

George Frazier Potshot Them All

by HARVEY GELLER

"Jazz is like a lot of other things," wrote critic George Frazier a long time ago. "It is like love and a lazy summer afternoon and the Tchaikovsky Sixth and White Christmas, but it is also like spinach and a foggy night and *Henry Esmond* and the poetry of Mr. T. S. Eliot. In other words it is lovely but lovely in a way that is, or is not, for you."

Scores of Frazier's readers (including Peggy Lee, Steve Lawrence, Joan Rivers, Tallulah Bankhead and Virginia Graham) who had suffered the slings and arrows of his outrageous potshots could stomach spinach, Eliot and even jazz. It was Frazier, an unmitigated louse of the first water, who was not for them.

As an executive with RCA Victor, commissioned to muster, edit and annotate a definitive limited edition of Glenn Miller sides, George nevertheless found time to drop a column to *Variety* dismissing the band as a "three-ring circus."*

"Mel Torme," he reported after sampling "The Velvet Fog" at New York's Riobamba Club, "should be bottled in brine."

He was "deeply concerned" about Peggy Lee and her "inability to sing her way out of a paper bag."

As for Tallulah Bankhead: "Well, Bankhead is, after all, Bankhead, and I trust you will forgive me for saying to hell with her."

In that antediluvian age of the 30s when musical mastodons like Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Artie Shaw were sacrosanct, Frazier first drew national attention with an effluvial attack on Goodman's distaff singer. "Martha Tilton stinks," he decided in *Down Beat* which, at the time, was America's most influential pop periodical. George later explained he had never met Miss Tilton and therefore had no axe to grind. "Simply, it's a case of my not liking her singing and saying so in the most honest, space-saving way at my command. . . . Her lack of talent is the least of my worries."

What disturbed George were disc jockeys: "Among the more bewildering products of civilization . . . a shameless group of individuals."

Martin Block's Make Believe Ballroom show on WNEW, N.Y., was "a careful selection of the most dreadful music ever put on records."

Though Frazier revered most of Sinatra's vocal efforts, he admonished, "Why, in God's name, does he feel he can improve on Cole Porter's lyrics?"

Recently George allowed he had done and said some horrible things in his salad days. "I now regard myself as a most tolerant man . . . we are always growing, always maturing. I have come to regard certain things as necessary—Joan Rivers, Virginia Graham and Mr. and Mrs. Steve Lawrence, for example. Rivers is as funny as a three-way car crash, Graham is revolting and Steve and Eydie are . . . inexcusable."

During the Watergate hearings George described himself as a "totalist." "I go all the way with Nixon," he told friends, "I dislike him, the guy who prepares his eggs in the morning, the fellow who decides which of his two pairs of pants he'll wear, his door man,

his vice-presidents . . . Gerald Ford is strictly road company and take me home for 22.50. He's as charismatic as an open can of tuna fish."

Pure Ivy League. Frazier, who died of lung cancer in the summer of 1974, was recently branded in *Time* as a "widely read gadfly, a self styled Brahmin who rambled polysyllabically about style, taste and whatever else he fancied in his *Boston Herald* and, later, *Boston Globe* columns. Proud of his image as a professional snob—he

proclaimed the common-man an 'ill-spoken hooligan.' "

Variety pronounced him "a genuine eccentric who once wrote a running account of a baseball game in Latin and brought his own hot dogs to the stadium."

Circa '33, Frazier, fresh from Harvard, was first published in a wilful little magazine called *Jazz-Tango-Dancing*. He supplied his copy in French since the publication was printed in Paris. If he wasn't the world's first pop music critic, it is doubtful that there was

Continued on page 3.

The Country Comforts of Rex Allen, Jr.

by TODD EVERETT

While the histories of Warner Bros. Records and country music aren't exactly intertwined, the company has from time to time made efforts, more sincere than successful, to penetrate the Nashville Sound barrier. The archetypal Warners country signing, of course, was that of the already-famous Everly Brothers, whose first two singles for the label, "Cathy's Clown" and "So Sad," zoomed into the Top Ten in 1960.

Success at Last. Warner/Reprise is currently enjoying its greatest success ever in its pursuit of Country Credibility. One of the reasons for said accomplishment is Rex Allen, Jr., whose first album, *Another Goodbye Song*, is released just this month.

Rex, Jr., is, of course, the son of veteran singing cowboy Rex

Allen. The elder Allen truly fits the description of star of stage, screen, radio and television: he began in vaudeville, was for a good time a regular on radio's National Barn Dance program, starred in numerous Republic Studios "B" pictures, and even had his own television series, *Frontier Doctor*.

