

The

Story of Pop

THE FIRST
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
POP IN 40 WEEKLY PARTS



GEORGE HARRISON: Man, Myth & Magic

BOB DYLAN: The Lost Years

JOHN SEBASTIAN: A Single Spoonful

PLUS: Marianne Faithfull, Moog & more

PART 29

30p

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George Harrison's contribution to the development of rock music extends further than the not inconsiderable fact that he was one of the Beatles. Harrison can also take most of the credit for introducing into the West a hitherto unprecedented interest in the music, life, culture and mysticism of the East. From his introduction of the sitar in 'Norwegian Wood' on the 'Rubber Soul' album Harrison alerted a generation to the possibilities of Indian religion and philosophy. At its most trivial this awareness was expressed in the superficial fashions of kaftans and beads, a passing interest in and corruption of Indian music and instruments in rock. On a more fundamental level it showed part of the generation the road to Khatmandu, the search for inner awareness through drugs and through meditation, and spread from the young outwards to the point where portly middle-aged matrons toned up with yoga. Perhaps the times were right for this questing after things oriental, but Harrison decisively changed popular culture by his propagation of his own beliefs and interests. For this, and of course his immense importance in rock music, he must be regarded as one of the most influential men in rock of the post-'50s.

On a par with Harrison is Dylan and we look at his 'lost' years – the time immediately following his motorbike crash – and their influence on his music. Yet another important but perhaps less well known figure is Robert Moog, inventor of the synthesizer that bears his name and which in its own way has helped to add yet another facet to the music. Such electronics are a very important part of the pop process and nowhere more so than in the recording studio – the heart of the industry – where the sounds are created. All these topics plus the careers of Marianne Faithfull and John Sebastian, *The Girl Can't Help It* (the first mainstream pop movie by a noted director) and the best-selling discs of 1957 are considered in this issue.

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Bob Dylan: The Lost Years

By the age of 25, Bob Dylan had turned himself into a legend. He had enthralled millions with his constantly changing musical style, astonished or alienated everyone who saw him on his 1966 tour when he rocked around the world with the Band, and then finally crashed his motorbike in upstate New York and vanished on July 30th, 1966.

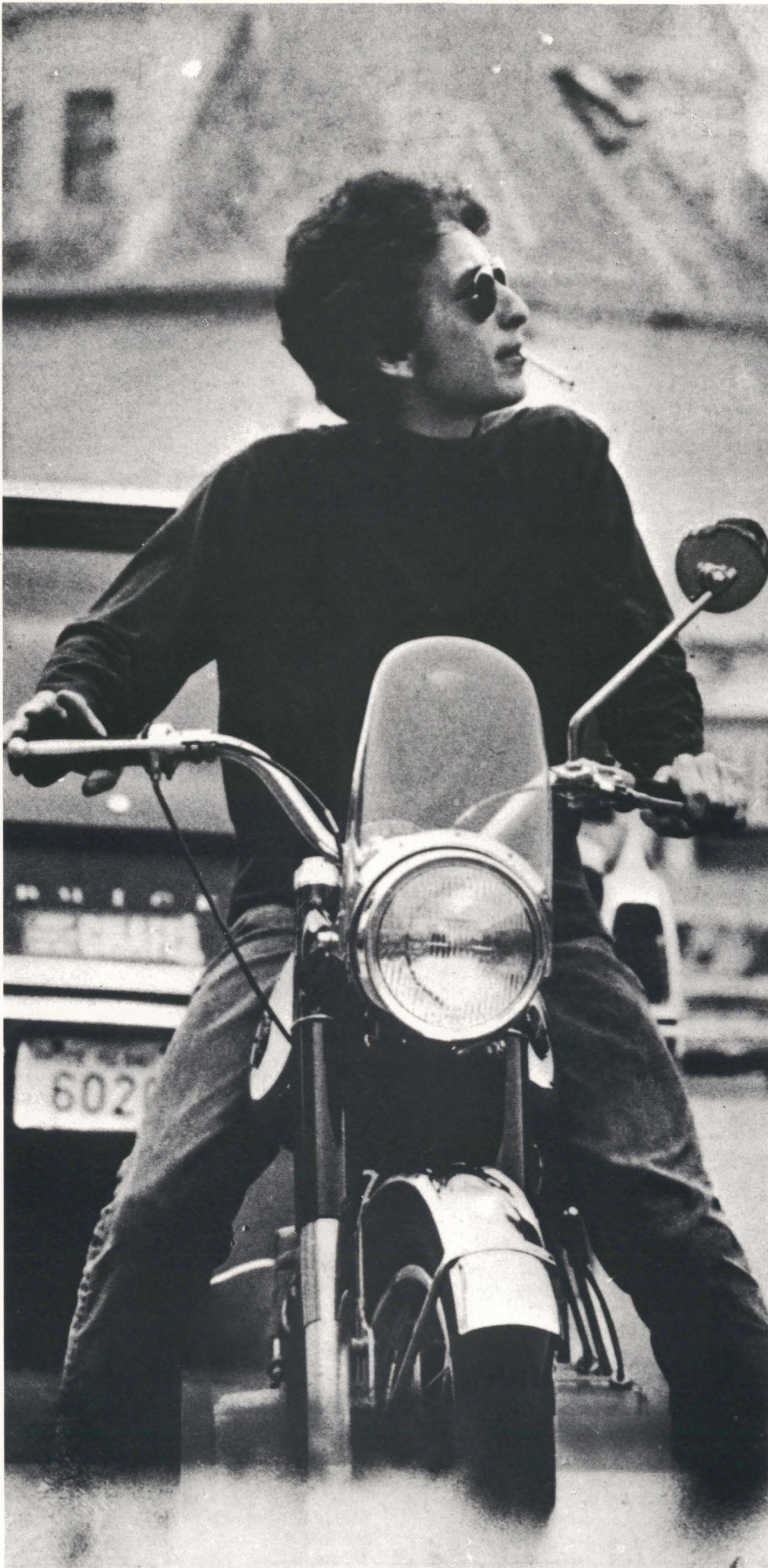
When Dylan dropped from view shortly after the release of 'Blonde On Blonde', at first there was in the air a feeling that the inevitable had happened, and that after all this time he had at last fallen foul of his own imagination and rioting, surreal energy. But then again, this sort of thing was merely unexpected – and Dylan had always specialized in doing the opposite of what most people expected.

From his earliest days, Dylan had latched his finger-pointing songs on to events like the Civil Rights Movement, and the Cold War confrontations in order to explore the mindlessness of most human behaviour – and for many of his followers he had presented a pretty convincing case: the world was indeed crazy, and so there was little to lose and little to gain . . . If Dylan was indeed a vegetable, if he was going through a drug withdrawal, or if he was even dead, nobody knew. The news clampdown was 100 per cent; speculation was the order of the day.

When a reporter *did* eventually get across the void and return, it was to offer the world a story that Dylan had smiled, and answered the wealth of speculation on the position of his head by affirming that *all* the rumours were true. In the face of such Dylanesque inscrutability, the world could only wait. And wait it did.

