

circular

A Chat With the Mother Superior

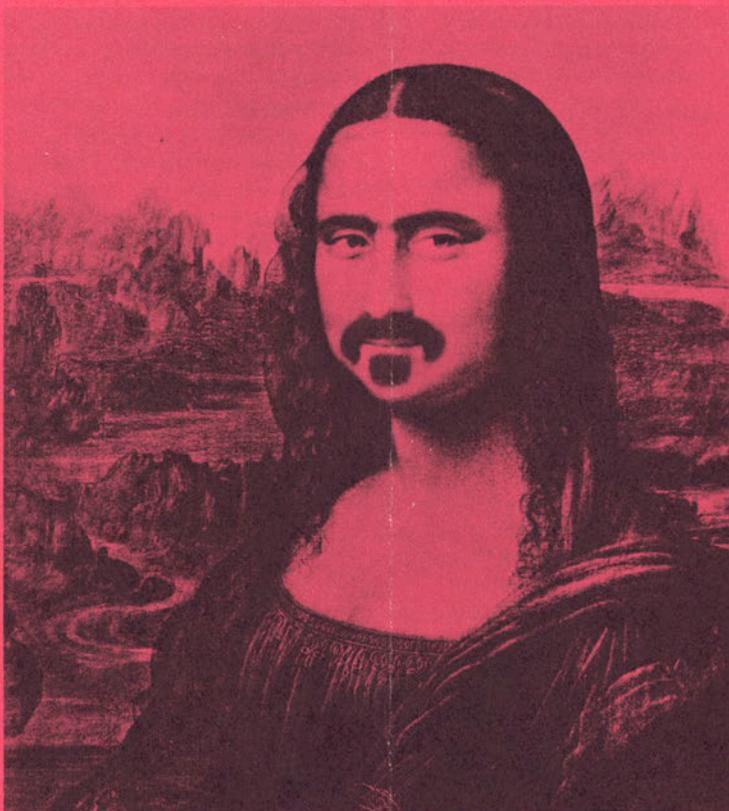
Situated between two parking lots on the "wrong side" of the Hollywood Freeway exit at Sunset Blvd., the squat, white building doesn't seem as though it would house Frank Zappa's newly created record label, DiscReet.

And while not as freaky as the public might expect a Frank Zappa domicile to be, the structure inside is vaguely reminiscent of a car dealership, circa 16th century Turkey. Offices surrounding a courtyard are accessible only through their own sliding glass doors, while miniature minarets and mosque designs pop out here and there. One almost expects to see a sign reading "Frank's Used Car Deals/Best East of the Bosphorus Straits" hanging in close proximity.

DiscReet, according to Zappa, its president, is not an extension of the old Straight/Bizarre labels. "Those," he says, "were two labels for two different kinds of product. This is one label for all different kinds of product, an independent distribution deal on more favorable terms with WEA and for more dollars."

Behind the corporate offices is yet another building, once, perhaps, an old garage or warehouse. It presently functions as a grand rehearsal hall for Zappa and his Mothers of Invention, where the group can often be found practicing on the life-sized stage, in concert-like conditions, in order to gain a realistic appraisal of their live sound.

The last half hour of work on



some new material reveals the music to be as intricate, interesting and stimulating as ever. But like the new record label, the music has evolved more than it has changed. In fact, some of the tunes even sound like the old MOI.

Retiring to the cluttered floor of an office in the progress of "becoming," Zappa talks about the similarities.

"One reason *Over-nite Sensation* sounds like the early stuff is

because I'm doing the vocals. The kind of voice I have is so limited—I don't have very good range or intonation; I mostly talk on pitch—that if I write something that I'm going to have to perform, I'll do it in a vein that's comfortable for me; hence it sounds like when I used to do the singing."

Frank's upcoming solo LP, *Apostrophe*, will also contain more vocals than any of his previous solo albums which were usually

more jazz and instrumentally oriented. The vocal development is interesting in light of his statement that "I really used to hate to sing." The explanation for the change stems both from strange circumstances and necessity.

"I injured my neck when I had that accident in Europe a few years back, and it did something to my voice. Not that it made it better, but it doesn't annoy me so much to sing now. I was always embarrassed about my piteous little croakings in the recording booth, but I figured I couldn't get the right inflections on the text unless I either did it myself or demonstrated hours on end to somebody else to tell him exactly how to say the words."

Inflection, to Zappa, is very important when considering the total product. "The words, themselves, on paper, mean only so much," he gestured, "but when you say them right, you can multiply the meaning to a point where they become something grander than they really are."

While Zappa's solo career gives him a chance to work with other groups of musicians, do tracks where he plays all the instruments and "experiment around with some of my favorite oddball type things that I would never perform onstage but are interesting projects for the studio," his continued leadership of the MOI gives him the opportunity to go on the road and express his ideas through live performances.

