

# circular

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“Don’t quote me, but business sucks.”

The Record Business Meets the Recession, page 8.



# Tracking the Doobies



Jeffrey Baxter

John Hartman

Keith Knudsen

Tiran Porter

Pat Simmons

Tom Johnston

by PAUL LAURENCE

Warner Bros. executive producer Ted Templeman's credits include albums by Little Feat, Captain Beefheart, Van Morrison, The Beau Brummels and The Doobie Brothers. All four of the latter group's albums were produced by Templeman, who can be credited with the consistent cleanliness and sophistication of the recordings and with playing a sizable role in the group's achievement of a distinctive sound.

Circular dispatched audio-and-music writer Paul Laurence — who's done this sort of thing a lot, most notably for Recording Engineer/Producer — to talk to Ted Templeman about how The Doobie Brothers' records are made and why they sound the way they do. Excerpts from their conversations follow.

**CIRCULAR:** Were The Doobie Brothers experienced in the studio when you met them?

**TEMPLEMAN:** No. They'd never been in the studio. They all had great big amplifiers and they wanted to play them real loud.

**CIRCULAR:** What things in particular about The Doobie Brothers struck you as strong selling points?

**TEMPLEMAN:** I felt Tommy was very commercial, and it turned out that he was. His voice and guitar rhythm, which were both things that nobody else was doing at the time. Also their background voices, plus good songs. It's hard to find that kind of combination. Usually a group doesn't have that strong a vocal sound, but The Doobie Brothers did. When they hit a big pile of "ooh's" together, you know it's them. The main thing is that they had a nice package — an identifiable kind of track sound, an identifiable lead vocal and identifiable background vocals.

**CIRCULAR:** To what extent did you "mold" The Doobie Brothers' sound? What things are you responsible for?

**TEMPLEMAN:** As far as "molding" their sound goes, it was just a matter of picking out the things that worked best — that sounded the most commercial — and using them. The way they lay out their tunes is pretty much them. Their tunes will all have a couple of verses and then a chorus, and then a slow part before it comes back. They originally worked all that out. As far as their actual sound goes, that's pretty much the way I heard them.

**CIRCULAR:** It seems to me that an important part of the "Doobie Brothers sound" is that low-distortion rhythm guitar, like on "Long Train Runnin'" or "Listen to the Music".

**TEMPLEMAN:** Yeah, well, it really depends on the tune. On "Listen to the Music," you're right — it is very clean. I might be wrong, but I think that was one where we did three tracks. One was the amp, another was a direct and another was just miking the strings. You can really hear the strings clicking away.

**CIRCULAR:** Do you try to keep those three tracks separate till the mix?

**TEMPLEMAN:** It depends on what you're after. You might mix them at the time. Often it's ideal to mix the string track right in with the direct.

**CIRCULAR:** Let's talk about The Doobie Brothers' trebly drum sound. Is that the sound of the kit, or is it happening in the miking or the mix?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Well, it's not a trebly *drum* sound, really — just the top part of the kit. You notice that a lot of the mids on the snares are fat. I often give it a shot at 10, so that the cymbals are bright. To me, a record should have depth and brightness whether it's on a Mickey Mouse record player or a great big set-up. Drums sound good to me that way, where the top part — where it's naturally bright — is bright.



“A record should have depth and brightness whether it’s on a Mickey Mouse record player or a great big set-up.”

**CIRCULAR:** Whose idea was it to have the acoustic guitar play the same part as the electric guitar?

**TEMPLEMAN:** I think it was probably mine. Sometimes we’ll cut a track with an acoustic guitar to get a better feel. Sometimes we end up wiping the acoustic and overdubbing an electric. Maybe we’ll do it with an electric and then overdub an acoustic. It depends.

**CIRCULAR:** How do you get Tom Johnston’s lead guitar sound? That’s a really solid sustain.

**TEMPLEMAN:** A lot of it is because he uses such good amps — usually old Fenders, like Bandmasters and Bassmans. Sometimes we’ve even used a Pignose. As far as the guitar goes, that’s his gold Les Paul on most things — lead and rhythm. We do a fair amount of limiting on him and sometimes even open up a room mike on his guitar to make it “big.”

**CIRCULAR:** I wanted to ask you about the Doobies’ background vocals. It sounds to me like you do three or four passes of the same part and use them all.

**TEMPLEMAN:** Yeah, sometimes we do that. There are really a lot of different ways that we do the background vocals.

**CIRCULAR:** How did you do them on “China Grove,” for example?

**TEMPLEMAN:** On “China Grove” and “Long Train Runnin’,” I think we had Tom and Pat sing the middle note together — in unison — and then we’d double it, and sing the high note in unison and double that, and then have Ti sing in unison with them on the low note and double *that*. If we were after a different sort of effect, like we were on “I Cheat the Hangman,” we’d have all of them sing the different parts for the one track and then double that up. Then maybe we’d stack it and double that too.

**CIRCULAR:** Is it generally a I-III-V harmony pattern?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. Sometimes we double up the octave or put one on the bottom that you might not hear too well.

**CIRCULAR:** I always thought that an important part of their background vocal sound is that Tom participates so much.

**TEMPLEMAN:** That’s what I was getting at when we were talking about “China Grove” and “Long Train Runnin’” — he’s on every note of that harmony. His singing on the background parts is definitely part of their sound.

**CIRCULAR:** What sort of modifications do you make on the lead vocal?

**TEMPLEMAN:** All in all, Tommy’s a pretty hard vocalist to mike because his voice changes from month to month. The edge on his voice is very funny. Sometimes it’s naturally there; other times I get him in front of a mike and it just isn’t. Then I get really unhappy and wait till it comes back. You can’t get it by equalizing. For the microphones, regular 87s are good for him. He has a lot of peaks, so you pretty much have to limit him. A lot of time there might be a 7½ tape slap on the lead voice to make it feel like it’s outdoors. Sometimes even a high-speed delay. We often give him a little mid-range in the mix to fill him out a bit.

**CIRCULAR:** Do you ever do live vocals?

**TEMPLEMAN:** No, never. I guess a lot of that is me, because I like to be able to concentrate on the track. Some artists *have* to do a live vocal, but not The Doobie Brothers. We prefer to lock in the [instrumental] track and then do the vocals, rather than having to worry about both of them at the same time. Also, it’s much easier to control the leakage when you don’t do live vocals.

**CIRCULAR:** What sorts of things do you do to the bass?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Well, first off, you need a good bass. We usually go through a lot of basses when we start an album. Sometimes it takes days. It’s hard to get a bass that sounds really good. We’ve used a different one on almost every album. On the first album, we used a red Rickenbacker from Studio Instrument Rentals. For the second album, I think it was a white Rickenbacker and a Gibson for certain things. A good Fender Precision is generally your best bet. We keep changing instruments because the instruments’ sounds change. If Ti drags one around on the road and brings it into the studio it probably won’t be up to par. Maybe there’ll be harmonics on the lower strings that interfere with the pure tone of the note. Maybe the bridge will need some adjusting or the pickups are bad or the strings are too old or too new.