Throughout his recording career, Dylan had always made his musical changes seem about as natural as the changing seasons. He had never just stayed in the

David Gahr/Time



limelight; he had stayed, and changed and grown. The way in which he had taken commercial and artistic risks had shown a way to most people from the Beatles down – the long, verbal collages of ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’ and ‘I Am A Walrus’ probably wouldn’t have happened without him. In five years, from 1962 to 1966, Dylan had gone from the folkie forms of ‘Bob Dylan’ to the epic imagery of ‘Blonde On Blonde’. Anything, in other words, was now possible – anything except what was delivered: the acoustic harmonies of a seemingly countryfied album, ‘John Wesley Harding’. Where this shift in direction came from, and where the likes of Johanna and the Thin Man went might stay a mystery for a long time, Dylan’s virtually undocumented 18-month absence certainly seems to have accounted for a lot. The post-crash Dylan, was, in fact, a different animal from the 1966 version.

Weird Words

In the course of his career as a pop star, Dylan took every convention he could lay his hands on (three-minute singles; 12 songs on an album; a stable image) and cheerfully murdered them. After he had rocketed up the charts and barnstormed round the world, there just weren’t any rules left. There was, though, a negative side to the circus of freakish talent that Dylan’s success loosed upon the world: because *he* wrote long songs, a lot of imitators tried their hand at a rock epic or two; because *he* used weird words, every erstwhile pop star started thumbing through his dictionary and filling his head with strange substances. The results were usually crass, and the songs were five times longer and 10 times more pretentious than they would have been without Dylan. But if there was a rich crop of third-grade surrealism, it was not entirely Dylan’s fault. He had given everybody a glimpse of what poetry and music and electricity could combine to produce.

In 1966, the world’s attention had been seized by Dylan’s bizarre rock & roll tour, so his motorbike crash that came a few months after gave him the perfect opportunity to do the unexpected once again . . . he vanished completely. Dylan was contracted to deliver his novel, *Tarantula*, to the publishers, but his deadline came and went and no novel appeared. He was contracted to record a TV show, and he let that slide by. Dylan recovered slowly from the broken bones in his neck and tried to understand what had happened to him on his strange trip to rock & roll glory. What he had collided with, apart from his accident, had been the unparalleled hysteria and tension that his performances generated. Phil Ochs once described Dylan’s concerts just before the crash in the following terms:

“LSD on stage. Dylan is LSD set to music . . . I don’t know if Dylan can get on stage a year from now. I don’t think so. I mean the phenomenon of Dylan will be so much that it will be dangerous.”

Joan Baez, on the other hand, described Dylan as being engulfed by the huge ego bubble of superstardom, and it is true that he developed a cutting, abrasive personality and tore up anybody whose opinions conflicted with his own. He surrounded himself with a ring of verbally vicious friends, like mental bodyguards to prevent his mind being ravaged by everyone asking ‘what his songs meant’ or what ‘The Answer’ was.

As Dylan slowly recovered, physically and psychically, he started to make music again with the Band. The Band had shared Dylan’s mind-tearing tour with him, and after the crash they settled in Big Pink, a house in Woodstock near to Dylan’s. The songs that he created with the Band became famous at the time via cover versions (Julie Driscoll’s ‘This Wheel’s On Fire’, Manfred Mann’s ‘Mighty Quinn’ and the Byrds’ ‘You Ain’t Goin’ Nowhere’ were all chart hits) and via bootleg albums such as the ‘Basement Tape’. In place of the unending verbal landscapes of ‘Blonde On Blonde’, the ‘Basement’ songs were characterized by their sparseness: there were fewer words in the songs, the real subject seemed to lie squarely between the lines, and the Band’s superbly ragged backing somehow suggested little more than an outline of the tunes. The location of the songs had shifted away from the hallucinatory New York world of the electric albums, to the highways and small towns of America:

*‘I’m goin’ down to Tennessee
Get me a truck or somethin’
Gonna save my money and rip it up!’*

(‘Lo And Behold’)

And the scope of the songs had widened. After the sarcasm and contempt of the rock albums (‘You don’t know what it is, do you?’), Dylan was here reaching for a broader view of society. In ‘Tears Of Rage’, for example, he tried seeing things from the other side of the generation gap – the hopeless sacrifices of parenthood, and the ultimate loneliness of being old and unnecessary:

*‘We carried you in our arms
On Independence Day
And now you’d throw us all aside
And put us on our way’*

Swallowed Alive

On the cover of ‘Bringing It All Back Home’ Dylan had written (the oft-quoted): ‘i accept chaos. i am not sure whether it accepts me’. But chaos hadn’t just *accepted* him, it *swallowed him alive*, and now Dylan wanted a way out of the trap. One of the most powerful ‘Basement’ songs, ‘I Shall Be Released’, saw human society as a huge prison, Dylan’s pleading vocal contrasting with the quiet precision of the Band’s backing to produce a tortured vision of hopelessness and liberation.

The broader scope of the ‘Basement’ songs prepared the way for the social parables of ‘John Wesley Harding’, but

there was also an obsession running through the songs. Almost every one was haunted by a sense of betrayal and emptiness. When Dylan first spoke to a reporter, 10 months after the crash, he was still thinking about vengeance:

“Songs are in my head like they always are. And they’re not going to get written down till some things are evened up. Not until some people come forth and make up for some of the things that have happened.”

The Beatles had sung that ‘Nothing is real’ in ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’ and Dylan was also thinking of nothingness as a solid object: the ultimate symbol of the bad vibes and betrayals that he felt he had been through.

Dylan, in other words, had gone as far as he could on his strange trip of self-discovery and self-destruction, and songs like ‘Too Much Of Nothing’ and ‘I Shall Be Released’ sounded like the testimony of a man howling to be let out of his cage. It was an extraordinary statement from the most talked about, most imitated rock singer of his time, and it was made all the more powerful by the almost desperate understatement of the Band’s music.

Country Music

Dylan, however, didn’t feel the Basement songs were the right material with which to announce his return to the recording scene. Instead he flew to Nashville to record ‘John Wesley Harding’, and the Band began working on their own first album, ‘Music From Big Pink’. There were probably two reasons underlying this decision: the ‘John Wesley Harding’ songs were a clearer sign of Dylan’s interest in country music, and their imagery drew upon the American frontier and the Old Testament to suggest the moral framework he was searching for.

‘Strap yourself to a tree with roots’ sang Dylan on the ‘Basement Tape’; whereas ‘John Wesley Harding’ talked of saints and sinners, landlords and outlaws, debts and broken promises. It appeared like Dylan’s attempt to find firm ground after the exploding, paranoid visions of the electric albums. An additional reason for not releasing the ‘Basement Tape’ was probably that the Band wished to make it on the strength of their own music, rather than in the shadow of Bob Dylan.

The effect of ‘John Wesley Harding’ on the public, particularly on other musicians, was enormous. In the days of ‘Bringing It All Back Home’ Dylan had plugged his complex lyrics into the big beat and mass audiences of rock music; three years later he pulled the plug out, and in the process influenced other musicians to remember their roots and the tight, classical forms of traditional music. The Beatles, for instance, tried to get back to where they once belonged. The Rolling Stones turned their back on the psychedelic swamp they had paddled in with their ‘Satanic Majesties’ album, and on ‘Beggars Banquet’ they celebrated the sound of basic urban blues,



the rhythms of Motown, the hard, driving music that had first turned them on.