Violinist Jean Luc Ponty and

James Montgomery Band, Funky but Clean

Boston has always held the conviction that the James Montgomery Band would make it. Funny, too, because ever since the embarrassing days of the "Bosstown Sound" the rest of the music world hasn't perceived the city in terms of bands. Instead, the image has been one of Harvard Square troubadour types, replete with acoustic guitars slung across their backs and lonely lyrics scribbled on the backs of envelopes. It took all the success the J. Geils Band could muster to convince folks out there that, yes, Boston does have bands. Good bands, too.

And the Montgomery Band, you would have been told as far back as a couple of years ago, was one of the best. True, they might get a bit juiced up here and there, start acting a bit crazy, but they could play the blues just fine. In fact, they were actually called The James Montgomery Blues Band then, and you could hear them boogie over at the Candlelight Lounge in Cambridge for the price of a beer. After awhile it became something of a local mystery as to why they didn't have a recording contract, but it appears now they knew what they were doing. They were honing and polishing, not to mention negotiating. As James himself put it when the big day finally came, "Hell, this has been going on for so long that the first album should be called *Farewell Tour*."

But the new record is here, all 400 studio hours worth. It's called *First Time Out*, a title which certainly indicates a measure of self-confidence. It brings with it a first national tour, 26 dates in five weeks in places such as Oshkosh and

LaCross, but also New York and Los Angeles. Initial album orders in Boston totalled 10,000 copies, which is roughly the same number of people that seemed to be crammed into the old Candlelight when the band played there.

Drinking Man's Band

On a recent night off, James told how the early stages of the tour were going. "We're batting four out of seven as far as encores are concerned," he cackled. "Of the other three, I'd say we had a triple and a couple of ground-rule doubles." That's not Boston, but it's not bad either.

The genealogy of the James Montgomery Band is, like that of most bands, mixed. Unless you're from Boston it won't mean very much, but in simplified form it began with James coming to Boston University from his home in Grosse Point, Michigan, six years ago. He was followed by bassist Billy Mather, who had played with him in and around Detroit. Together with drummer Chuck Purro and a long-since departed guitarist, they formed the James Montgomery Blues Band and worked a dreary succession of juice bars. Peter Bell, a guitarist and singer who had built his own reputation around Harvard as a solo country blues performer, joined in December, 1971. Two months later, organist David Case moved from Detroit to join old friends Mather and Montgomery. Finally Peter Malick, the only true Bostonian in the group, came in on guitar in June, 1972.

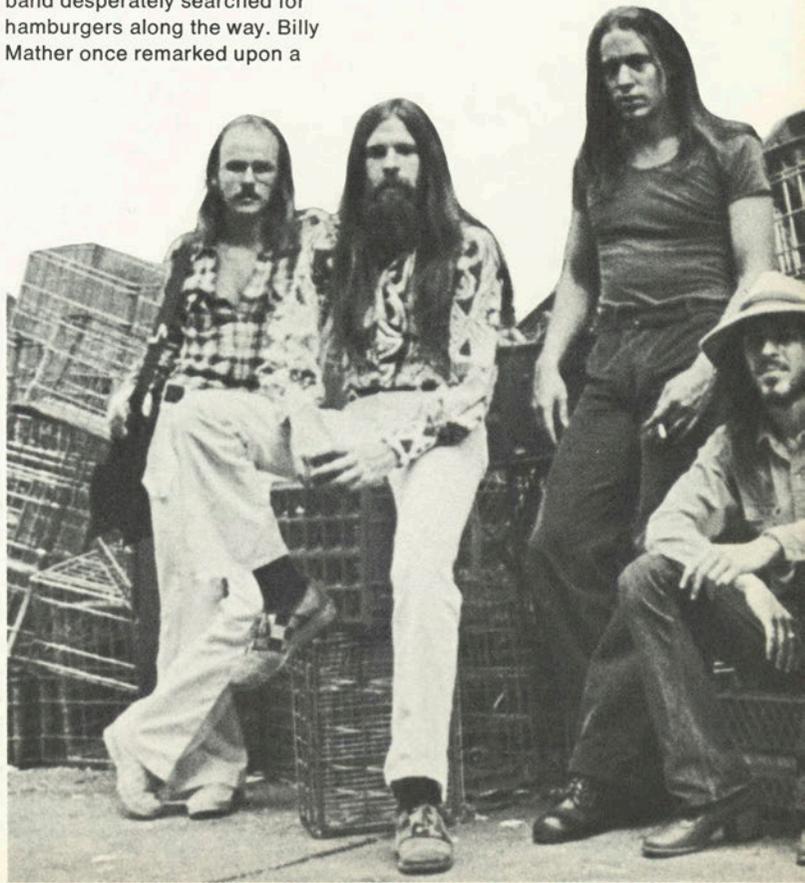
James, incidentally, is not the off-stage leader of the band by any stretch of the imagination. The name was given to the group back

at the beginning and just sort of stuck; no one seems to know why. On stage, however, his singing and harp playing are often the focal points, and he has a glittering ability to work a crowd.