**CIRCULAR:** What kind of bass player does a group like The Doobie Brothers need?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Somebody who understands dynamics and can keep a consistent level so that you don’t have to limit him so much. Ti is very consistent — the sound of all his notes comes out nice and even. He’s really great with the placement of his notes. He naturally picks the right part of the bass to make a note sound right, rather than being hung up on certain inversions or in areas where it’s easier for him to play that lick but where the note doesn’t sound as good. A guy like Ti can do it whatever way you want. He’s really a fine player and easy to work with.

**CIRCULAR:** Let’s talk about having two drummers in the group.

**TEMPLEMAN:** Okay. After we made the black album, they got their second drummer and started performing with him. On record, they’ve had two drummers since *Toulouse Street*.

**CIRCULAR:** I notice that you usually only use a piece of the second kit, like a snare or a high hat. Does each drummer play the entire kit live in the studio?

**TEMPLEMAN:** It depends on the tune. For example, on “Rockin’ Down the Highway,” we cut the basic track as a nice little package — one guitar, bass and Michael on drums. Then we overdubbed a set of John on just the high hat and the snare. There are certain tunes where we’ll have rehearsed both drummers and they’ll play together. A lot of the time, what we’ll do is have the band lay down the tune real quick when they first come in and then I’ll let the rest of the guys go and just keep the two drummers. Over the monitors in the studio I’ll play them the guitar and the



# Ted Templeman Gives Away Some Secrets

Continued from page 3

bass and we'll do it over and over until we've really worked out the drum part.

**CIRCULAR:** On *Stampede*, were you consciously trying for more of an FM audience?

**TEMPLEMAN:** A lot of it was because they got another guitar player and he really adds a lot to their sound. You get a guy that good and you've got to use him! He doesn't play that balls-out rock & roll/blues that Tommy does but he plays everything else great. He played some really good leads on *Stampede*.

**CIRCULAR:** I've always been intrigued by a band that has radically different kinds of guitarists.

**TEMPLEMAN:** Yeah, that's one of the things I liked about them in the beginning too. Tommy plays that great rhythm guitar, Pat plays good fingerpicking guitar and Jeff plays some incredible solos, so now we've got a three-guitar group. There hasn't been a good one since Moby Grape.

**CIRCULAR:** What do you look for in a single?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Number one, the overall sound. There's something that hits you, whether it's a Stylistics record, Cat Stevens, Led Zeppelin — whoever. Just an overall sound that gets you the first time through. Then it's the lead singer and the song. Also, I must admit that I'm partial to a good rhythm. If you're talking about a general audience, I'd say that's what it is.

**CIRCULAR:** How about hooks?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Well, when you say "hooks," we're almost getting into semantics. A hook for one artist can be very different from a hook for another artist.

**CIRCULAR:** How did "Listen to the Music" measure up? Did you think at the time that it was going to be such a big hit?

**TEMPLEMAN:** Yeah, I thought it could be a hit single. I put it as the first cut on the album and tried to make it real obvious. I had another one that I felt the same way about — a song by Little Feat called "Easy to Slip." I could have sworn that was a hit single!

**CIRCULAR:** Whose idea was it to have the refrain repeating over and over for the fade on "Listen to the Music"?

**TEMPLEMAN:** That wasn't me, that was the group. The reason was that we wanted to keep doing more and more guitars — have little guitar parts coming in and out. It's unnaturally long.

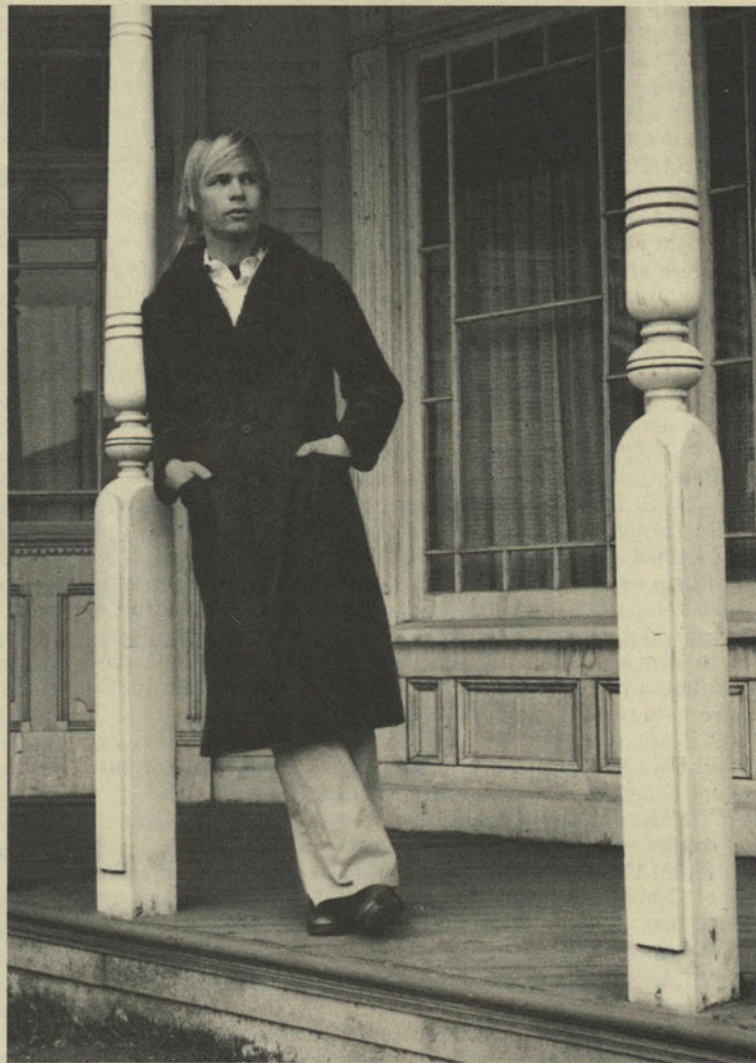
**CIRCULAR:** Was it your idea to put the banjo in?

**TEMPLEMAN:** No, it was Pat's. The combination of that and the steel drums gave it a nice edge, I think.

**CIRCULAR:** Do you consciously shoot for a certain number of singles per album?

**TEMPLEMAN:** We always try to make singles, but usually within the context of making a good record. Offhand, the only time where we thought, "Let's make a single" was "Take Me in Your Arms."

**CIRCULAR:** Do you try to establish a tentative post-album release order or do you wait to hear which songs the stations are playing?