The cover of 'John Wesley Harding' has been described as resembling 'a graduation photograph from a mental institution', and there is certainly a bleak and twisted mood running through much of the music. By mixing up American frontier imagery with Biblical references, Dylan introduced a timeless feel into the music (a device that the Band repeated when they 'pulled into Nazareth' in 'The Weight'). The language had been stripped of the baroque images and hip jargon of 'Blonde On Blonde', and it seemed to talk across ages and across cultures.

A Hero From The Old West

Dylan's earlier audience had been the alienated American kids of the post-war baby boom, the 'children of Marx and Coca-Cola'. Now, though, Dylan felt burned by having passed so close to death, and weary of the crowds who were trying to copy his surreal antics. He resurrected himself as John Wesley Harding, a hero from the Old West, and though the title song is deliberately vague about what exactly Harding achieved, it's very clear on two points: John Wesley Harding had style, and he ran rings around everyone else:

*'There was no man around
Who could track or chain him down
He was never known
To make a foolish move'*

The most powerful moment of the album came on 'All Along The Watchtower', which generated more atmosphere and tension in just 12 lines than 'Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands' had created in 12 minutes. The sparse images suggest a walled city in Biblical times, or a fort on the American frontier, or even Kafka's castles of the mind . . . any stronghold on the edge of an abyss, any civilization undermined by its own excesses.

And, to cap it all, Dylan rounded off these bleak parables with two songs celebrating love in its most immediate form – 'I'll be your baby tonight' – nothing less, nothing more. The songs could have sounded like a corny retreat from the themes of guilt and retribution, but the music was so simple and seductive one couldn't help smiling and swaying to the rhythm.

At Dylan's first live performance after the crash, on January 20th, 1968, he again appeared with the Band. This time though, it was to celebrate the memory of Woody Guthrie, Dylan's first idol, the man who married the American folk tradition to the moral crusade of Roosevelt's New Deal. Dylan and the Band were sharing the bill with Pete Seeger, Jack Elliott, Judy Collins, Tom Paxton and many others. Here were the best-known and respected figures in folk music; they'd seen Dylan appear as a brilliant, young writer on the Village folk scene, and they'd watched him turn into a rock & roll outlaw

– a freakish mixture of Elvis Presley and Allen Ginsberg. Now, though, Dylan was back on the same stage with them, and it became apparent just how much care and skill he and the Band had put into re-interpreting America's traditional music. With their rock-solid rhythm section, and their piano, organ and guitar highlights, they translated Guthrie's 'Grand Coolee Dam' and 'Mrs Roosevelt' into a mellow rock & roll idiom which celebrated Guthrie's vitality and directness. Nobody thought of jeering this time around.

On 'Nashville Skyline' (1969), Dylan continued his love themes and his search for something timeless and stable. So timeless, in fact, that it was hard to remember that the songs were new Dylan compositions; they sounded like a collection of Nashville classics, so clearly did they move through the classic pop permutations: man finds woman/man loses woman/man woos woman/man wins woman. It was mathematically precise and country corn too, and the improbable concept only really managed to work through the beauty of the music: church-like organs, whining steel guitars and majestic piano chords making 'Nashville Skyline' sound like a string of heterosexual hymns. Dylan's voice was deep and vibrant, far removed from the juvenile twang he had used on his early records, and on the closing song, 'Tonight I'll Be Staying Here With You', he seemed to refer back to Bob Dylan, the hard travelling adolescent folk hobo of eight years previously:

*'If there's a poor boy on the street
Then let him have my seat
Cos tonight I'll be staying here with you'*

Corny Songs

Dylan was by now a married man with five kids and a country estate, and he wasn't hitting the road again. For his next live appearance (in August, 1969) he flew to the Isle of Wight Festival, ambled on stage in a white suit, sang for just over an hour, and flew away . . . around £35,000 richer. Dylan and the Band used the Isle of Wight concert to hide his old repertoire under the new Nashville sound. They sang 'She Belongs To Me' as an uptempo country ballad; and to top that they performed 'Like A Rolling Stone', draining it of all the scorn and anger that made the song move in the first place. Dylan even managed to forget the words during the second verse. This performance was released on the 'Self Portrait' album, and the sound of Dylan forgetting the words of his own greatest song while being cheered ecstatically by 250,000 people was one of his most baffling moves. The whole album, though, upset the critics, particularly the underground press and 'progressive' music papers. They knew that Dylan liked to move in unpredictable ways, but a collection of corny traditional songs (with Dylan claiming copyright of some), Nashville-style re-interpretations from the Isle of Wight, and some novelty instru-

mentals, was more than the hip press could cope with. 'What is this crap?' shrieked the outraged music paper, *Rolling Stone* (named after Dylan himself).

Even Dylan was alarmed by all these signs of contempt. He dashed back to the studio (while suffering from a cold which gave his voice the cracked quality of his early recordings) and only four months later, in October 1970, released a new album. It was called 'New Morning' – to reassure everyone that he'd woken up – and it featured one song guaranteed to curl the toes of every 'radical' rock critic: 'Day Of The Locusts', which described a college graduation ceremony reeking of violence and decay. Dylan was trying to revisit Highway 61 yet again:

*'The man standing next to me
His head was exploding
Well I was prayin' the pieces wouldn't
fall on me'*

'We've got Dylan back,' said *Rolling Stone* ecstatically.

Sentimental Charm

It would appear today that there was much more pleasure to be found in 'Self Portrait' than anyone would allow back in 1970, and a lot less to 'New Morning'. While some of 'Self Portrait' remains puzzling or painful (particularly the Isle of Wight recordings), the album as a whole was Dylan's way of acknowledging some of his roots and influences, including Hit Parade material and the sentimental charm of commercial country music.

As in 'Nashville Skyline', it was musicianship that made the album work: the way in which Dylan's voice wrung new twists out of such old lyrics as 'Days Of '49' and 'Copper Kettle', or the way in which the backing group revitalized the Everly Brothers' 'Take A Message To Mary'. Dylan's very first album had been an eclectic collection of blues, gospel and Nashville songs, but then he had emphasized songs about death, isolation and travelling. It was Dylan's romantic image of himself riding a hard road to an early grave. 'Self Portrait' repeated the process, but this time Dylan acknowledged friendship ('It Hurts Me Too') and the joys of getting paralytically drunk ('Copper Kettle'). When he sang about himself as an outlaw ('Little Sadie') or a lonesome traveller ('Early Morning Rain') he gave the song a rather corny treatment, admitting it was far removed from his then-present station.