"I was raised in Los Angeles," says the younger Rex, via telephone from WB's Nashville office. "My parents both still live in the Malibu Canyon area. Dad always told me that his name could open the doors for me, but that I'd have to go in and take over for myself. It's true: very few 'juniors' make it. In country music, the only prominent ones I can think of offhand are Hank Williams, Jr., and Lynn Anderson.

"A lot of the people who see me

Continued on page 2

The Son Also Rises

Continued from page 1

and hear my records, though, aren't even aware of who my father is. Some will remember his movies, and a few will remember his records. Few people today realize that Dad had the first hit version of 'Crying in the Chapel,' back in the mid-40s. The last big hit he had was 'Son, Don't Go Near the Indians,' on Mercury, in 1962.

"A lot of the time, the performing child of a famous performer will be expected by his fans to do versions of the father's material—Hank, Jr., doing 'Your Cheating Heart,' for instance. I don't get a lot of those requests, though, and have to make whatever impression I do on the strength of my own material, which is probably just as well. One song associated with Dad that I *do* perform is a version of 'Streets of Laredo.'" 2

Kid Guitarist. Rex's father and mother were wary of their son's entering a show business career, and he says that they actually discouraged him—or tried to. On the other hand, Little Rex appeared on stage with his father at an early age, and by the time he entered his teens he was playing rhythm guitar for his father.

"I began playing music in my early teens, got a band together and began writing. Even then, my songs had a country flavor to them, though I wasn't consciously writing country songs. I *still* don't, as a matter of fact."

By the time he was 19, Rex had been leading his own band for several years. He'd never worked as a sideman, other than with his father. Thinking that he was ready to record, Rex trekked from one record company to another, arousing

little or no interest along the way. Eventually he found himself on Imperial, where he recorded four sides. "Right after I recorded them, I was drafted. I remember being afraid to tell anybody at the label that I had to leave."

In the service, Rex worked as an entertainer, something that suited him well. By the time of his discharge, he felt confident about trying again for a recording contract. "I went to Nashville, and recorded around a bit there. Most of my stuff is on Shelby Singleton's labels, and JMI. Shelby probably has enough to come up with some sort of an album, if he wants to. None of the others do."

Butler Does It. Eventually, Rex was brought to the attention of Larry Butler, the prominent Nashville pianist who is perhaps best-known as a producer for his work with Johnny Cash. "Larry is now running the country department of United Artists. When he went to work for them, it was under the condition that he could continue to produce Dick Feller for Asylum, and me for Warner Bros. I was signed to the label on the basis of a demonstration tape put together by Larry and myself. Warners was looking to expand into country music, and here we all are."

Three of the titles of Rex' first album, *Another Goodbye Song*, have been released as singles, so far. Encouragingly, each has met with wider acceptance than the one preceding, expanding Rex' circle of fans and amount of airplay.

First was "The Great Mail Robbery," written by Joe Allen, composer of Glen Campbell's hit "Manhattan, Kansas," and numerous others. A song with a cute



lyrical twist, it was played on a number of stations. "Goodbye," the second single, had been composed by Larry Butler and Buddy Killen some time ago, and has been previously recorded by David Frizzell. Rex's arrangements is considerably different, though. "'Goodbye' got played quite a bit across the country," Rex explains, "... but it spread market by market. It would go off the charts in one area, and then on in another. So it didn't go quite as high on the national charts as it might have."

"Another Goodbye Song," the album's title number and third single release, was written by Butler and Nashville veteran ("Single Girl," "Come Back When You Grow Up") Martha Sharp. Rex' is the first recorded version. "The Same Old Way" was written by Jerry Foster and Bill Rice, and has been recorded, but was never a hit, by a number of artists (Foster and Rice's compositions are picked up regularly by artists like Charley Pride and Johnny Paycheck). "Never Coming Back Again" was written by Butler and Jan Crutchfield. "I Can See Clearly Now," "Sunshine on My Shoulder" and "(I Want to Sing You) A Love Song" are, of course, established hits. "Midnight Oil," another Joe Allen composition, was a hit for

Barbara Mandrell, though it was originally written to be sung from a male point of view—which, of course, is the way Rex treats it. "Yes, We Have Love" is the only Rex Allen, Jr. composition on the album.

Big at Fairs Rex works more than half the year, doing personal appearances. While he doesn't carry his own band on the road with him, thinking it economically disadvantageous, he has pick-up groups in several areas ready to answer the call when a date falls nearby. Rex especially enjoys working state fairs, where the concentration of listeners most likely to be receptive to his music is higher than at the kind of folk-club or big-city concert date considered *de rigueur* by record companies intent upon breaking an artist.