Ted Templeman

**TEMPLEMAN:** It's usually safer to put the album out without a single and see what the response is. Sometimes, if I feel really strongly, I'll put one out in front, like Van Morrison's "Wild Night" or "Take Me in Your Arms." Usually, I'll have a couple that I think *might* be singles. It really depends on a lot of things: the song, the timing, the radio play. I listen to what the promotion department has to say, too. You have to try to feel all that out. ●



# A Heard of Doobies

**Thundering Hooves.** Summertime and the cattle are restless. In fact, there's to be a stampede all over England's



southern coastal resorts lasting five July days. A couple of cowboys, suitably mounted, will clatter through the streets from Clacton to Torquay distributing from their saddlebags vouchers that will get the bearer more than a dollar off any Doobie Brothers album he fancies. Meanwhile, the dudely Doobies' *Stampede* LP continues sure-footedly to tread the British charts.

**Hot Ashe.** Although it is already ancient history, I must say what a positive revelation it was to see Arthur Ashe beat Jimmy Connors at sunny Wimbledon (while the tennis fans there ate their way through a staggering one ton of strawberries per day). Arthur's exhilarating, exemplary game prompted one British sports commentator to observe that whereas Ashe was a UCLA graduate, Connors was a UCLA drop-out (suggesting that the better you cram, the better you slam?), but like drop-outs before him, Jimmy may have

better luck with his new recording career. Now that test match cricket has taken over from tennis, I've heard several people wish aloud that Arthur would take up the bat and play for England, which team needs all the help it can get.

**Muldaur Power.** Maria Muldaur is answering countless prayers by arriving (at last) in London on July 21 to begin a week-long residency at Ronnie Scott's club. She will have warmed up in Europe at the Montreux Jazz Festival where she'll appear with the Count Basie Orchestra. For Ronnie's she'll rely on her regular, six-person American backing band. Before leaving London she will record a half-hour BBC-TV



*In Concert* to be televised this fall. In between sets, she'll juggle with a heroic interview schedule. Even as I write this our Moira B. is biting her lip at the number of papers demanding exclusives. *Bugs, Circular's* British sibling, has had speedy (some even feverish) responses to its July contest,

the tempting prize for which is a night out at Ronnie's to see and hear Maria in the glorious flesh.

**Loafing.** The mysterious George Baker is making a lightning promotional visit to England on July 21 and 22. He is the prime mover of The George Baker Selection, who brought you "Paloma Blanca," the bouncy single that has sent Europeans into a buying frenzy. George is a Dutchman



who reputedly gets his song inspirations while roaring around the (flat) countryside on his big old Harley. Although I'd never heard of him till WB released the "Paloma" single, the rest of the planet certainly had. He's had eight gold singles, five gold albums — even a gold cassette — and when he appears on TV during his English foray, he'll be presented with a gold loaf (instead of the conventional disc) for Dutch sales of his hit LP *Hot Baker* (get it?).

**Aspitude Dancing.** South Africa's leading striptease dancer was just fined some

500 dollars for dancing naked with a python (not to be confused with John Cleese or Eric Idle . . .) at a private gathering of pigeon fanciers.

**Encore.** Malcolm McDowell, the paisley-eyed star of *A Clockwork Orange* and *O Lucky Man*, was seriously upstaged the other night at the West End theatre where he is currently appearing in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. During Malcolm's big seduction scene, a pair of real-life lovers in a box went at it, chairs and all. The desperate actors got so distracted they sent a message offstage requesting that the curtain be brought down. When the management caught up with the concupiscent couple at last, the pair allowed demurely that they'd finished and were going anyway.

— SHELLEY BENOIT

## Top Ten

Based on Warner Bros. sales figures for the two-week period June 30-July 11.

1. Neil Young/Tonight's the Night
2. Uriah Heep/Return to Fantasy
3. Frank Zappa/One Size Fits All
4. America/Hearts
5. James Taylor/Gorilla
6. The Doobie Bros./Stampede
7. Good Vibrations - Best of The Beach Boys
8. Seals & Crofts/I'll Play for You
9. Ron Wood/Now Look
10. Curtis Mayfield/America Today



# At Home on the Emotional Range

by JOSHUA BAER

The accuracy gets bold with you. By the time you hear the second cut ("Way 'Cross Georgia") on the first side, David Sanborn's gift for melodic exactitude has taken over. You're here to stay. Promises of the beauty in store for you are made almost immediately, and as you move through the balance of Side One (*Duck Ankles, Funky Banana*), it becomes clear that these promises are going to be kept.

Side One closes with *The Whisperer*, composed by Don Grolnick. Mild-mannered, at home in any situation, *The Whisperer* speaks with restraint — gentle, narrative lines are payed out like nets. When the nets are gathered in, David Sanborn's alto saxophone cuts loose with a series of tight, high blasts and heads for home. Being at sea is a prevailing mood, and *The Whisperer* concerns itself with elements which inevitably confront men on boats: the music passes through storms, is becalmed, lays its catch on ice and comes into port as lyrically as it put out to sea.

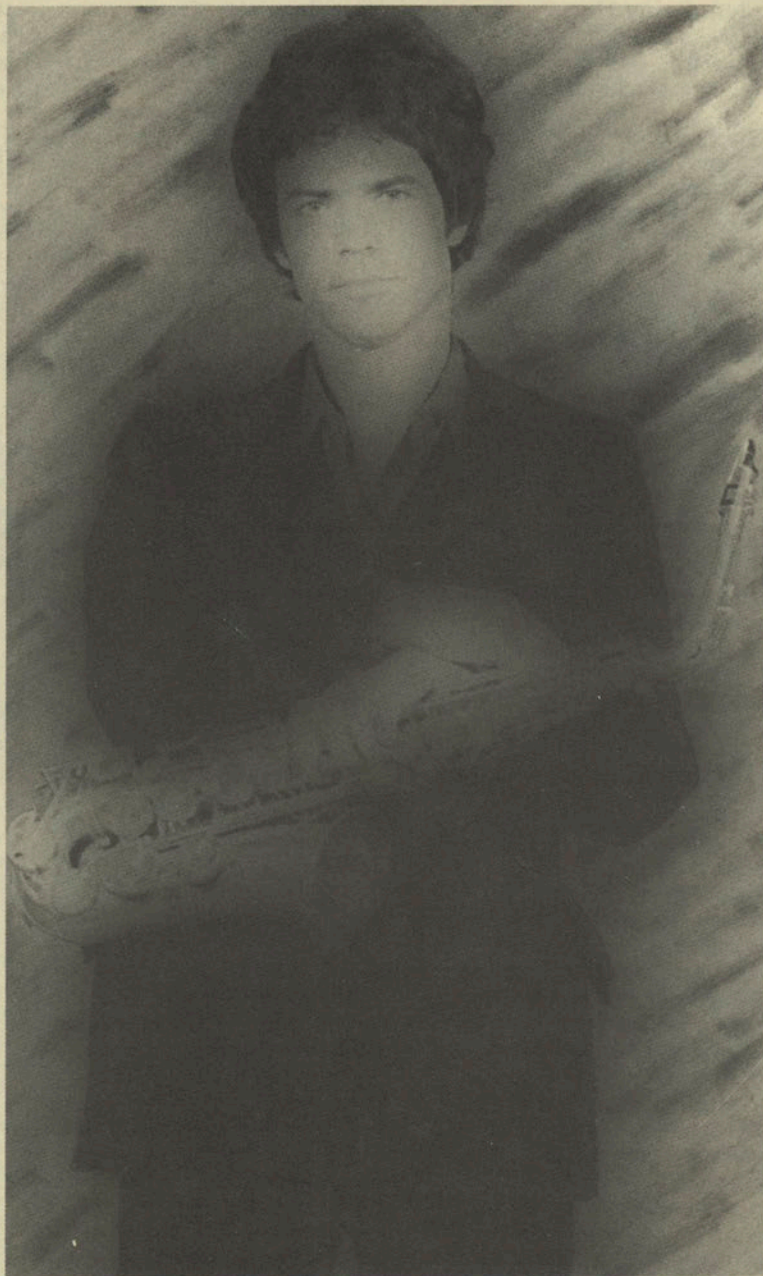
The delicacy and confidence which David Sanborn brings to his alto are rooted in nothing less than a lifetime of experience.

