sabbath, who have seven tracks of their next, as-yet-untitled, album roundly underway. The foursome are also touring, which makes for an event-filled life.

I've Seen Fire and I've Seen Rain or Love the One You're With

The following deliciously romantic scene comes to *Circular* readers through piracy of the March 20th *Los Angeles Times*:

MENLO PARK (UPI)—A couple kissed and made up by the light of two flaming automobiles Sunday after the girl had deliberately rammed her boyfriend's car, police reported.

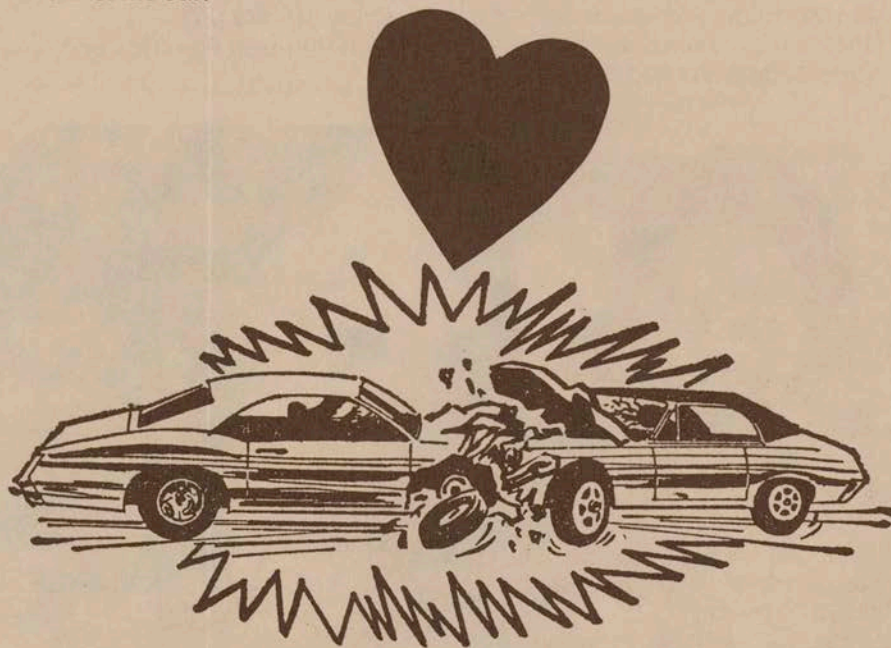
Police said Gloria Jean Murphy, 27, Menlo Park and Robert L. Smith, 29, Milpitas, quarreled. When Smith drove away, investigators said, Miss Murphy followed and rammed the rear of his car.

Both cars burst into flames and Smith's vehicle was totally destroyed. Miss Smith was cut on the face and was treated at Stanford University hospital.

The police accident report read:

"After the accident, at the scene, while waiting for the ambulance, Murphy was observed being affectionate toward Smith, indicating they had resolved their differences as they watch Smith's car being totally destroyed by fire."

Police issued no citations.



Season's Greetings

★ Next album from Alice Cooper is titled *School's Out*, with release planned for—you guessed it—early summer. Alice has already written most of the LP, which will commence recording soon in New York, Bob Ezrin producing, the same gent who produced *Love It to Death* and *Killer*.

Show Biz

★ The Hollywood Reporter, source of endless inside show biz scoops, recently printed this tasty little item: "Box Office Barf Bag—At the Boston premiere of 'Mark of the Devil,' the first-run Astor Theatre advertised, 'No one Admitted Without a "Stomach Distress" Bag (Available at box office).'"

Special Event

★ Jackie Lomax is doing a one-night stand at the Bitter End in New York simply to extend his visa, or at least that's what the guy on the phone said. Anyway, Warner Brothers' people in New York are taking advantage of the occasion to invite all and one to an evening bannered "Jackie Lomax Is Going to Get His Visa Renewed as a Result of This Set," occurring April 11. Jackie's latest platter, incidentally, is titled *Three*. "P.S.," says the invite, "All aliens must register in January."

A Single for Lorraine

★ Lorraine Ellison, she of the classic "Stay with Me," is at work on a single and an album under the producing baton of Ted Templeman, whom producer fans know from his work with Van Morrison, Little Feat and the Doobie Brothers. In the works is "Two Trains," a single written by Little Feat's Lowell George (he also arranged the record and played guitar), also featuring Little Feat's Bill Payne on piano and organ.