'Self Portrait' was Dylan melodramatically abandoning himself to being old, commercial, married and drunk. 'New Morning' saw him attempting to be alert and energetic; thinking about Elvis Presley ('Went To See The Gypsy'), joylessness ('Three Angels') and imprisonment ('If Dogs Run Free'). But the music and lyrics didn't quite have the energy to carry it off. He sounded as though he'd been told what topics to write about and he was trying hard. More convincing was 'Time Passes Slowly', which sang of marriage and living



Bob Dylan, Judy Collins and Arlo Guthrie were but a few of the artists who all played Woody Guthrie material at the Carnegie Hall in 1968, as a tribute to a great man.

in the country as though poised half-way between pure joy and pure boredom. Or 'Sign On The Window', which suggested the possessiveness which can creep into any relationship:

*'Sign on the window says "Lonely"
Sign on the door said "No Company
Allowed"
Sign on the street says "Y'Don't Own Me"
Sign on the porch says "Three's A
Crowd"'*

Through 1971, Dylan continued to flirt with his past. He performed at George Harrison's Concert for Bangla Desh and astonished the audience by singing 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' and 'Blowin' In The Wind', reminding them that the songs expressed far more than the naïve idealism of the early '60s. To follow this apparent return to commitment, he released a single commemorating George Jackson, a black convict imprisoned for a \$70 robbery who had educated himself and written a powerful series of letters from prison, and who was finally killed by prison guards 'while

attempting to escape'. One side of the single featured just Dylan and his acoustic guitar sounding much as he did on 'Free-wheelin''; the other side contained the same song, but with girls' voices singing along on the chorus turning the song into a gospel-style celebration of death. It was one of Dylan's most imaginative recording ideas to use a gospel sound on a requiem for a black radical: conveying the tragedy and the triumph of his death. It wasn't George Jackson (the symbol of oppressed blacks) Dylan was commemorating, but the triumph of a spirit that could not be forced to bow down to authority. In one haunting phrase, Dylan describes the guards as fearing Jackson because he was too *real*, and being frightened of his *love*.

Powerful Song

Through 1972 and '73, Dylan maintained his low profile. He played the part of Alias ("Alias what?" . . . "Alias whatever you like.") in Peckinpah's film *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. He also composed the music for the film, including one

very powerful song, 'Knockin' On Heaven's Door', which climbed the singles' charts in both Britain and America. Dylan also did session work on a few friends' albums, but as a public figure he had virtually ceased to exist: since his crash he had appeared in concert only five times in seven years, and by the end of 1973 it was three years since Dylan had released an album of new songs.

The second phase of Bob Dylan's career, which had begun so triumphantly with 'John Wesley Harding' and the Woody Guthrie Concert, ended not with a bang (like the '66 crash) but a whimper:

*'Go take this badge off of me
I can't use it any more
It's getting dark – too dark to see
Feels like I'm knockin' on heaven's door'*

After the critical mauling of 'Self Portrait', and the strange *volte face* of 'New Morning', it is easy to understand why Dylan lost interest in an audience obsessed with idolizing him or destroying him. So at this stage Dylan collected all his songs, sleeve notes, poems and a few doodles into a fat book, and published it with a dedication to Robert Johnson and Woody Guthrie; it felt like his last testimony, and scribbled in the corner of the first page were a few words expressing his mood: 'If I can't please everybody/I might as well please nobody at all/But there's so many people/I just can't please them all.'

Kind Of Flattered

And then, lo and behold, Dylan decided to get up and do it all over again. Not just appear in concerts, but sign a new recording contract and undertake a massive tour with the Band, playing 39 concerts in 21 cities in front of a total of 700,000 people. News of the tour triggered off an estimated 20,000,000 applications for tickets, enclosing \$92 million in cash. To put it mildly, Dylan was in a class of his own: and was reported to be '*kind of flattered*' by the reaction.

Dylan and the Band played their first date in Chicago on January 3rd, 1974, and the critics all agreed they carried it off very well. They mixed together rock & roll arrangements and acoustic solos, playing a song from practically every one of his albums. And it was uncanny how Dylan's songs kept striking sparks off contemporary America, years after he had written them. For 18 months America had been reading bizarre news stories about Watergate and White House Enemy Lists and groups of 'Plumbers' and Cuban exiles and ex-CIA agents performing strange operations 'in the interests of national security'. When Dylan sang 'It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)' he paused at the line:

*'But even the President of the United
States
Sometimes must have to stand naked'*

. . . and the audience exploded.

At the start of the tour Dylan's new

record label, Asylum, released 'Planet Waves', a studio album he'd recorded with the Band in November, 1973. Musically it was Dylan's best album since 'Blonde On Blonde'. The Band's music combined strength with relaxation in a way no other group could match. After the sparseness of 'John Wesley Harding', the almost camp country sound of 'Nashville Skyline', and the false start of 'New Morning', 'Planet Waves' came like a wave of warm, confident music. Garth Hudson's organ and Robbie Robertson's guitar provided just the right degree of embellishment for Dylan's voice and, although the lyrics sometimes sank into sentimentality on love songs like 'Something There Is About You', there still remained the indefinable feeling that once again Dylan had found his edge.

Self-Parody

On 'Forever Young', two versions of which appear on the album, Dylan wished young people the dubious joy of staying cocooned in youth. On the second take Dylan sneered the words out of the corner of his mouth, as though sending it up in an old familiar way; but if the song was a joke, it was a joke without a punch-line.

Like 'If Dogs Run Free' on 'New Morning', 'Forever Young' verged on self-parody, but never settled for it. 'On A Night Like This', and 'Tough Mama', however, were more successful at conveying affection mixed with humour, but the heaviest of the love-songs, 'Wedding Song', sang about a love so total that it turned into near-paranoid fanaticism:

*'Eye for an eye and tooth for tooth
Your love cuts like a knife
But I'd sacrifice the world for you
And watch my senses die'*

... and Dylan's voice ground out the litany with bitter clarity, lacking any trace of humour or tenderness. It was a new style of song for Dylan, and one of his most disturbing. 'Going Going Gone', was refreshing as a song that used the spaces between the words to convey something supernatural and desperate: 'I've just reached a place where the willows don't bend' – the song of a man preparing to break loose. Most sinister of all was 'Dirge', a bitter song of broken promises which becomes a hymn of hopelessness:

'So sing your songs of progress

*And other doom machines
The naked truth is still taboo
Wherever it is seen.'*

... sung to a superb acoustic guitar accompaniment that recalled the flamenco patterns of 'Desolation Row'.

Perfect Partnership

Predictably, critics greeted 'Planet Waves' as they had greeted 'New Morning' – instantly acclaiming it as a triumph and welcoming Dylan back again. Once again it proved that the Band were the perfect foil for Dylan's performances. The album had too many soft spots to be a work of genius; his 1975 album 'Blood On The Tracks' showed a new energy and authoritative durability.

Dylan's art has always been profoundly split, because Dylan could never do anything half-heartedly. His electric songs explored extremes of chaos and self-destruction. His post-crash work explored extremes of cosiness and complacency. 'Planet Waves' real achievement was in the way that Dylan had begun to build a bridge between these two halves of his mind – a bridge across his 'lost years'.

The Band's Robbie Robertson playing with Bob Dylan in Chicago, during his 1974 six-week, sell-out tour of the States.



PROFILE: 1964-75

Marianne Faithfull:

The Wordly-Wise Waif

The ups and downs of show-business romantic entanglements are guaranteed good copy for the world's journalists. Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, John Lennon and Yoko Ono—there are many instances, but few have sustained such lasting sensationalism as the affairs and personal tragedies of Marianne Faithfull and, most particularly, her relationship with Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones.

Even in 1974, three years after the final split, Marianne's version of the story could still command a double-page feature in one of Britain's leading weekly pop papers, *and* warrant a lengthy TV interview.

Marianne first appeared on the scene as an innocent, waif-like ex-convent girl: she has since developed into an actress who has been described as: 'Sultry, sexy and tempestuous'. Despite the traumas of a broken marriage, the miscarriage of Jagger's baby, drug busts and sex scandals, suicide attempts and health breakdowns, Marianne has nonetheless emerged as a worldly-wise 27-year-old woman who can still say with conviction: "Despite it all I've had a good life because I've experienced so many different things, and that is what life is all about."