"I had polio when I was five; I spent time in an iron lung and the whole thing. It was my

doctor's suggestion that I take up a wind instrument as physical therapy, to strengthen my lungs."

Today, David, his lungs and his alto are beyond needing therapy. He has worked and recorded with Albert King, Paul Butterfield, Cat Stevens, Paul Simon, Chick Corea, David Bowie and James Taylor; Bowie and Stevie Wonder have used him on concert tours; American Airlines, Schlitz, Welch's Grape Juice and Timex have David's playing behind their advertisements. David says that "when you do a jingle, the sessions are short. I don't think too much about it while it's happening, but maybe people can pick up a good association with the product by hearing my alto behind it; it's hard to say."

Advertising work has taught him to be responsive and precise when backing up other artists — "all the guys who write jingles are very specific about what they want you to deliver" — but while his precision has been in and out of recording studios on a regular basis, David prefers a concert or club situation to the technical restrictions and possibilities of recording. He's delighted with what happened during the *Taking Off* sessions but concedes that "most studio work is fairly limiting for me. In a live performance, you aren't concerned with the length of the takes, you're a little more relaxed psychologically; I don't know, but it seems like there's always the danger of over-dubbing in a studio. All my playing on *Taking Off* was improvised; I was working with songs and



## Inspirational Verse

This place sure needs a  
woman's touch,  
And come to think of it,  
so do I.

—Jake Holmes  
"Suitcase Room"



people I knew well and really liked — it was a live session and I think, generally, that live is better. You lose feeling when you over-dub. You lose the immediacy. There are times when that kind of thing is called for and there are people who are really good at it, but I wanted to work on one sound and do an excellent job on that, instead of branching out and bringing a lot of different styles into the thing. You lose people when you cover too much ground.”

John Court, producer of *Taking Off*, says that “when people ask me why there aren’t any voices on the album, I just tell them all the singing is in David’s alto. Working with David, with the Brecker Brothers and with the other people on the album was such a pleasure. They’re all solid professionals and it really shows. David’s capacity for depth is the key to everything. As soon as you hear him, you realize what an incredible emotional range he’s got. He’s even taking voice lessons now, just to get a better feel for the lyric potential of his alto.”

David’s attitude toward the career in front of him mirrors his playing on *Taking Off*: it comes down to a controlled restlessness, a restlessness satisfied by David’s reliance on the wisdom of following impulses.

“Being in New York, taking all these different jobs: it’s like being in school. I’m playing with the Pointer Sisters tomorrow night, I’m supposed to be working with Chick Corea pretty soon and I’m doing some composing on my own, maybe for a future

album. The best thing about right now is that nobody knows what’s happening. That’s good for musicians, very good. When the chance to do *Taking Off* came along, I just got some close friends together and it happened. Dave Matthews, for instance. Dave used to arrange for James Brown. *Taking Off* was originally his idea. Everything went smoothly. And Randy Brecker is such an intelligent player and writer — working with people like that is the best thing for me now.”

“It Took a Long Time,” composed and arranged by Randy Brecker, opens Side Two. Balance is all over the cut. The shifting rhythms confront each other, an argument ensues and David’s careful phrasing resolves the exchange into an agreement. You can dance to “It Took a Long Time” but you can also do housework. With the album playing your chores turn out to be as effortless as Don Grolnick’s excellent piano work — everything in the sink gets rinsed, dried, and put away; by the end of the cut, the windows have been washed, the floors have been waxed and the oven door no longer squeaks. A suite of three cuts follows — “Black Light,” “Blue Night,” “Flight” — composed and arranged by Dave Matthews. Sanborn’s usual restraint becomes a barrage of short solos but the accuracy stays whole. You can lose yourself and everything you take for granted in this music; the suite advances with certainty and barely rests between cuts. Time seems to have stepped out for a moment. You spend a good

“The best thing right now,” according to David Sanborn, “is that nobody knows what’s happening. That’s good for musicians, very good.”

45 minutes at the magazine rack in the drug store before remembering that you left the house an hour ago to go for a walk. It’s dark when you leave the drug store and start to walk home. Saxophone music is coming out of every passing car. The volume fades and increases with the number of cars, but before long you come to a boulevard where the traffic is constant and you can hear everything. The saxophone is an alto and its courage takes the form of light solos, deep solos, solos without arrogance or pretension.

The band behind the alto

shows the professional courtesy of maintaining strength while avoiding interference. At a busy intersection the immediacy of these rhythms puts your intentions on hold. It would be no trouble at all to spend the night at the edge of this crosswalk, watching the traffic light run through its colors. The saxophonist collects himself into a pause. His band waits in the wings, gathering strength. The wings start to move. There is a rush of accompaniment. The alto slips back into place, the traffic light changes and the music takes off. **C**

## Vinyl Statistics

I can’t remember the guy’s name but he used to have a fantastic memory. Could memorize anything you told him. Was married at the time and he used to come over, bring his wife and they’d sit there all evening over a bottle of Calso and swap stories about people he barely knew: waiters in cafes he’d been in only once, strangers on trains—one night he did a couple hours on faces he’d seen in the crowd when he was watching the 1968 Republican and Democrat conventions on TV! He had a real thing for numbers, dates, serial numbers. You give him a list like this rundown of the singles released by Warner Bros. and affiliated labels in the past two weeks and he’d have it down in nothing flat. Amazing guy.