The band played its share of \$100-a-night dormitory mixers, working its way up to college gymnasiums featuring dressing rooms filled with rows of gurgling urinals. The early gigs were usually in New England, and often ended with long drives back to town while the band desperately searched for hamburgers along the way. Billy Mather once remarked upon a

wintry arrival via the main street in North Adams, Massachusetts, a small college town located about as far from Boston as you can get and still be in the state, "This place is about as pretty as the picture behind Johnny Carson's desk."

As success came, so did a certain psychological change. Four band members moved into a rambling 10-room house in Hingham, a coastal suburb of Boston, where rehearsals became more frequent.



“The emphasis has always been on having a good time.”

(Until then they had often been held on stage during performances.) Nat Weiss, a New York lawyer who was once Brian Epstein's partner, was retained to negotiate with record companies, some of whom had been coming around for two years. When a contract was finally agreed to in June of 1973—involving seven albums for Capricorn over four years—friends and neighbors greeted the occasion by downing 25 cases of Carling's beer and 85 bottles of

Francois Blanc de Blancs champagne during a celebration in a boathouse overlooking the Charles River. But drummer Chuckie Purro had known what was ahead when he had said earlier: “If this first record isn't a good one, it could be disastrous for all of us; if it doesn't sell it's almost the ruination of everything we've worked for.”

Indeed, the band was developing a split personality never quite seen from the audience. “The emphasis has always been on having a good time, which I believe in,” Peter Bell explained. “Sometimes I get afraid of losing what we have now. But I also want to be involved in something serious, where people take their music seriously. And people in the band feel they're growing up a little now. Everybody is seriously motivated, but we've kept our sense of humor and priorities.”

Seriously Motivated

A good example of this dichotomy is bassist Billy Mather. He has the best sense of humor in the band, but is also its most serious critic. Sitting in a bar the night the recording contract was signed, seemingly in high spirits, Billy suddenly became very serious. “There's something you gotta know,” he said, lowering both his head and his voice. “I worked for 10 years to put my signature on that piece of paper today. For 10 years I worked like hell. *Worked!* Don't ever forget that, OK?”

It appears now that there wasn't all that much to worry about. The album took two months to record at Sigma Sound in Philadelphia, the band living on a farm in nearby Valley Forge. It was done, said James, “ninety-eight percent in the middle of the night,” which is still the band's style. The most difficult moments came during the taping of “Train,” which is practically the group's theme song but also lasts nearly nine minutes with little overdubbing. It took many, many takes to get right, and at one point was nearly dropped in exasperation.

First Time Out is a reflection of where the band is today, musically speaking. As James points out, the roots are primarily blues and R&B, and this is where they will probably remain. “In terms of general feeling we're still pretty close to a blues band,” he said. “I mean, when you put our material next to, say, Black Oak Arkansas, there's quite a difference. On our nights off we don't go out looking for rock bands to listen to. We try to see which blues and R&B bands are in town. I think we'll always gravitate towards that type of thing.”

The first single from the album looks like it will be “If You Want Me,” a beautiful loping tune written by Peter Bell, yet the song which is probably least typical of the band. Somebody in Capricorn's promotion department described it recently as the kind of song young girls will take to.

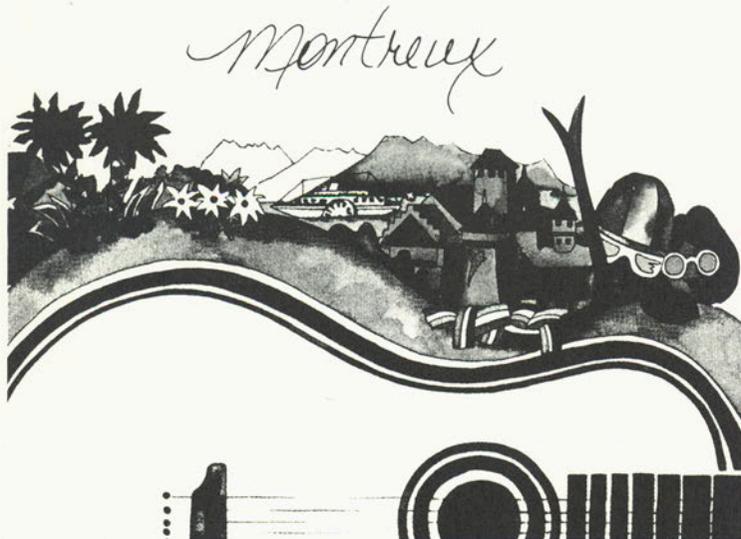
The band plans to start recording again in January. In the meantime, the tour crunches along. “It's kind of tough,” James said. “You know, people pay five dollars to see somebody, but first there's these guys from Boston who they've never heard of before. Actually, now that the record's out, we've *really* got our work cut out for us.

“Damn,” he laughed, and maybe he was thinking back to the days at the Candlelight. “You can't really quit until they're flying you into gigs in helicopters. Then you can lay back.” But up in Boston folks figure The James Montgomery Band has made it already. And about time, too.