Top Ten

1. Neil Young/*Harvest* (MS 2032)
2. Jimi Hendrix/*Hendrix in the West* (MS 2049)
3. The Allman Brothers Band/*Eat a Peach* (2CP 0102)
4. *America* (BS 2576)
5. *Malo* (BS 2584)
6. Gordon Lightfoot/*Don Quixote* (MS 2056)
7. *A Clockwork Orange*/Sound Track (BS 2573)
8. Jerry Garcia/*Garcia* (BS 2582)
9. Faces/*A Nod's as Good as a Wink . . .* (BS 2574)
10. Todd Rundgren/*Something/Anything* (2BX 2066)

Top Ten is an uncopyrighted feature of *Circular*, carefully compiled from scraps of yellow lined paper delivered weekly by the Warner/Reprise sales department. Chart positions are determined on the basis of conversations with an IBM computer and the echoed shouts of men in the streets. Oddly enough, albums manufactured by companies other than Warner/Reprise rarely penetrate this chart.

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying

★ Eleven years ago this month Warner Bros. made its bid for the popular market with the following LPs: *3,046 People Danced 'Til 4 A.M.* by Bill Doggett, *Danish Imports* by Asmussen-Neuman and *Best of the Piano Concertos* by George Greeley.

A Bracelet with No Name

★ LOST AT THE WARNER BRANCH MEETING IN NEW YORK: One silver ID bracelet, unnamed, bearing the information "Made in Mexico." Claimants should contact Bob Merlis in Warner's New York publicity office.

Balmy Breezes

★ James Taylor did himself and some friends a favor—he played a gig in Hawaii. No tour, just one gig—which was extended to two gigs because of public demand and the Taylor group's appreciation of one more day in the sun. James is rumored to be starting his third WB album very soon.

Birthday Billets-Doux

★ This week's celebrations include the following musical notables: Mo Ostin (March 27). Sarah Vaughan



Mo Ostin

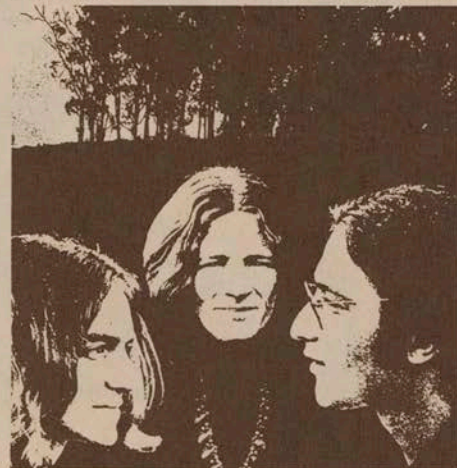
(March 27), Paul Whiteman (March 28), Frankie Laine (March 30), Shirley Jones (March 31), John D. Loudermilk (March 31), Herb Alpert (March 31), Debbie Reynolds (April 1), Sergei Rachmaninoff (April 1) and Rudolph Isley (April 1).

New Singles

Warmth of Your Eyes

Lazarus
BSV 0005

A gentle, beautiful record whose kinship with the sound of Peter, Paul and Mary (Peter Yarrow found them and brought them to Bearsville and co-produced—with Phil Ramone—their first album, *Lazarus*)

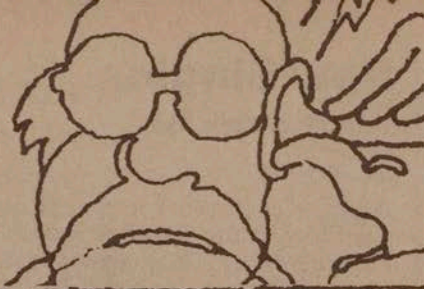


is evident. Not much has happened with the group's first album yet, but those who've heard it know its time has to come. This single is another step closer to that moment, perhaps a big one.

Ain't That Peculiar

Fanny
REP 1080

It bounces along the waves of June Millington's slide electric guitar seamed nicely by the precise drumming of Alice deBuhr, over all of which cruises June's doubled voice. You remember it as a Marvin Gaye hit written by Smokey Robinson and friends, but Fanny give good cause to attach new memories to it. June's cool reading of the lyrics allows the group's instrumental energies to come to the fore, and come to the fore they do. Producer Richard Perry recorded this selection from Fanny's fresh *Fanny Hill* LP in London's Apple Studios, a locale which insured the crisp sound of the album and its single.



Dr. Demento

Last week's question was the origin of the first 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm records made for public consumption and what company introduced them.

The first 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm long-playing records for home entertainment were introduced by RCA Victor in 1931. Having just acquired the Victor Talking Machine Company, the Radio Corporation of America was searching for a new gimmick to counteract the serious decline in record sales.

This decline was brought on by (1) the booming popularity of radios, which for a time caused people to lose interest in the rather crude and ill-sounding machines generally used to play records and (2) the onset of the Depression.

RCA's early long-players were notably unsuccessful, largely because few people in 1931 could afford to buy the machines required to play them (starting at \$247.50). Another drawback was that virtually all of the early long-players were dubbed from existing 78's, and didn't sound at all good.