### Singles JULY 9

“I Believe I’m Gonna Love You”/“The Only Couple on the Floor”—Frank Sinatra—Reprise RPS 1335

“Anybody Out There Wanna Be a Daddy”/“Somewhere Down the Road (There’s a Country Girl)”—Kitty Wells—Capricorn CPS 0240

### JULY 16

“Get Sexy”/“I Believe I Can”—Paul Kelly—Warner Bros. WBS 8120

“Get Sexy” (Long and short version)—Paul Kelly—Warner Bros. PRO 606 (Disco DJ)

“Who Loves You”/“Who Loves You” (Disco version)—Four Seasons—Warner Bros. WBS 8122

“Nothin’ Heavy”/“Baby, You’re Not a Legend”—David Bellamy—Warner Bros. WBS 8123

“Do the Dog”/“Thousands of Girls”—Martin Mull—Capricorn CPS 0241

“Wouldn’t It Be Nice”/“Caroline, No”—The Beach Boys—Reprise RPS 1336



# The Record Business Meets the Recession

*For a while it appeared that the general economic downturn that's been plaguing the industrialized world would bypass the record industry. Record sales in 1974 outpaced the previous year's figures by a wide margin even as national and international economic indicators took sickening dives.*

*But in 1975 — just as overall indicators started to look positive again — the record business became a belated victim of the recession/inflation behemoth. Sales sagged; returns zoomed (records are generally whole-saled on a 100% consignment basis; i.e., retailers can return any or all unsold goods). It's not the end of the industry's world, but volume and profits are undeniably down. Firings and other cutbacks proliferate; hirings and signings wither. Interested in how an industry accustomed to accelerating growth reacts to a levelling of sales, Circular asked David Rensin and Ken Barnes to investigate.*

## "Don't Quote Me, But Business Sucks."

by DAVID RENSIN

In a business where constant hype and manufactured enthusiasm are fixtures, it's not surprising that in bad times optimistic predictions are handed out wholesale—"for the record"—

while the less encouraging reality is discussed in private. The trade press, for example, balks at printing a realistic appraisal of the current sales picture.

However, one reputable trade staffer who wishes to remain anonymous was willing to level with me:

"We're reluctant to talk about all this officially because of our obvious dependency on record companies for advertisements. The nature of the business is to promote itself so we act like Polyannas. But let me assure you that everyone who needs to know how bad it is knows. Cash registers give very valid reports. The hard facts are that we were the last to feel the effects of the economic slump, and we'll likely be the last ones out.

"Business sucks. Only the hits are selling. A number one single is off 40% in sales from last year and album sales have dropped too. What's happened is that number one albums stay up there longer and drop rapidly from the top 20 down. There's no middle level anymore; what was once a curve is now a peak and collapse. Unit sales are off, although gross revenue has picked up somewhat because of the \$1.00 list price increase.

"New albums seem to sell well initially and then just sit around. What's really selling is greatest hits packages. *John Denver's Greatest Hits* is doing so well it will probably surpass Carole King's *Tapestry* as the all-time biggest-selling album."

One factor standing in the way of dealing with the problems of a declining economy is an old saw that serves to buoy a lot of spirits: "The entertainment industry (read: record companies) does well in times of economic turmoil." But reliance on historical analogies proved shortsighted at best.

"Those kind of statements don't hold water anymore," explained Ed Rosenblatt, vice president and director of national sales and promotion for Warner Bros. Records. "There have been changes. Movies cost \$3.50 now, not a nickel. Besides, there's inflation in addition to depression. It's just brave talk." **Then Again . . .** But Rosenblatt doesn't paint the future totally black.

"I would like to play down the negative aspects. At year's end we might end up having sold as much as we're used to. It will just have taken longer because initial layouts are not as huge."

Warner Bros. Director of Merchandising Adam Somers agrees. "Instead of dumping a million units on the market, selling 500,000 and having to take 500,000 back, it would be better to sell less. If I was in charge, I might not release another album all year. It may be conservative spending, but we would also be here next year. Actually, Christmas and Thanksgiving may well prove to be our saviors."

Perhaps. But workers have been laid off at every record company of any size, including Warners, to compensate for a failure to generate predicted

profits. Columbia has yet to lift a hiring ceiling put into effect a few years ago. Motown and United Artists have had major shakeups and Capitol cut back at the beginning of 1975.

Artist rosters are being trimmed of dead weight. John Babcock, Columbia/Epic's West Coast Director of Artist Relations, explained the situation at his company.

"We have a general roster cleaning on a yearly basis, but we're still signing *and* breaking lots of acts like Dan Fogelberg, Minnie Riperton and Janis Ian. We're also strong in black and country music."

Pat Siciliano, Epic's West Coast Publicity head, adds: "We have an aggressive signing policy and our new bands get plenty of money for ads and promotion. But we work on a policy of break 'em or dump 'em. Sounds tough, but it works. We're getting a lot more return for our money."

### Many Unhappy Returns.

A big problem for the record business is the enormous number of albums being returned to distributors. Racked accounts in major department stores have difficulty competing with the ever-growing chains of retail outlets.

Rosenblatt: "We have an ambivalent situation. Retailers are doing okay, controlling their inventory and holding up volume. The problem is with the racks. The department-store big shots finally realized the economic news was on the front page and no longer behind



the comics, so they cut inventory and increased returns. And rack accounts are frequently out of stock in catalog items because we can't service them enough. The consumer sees that."

Stu Burnat, director of marketing and merchandising at Musical Isle of America, a leading independent distribution company and national rack jobber, seconded the thought. "Business has been rotten. We had a pickup in mid-June because of a few majors like McCartney and Elton selling, but the catalogs have been the shits and we've been crippled by returns. We're under pressure to take the catalog out if we want the new stuff in. It's a constant fight."

Live shows are also undergoing changes. Local promoters Steve Wolf and Jim Rissmiller insist that while they understand the business' problems, it hasn't been hard on them as yet. "We do almost as many concerts as usual," says Rissmiller. "The ticket prices are a bit higher but we have the same relative degree of success."

**Fear of the Unknown.** But Columbia/Epic's Babcock feels an unknown act's chances of getting bookings are steadily decreasing since the third-billed spot has been eliminated from most shows. "The only place left to play is a club and here in Los Angeles they seem to be having problems," he said. "The Troubador is struggling and the Whisky is closed. The Starwood, though, is being viewed as an

alternative and, fortunately, its business is brisk." The Starwood can handle a greater capacity than either the Whisky or the Troubador.