"One last thought. Coming to Warners now is a bit ironic. I auditioned for the company once before, back when I was 19. They turned me down then. I wasn't ready, and they evidently knew it. It looks like *they* weren't ready in 1967, either. When I auditioned for Warners then, they had my Dad, Hank Thompson and Roy Clark all under contract—and none of them ever had a hit on the label. Maybe we're *all* ready now!" C

Frazier Wrote Wry With a Touch of Bitters

Continued from page 1

ever one more abrasive, articulate, competent or controversial.

Less than a handful of pioneer pop/jazz commentators, including Frazier, John Henry Hammond, Jr.,* and Charles Edward Smith endured in those early Depression years. *Metronome*, the only regularly published U.S. music magazine, devoted most of its editorial efforts toward marching bands and no American publication seemed interested in the subject of jazz.

Hammond began writing for *The Gramophone*, a staid English periodical that covered the worldwide record scene. "That was in 1931. . . . A year later I switched to London's *Melody Maker*—they paid me five guineas a month, about \$26."

In February, 1934, *Esquire* printed Charles Edward Smith's article on "Collecting Hot," a historical break-through for both fans and critics since it served notice that there were thousands of Americans who liked the same kind of music. That same year French critic Hughes Panassie's sober, authoritative *Le Jazz Hot* was published in Paris and in '36 Witmark issued a translated version in the U.S. It undoubtedly was the most popular and influential book on the art of musical improvisation.

"Every one of us was so shatteringly positive in those days," Frazier recalled, "especially me."

Down Beat arrived with the Big Band explosion in the mid-30s. By then Frazier was on intimate terms with many of the soon-to-be celebrated sidemen.

"I knew Harry James so well I called him Harry Jimmy."



Frazier and two of his most cherished vices—a cigarette and a glass of scotch—pose for this mid-40s photo.

Dave Dexter, Jr., former *Down Beat* editor, remembers being "entranced" by Frazier's firm Westbrook Pegler approach to jazz and the big bands. "Many times I didn't agree with him but I certainly admired his guts and the way he expressed himself. I had never seen any copy that was as first-personish as Frazier's. I penciled him strongly and he screamed—not at me, but at the two *Down Beat* owners. Well, word got to me that Frazier was irate at some of the excisions. I wrote to him and that started a correspondence that lasted for years.

"George was probably the purest example of Ivy league that I have ever encountered. He dressed differently, spoke differently with that broad New England

accent. He was truly an impressive, colorful and fascinating young man. And as time went on I stopped trying to edit him. Sure, it was personal opinion and evaluations but that's what readers liked . . . I haven't seen him in years, but I loved to come across his by-line in *Life*, his fashion pieces in *Esquire* where he'd rip 99% of the male population for the shoddy, sloppy way we dress.

"Frazier knew jazz—with the possible exception of John Hammond—as expertly as anyone I ever met. He knew most of the big band and jazz stars personally . . . I'm saddened to realize that I won't be reading his copy again."

"I have no quarrel in the manner in which editors have treated my copy," George maintained.

"There have, of course, been occasions when a magazine took the liberty of inserting a line or two into the piece without consulting me. The results were awful, but I was inextricably linked to them. After all it was my by-line and there was no way for anyone to know that I hadn't written the absurd interpolations. I would read them and, so help me God, for weeks afterward, I would run down the nearest alley every time I saw a good writer like William Shakespeare coming toward me on the street."

Hardly a Perfect Book. With the exception of his wife, Mimsie, I was Frazier's most familiar companion between 1940 and 1950. We had met at the bar in Jimmy Ryan's, a 52nd Street saloon, on a Sunday evening during that redolent era when the Commodore Music Shop was presenting week-end jam sessions. I was 18 and

George was nearing 30. Not only had I been reading him in *Down Beat* but I had memorized long passages from his columns. I don't recall whether I told him then, or ever, but I considered Frazier the noblest thing to have happened in Boston since the Tea Party.

Gatsby would have envied his smooth graceful elegance, his appearance of studied carelessness that John Pearson, Ian Fleming's biographer, called "that touch of premeditated unconcern." He was an inordinately handsome man, projecting the image of aristocratic wealth (I later discovered he was the son of a fire inspector). His slight limp, memento of an earlier skirmish with polio, did not diminish his attractiveness.

The friendship, despite the disparity in our ages, was genuine. I supplied him with dedicated adoration, proof-read his copy and offered unflinching affirmation of his talents. He guided my interests in literature, music and men's fashion, introducing me to a number of his celebrated acquaintances, including John Steinbeck, Frank Sinatra, Irving Berlin and John O'Hara.

George wrote one novel (unpublished), one song ("Harvard Blues," recorded by Count Basie), a number of short stories. In 1944, Random House published a collection of his close-ups, *The One With the Moustache Is Costello*. A few days after its publication I asked Frazier if he considered it a perfect book. "No," was his fatuous answer to the absurd question. "The binding could be a lot stronger."