—NATHAN COBB



It Takes All Kinds of Nobs to Engineer a Hit LP



All the News We Can Get About Deep Purple From Our Man in Montreux. Burbank's link to the International World, Tom Ruffino, ambled in on a recent Friday afternoon towing a very important Swiss visitor, who promptly announced he was full of Deep Purple news. The Purple are currently recording a new album in Montreux (scene of the *Machine Head* LP sessions) and expect to be finished by the end of this month. They're recording in the oh-so-modern Convention Centre there, with the Rolling Stones' mobile recording unit wheeled right inside the building. Purple also are planning a video tape program to show the world how the album was recorded—from the moments of writing a song to the false takes in the studio through to final mixing. T. Ruff's VIV (Very Important Visitor) was Claude Nobs, to whom *Machine*

Head was dedicated (his picture is in the innerspread, too). He earned the honor by taking the Purps in hand last December in the aftermath of the fire which destroyed the Montreux Casino (all of which is detailed—including Frank Zappa's performance—in the lyrics to the autobiographical hit 45 "Smoke on the Water"). Deep Purple was to have played the Casino and their performance was to have been recorded live. But the "fire in the sky" destroyed all that. Nobs, who was then with the Montreux Tourist Office (he had been running the annual Montreux Jazz Festival for eons) took the lads and arranged for them to use the Grand Hotel to record the *Machine Head* album. It was a massive empty hotel which they had to drape with mattresses for soundproofing (you can see pix inside *Machine Head*). There were leakage problems from Black-

more's 500-watt guitar amps; the group had to enter rooms from the balconies because mattresses blocked the hall and everyone was thoroughly depressed as the album came to life. The fact of the fire scrubbing what was to have been a live album also set up the release of *Made in Japan*, a fortuitous accident for us all. Claude himself joined WEA European artist relations on September 1. He will operate out of Montreux and will specialize in quadraphonic and video projects for the companies. He is also starting his own company, called Montreux Sounds, which will book musical acts in the area. He offered some indication of what Ian Gillan is up to—he's getting his own recording studio together in Bayswater, London. Roger Glover, meanwhile, is producing a Nazareth LP for Purple Records titled *Silverhead*. P.S. All this dedicated from Ruby to Mike Skadeland of Perrysburg, Ohio, who wanted to know all there was to know about Deep Purple.

Loveless Brouhaha Makes LA Radio Waver

Saturday, November 10, all hell broke loose at KFI, a Los Angeles-based, basically MOR radio station. During Hilly Rose's midnight talk show, the panel of participants decided the best way to *really* get into a roundtable on nudity was to do it nude. They suggested that all the listeners get down to it also. Hilly explained in *The Hollywood Reporter* that, "purely as a gag," he announced that calls would only be accepted from naked listeners. The phones started to go berserk. There were between 400 and 600 calls, mostly from outraged lis-

teners who made it plain they didn't go for nude radio. There was such a stew KFI had to apologize on the air to its protesting public. Rose promised listeners "no more adventures in nude radio over KFI, because there were people who felt it was not in the best of taste." Hilly swears "on oath and on a stack of bibles" that the nude-in was not pre-arranged. To the station's program manager, Viggie Nevins, goes Ruby's Vote of Confidence for Keeping His Head While Everyone About Him Was Losing Theirs—he said, "The thing that concerns me is that this would be the only time anyone calls about an interview show—to complain

Vinyl Statistics

Circular is pleased to present a running account of newborn Warner Family Records, everything from 7 to 12 inches in diameter, a list stripped of adjectives, avoidable nouns and even verbs. The past week has given birth to one monstrous single and two fabled albums.

SINGLES (December 5)

"Jessica"—The Allman Brothers Band — Capricorn single
CPR 0036

ALBUMS (December 4)

50th Anniversary Album — Fifty Years of Film Music — Warner Bros. album 3XX 2736

50th Anniversary Album — Fifty Years of Film — Warner Bros. album 3XX 2727

about a show like *this*. We've discussed homosexuality, the war, gas rationing, the economy—virtually every subject under the sun. The calls of objection are relatively few and far between, unless you're talking about lovemaking. Very interesting."

Ruby's Run-Ons

Two more platinum platters for WB—*The Captain and Me*, most recent 33 1/3 issue from the **Doobie Brothers**, and *Diamond Girl*, brought to your turntable by **Seals and Crofts**. These LPs sold over one million units apiece which makes them more than gold, according to the smiling RIAA which ceremoniously handed over those platinum discs two weeks ago.