"The bands with good product, like the Eagles and Elton, still sell out," Wolf says. "The ones with bad product don't. It seems to me highly possible that it's easier for a record company to blame the recession for a band's problems than to say, 'Hey, your album stinks.'"

A product's quality seems to be the one consideration raised by most everyone we spoke to. There was a general feeling that today's music just didn't contain anything exciting or fresh and that it was just fate that caused the recession to coincide with the emergence of an artistic wasteland.

"What we need," says Motown's merchandising head Pete Senoff, "is just one new phenomenon to lift us out of the doldrums and get people back into the stores."

**Maybe, Maybe Not.** Warner Bros. Executive Director for Label Management Don Schmitzerle only half agrees. "True, there are too many records and not enough artists in the marketplace, but we can't look for a Messiah to change everything. We can't look to the overnight sensations of the past to rescue us in the long run. From here on out we must rely on slow, sensible, gradually ascending careers."

"We have to aggressively expand the marketplace," insists

"Everyone who needs to know how bad it is knows," says one trade-paper staffer. "Cash registers give very valid reports."

WB's Adam Somers. "We have to get the record buyers 30 and older by expanding into progressive jazz, the black market and other areas. We ought to advertise with regard to the concept of positioning; that is, position against people spending that dollar for concerts or movies and show how records are a better buy. Of course, we've got to keep developing new talent and find the balance somewhere."

Rosenblatt again: "Signings must reflect a good street knowledge and a view of where things will be instead of where they are now. Music is evolutionary, not revolutionary."

The record business and all its auxiliary functions have not come to a permanent standstill, but appear to be experiencing a period of no growth. Though it's in contradiction to the growth rate upon which the industry has been built, the situation is not unworkable. Solutions can be found and hopefully, once the recession lifts, decision makers will not revert to old habit patterns and obsolete answers.

**Cheer Up.** Of course, if this all still bothers you, perhaps you can take heart in the positive thinking of an independent distributor, Record Merchandising's Sid Talmadge. "I don't think the economy has affected business at all. Records are the cheapest form of entertainment during depression years and I've got big hopes for Christmas. Look, I'm a perennial optimist."

Or the realism of WB's Somers: "I don't think we can sell records like cans of tomatoes. We have to create the market for 20 or 30 new items at a time; otherwise no one wants them. We have to make it happen."

## Phraser Fails to Finger Flak Famine

by KEN BARNES

"The industry's in a slump," *Circular's* editor tells me. "What I want from you is a personal reaction. As a rock writer, how has the slump affected the quality and quantity of the promotional material you get?"

Quite a coup this will be, think I, suavely inverting my syntax. I'll be getting down to the real "bottom line" — the slump's effect on the backbone of the industry, its verbal vertebrae (nice phrase, I compliment myself; I'll use it), the rock critics.

I determine therefore to analyze the quality and quantity of my mailbox stuffings over the next fortnight. At the end of two weeks I am stymied. It looks about the same, I think (I have given up syntax inversion for the duration of the slump). The same number of

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# How's Business?

Continued from page 9

records, the same delays and warp percentages. As for supplementary materials, there is no apparent dearth of Gold Record announcements, Z.Z. Top itineraries and new official photos of Helen Reddy ("This photo should be used for any future need and all the previous photos you have on Helen should be discarded").

In fact I get a bonus of 23 hate letters from *Rolling Stone* readers enraged by a recent review, which throws me into a three-day funk.

Obviously this personal avenue of investigation is a bust. Far from daunted, I call heads of publicity at various record companies and solicit their opinions.

I start with Charlie Coplen at Columbia, who genially informs me that CBS has so much hot new product coming up that sales are sure to zoom. Smooth answer, I have to admit, submitting to a spiel on some new big-push group called the Basement Tapes. He goes on to say it would be "a very serious mistake to cut back on publicity operations with all the product we have. There is a definite focus on budgets now, but no serious cutbacks. Let me sum it up—we've gone from a 5-drink to a 3-drink maximum."

Now I can tell I'm on the scent of something big. If a monolith like Columbia is cutting back on liquor intake, imagine the situation at a smaller label, like Island. There, Jeff Walker minimizes the slump's effect: "We have no huge sellers yet; most of our albums have steady sales, to die-hard fans who'd buy them despite the recession." "We have

a policy of keeping our mailing list as small as possible. I've always sent records on a limited basis to key press. I can't see where I'd cut back further."

Doreen Lauer at A&M tells me up front, "I've got no secrets," so I figure I'll really get the scoop this time. Have you cut back your mailing list, I ask. "No, it's constantly increasing. I have been categorizing the list, not sending out every record to every writer. But that just makes good sense. We've always been conscious of economy, but it's basically the same as it has been."

I add up the score and it hits me that the slump hasn't had much impact to speak of on publicity departments. Some story, I think—and begin to wonder if there is a slump at all. But further discreet inquiries indicate all is not well. Singles volume is up to 40% off, with limited airplay and the \$1.29 list price seriously endangering the species. Sound tracks and traditional MOR are down, quadrasonic is zilch, and while superstars are in great sales shape, marginal artists are imperiled. Some companies are instituting freezes on new signings, others on new hirings.

It's a gloomy picture, but you wouldn't know it from the industry's public attitude. As I wrap up the case, I tell myself I need one forthright comment from an influential but impartial industry nabob. So I call Mark Shipper, editor of *Radio & Records* and a candid sort of fellow. In my most authoritative journalistic manner I ask him, "Have you any forthright

comments, general or specific, regarding the alleged significant downward alteration in current record-buying patterns?" His answer says it for a lot of people: "No."

## Business Doesn't Suck

by STAN CORNYN

In search of perspective at this time of Recession, *Circular's* staff (which has an average age of 12) turned for solace to Stan Cornyn, Warners' Senior VP and a man who's been through things, as his average age is 42.

Cornyn commented, "Although I don't appreciate being cast as *Circular's* Maharishi, I hardly feel the year 1975 compares with 1481, the year of the Black Plague.

"There are, to use the language of our hallways, uppers to be had."

"For one thing, the record business has barely tapped its potential audience. This business will still hustle in such areas as video discs, cable audio sales and direct mail."

"And when it comes to the present, the record industry, compared to most industries, is hardly on its ass. What isn't down? You creeps at *Circular* must be spoiled. Don't blame the record business. It hasn't fallen on hard times. It just isn't insulated from the rest of the economy."

"When there's money around, then the whole world'll be in gear again. Until then, the record business has discontinued

its ambition to put promotional tee-shirts on everyone south of Edmund Muskie. A few priorities like that we can do without anyway."