During that decade George's thirst for alcohol was surpassed

*Hammond, a Columbia Records vice-president plans to retire next year.

A Pioneering Music Critic

Continued from page 3

only by his appetite for literature. He insisted that he was one of only a dozen Americans who had read and understood James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. When Mimsie, whom he adored, divorced him, he continued to live in their Beekman Place apartment though he withdrew to an adjoining bedroom. When she finally remarried, he phoned to ask me if it was time to move away.

During the War years, as entertainment editor for *Life* he wrote the first major piece on Sinatra. It included the classic line "If Frank Sinatra weren't Frank Sinatra, he'd be a Frank Sinatra fan."

He did another on Bogart, whom

he described as "a realist with a face that looks as if it had just smelled something unpleasant."

One of his favorite anecdotes concerned restaurateur Toots Shor, who was seated one night with a few friends, including Bing Crosby, in a Sixth Avenue joint called Marion's. After several drinks Shor suddenly decided he was a better singer than Crosby. "I'll prove it," said Toots. Crosby thought about this for a moment and agreed to a contest. Shor gulped down his drink and climbed onto the table. He was just about to sing when he pointed his finger at Crosby. "Remember," he said, "this is for loud."

Never an End. Frazier quit his *Life* post in the mid-40s to collaborate with John Steinbeck on a musical comedy, *The Wizard of Maine*. MGM got wind of the project and promptly offered \$100,000 in advance for the screen rights. "Let George and me talk about it and we'll phone you tomorrow," said Steinbeck.

When Frazier heard about the offer, he was ecstatic. The next day, in George's presence, Steinbeck made the call. "Everything went well," Frazier recalled, "and John was about to hang up when something occurred to him. 'One more thing. When you draw up the contract I want it specified that Judy Garland won't appear in the movie.'"

Frazier heard a burst of anger from the other end of the line. "Don't make me repeat myself," John warned. "Either you agree that Garland won't be in it or the hell with it." Steinbeck listened, nodded and slammed

the receiver.

George stared at him in disbelief. "Have you ever met Garland?" he asked. "No," said Steinbeck. "Well, you don't like her in pictures?" "Hell, I have better things to do than watch Judy Garland movies. I have never seen one of her damn pictures."

Despite George's *aere perennis* as an acerbic arbiter of arts, he was partial to a great many things. Show tune singers like Bobby Short, Blossom Dearie, Hugh Shannon, Kitty White, Mabel Mercer and Jackie & Roy delighted him. He adored Benny Goodman; Billie Holiday; Ella Fitzgerald; Clayton, Jackson and Durante. He was appalled when at Louis Armstrong's last rites "Peggy Lee chanted and Ella was mute while Bobby Hackett, a protege for whom Armstrong had fatherly affection, wasn't invited."

He admired the grit and grace of Joe Namath. He was entranced by odd and inconsequential information. He knew the verse to "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" and the names of two songs that rhymed "Yonkers" with "conquers."*

Violent films like *Dirty Harry* and *Get Carter* amused him. He respected Atlantic Records president Ahmet Ertegun's clothes consciousness until he discovered that Ertegun wore pockets on his shirts. That and white socks were Frazier *bêtes noires*. "Shoot 'em on sight. They're as bad as turtle necks!"

He gave wide berth to restaurants where the *maitres d'* had fountain pens visible in the breast pockets of their dinner jackets.

*The Gershwins' "Who Cares" and Rodgers and Hart's "Manhattan."

"A few days after publication of close-ups, *The One With Is Costello*, I asked Frazier if it a perfect book. "No, the book is a lot stronger."

He couldn't understand why anyone in his right mind would want to live in New Jersey or Providence, R.I.

He was entranced by Coleman Hawkins ("pumping out enduring passion on his saxophone"), Jack Teagarden ("the most lyrical trombone you ever heard"), "Bix" Beiderbecke ("one of the most expressive men on the face of the earth") and Bunny Berigan ("handled a trumpet so flexibly and with such enchantment that he earned the right to be numbered among the great musicians of all time").

He considered the only proper button-down the one from Brooks Bros. and Johnny Carson's clothes "an offense to the eye . . . admired for his garb only by persons who dress more execrably than he."

He agreed with Scott Fitzgerald that good writing was swimming under water and holding your breath. He winked at homely girls.

He loved 1935 and the surrounding years, when "52nd Street was jumping like nobody's business and every night of the week there were gutbucket giants dropping by and blowing their way to glory. West 52nd was paved with more than good intentions in those nights—it glistened with unforgettable accomplishment. Those nights are my particular baby and I am never going to put them up for adoption."