To her critics, Marianne is the ultimate groupie; a lady who has confessed that as a young, almost virginal, girl she decided that she was going to get herself a Rolling Stone and, after sleeping with three of them plumped for Jagger . . . "because he seemed the best bet". But she then found that she had fallen hopelessly in love with him. Her love could not be pushed aside, and yet it couldn't compete with their



Rex Features

individual aspirations as artistic performers. It was at this point that Marianne revealed herself not as a predatory vamp, but more as a talented but emotionally confused little girl.

Marianne was born in Hampstead, North London, the daughter of Dr. Robert Glynn Faithfull, a philologist and University of London lecturer, and Ava Sacher-Masoch, Baroness Erisso, a half-Austrian, half-Hungarian aristocrat and former ballet dancer. Her parents had separated when she was four, and Marianne was raised by her mother before being sent between the ages of eight and 15 to St. Joseph's Convent School in Reading.

Then, while on holiday in 1964, Marianne and her boyfriend John Dunbar were walking down Wimpole Street in London with Peter Asher, a friend soon to win pop fame as one half of the Peter and Gordon duo. They were hungry, and no one had any money to buy food. Asher, though, had been invited to a show business party, and as he said there would be plenty to eat and drink there, they all went along.

'As Tears Go By'

In her scruffy student gear Marianne made a vivid contrast to the bright, smart young debs – but it meant she was noticed, and her instantly attractive, almost naïve personality and undeniable good looks soon produced suggestions that she should make a screen test. But among the guests was also the 20-year-old pop tycoon Andrew Loog Oldham, manager of the Rolling Stones. He immediately told her he was going to cut a record with her, without even asking if she could sing: "Perhaps he thought Marianne Faithfull, which is my real name, would look good on a disc," Marianne said afterwards.

For the record Oldham decided to update the traditional 'Greensleeves' (supposedly composed by King Henry XIII), and brought in Mick Jagger and Keith Richard to help him compose a number for the flip. The number they came up with was a wistful ballad called 'As Tears Go By'... and that's the one the punters went for. Marianne had been due to return to school, but by the time school started again the record was already high in the charts and she was being set for a national tour. School was out.

In her first publicity hand-out around this time Marianne was described as 'lissom and lovely with long blonde hair and a shy smile... and she confesses quietly to a liking for people who are "long-haired and socially conscious"'. She is a shy, wistful girl with a waif-like beauty all of her own, a beauty that surges out of her through the medium of her voice, a beauty which is all the more compelling in its disarming simplicity... and it wasn't merely publicity hype. As she has said herself: "All those years closeted in the convent had ensured that I was not only a virgin,



Dezo Hoffman



Joe Stevens

Above, far left: *The couple of the '60s, Marianne and Mick Jagger. Above: A slightly different combination for the '70s, Marianne and David Bowie singing together. Bottom left: Marianne, as she appeared in the 1967 film *Girl On A Motorbike*, in her skin-tight leathers.*

but totally virginal and slightly naïve."

But already the turmoils and traumas which have since plagued her life were beginning, and in November, 1964, the caption to a newspaper photograph told the story that she was in hospital, suffering from nervous exhaustion. Six months later more newspaper pictures revealed that while her plaintive 'This Little Bird' was at no.4 in the UK charts, the 17-year-old star had secretly married her boyfriend John Dunbar at Cambridge Registry Office. Then, in November, 1965, came the news that she had fallen down some stairs and prematurely given birth to their son, Robert Nicholas.

Dunbar was still studying at Cambridge at the time, but soon after – part-financed by Peter Asher – he set up in the art business and started to dabble in photography. The couple were pictured happily ensconced in their London home with their

new baby and their huge Dalmatian dog named Sara Bingley. But bliss was not to be theirs for long. As Marianne became more and more involved with the Stones and fascinated by the whole world of pop, they gradually drifted apart. Then, in October 1966 they separated, just at the time that Jagger's own romance with Chrissie Shrimpton – sister of Britain's then top model Jean Shrimpton – was breaking up after three years. Then Jackie de Shannon penned 'Come And Stay With Me' made the charts for Marianne at the time, and the title was almost a personal plea.

It was as though fate was pushing the pair together, and when Marianne felt lonely while in Italy for the San Remo Song Festival, Jagger flew out to join her. Marianne, known to the Stones as Muff, was by now living in an apartment that Andrew Loog Oldham had taken for her in the Mayfair Hotel. His own apartment, which he used as an office, was one floor up, and Jagger, Keith Richard and the late Brian Jones soon got into the habit of popping in to see her.

The Gossip Columns

By this stage, despite the success of her records and her impact on tour with Roy Orbison, Marianne commanded the gossip columns more for her budding romance with Jagger than for her ability as a pleasant but none-too-distinctive folksy singer. To the outside world Jagger became the Svengali of her life, exerting his influence not just over her music but over her whole life-style and philosophy. "My relationship with Mick Jagger is very important. What he gives to me doesn't matter: it is enough that he gives", she said at the time.

Then, in April 1967, her own career took a new turn. She was chosen for the role of Irina in a London production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, acting alongside Glenda Jackson and Avril Elgar. But her choice for the part caused a furore in the acting profession. At a meeting of Equity (the British actors' union) Ronald Swire said: "A pop singer she may be, but an actress she is not. Hundreds of actresses are eating their hearts out because she has been given this role." A spokesman for Marianne retorted angrily: "It is grossly unfair to pre-judge her acting ability."

The British newspaper theatre critics, though, were much kinder to her. 'She has a combination of good looks and quiet, effective presence which cannot be acquired by long training', wrote Peter Lewis. In the *Daily Express* Herbert Kretzmer opined: 'Miss Faithfull has a haunting and delicate beauty, moves with grace and manages her lines quite creditably'; while *Daily Sketch* critic Fergus Cashin was sure that 'she could make a fortune in films'.

It was indeed to the movies that Marianne Faithfull next turned, and in late 1967 she began filming *Girl On A Motorbike* with French heart-throb Alain Delon – who confessed he had fallen madly in love with her off the 'set. Salvador Dali painted a nude portrait of her as part of the film's

publicity, and the way she kept busting out of her skin-tight kinky leather clothes on the set gave the newspaper columnists plenty to write about.

The film was produced by Jack Cardiff, who had earlier worked with Ava Gardner, Sophia Loren and Marilyn Monroe, and he freely confessed to finding Marianne utterly fascinating – he even ventured the opinion that she was the new Monroe. Sadly, Marianne filled that particular role even more in terms of her private malaise than she did on the screen, where her nude scenes and her torrid love-making never quite tallied with her previous (albeit soiled) 'bewildered young innocent' image.

But, naïve or not, Marianne Faithfull – the delicate-looking 5ft 4in 'English Rose' ex-convent schoolgirl – became involved in one scandal after another. Her strongly religious background was soon pushed aside as she adopted Jagger's attitudes and, before her film debut, drug raids at the Cheynes Walk, Chelsea home she was sharing with Mick Jagger gave rise to a sensational court-case following a similar raid on Keith Richard's house deep in the Sussex countryside.

The police told in court of how they found one girl among the men there, a girl naked except for a fur rug which occasionally fell away to reveal everything. Though her name was not mentioned in court, Marianne later admitted she was the girl concerned. She was still only 20 years old and, despite her outward show of defiance and indifference to then generally accepted moral standards, she nonetheless appeared bewildered and unsure of herself. To make things worse there was now open season on her as far as the knockers were concerned, and her every move brought torrents of abuse, culminating in obscene anonymous letters and threats to kidnap her child.