Cornyn then looked *Circular* straight in the paragraph and said, "Don't quote me, but Warners is still breaking Emmylou Harris and Graham Central Station, to name two." Then, drawing on a wisdom born of 17 years of working for Warner Bros. Records, Cornyn stated: "Now get out of here and get back to work." ●

### Circ Skimps; Ruby to Return

*Circular* is not just an observer of the current spasm of corner-cutting in the record industry; it's a victim. In an effort to Hold Up Our End as hard times go by, *Circ* is depriving itself — for the duration anyway — of the services of the fashionable Laurel Canyon design studio and Fairfax Avenue typesetting house that have served it so well for so long. Paste-up is being handled by WB's own (already over-burdened) art department and the type you survey is no longer real live lead slug impressions but IBM Composer cold type, the product of a process involving, we are told, typewriters with balls. Ruby Monday hasn't been axed from the budget, though; she's on vacation this biweek and returns next issue.



# Sorry, Babe, But I Can't Stay . . . I Gotta Make It to Atlanta by the Break of Day

## America

8/3 Hollywood Bowl  
8/8 Ravinia Music Festival, Chicago  
8/9 Coliseum, Ft. Wayne, Indiana  
8/10 Mississippi River Festival, Edwardsville, Illinois  
8/11 Illinois State Fair, Springfield  
8/13 Cumberland County Coliseum, Fayetteville, North Carolina  
8/14 Carolina Coliseum, Columbia, South Carolina  
8/22 CNE, Toronto  
8/24 Central Park, New York City  
8/25 War Memorial, Syracuse, New York  
8/26 Saratoga Springs, New York  
8/29 Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul  
8/31 DuQuoin State Fair, Illinois

## Beau Brummels

7/21-23 Great South East Music Hall, Atlanta  
7/25-27 Amazing Grace, Evanston, Illinois  
7/30-8/2 Teddy's, Milwaukee

## Elvin Bishop

7/21-23 The Bottom Line, New York City  
7/24 Macon Barbeque, Georgia

## Black Sabbath

7/22 "Midnight Special" Taping, Los Angeles  
7/24 Municipal Auditorium, Atlanta  
7/25 Coliseum, Savannah, Georgia  
7/26 Civic Center, Lakeland, Florida  
7/27 West Palm Beach Auditorium  
7/31 Spectrum, Philadelphia  
8/1 Cobo Hall, Detroit  
8/2 Civic Center, Baltimore  
8/3 Brown Stadium, Providence, Rhode Island  
8/22 Civic Auditorium, San Antonio  
8/23 San Houston Coliseum, Houston  
8/24 Dallas Memorial  
8/26 Municipal Auditorium, El Paso  
8/27 Civic Center, Albuquerque  
8/28 Community Center Arena, Tucson  
8/30 Earl Warren Community Center, Sacramento  
8/31 Winterland, San Francisco

## Bonaroo

7/24 Capital Center, Largo, Maryland  
7/25 Auditorium, Greenville, North Carolina  
7/26 Coliseum, Charlotte, North Carolina  
7/27 County Coliseum, Fayetteville, North Carolina  
7/29-8/2 Good Earth, Boulder

## George Carlin

8/28-31 Mill Run, Niles, Illinois

## The Doobie Brothers

8/30 Coliseum, New Haven, Connecticut  
8/31 Roosevelt Stadium, Jersey City, New Jersey

## Graham Central Station

7/22 Roxy Theatre, Los Angeles  
8/1 Carolina College, Columbia, South Carolina  
8/2 Scope, Norfolk, Virginia  
8/3 Coliseum, Greensboro, North Carolina  
8/7 Capital Center, Largo, Maryland  
8/8 Civic Arena, Pittsburgh  
8/9 Spectrum, Philadelphia  
8/10 Coliseum, Richmond  
8/13 Hare Arena, Dayton, Ohio  
8/14 Public Hall, Cleveland  
8/15 Convention Center, Louisville  
8/16 Arie Crown Theatre, Chicago  
8/17 Market Square Arena, Indianapolis  
8/22 Savannah  
8/23 Coliseum, Jacksonville  
8/24 Jai Alai, Miami  
8/25 Jai Alai, Tampa  
8/30 New York City

## Arlo Guthrie

7/25 Central Park, New York City  
8/6 Mississippi River Festival, Edwardsville, Illinois  
8/8 Civic Center, Charleston, West Virginia  
8/9 Temple University, Philadelphia  
8/10 University of Delaware, Newark

## Emmylou Harris

7/21 Place de Nations, Montreal  
7/22 Tanglewood, Lenox, Massachusetts  
7/27 Red Rocks Theatre, Denver

## Impressions

7/21-22 Electric Ballroom, Atlanta  
7/25 Albany, Georgia  
7/26 La Grange, Georgia  
8/1-7 McVicker Theatre, Chicago

## Doug Kershaw

7/26 Love Field, Dallas  
8/2 Wyoming Fair & Rodeo Grounds, Casper  
8/9 Cairo Fair, Hunter, New York  
8/11 Montana State Fair, Billings  
8/23 Freedom Park, Big Rapids, Michigan  
8/31 Southeast Fairgrounds, Atlanta

## Little Feat

7/26-28 Fox Venice Theatre, Venice, California

## Hirth Martinez

7/21 Roxy Theatre, Los Angeles

## The Meters

7/21-26 Boarding House, San Francisco  
7/27-28 Cobo Hall, Detroit  
7/30 Omni, Atlanta  
7/31 Coliseum, Greensboro, North Carolina

## Natural Four

7/21-22 Electric Ballroom, Atlanta  
7/25 Albany, Georgia  
7/26 La Grange, Georgia

## Bonnie Raitt

8/13 Temple Music Festival, Ambler, Pennsylvania  
8/16 Millerton Centennial Celebration, New York  
8/19 Wolf Trap Music Festival, Vienna, Virginia

## Todd Rundgren

7/23 Amarillo Civic Center, Texas  
7/24 Will Rogers Auditorium, Ft. Worth  
7/25 Municipal Auditorium, Shreveport, Louisiana  
7/26 Mississippi Coliseum, Jackson  
7/29 West Palm Beach Civic Auditorium  
7/30 Curtis Hixon Hall, Tampa  
8/6 Place de Nations, Montreal  
8/9 Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto  
8/10 National Art Center, Ottawa  
8/12 Pine Knob Theatre, Detroit  
8/15 Stamford Catholic High School, Connecticut  
8/16 Convention Center, Asbury Park, New Jersey  
8/17 Temple Music Festival, Ambler, Pennsylvania  
8/25 Shaeffer Festival, Central Park, New York City  
8/27 Calderon Theatre, Hempstead, Long Island

## Frank Sinatra

8/15-16 Pine Knob Theatre, Detroit  
8/19 Merriweather Post Pavilion, Washington, D.C.  
8/22-23 Garden States Art Center, New Jersey  
8/26 Performing Arts Center, Saratoga, New York  
9/8-20 Uris Theatre, New York City