Yet often he yearned for the barrelhouse bands of the 20s. "My right arm I have given on a lot of occasions, but never for keeps. Because deep down in my heart I am saving it for a man who will bring back 1927 and sit me down at a table in the Sunset Cafe where

Top Ten

Based on Warner Bros. sales figures for the week of September 22-29.

1. Graham Central Station/**Release Yourself**
2. Zappa/**Mothers/ Roxy & Elsewhere**
3. Fleetwood Mac/**Heroes Are Hard To Find**
4. Bonnie Raitt/**Streetsights**
5. Alice Cooper's **Greatest Hits**
6. Neil Young/**On the Beach**
7. Randy Newman/**Good Old Boys**
8. Richard Betts/**Highway Call**
9. John Sebastian/**Tarzana Kid**
10. Robin Trower/**Bridge of Sighs**

Main Man in Paris

of his collection
the *Moustache*
he considered
ending could be

there is a band under the direction of an amazing cornetist named Louis Armstrong. For that I would give my right arm."

Thirty years ago Frazier wrote, "The bank account of jazz is always about to be closed—yet somehow it never is, and night after night, year after year, people go right on making withdrawals, just as if they had not heard that Beiderbecke and Berigan are no longer behind the paying windows . . . people are forever clutching at the vanished years . . . it would be pleasant if, in cherishing the past, they didn't feel it necessary to chide the present . . .

"When Armstrong dies, then jazz will really be dead, or so, at any rate, the gloomy boys maintain. But much as I love Louis (and I love him dearly), I cannot believe that jazz owes its existence to him or any other individual. When a boiler-maker kind of foolishness called re-bop can't kill jazz, you may be sure that nothing can. The truth of the matter is simply this: There never will be an end."

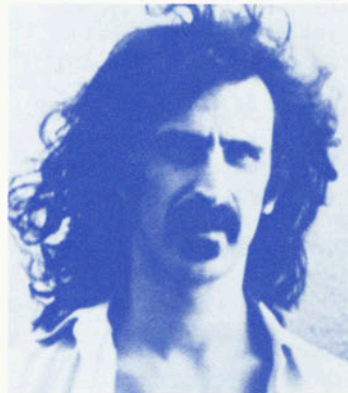
Though most of his gods are gone and just a few still linger—impersonating their former selves—Frazier's prediction, like much of what he said and wrote, is accurate. In the fall of '74 more than 600 colleges and universities are offering courses in jazz history while about 30,000 jazz ensembles currently are performing on U.S. campuses.

Most of this year's crop of golden boys weren't born when Frazier was a cub columnist on *Down Beat*. One of the shames of his death is that he isn't around to roast or revere them. ●

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London—I'm a sucker for grabby headlines just like anyone else, which is why when I saw "Europe's Sexiest Young Executive" splashed in a red diagonal band across the upper-left corner of the American Excess freebie magazine *europa*, I turned immediately to page 18. "Sexy" turned out to be the nature of the glossy periodicals with which the subject made his million. "Young" turned out to be 46, but there was more to the story. The name Daniel Filipacchi struck a familiar chord in the cranium of my near-omniscient companion, who declared that the Warner Records operation in Paris used to be called Warner-Filipacchi and the fact that WB would go into partnership with this fellow meant that here was a man to be reckoned with, silly *Europa* articles notwithstanding. The writer described him in the first sentence as "thrusting, sparkling and handsome." Phew, I thought. What if all our thrusting and sparkling record bosses took up publishing slick girly mags? Who'd mind the vinyl? I sensed a dangerous precedent. When I got into the office I made inquiries as to whether this "paradigm of the New European Executive" was in fact still affiliated with WB. As my noble associate Dave the Rave had to call Paris anyhow to sort out a few details on the Zappa Extravaganza (see below), I had him drop the name Filipacchi to see what ripples ensued. What came back was an emphatic tidal wave to the effect that he is still very much the Main Man in Paris and, for that matter, substantially involved in the aforementioned Zappa Extravaganza (see below.)

Below. If rumor is to be honored, the very *piece de resistance* and *chef d'oeuvre* of the musico-social season is the grand gala for Frank Zappa held in Paris September 26-27, with a Thursday night ball for 600 glitterers. Among the names breathlessly banded in anticipation were Maria Callas, Jack Nicholson, Woody Allen, Charles Aznavour, Francoise Hardy, Michel LeGrand, Bill Wyman and Stephen Stills. A profu-



sion of divertissements are planned, everything from jugglers to itinerant bands of thespians. Sounds like Frank's wondrous Warner Boulevard parade carried to its ultimate extreme. As F.Z. is not making any British appearances on this particular European swing, a lucky handful of London press will be treated to this exceptional junket—or should we say *blancmange*?