Question for Next Week

Now you know who made the first 33's. OK, who made the first 45's?

The winner of Dr. Demento's two-weeks-ago question (Q: Who was Bob McFadden's straight man, alias Dor, on the 1959 comedy single "The Mummy?") A: None other than Rod McKuen) is James A. Smith of Chicago, who sent a list of five alternative albums, four of which are out of print. He will receive, therefore, *The Complete Sea* by the San Sebastian Strings.

Honorable mention, but no album, to Todd Everett of Hollywood.

Each week the good doctor poses a music lore question whose answer is the focus of his subsequent column. The earliest reply to his question (mailed to Dr. Demento, *c/o Circular*, Warner Bros. Records, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91505) wins any single Warner/Reprise catalog album (please specify choice). Answers will be geographically pro-rated on the basis of two days per time zone, ties will be judged on the basis of penmanship, wit and lucidity.

Artist Itineraries

Alabama

Beach Boys
3/31, Auburn Memorial Coliseum, Auburn

Arizona

Alice Cooper
3/30, Phoenix

California

Dionne Warwick
3/29-4/8, Now Grove, Los Angeles

Tony Joe White
3/29-4/2, Whisky A Go Go, Los Angeles

Stonewall
3/30, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hills
3/31, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica
4/1, Funky Quarters, San Diego

Cold Blood
3/31, Community Concourse, San Diego
4/2, Winterland, San Francisco

Crazy Horse
3/31-4/2, Fox Theatre, Long Beach

Fanny
3/31, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica

Jackie Lomax
3/31, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica
4/1, Funky Quarters, San Diego

Seals & Crofts
4/1, Berkeley Community Theatre, Berkeley

Colorado

Malo
3/27-28, Sound Track, Denver

Bonnie Raitt
3/29-4/1, Sound Track, Denver

Connecticut

Black Sabbath/Wild Turkey
3/30, The Arena, New Haven

Florida

Beach Boys
4/1, Convention Center, Miami
4/2, Homer Hesterly Hall, Tampa

Georgia

Beach Boys
3/30, Georgia Tech., Atlanta

Illinois

The First Edition
4/3-16, Mr. Kelly's, Chicago

Kansas

Kindred
3/29, The Store, Emporia

Kentucky

Deep Purple/Nazareth
4/3, Convention Center, Louisville

Maryland

Beach Boys
3/28, Civic of Maryland, College Park

Michigan

Deep Purple/Nazareth
3/30, Ford Auditorium, Detroit
3/31, IMA Auditorium, Flint

New York

John Baldry
3/27, Columbia Univ., New York City
3/31, Capitol Theatre, Rochester
4/1, Ritz Theatre, Staten Island

Deep Purple/Nazareth
3/27, Ritz Theatre, Staten Island

Fleetwood Mac
3/27, Columbia Univ., New York City
3/31, Capitol Theatre, Rochester
4/1, Ritz Theatre, Staten Island

Earth, Wind & Fire
3/28-29, Philharmonic Hall, New York City

John Sebastian
3/28-29, Philharmonic Hall, New York City

Rod McKuen
3/30-4/2, Westbury Music Fair, Westbury, Long Island

Kindred
4/1, War Memorial Auditorium, Rochester

North Carolina

Black Sabbath/Wild Turkey
4/1, Coliseum, Greensboro

Ohio

Kindred
3/31, Sports Arena, Toledo

Deep Purple/Nazareth
4/1, Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Columbus

Pennsylvania

Black Sabbath/Wild Turkey
3/27, Civic Arena, Pittsburgh

Puerto Rico

John Baldry
4/2, Music Festival (Mary Sol)

Alice Cooper
4/2, Music Festival (Mary Sol)

Fleetwood Mac
4/2, Music Festival (Mary Sol)

Black Sabbath
4/3, Music Festival (Mary Sol)

Faces
4/3, Music Festival (Mary Sol)

South Carolina

Black Sabbath/Wild Turkey
4/2, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia

Texas

Malo
4/1, Municipal Auditorium, San Antonio
4/2, El Paso Coliseum, El Paso

Utah

Malo
3/30, Terrace Ballroom, Salt Lake City

Virginia

Alice Cooper
4/1, Richmond Coliseum, Richmond

West Virginia

Black Sabbath/Wild Turkey
3/28, Memorial Fieldhouse, Huntington
3/31, Charleston Civic Center, Charleston

Canada

Brave Belt
3/30, Civic Auditorium, Calgary, Alberta
3/31, Lethbridge College Auditorium, Lethbridge, Alberta
4/1, College Auditorium, Medicine Hat, Saskatchewan

Inspirational Verse

You're my first cup of coffee
My last cup of tea

— The Falcons "You're So Fine"