Peter Yarrow drew raves Tuesday, November 20, at LA's Troubadour, both from the audience (who honored him with two standing ovation-encores) and the press. *The Hollywood Reporter* said, "A revitalized Peter Yarrow performed an exciting, well-paced set . . . Yarrow was like a kid with a new toy as he presented his current repertoire, which expertly blends rock & roll, Jamaican reggae, nostalgia and satire . . . On **Jimmy Cliff's** 'The Harder They Come,' Yarrow was so pleased with the total sound he all but danced off the stage with joy." After you've muddled through your New Year's Eve hangover, **The Allman Brothers Band** and **The Marshall Tucker Band** (Capricornians all) will wing their way through an astounding European tour. Inside

two months they'll hit London, Glasgow, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Zurich, Paris, Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. Speaking of Allman, **Gregg's** album, *Laid Back*, is knocking the promotion men out with strong national reaction. Atlanta and Miami called it "a super-biggie." In Memphis it's the #1 LP. Hartford, New York and Boston report huge sales while Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Houston say you can't turn on the radio without hearing cut after cut.

Arlo Guthrie, the well-loved Brooklyn cowboy, came to Los Angeles two weeks ago to play to a packed Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. He got excellent reviews, both from **Groovy Tuesday** and the Hollywood press. G.T. said Arlo alternated between various guitars, banjo and piano on numbers like "City of New Orleans" (that monster hit), "Pickle Song" and "Ring Around the Rosy Rag." Also two weeks ago, **Wendy Waldman** made her LA Troubadour debut which was followed with rave reviews. One said her voice was reminiscent of **Laura Nyro's**, a nice compliment in itself, but most praised Wendy's original vocal talents, piano playing and compositions. She soars through the blues, country and bluegrass—mostly self-penned. Watch out for this lady—she's hot. **Our French Connection** in capitalism have a sense of humor all their own. Taking our favorite old slogan, "It's Better in Burbank," the **French WEA coup de graced** us with their new one—"It's Far Better in Paris." Guess who's cutting a demo or two for WB right this very minute? Well, it's **Michael**



Autographed copies of Alice Cooper's *Muscle of Love* LP went to the first 50 customers who asked for them at Borje Ekberg's Stockholm record store recently. WB Sweden's label manager, Rolf Lunstrom, organized the promo, and as you can see by the crush it was quite successful. But what is the man in the dark suit doing with his hand in his pocket? Holy muscle of love!

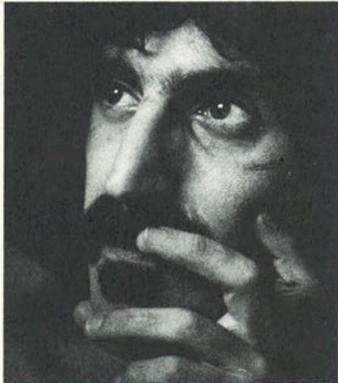
Bruce out of **Alice Cooper**. Possibly a solo LP on the way. Stay tuned. Full page, four-color ad touting "Love Music" appeared in a recent issue of *Playgirl*. It's a four-record set, see, and included on the LP *Passion* was WB's **Rod McKuen** ("The Gentle Touch," "Clocks" and "Theme From Eros"). Album number two, titled *Seduction* includes two of Rod's tunes, "Eros" and "Kaleidoscope;" a **Frank and Nancy Sinatra** selection, "Somethin' Stupid"; "Strangers in the Night" by Frank alone; **Dean Martin's** "Gimme a Little Kiss, Will Ya Huh?" and "Reach Out for Me" by **Dionne Warwick**. The third album's called *Foreplay* and includes "Tell Her You Love Her Each Day" by Frank Blue Eyes, not to mention "I'm Confessin'" and "Fools Rush In" by Dino. And just what is the fourth album in this amazing set called? *Climax*, of course. It includes "Something Beyond" by Mr. McKuen and "Softly As I Leave You" by Mr. Sinatra. Whew.

Top Ten

Warner Bros. Sales Figures for Week of December 3 - 9

1. Alice Cooper/*Muscle of Love* (BS/M8/M5 2748)
2. Frank Sinatra/*O! Blue Eyes Is Back* (FS/M8/M5 2155)
3. *The Beach Boys in Concert* (2RS/K8/K5 6484)
4. America/*Hat Trick* (BS/M8/M5 2728)
5. Allman Bros. Band/*Brothers and Sisters* (CP/M8/M5 0111)
6. Uriah Heep/*Sweet Freedom* (BS/M8/M5 2724)
7. Gregg Allman/*Laid Back* (CP/M8/M5 0116)
8. Neil Young/*Time Fades Away* (MS/M8/M5 2151)
9. Osibisa/*Happy Children* (BS/M8/M5 2732)
10. Jesse Colin Young/*Song for Juli* (BS/M8/M5 2734)

Frank Zappa's DiscReet Over-rite Sensation



Continued from page 1

reed man Ian Underwood have dropped out of the line-up leaving Tom Fowler, bass; Bruce Fowler, trombone; Ruth Underwood, marimbas, vibes and percussion; George Duke, keyboards; Chester Thompson and Ralph Humphrey on drums and new vocalist Napoleon Brock, with Frank (lead guitar and vocals) as the latest manifestation in a long line of Mothers. "Now," smiles Zappa, "we have a very strong group."