The strain was beginning to tell, and her relationship with Jagger was becoming stormy as she became more and more confused. She started having phases of deep depression, and several times he narrowly prevented her from committing suicide – several more times he even went looking for her when she left him. But at least Jagger benefited artistically, the personal heartaches and tribulations inspiring him to his most perceptively creative and sensitive period of songwriting. It was this balance between their private lives as two people in love, and their outward ambitions as creative people – with all the egocentric drive that demands – which threw Marianne most into confusion and affected her relationship with Jagger.

Innocent And Vulnerable

So while Jagger immersed himself deeper in his music, Marianne went on developing as an actress. She was chosen by director Tony Richardson and star Nicol Williamson for the role of Ophelia in *Hamlet*, once more acting out her own personal traumas via the stage. "She is innocent and vulnerable, and has a simplicity and directness," said Richardson, "she



Mick Rock

Marianne Faithfull's new cool and sophisticated image on her re-emergence in 1973.

hasn't the technical background, nevertheless she *is* an actress."

But by now the personal side of things was beginning to dominate her professional aspirations: "People think of me as wicked," she said at the time, "O.K., I got married when I was too young and immature, so we separated, so I'm in love with Mick Jagger". But the barbs of media disapproval were biting deep: she wouldn't read newspapers and had neither radio nor TV in the house and, following on from her miscarriage, all this started to play on her health, both mental and physical. In a sensational TV interview at the time she confessed that she had taken LSD, she bared her soul on matters of morals and personal philosophy and, in many ways by the very process of self-justification, seemed conversely to be trying to expunge Jagger from her soul.

Whether or not she was, she nonetheless left him and went to live in Rome with Italian film director Mario Schifano. After a month though, she drifted back, and in July 1969 she went to Australia to appear alongside him in the film *Ned Kelly*.

By now Marianne was poised on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and when the couple were mobbed by angry demonstrators at the airport in Sydney (demonstrators who didn't approve of a long-haired English rock star like Jagger portraying one of their national heroes) the thread snapped.

Marianne could not recall taking an overdose, but she did tell Donald Zec of Britain's *Daily Mirror* that she walked over to a mirror and saw not her own reflection but that of Brian Jones who had just been found dead in the swimming pool of his

home. "He was there in the mirror, I swear it, and he was dead. And I remember thinking 'Dear God, I am dead too'. I knew nothing after that until I recovered in an intensive care unit." In fact she had taken an overdose of sodium amytal, a sedative prescribed by her doctor, and spent a week in an oxygen tent.

Still trouble stalked her. Her relationship with Jagger lasted little further than court appearances in early 1970 to face charges arising from the drug raids of the previous year and to attend the final hearing of her divorce (in which Jagger was cited and ordered to pay costs), before it once again foundered.

This time Marianne took up with Lord Paddy Rossmore, an Old Etonian some 15 years older than her who owned land in Ireland. Rossmore's 'country squire' image could hardly have contrasted more strongly with Jagger's show-business flamboyance, and Marianne thought she owed a lot to him: "I was unconscious for eight days in Australia and came back a nervous wreck. I'd bitten my nails down to the roots, and Paddy cured me of that and helped straighten my mind out".

In November 1970, TV producer Jack Good invited her to Birmingham to see his stage show *Rock My Soul*. Marianne booked into a hotel and was later found unconscious in her room, suffering from an overdose. Rushed to an intensive care unit where her stomach was pumped clear, she was again at death's door.

Alice In Wonderland

Following that, her latest romance was soon on the rocks and her mind well messed up again. In early 1971 she was fined for being drunk in a public place and, to cap it all, Marianne had by now become a heroin addict. In August 1971, on a flight into London's Heathrow Airport, she was again taken ill and the pilot had to radio ahead for an ambulance.

It was personal courage alone which allowed her to kick the habit. Despite the large sums she had earned from her records, Marianne was by now nearly broke. So, rather than the expensive Swiss sanatorium cures showbusiness stars usually resort to, she had to put her faith in the free National Health Service and, fortunately, it paid off. Since then Marianne has continued to pursue her career in the theatre and, hopefully, has now put all her sad past out of the way.

Marianne has perhaps best been described (by Fergus Cashin) as: 'A modern Alice in Wonderland — full of poetry, full of belief, full of fantasy'. Unfortunately, like Alice, she is touched with curiosity, yet too vulnerable to accept its circumstances. Perhaps it is significant that she is, on her mother's side, a descendant of the writer Sacher-Masoch — who lent his name to the term masochism. For while the world has been unkind to Marianne Faithfull, she has largely inflicted its unkindnesses on herself, almost wilfully. To dismiss her as a mere nothing belies the intensely creative nature of her psyche. She needs not pity nor hatred, but simply understanding.



THE SUPERSTARS

George Harrison:

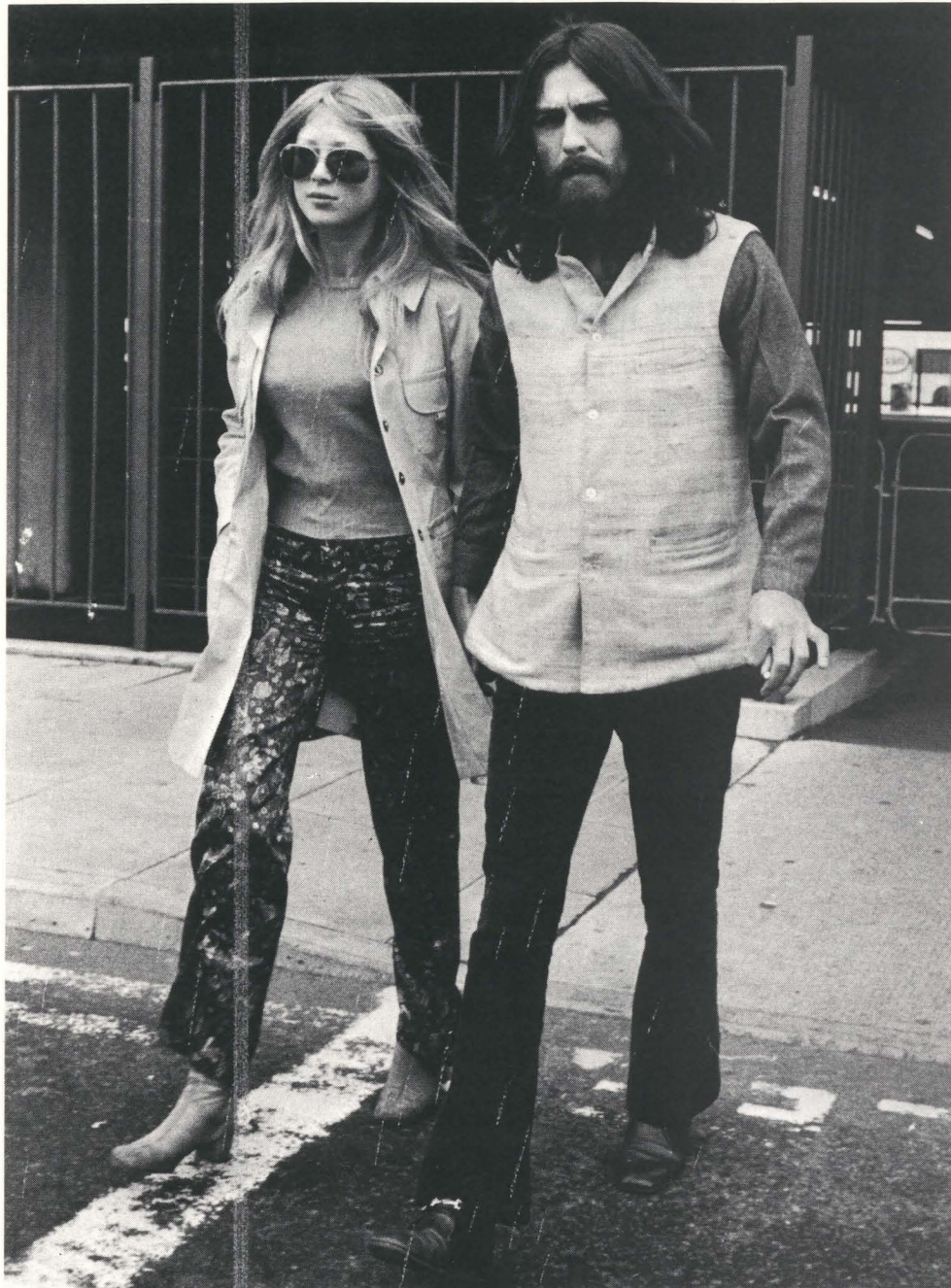
The Mystic Maestro

Neither baby-faced beauty nor arrogant sex symbol, George was just the quiet one in the middle . . . playing in the spaces left by two giant egos.

In the touring days of the Beatles, George used to stand half-way between John and Paul and get on with playing his guitar. Then one of them would end the verse and George would stride over to join the other one for the chorus. He'd walk purposefully backwards, playing an economical guitar solo and perhaps throwing in a couple of dance steps. And then he started to write the occasional song for their albums. At first they were run-of-the-mill love songs that the others did better, but then he started turning out strange songs. On first hearing they often sounded normal enough, but . . . who-ever started a song with 'If I needed someone to love you're the one that I'd be thinking of'?

Soon after this, the Beatles' music became more complex, and as if on cue, out stepped the quiet one to show them the way. George had become interested in Eastern religion, and the next album, 'Revolver', duly marked a watershed in the Beatles' career. 'Revolver' was the only album on which the Beatles ever managed group unity in a serious way; before it they were fun, after it they were each on their own.

George's interest in the East had been a major influence in this shake-up. He was introduced to it by his wife Patti and the two of them went into it seriously. They read and they talked and they meditated, and then they started to spread the word among their friends. Lennon had got really caught up in it, and even Paul's contributions on 'Revolver' had a mystical aura



George Harrison with ex-actress and model Patti Boyd whom he married in 1966.

that he never again tried to capture. George's three songs on 'Revolver' marked his emergence as a definite third force, a factor – given the already strained, creative relationship between John and Paul – that was bound to loosen and eventually break up the group.

For a time though, everything went well. Lennon was heavily into acid, George into his enlightenment. For a short time, Paul and George Martin had the group and its talents more or less at their disposal. So arrived 'Sgt. Pepper'. On that album, George had just the one song, 'Within You Without You', which lyrically defined his general position:

*'When you've seen beyond yourself
Then you may find, peace of mind,
is waiting there'*

Musically, it was George's last attempt at full-scale Indian music. From then on he

began to lyrically explore Western themes through an Eastern-mediated world-view; and in the process create a rock music heavily influenced by Indian moods and tones. 'Within You Without You', had a George Harrison stamp on it, as did John Lennon's contributions. It had become clear that the two of them would not be content to follow Paul's ideas as to the group's direction.

As George's own musical ideas took shape, the last years with the Beatles must have become increasingly frustrating for him; for no matter how friendly members of a group are, there's only so much space on an album. The chance to create tension between songs, to create interacting moods, is something that can't easily be shared. The Beatle albums became less than the sum of their parts; a series of conflicting tracks.

George in fact walked out of the Beatles

during the filming of *Let It Be* after a huge row with Paul. And although he came back again the problems were not resolved. Basically these centred on George's feeling that he wasn't sufficiently recognized as a writer and musician by Paul. George had just come back from the States, where he had been jamming with many musicians just for the fun of it. The co-operation of these musicians, George said, "contrasted dramatically with the superior attitude which for years Paul had shown towards me musically. In normal circumstances I had not let this attitude bother me and to get a peaceful life I had always let him have his own way, even when this meant that songs which I had composed were not being recorded. When I came back from the States . . . I was in a very happy frame of mind, but I quickly discovered that I was up against the same old Paul . . . In front of the cameras, as we were actually being filmed, Paul started to 'get at' me about the way I was playing."

An Equal Songwriter

This ill-feeling between George and Paul was preserved on the film. At one point Paul says "I always seem to be annoying you." George replies, "All right I'll play whatever you want me to play, or I won't play at all if you don't want me to play." The Beatles' old friend in Hamburg, Astrid Kemp, perhaps put her finger on the background to all this when she observed that George was younger than the others and it took him longer to grow up. Paul had always been something of a father-figure to George and George found it difficult to escape some sort of inferiority complex without over-reacting. Paul, on the other hand, found it difficult to accept that George was by this time his equal as a musician. George was writing as many if not more songs than John and Paul but he wasn't getting an equal share of the cake.

The songs he was allowed to record on the Apple albums definitely showed that he was flowering as a songwriter.