## Slade

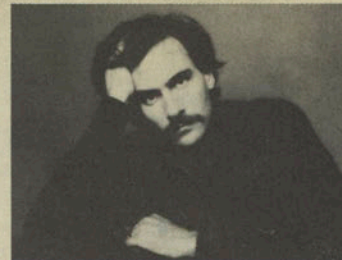
7/21 Shaeffer Festival, Central Park, New York City  
7/24 Music Hall, Hartford, Connecticut  
7/26 Casino, Asbury Park, New Jersey  
7/29 Rivoli Theatre, Indianapolis  
7/30 Arena, Milwaukee  
7/31 Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis  
8/1 Long Beach Arena, California

## Rod Stewart / Faces

8/15 West Palm Beach Auditorium  
8/16 Tampa  
8/17 Omni, Atlanta  
8/19 Civic Center, Ashville, North Carolina  
8/20 Scope, Norfolk, Virginia  
8/22 Roosevelt Stadium, Jersey City, New Jersey  
8/23 Coliseum, Cleveland  
8/24 Meskar Music Park, Evansville, Indiana  
8/26 Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis  
8/27 Mid South Coliseum, Memphis  
8/28 Myrid, Oklahoma City  
8/30 Anaheim Stadium, California  
8/31 Balboa Stadium, San Diego

## James Taylor

7/21 Place de Nations, Montreal  
7/22 Tanglewood, Lenox, Massachusetts  
7/26 Salt Palace, Salt Lake City



7/27 Red Rocks Theatre, Denver  
7/30-8/2 Universal Amphitheatre, Universal City, California

## Uriah Heep

7/31 War Memorial, Buffalo  
8/1 Saginaw Civic Center, Michigan  
8/2 Convention Center, Louisville  
8/3 Cobo Hall, Detroit  
8/7 Auditorium, West Palm Beach  
8/8 Bayfront Center, St. Petersburg  
8/9 Municipal Auditorium, Mobile  
8/14 Spectrum, Philadelphia  
8/15 Civic Center, Pittsburgh  
8/16 Scope, Norfolk, Virginia  
8/17 Capital Center, Largo, Maryland  
8/21 Memorial Coliseum, Ft. Wayne, Indiana  
8/22 Amphitheatre, Chicago  
8/23 Cleveland Stadium  
8/24 Arena, Milwaukee  
8/27 Kiel Auditorium, St. Louis  
8/28 Convention Center, Indianapolis

## Wendy Waldman

7/22-26 Great South East Music Hall, Atlanta

## Dionne Warwick

7/26 Gala, Cannes  
7/29-8/3 Westbury Music Theatre, New York  
8/14 Illinois State Fair, Springfield  
8/15 Temple Music Festival, Ambler, Pennsylvania  
8/17 Filene Center, Vienna, Virginia

## Gary Wright

7/21 Coliseum, Jacksonville  
7/23 Municipal Auditorium, Atlanta  
7/25 Fairgrounds Arena, Oklahoma City  
7/26 Coliseum, Houston  
7/27 Memorial Auditorium, Dallas  
7/29 Tucson Community Center  
8/1 Long Beach Arena, California  
8/2-3 Coliseum, Oakland, California

## Jesse Colin Young

8/18-19 Universal Amphitheatre, Universal City, California



# Four Dead; Three Born in Ohio

The sovereign state of Ohio may be best known for the Reds, the Buckeyes and the Soap Box Derby. In recent years, however, no less than three recording groups have named themselves after the Buckeye State — in a time when geographical names have all but disappeared from artist credits.

The Ohio Express actually made some of its records in Cleveland (so did Grand Funk Railroad — Ohio is a good state for trainwatching). The Express pulled in with "Beg, Borrow and Steal" on Cameo Records in 1967, then moved over to Buddah for their biggest hit, "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy" and an absolutely definitive bubblegum opus called "Chewy Chewy." In 1969 the Express was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to extend its tracks all the way to "Sausalito" (Buddah 129) but its most notorious derailment has to be its shamelessly expurgated cover of The Standells' "Try It" (Cameo 2001).

In 1970 Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young recorded a song called "Ohio," a memorial to the blackest page in the state's history, the Kent State shootings. CSN&Y produced no other songs about Ohio, but its drummer Dallas Taylor made up for that by leaving the supergroup and joining Ohio Knox for an LP of lighthearted but thoughtful soft-rock in 1971. Unfortunately Ohio Knox never rivalled Fort Knox and soon broke up, but lead singer Peter Gallway did make a nice solo LP for Reprise the following year.

The Ohio Players may well be the oldest of the three groups; they showed up on the R&B charts as early as February 1968 with an item called "Trespassin'." Three labels and seven years later their disco music bids fair to attain ubiquity.

What does the future hold for musical geography? Perhaps it all depends on the Bay City Rollers, whom promoter Sid Bernstein thinks will eclipse the records set by the Beatles concerts he put on in 1964. There are four Bay Cities in the U.S.A., by the way, and I understand the Scottish group has forgotten which one it's named after.

## Question for Next Issue.

Now that Elton John has Made It Big, his early singing and songwriting efforts are becoming collectors' items, much like Elvis Presley on Sun or The Beatles on Polydor. If you've been collecting WB singles for awhile, you may have one already — a song Elton co-wrote when he was still called Reg Dwight, before he had even met Bernie Taupin.

In 1967, Elton-to-be was playing in the backup group for one of England's top vocalists when the latter had a #1 record on the British charts. WB picked up the American rights to the single and released it (#7098) at the end of 1967. On the flip side was the tune Reg helped write. Name the primeval Eltune, and the singer (hint: Elton later co-produced two LPs by this artist).

Boy, you aren't kidding it's weird. I wake up from it every night at exactly the same point: I'm leaving on a jet plane, flying 'cross the desert in a TWA and everything's coming up roses. I'm loaded for bear, you know, I make real good bread and I got a real cool head and I'm having a great time when all of a sudden it starts! Off to my left I see five hundred cowboys, off to my right ride a dozen more. Screaming and shouting "Doc's winner last week was Bob Henschen from Tempe who won a copy of *Waitress in a Donut Shop*." I lunge down the center line. Each step brings me closer to the aisle and my heart is beating, beating up to the old inn door. When I get there, I see an eyeball peek from behind a smokey cloud and someone sez, "Who sent you?" "Dr. Demento," I gasp, "and you can reach him c/o *Circular* at Warner Bros. Records, 3300 Warner Blvd., Burbank, California 91510, if you want to answer this week's question, bearing in mind that answers will be pro-rated for distance, originality and wit and remember to state your preference of which *single LP* from the Warner/Reprise catalog you'd like to win if you win and when you win!" Then I wake up.



## circular

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