The lineage of the Mothers has been so long and so involved that Zappa plans to issue an album containing quad recordings of four of the various bands in concert to commemorate the MOI's 10th anniversary next year. In addition, he would like to put out his legendary yet mysterious nine-record history of the Mothers, but, as always, the project presents a number of apparently insurmountable problems.

"Next year is the time to put it out," Zappa explained, "but it would be hard to release something so gross in a depleted market at a time when they've just raised the overall retail cost per

disc \$1. Plus, there's no way I can afford to pay everyone entitled his fair share of royalties for his work," he chuckled. "I may be squeezed into the position of putting out a quadruple album now and waiting another 10 years for the next set."

Natural Slime

Meanwhile, Zappa and band continue to tour. Having already done Australia and Europe, the East Coast and Canada are now playing host to the Mothers while listening to the new single from *Over-rite Sensation*, "I'm the Slime." According to Zappa, so many of the other tunes on the album were getting airplay, that for the first time, problems arose in deciding which cut to release. He thought "I'm the Slime" was the least likely candidate, but the opinion of various pop music reporters in England and Germany was that "Slime" was a natural.

As he finished discussing his immediate projects (touring and making a movie with a monster in it that he can't talk about) and priorities (he's not doing any producing other than his own product inside the company; his last outside effort was the *Ruben and the Jets* disc for Mercury) Frank paused to consider the fact that he is often labelled the "father" of theatrical rock a la Alice Cooper (an early protege) and others. Here he offered some interesting insights into the MOI's past.

"I probably am the father," he admitted, "and I can see that now it's turned into something quite spectacular. At the time we were doing it, we had very poor equipment and did it under circumstances that most of the spectacle

rock groups today wouldn't work in. In other words, we did it the hard way: six nights a week, two shows a night for five months at the Garrick Theater in New York, in August and September with no air conditioning and the humidity at 90%. It was a little 300 seat theater, and we played for whoever would come in and take part in what we were doing. We would involve the audience so that what we did was an extension of the personalities of the people in the group and in the audience instead of a locked-in, spectacle type show. It was spontaneous, and our credo was that we weren't afraid to do anything as long as the audience was going to get off on it. I do weird things onstage, but nothing involving material discharges from the body or small animals subject to injuries. We've done some strange things, but we don't hurt people or animals, and it doesn't smell bad."

Ultimate Audacity

But since Zappa and company's circuit only gets them to each town on the average of once a year, the rumors and speculation have a habit of running rampant.

"We never had a gross-out contest with the Fugs. My father is not Mr. Green Jeans from Captain Kangaroo, and when I'm accused of killing chickens, I tell people to check with Alice Cooper," he said, trying to set the record straight once and for all. But speaking of Alice again, has Zappa even seen his "child" all grown up in concert lately?

"I've never been to one of his new grand shows. The last time I saw them, they still had dumpy

equipment, but then I don't go to see anybody unless they happen to be the group we're working with and I get to the show early. I'm just not interested because I don't buy rock & roll records, I don't listen to the radio or watch TV. I don't go to rock concerts as a member of the audience because generally, when you get right down to it, what the other groups do is so demeaning to the consciousness of the crowd that I don't want to be a part of it. It's the whole idea of the show being inflicted on the audience."

What, then, sets the Mothers, a group once known for its outrageous actions as well as words and music, apart?

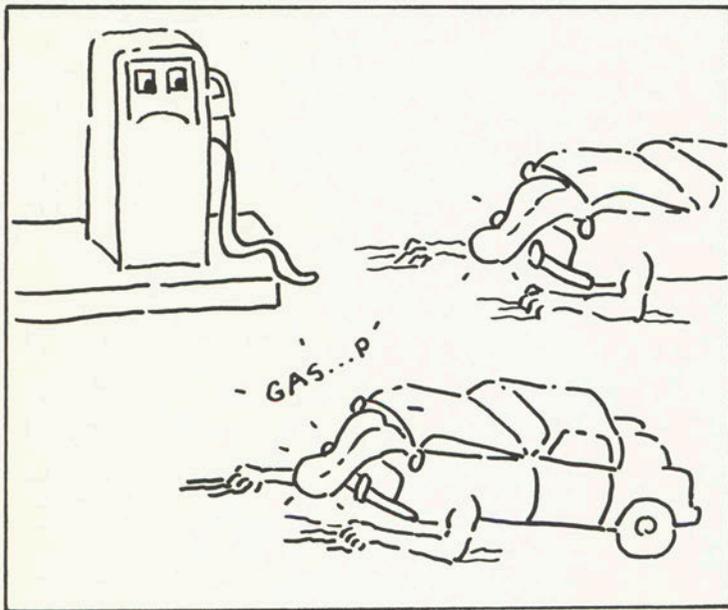
"I don't feel we inflict our show in the same way," Zappa says defensively. "What we do is go out and have the ultimate audacity to perform what we do whether or not the audience believes they can enjoy it. Most of the time, they don't have any idea they can enjoy it."