I've Got My Own Press Kit To Do. Anybody smart would steer clear of the Greek Street Press Office today. The place is neck-deep in the components of the Ronnie Wood press kit and every able-bodied passer-by has

been conscripted to assemble the prescribed T-shirt, badge, sticker, poster and album into stout cardboard boxes. I unnerved the normally unflappable Janet by asking if bios and photos ought not to go in too. After philosophizing that the press tend to be bored by anything they can't eat, wear or sell, she made the obligatory additions.

Everybody's Sweetheart.

I arrived back from lunch to find the office transformed into a heavenly-smelling florist shop. Every desk bore a vase with a dozen roses (each dozen a different color), a single banana and a little card signed by Neil Young with thanks. Everyone was beaming with bemused pleasure. "What's he thanking you for?" I asked, and they replied, "We think it's for not bothering him."

The Kingfish. The people who haven't heard *Good Old Boys* yet wonder why I keep lurching up to them singing "The Kiiii-ng fish, The Kiiii-ng fish . . ." (my favorite refrain) or "Beware, beware, beware of the naked man." I had to flip a coin with Dave the Rave to see who got to take the white label home. I won, but I brought it back to show good faith. Meanwhile the Real Thing with the Real Sleeve has come in so we can quit squabbling. The enormously popular weekly mag *Time Out* just ran a cover story on Randy Newman calling him "the greatest living composer of popular music in America." The torrent of poker-faced and devastating quotes that could come only from Randy deserve to live on. I'll send a copy to Sol and Ruby so they can pick a few out for you.

—SHELLEY BENOIT

Felix Goes to Bearsville

At Least He Didn't Change His Name. Once lead vocalist and keyboarder for The Rascals, Felix Cavaliere's all revved up and ready to roll as a star solo. He's been living in Connecticut, recording in New York City and visiting in Woodstock/Bearsville, New York, where everyone's proud to announce he's joined the teddy's artist roster. Another giant from the Bears' inner circle, Todd Rundgren, produced his first go-it-alone LP for Bearsville, *Felix*



Cavaliere, which by now is in your local record store. In a *Cash Box* interview with David Budge, Felix said, "I can't say enough good things about Todd. He's much more spiritually inclined than he's given credit for and he's an electronics genius. He mixed my entire album in 10 hours spread over two nights. I've never encountered anyone like him."

Tell the Truth. Ruby's Quote-of-the-Week-Award's currently winging out to Frank Zappa for the last sentence of his official biography, "I think in contemporary America most artists try to make records so that they can eat." According to WB's Promotion Department Hotline, the Zappas, at least, should be able to eat out more often. "Don't Eat the Yellow Snow" was lifted from *Apostrophe* and played

on AM radio in three major markets (Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Buffalo) even before WB and Disc-Reet let it fly as a 45. This is a particularly unprecedented move these days as those AM playlists get smaller and tighter everyday. Now that "Yellow Snow" (that's where the huskies go) is in true single form, watch for the smash. Maybe Frank will take us all out to dinner.

Laughing Stock of the Gridiron Set. That's us. At least as far as Volume 6, Number 29 is concerned. You might've noticed (blush, cough) the reference to "Dixie Howl, a real football player from the South," in Randy Newman's album article. Even though we here at *Circular* feel it looks better as "Howl," the man's name was actually "Howell," as in Bell and. Special thanks to the tallest man in Artist Relations (coincidentally, the Director of that Department) for pointing this out and Oh-Shut-Up to all of you who've already fired postcards this way, hoping to be first to scream "Mistake!" Naturally we've cancelled the NFL's subscription to *Circular*; the thought of all those good old boys howelling in the locker room was just too embarrassing.

The Sun Never Sets on Gordon Lightfoot. Memos and cables are flying between Burbank and Australia like paper airplanes at a rock concert. Gordon Lightfoot's 33 1/3 *Sundown* just hit the Golden mark on that continent for \$1 million worth of business. The world waits while Gordon works on his now-scheduled-for-release-in-January LP in Canada. Lenny Waronker's there too, of

course, waiting and working with Mr. L. No word on what the album's title is apt to be.

Ladies and Gentlemen, DR. DEMENTO. Pretty soon Everytown, U.S.A., will be hearing our amazing doctor of discs on



local radio. His up till now exclusively-Los-Angelesian radio show is beaming down from nearly 50 radio stations, including (only one to a town, now) Seattle, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Milwaukee, Denver, Cleveland, Washington (D.C.), Nashville, Las Vegas, Miami, Wichita, Albuquerque, Portland, Baltimore, Chattanooga, San Diego and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Grand Rapids, Michigan? Well, it's Gerald Ford's hometown.