"We have a hard core group that makes up the basic attendance at our gigs, but there are others that come as first time visitors to our environment out of curiosity or because there's nothing else going on in town or because it's already pre-paid on their student body cards. They don't know what to expect, so if you start playing things like "Father Oblivion/Part Two: The Tango" or "Kung Fu: A Shuffle," they have to make up their minds right there and then what's happening to them."

He stood and smiled for effect. "And they usually do."

—DAVID RENSIN

Rationalizing British Tours



LONDON—The phenomenon that causes people to laugh at the scene of an accident is rife in London to the extent that everyone you meet says, "It's all crumbling. It's the beginning of the end, isn't it?" Grinning maniacally, and referring, of course, to the EVERYTHING shortage of which petrol is the most acute. At the weekend, sales were restricted to one gallon per car per filling station, causing chaotic queues and bilious tempers. I asked Mick Coles, the master strategist behind all Warners' touring groups in England, how he expected to keep bands on the road in this situation. Some of his answers were classified, as people are now being jailed here for siphoning gas out of neighbors' tanks, but Mick has arranged for the forthcoming Allman extravaganza by booking four separate modes of transport for each gig

(charter plane, scheduled plane, train and coach) reckoning that at least one should come through OK.

No Allmaniacs Yet. Meanwhile, the Park Tower Hotel, of which two floors are reserved for the entourage, rang the press office here in real fear to ask if the Allman Brothers were anything like the Osmond Brothers, and if they might anticipate a plague of weenie locusts. They were assured that the Allman Brothers were not, in fact, like the Osmond Brothers. They may end up wishing they were . . .

Giorgio—Yves St. Warnerchy Unveils Winter Collection. At this moment the Warner press office effectively evokes Seventh Avenue—the rag trade outdoing the platters, cartons overflowing with the

T-shirt makers' art. Smart or casual, it's all here: Back Door introduces a snappy little short-sleeved black number adorned with green feely-fuzz letters; the Ol' Blue Eyes is a dazzling chrome-yellow, classic long-sleever with Wedgewood-blue portrait and legend; the Alice Cooper batch is all authentic, re-cycled U.S. government issue sailor shirts with "Muscle of Love" stenciled on the traditional middie collar—a splendid sartorial contrast to the most exotic exhibit, the Osibisa pullover in brown with mock-leopard feely-fuzz in a Tarzan-style off-the-shoulder motif, accessories built in by way of a flocked savage necklace. But you have to see it "on," darling.

Holy Roman Empire's Greatest Hit.

Chrysalis is prone to do what Steeleye suggest in their lovely "Gaudete"—that is, rejoice. "Gaudete" has insinuated itself into the Top 50 here, a piquant novelty for a company that has heretofore amassed its fortune with "album artists." And there is every indication that next week will see Leo Sayer well into the Top of the Pops with his first fast-spinner, "The Show Must Go On." (A noble sentiment, and Leo's seeing to it while the rest of us go to pieces.) Leo continues to break undeniably big on all fronts, landing double-page spreads in everything from the teeny mags to the national dailies. Wish you guys had the LP. We all do! (We deserve it. You get all the damn movies first.)

Return of the Jabberwock.

A while ago I became a rabid fan of what must be England's least

literate journalist. Naturally he writes for a music trade magazine. What first caught my attention was his review of the Stones' London show in which he declined to describe Mick Jagger's performance "because there is a dearth of information about that already," not to mention all the groups who "emanate" *Les Rolling*. Here are a pair of gems for you to savor. The first refers to that tubby titan of English pop, Gary Glitter: "The revitalized Paul Raven must be counting his blessed sequins about how he arrived on the wave of boomeranging fashion, climbing aboard the rostrum of stardom as the proverbial wheel turned full circle." If you aren't too dizzy from that, try this one gleaned from a feature on the music-as-art vs. music-as-product see-saw: "The rationalization is a common psychological happening born of the art-product conflict and nurtured to the stage where it is used as an excuse for mediocrity." Phew. Maybe the vinyl crisis is a good thing after all.

—SHELLEY BENOIT

IT COULD BE VERSE Black Gold

Energy shortages
Curb the economy
Even affecting such nice guys
like us.
Don't have the oil, so we
Can't make the vinyl STOP
GO to the record store,
please, folks, by bus.

Hey, Veeeeeeee...nus!



"Venus" by Frankie Avalon, which was the #1 disc in the land for six solid weeks beginning March 2, 1959, was not the first song ever to be dedicated to the love goddess of Roman mythology. 'Tis a great pity that they didn't have records, #1 or otherwise, in ancient Rome to preserve the songs they sang to Venus when folks *really* believed in goddesses. Perhaps someone can ask the 2000-Year-Old Man to hum a few bars next time he drops in.

Even if folks don't take goddesses quite as seriously as they used to, they're still handy pegs to hang songs on. So, undoubtedly, "Venus" by Shocking Blue will not be the last song ever written about this lady of legend. Its place in history remains reasonably secure, however, at least for a decade or two; in addition to key-noting the Dutch-rock craze (which, until Focus came along, looked like the quickest flash-in-the-pan since calypso) the Shocking "Venus," by reaching #1 in January, 1970, neatly combines with the 1959 Avalonian ode to make a Venutian sandwich of

Inspirational Verse

I wouldn't trade my wooden wife

For you, sugar.

— United States of America
"I Wouldn't Trade . . . (etc.)"

the 1960s.

A Chuestion for Christmas

Energy crisis or no, the Christmas decorations seem to go up a little earlier every year. There is little question that Yuletide remains in the 1970s the healthiest of our holidays, having so far survived every attempt to change it to the last Monday in December. Vinyl shortage or no, there's little doubt that nearly every Christmas tree (aluminum or otherwise) in the USA will soon shelter a plethora of platters. (Next to liquor bottles, records are certainly the easiest gifts to spot in a pile of presents; there just isn't much else that's 12 inches square and flat).

Yet with all this Yuletide cheer, Christmas records just aren't selling like they used to. Whereas the Yuletide platters used to practically monopolize radio playlists (however tight) for at least half of December, it's been quite a spell now since a Christmas single has made #1 on the *Billboard* charts. (Martin Mull's "Santaflly" and Slade's "Merry Christmas Everybody" are current hopefuls.) What was the last 45 to put Christmas on top of the heap, and in what year did this memorable event occur?

Winner of Dr. Demento's three-weeks-ago twist contest is Jack Hopper who correctly guessed Chubby Checker's "The Twist" which reached #1 with "Toot" on the "B" side in 1960 (might be the best of the three sides, says Jack) and again in 1961 with "Twistin' U.S.A." as the "C" side.

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, 3701 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Ca. 91505) wins any *single* Warner/Reprise catalog album. (Please specify choice.) Answers will be geographically pro-rated; ties will be judged on the basis of penmanship, wit and lucidity.

It Took Me Four Days to Hitchhike From Saginaw



Allman Brothers Band

12/28 Philadelphia
12/31-1/1 San Francisco
1/10-2/9 Europe

Beach Boys

12/10 Durham, New Hampshire
12/12 Washington, D.C.
12/13 Union, New Jersey
12/14 Philadelphia
12/16 South Orange, New Jersey
12/18 Brooklyn
12/19 New York City

Tim Buckley

12/12-13 Ann Arbor, Michigan
12/15 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
12/16 Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Paul Butterfield's Better Days

12/13 Corning, New York
12/14 Port Chester, New York
12/15 Poughkeepsie, New York

Captain Beyond

12/15 New York City

Alice Cooper

12/11 Madison
12/12 Ann Arbor
12/14 Toronto
12/15 Syracuse
12/16 Norfolk
12/19 Largo, Maryland
12/22 Tampa
12/26 New Haven
12/27 Montreal
12/29 Binghamton, New York
12/31 Buffalo

Kathy Dalton

12/18-23 Los Angeles

Linda Lewis

12/10 New York City

Gordon Lightfoot

1/25 San Diego
1/26 Palo Alto
1/27 Los Angeles
2/15 Milwaukee
2/16 Duluth
2/17 St. Paul

James Montgomery Band

12/11 Pittsburgh
12/13 Hamden, Connecticut
12/28 Philadelphia

Maria Muldaur

12/13 St. Louis
12/14 Kansas City
12/15 Springfield, Missouri
12/16 Springfield, Illinois
12/17 Evansville, Indiana
12/19 Los Angeles
12/27-31 San Francisco
1/30-2/12 Denver

Rod McKuen

12/15-16 Santa Monica

Osibisa

12/13 New Orleans
12/15 New York City
12/16 Baltimore
12/17 Detroit
12/19 Los Angeles

Bonnie Raitt

12/10-11 Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
12/13 Corning, New York
12/14 Port Chester, New York
12/15 Nassau, Long Island
12/18-22 Cambridge, Massachusetts
1/18 Durham, North Carolina
1/19 Richmond
1/26 Providence
1/27 Washington, D.C.
1/30 Pittsburgh
2/7 Hanover, New Hampshire
2/9 Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Tower of Power

12/14 Phoenix, Arizona
12/20-22 San Francisco
12/23 Fresno
12/28-29 Los Angeles
12/31 Las Vegas

Marshall Tucker Band

12/31-1/1 San Francisco

Wendy Waldman

12/21 Santa Cruz, California
12/26 Lewiston, Maine

Eric Weissberg

2/22 The Bronx

Jesse Winchester and the Rhythm Aces

12/10-15 Toronto

Peter Yarrow

12/10-15 Washington, D.C.
12/20-23 Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Jesse Colin Young

12/14-15 San Francisco
12/17 Los Angeles

Frank Zappa/Mothers of Invention

12/10 Los Angeles