Bailing Out. The last thing in the world Ruby would want is for her readers to think the *Circ* staff had given the heave to a crucial followup story. You'll remember the item, I'm sure, from the issue of September 16. The cause for all the scribbling was an underground water main whose untimely bursting flooded the basement of Warner Records' nearly-completed New Building with three feet of water. While a full two weeks have passed since then, *Circ* still doesn't have the whys and hows. Please bear with Ruby.

Two Final Announcements. Ruby's-Radio-Station-of-the-Week-Award goes to all those whose

crackling wattage will carry Dr. Demento into the homes of millions. Thank God, too. Now we won't have to do all that belabored explaining. *Record World* wins the Favorite-Trade-Rag-of-the-Week Award because it didn't arrive this morning, therefore I didn't have to read it today when I was supposed to compose this column.

Ruby's Run-Ons

• **Anne Marie Micklo International** just touched down at the



Hollywood/Burbank Airport, came straight to *Circular*'s office without pausing for breath and reported, "**Todd Rundgren** slipped onto the Continent for a one-week vacation and ended up the being The Hot Interview of four countries (England, France, Holland and Belgium, which flew journalists into Paris for the honor). Todd has turned macrobiotic and most interviews were conducted over grains. Now he plans to tour Utopia in Europe in spring." • As it turns out, too, she had the pleasure and privilege to view a 45-minute video of **Ron Wood** concerting "somewhere outside London with the best-looking band ever [she said



I could quote her]—**Andy Newmark, Willie Weeks, Keith Richard, Rod Stewart** and the inimitable Mr. W. Absolutely the best promo film we have ever had to work with (may be a U.S. rock special, negotiations going on now), capped by at least four frames of Keith Richard upright, animated and actually smiling.” ♦ **The Traveling Lady** actually met **Urban Gwerder**, who you all remember is the fellow behind the *Zappa Archives*. According to reports, he accompanied the current Zappa Tour and should, therefore, have a lot of history to add to the room in his house where every piece of Frank Zappa’s biographical material is coded and cataloged with the utmost existential care. ♦ **Medical Center Updates** include the fact that although **Uriah Heep’s Gary Thain** did, in fact, recently get a tremendous jolt of electricity

from a faultily-grounded mike, he no longer has amnesia and is no longer mumbling in Swedish. ♦ **More Medical News** on just how poisonous your records can be from *Cash Box*, “A respected medical researcher, **Dr. Irving J. Selikoff**, professor of environmental medicine at the Mount Sinai medical school of New York, in testimony at hearings of the **Senate Commerce Subcommittee on the Environment** suggested that the raw material from which a number of plastic products are made might cause genetic damage and birth defects.” Apparently, too, there’s a **Dr. Joseph Wagoner**, (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) who suggested that vinyl chloride heightens the risk of cancer of the respiratory system, the central nervous system and in blood-forming tissues. Respect Your Records. ♦ **On the Beach, Neil Young’s** latest on Reprise, just went Gold, that is, according to the piratophobic RIAA. ♦ As a special request, Ruby Monday’s Strong-Right-Hand-Award for 1974 goes to **Dave Benjamin**, WEA’s Miami sales manager. This Award is given in utter ignorance for a special performance at WB’s sales meeting September 28 in Atlanta. **The Force** said the salesman would know. ♦ **Even More Than Rod McKuen? Al Mair, Gordon Lightfoot’s** manager and **Attic Records** president, airmailed a clipping which says the artist with the most recordings is **Ms. Lata Mangeshkar**. She’s waxed over 20,000 titles for the **Gramophone Company of India**. ♦ Heh heh, **DiscReet’s Ted Nugent** (of Ted Nugent’s Amboy Dukes) was arrested in Memphis,

said *Record World*, “for indecent exposure when he returned to the stage for an encore dressed in a loin cloth only, and holding a large bow and arrow which was aimed at a flaming skull at the other end of the stage. Nugent got carried away and lost his balance, falling off the stage into the arms of the police. The kids in the audience grabbed him and pushed him back on stage, in time for him to shoot the flaming skull, and to be hauled off by the police . . .” Apparently he was bailed out by

the concert promoters. There has been no confirmation from **DiscReet Records** on this incident. ♦ **Saving the Best for Last**, I’m playing this one absolutely straight. According to *Record World*, **UPI** reports the top three records from **Mainland China** are, #1 “Long Live Chairman Mao,” #2 “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman” and #3 “Oh, How I Love to Carry Manure up the Mountainside for the Commune.” ♦

Vinyl Statistics

Life, birth, death, taxes, subscription renewals, yelling and screaming—the daily drama of people at work in a near-great southern California city (you’d recognize its name in an instant) courses on with the relentless coruscating impact of Jack Daniel’s Old No. 7 . . . and you, the casual reader, have ducats at ringside for the sobering spectacle.

Five records died this week—one of arteriosclerosis, one of multiple burns, one of being left on the back seat to warp while the owner was in Newberry’s buying a bedspread and some coat hangers, one of no airplay, and one of spilled pineapple-grapefruit juice. But somewhere, off in the middle distance, three wee singles were born. They

opened their eyes and howled, and the tumbling, turning permanent-press cycle of our existence was renewed, lest we forget that in the midst of stiffs we are in the midst of hits, and that no name may be scratched from the Big Playlist till all the phone and store reports are in.

SINGLES

SEPTEMBER 25

“**Hands**”/“Jamestown Ferry”—Debbie Dawn—Warner Bros. WBS 8032
 “**Nabucco**”/“Elixir De Amor”—Waldo De Los Rios—Warner Bros. WBS 8034
 “**I’ll Be Your Everything**”/“Blue Water”—Percy Sledge—Capricorn CPS 0209

Laughing at the Differences



This country has often been called the Great Melting Pot, a reference to the process by which people of diverse nationalities are transformed into supposedly homogeneous Americans. This "melting" is a slow process, the very desirability of which is subject to much more serious doubt than it was, say, in 1900.

The juxtaposition of different racial and ethnic groups has at times produced odious tensions and conflicts. It has also produced a great deal of humor. Some of this humor has been of a demeaning kind, springing directly from intergroup conflicts. There are anti-black jokes, anti-Latin jokes and the hardly less obnoxious

Inspirational Verse

Your looks intoxicate me
Even though your folks
hate me,
There's no one like you,
Elenore, really.

—The Turtles
"Elenore"

Polish jokes.

Through the years, most of the best ethnic humor has been produced by members of minority groups themselves. Several socially-aware black comedians of today come instantly to mind: Richard Pryor, Dick Gregory and Franklin Ajaye, to name a few. In the 1940s and 1950s, Jewish audiences were convulsed by the songs of the Barton Brothers, Lee Tully and Mickey Katz, all of whom delighted in deft switches from English to Yiddish and back again, often several times in a single verse.

I'm not sure of the ethnic background of the late Harry Stewart, but the records he made under the name of Yogi Yorgesson from 1949 to 1956 sold like smorgasbord everywhere there were Scandinavians. They were done almost entirely in English, and the strictly ethnic allusions are few, but Yogi's accent alone was hilarious. Since Swedes are not among America's more downtrodden minorities, there was no hint of tension in Yogi's humor. Good clean fun, his records soon became successful in non-Scandinavian strongholds as well.

What about "Nishimoto at the Bat"? Well, that was Harry Stewart too, under the name of Harry Kari (with his Six Saki Sippers). The Harry Kari discs (the best-known of which was "Yokohama Mama") stray over the line into stereotype a little more often than the Yorgessons, but Stewart's accent is still captivating. His lyric-writing is also superb in "Nishimoto," a much freer adaptation of the original "Casey at the Bat" than the 1962 Danny Kaye version

discussed last week. The preliminaries are quickly dismissed, leaving Harry free to concentrate on the climactic moment, at which Nishimoto—just like Casey, and Kaysi—strikes out.

Question for Next Week.

We've all heard Alice Cooper's brilliant incorporation of a nugget from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* into his *School's Out* album ("Gutter Cat Vs. The Jets"). The question is—what artist, now on a Burbank-distributed label, recorded (at an earlier stage of his career) an "East Side Story"?

Boy, that William Stout. What a guy. Not only did William know that Danny Kaye recorded "D-O-D-G-E-R-S Song

(Oh Really? No, O'Malley)"—a piece of information that streaks like a line drive to the heart of Dr. Demento's September 16 question—but he (William) painstakingly adorned the winning postcard with a colored-pencil-and-ballpoint caricature of Kaye that's more than suitable for framing. Luxuriant blond curls, ironic half-smile and arched eyebrows, outsized ears and diminutive neck—I wish this was television, folks, so you could all see it. William, who resides in Hollywood, nets a mint-condition copy of Alice Cooper's *School's Out*, suitable for playing, which is worth a good deal more in the long run than the \$500 art scholarship you get for drawing the fawn on the matchbook.

Anyone can submit an answer to this week's question, but only one or fewer answers can win by being first and correct and getting here within two weeks. That winner gets to pick the *single* album of her or his choice from the Warner Bros./Reprise catalog, available in one different decorator shade wherever records are cataloged, so indicate a preference. Have I mentioned that geographical distance, neatness and originality are considered? Thought not. Keep those arts and letters coming: Dr. Demento, Warner Bros. Records, 3701 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Ca. 91505.

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