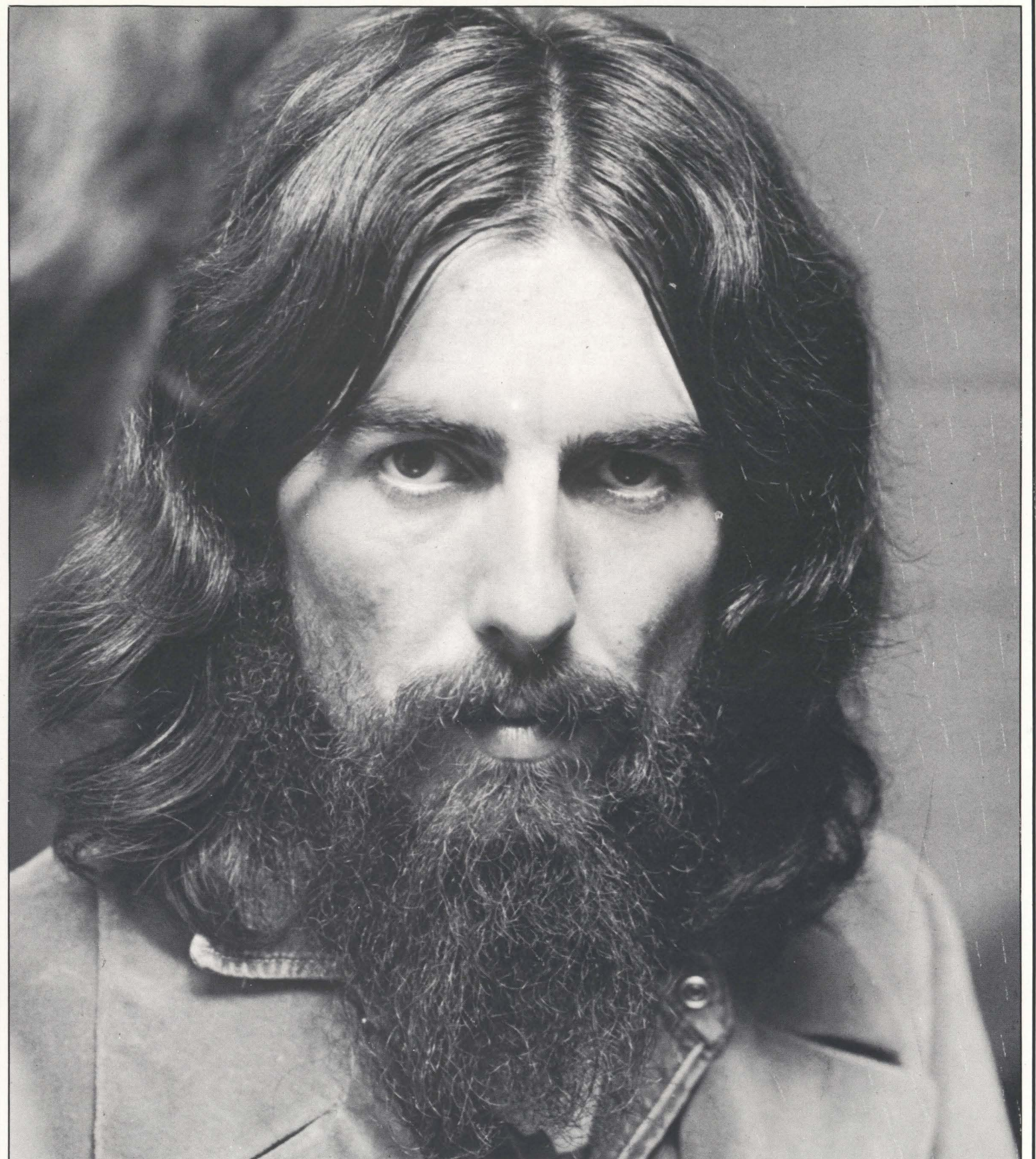
His two main themes – love and society – were the usual ones, but what made his contributions different was approaching the subjects from a radically new angle.

The love songs on the Apple albums differ appreciably in feel from any others written at the time. George was not only concerned with the complexity of hang-ups created by Western views of *time* and *change*: loving forever, possessiveness, the inability to communicate. He was also concerned with getting across a simple statement of what he was feeling, of saying, in effect, that if *he* opened himself, then that at least was a start:

*'You're asking me, will my love grow?
I don't know, I don't know . . .'*

(*'Something' from 'Abbey Road'*)

. . . there was no truth in anything else, no need to invoke the past or future to satisfy the present. This notion relates directly to the central reference point of George's Eastern vision: the crucial need



BACK TRACK

Born February 25th, 1943.

1966, January: Marries Patti Boyd.

1967, February: George and Patti's first contact with the Maharishi.

1968, February: Studies with the Maharishi in India. November: 'Wonderwall' album.

1969, June: 'Electronic Sounds' album.

1970, September: 'All Things Must Pass' album.

1971, January: 'My Sweet Lord' single.

April: Co-writes Ringo's single 'It Don't Come Easy'. July: 'Bangla Desh' single.

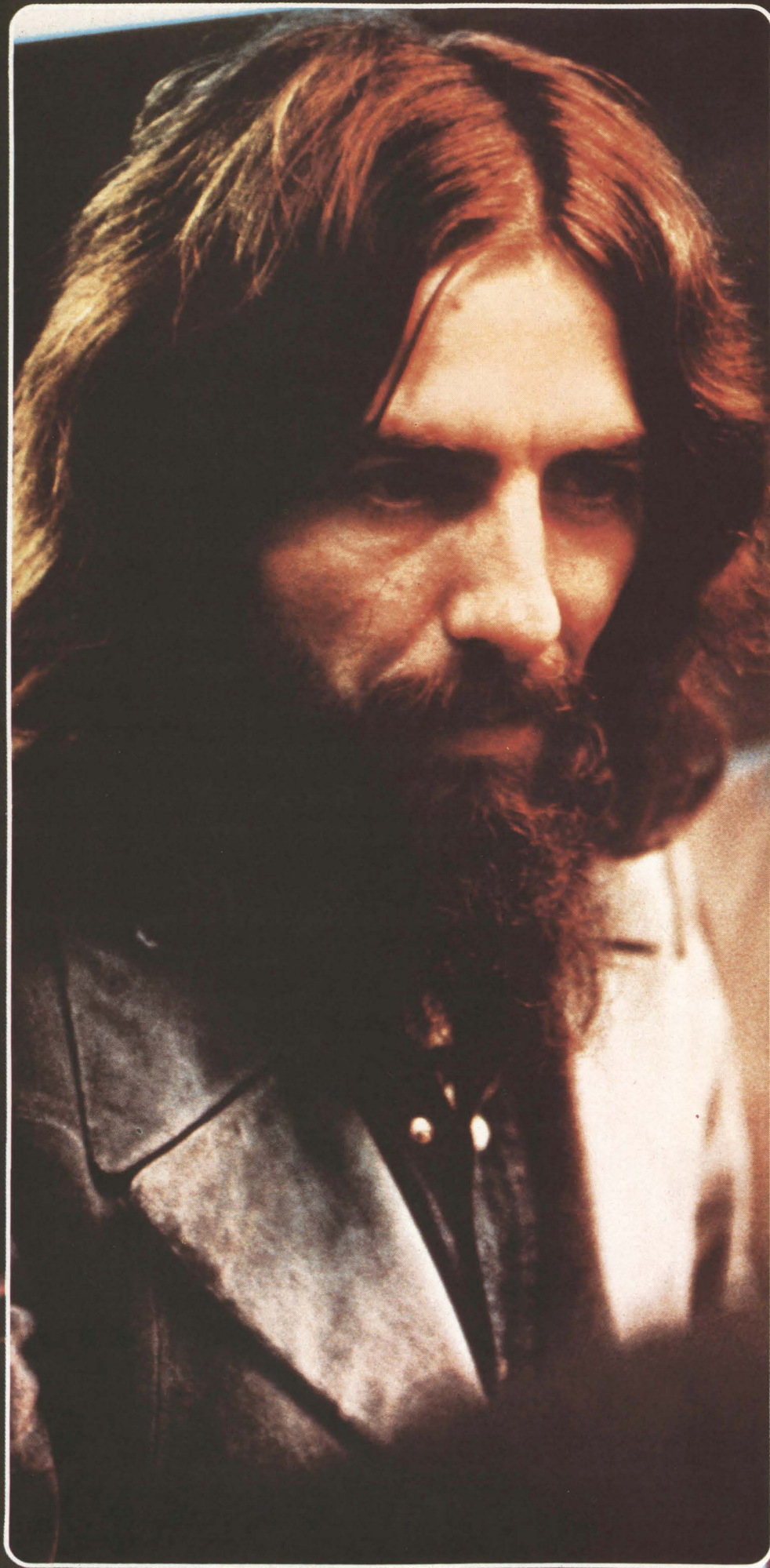
August: Organized concert for Bangla Desh in Madison Square Garden, NY.

1972, January: 'Bangla Desh' concert album.

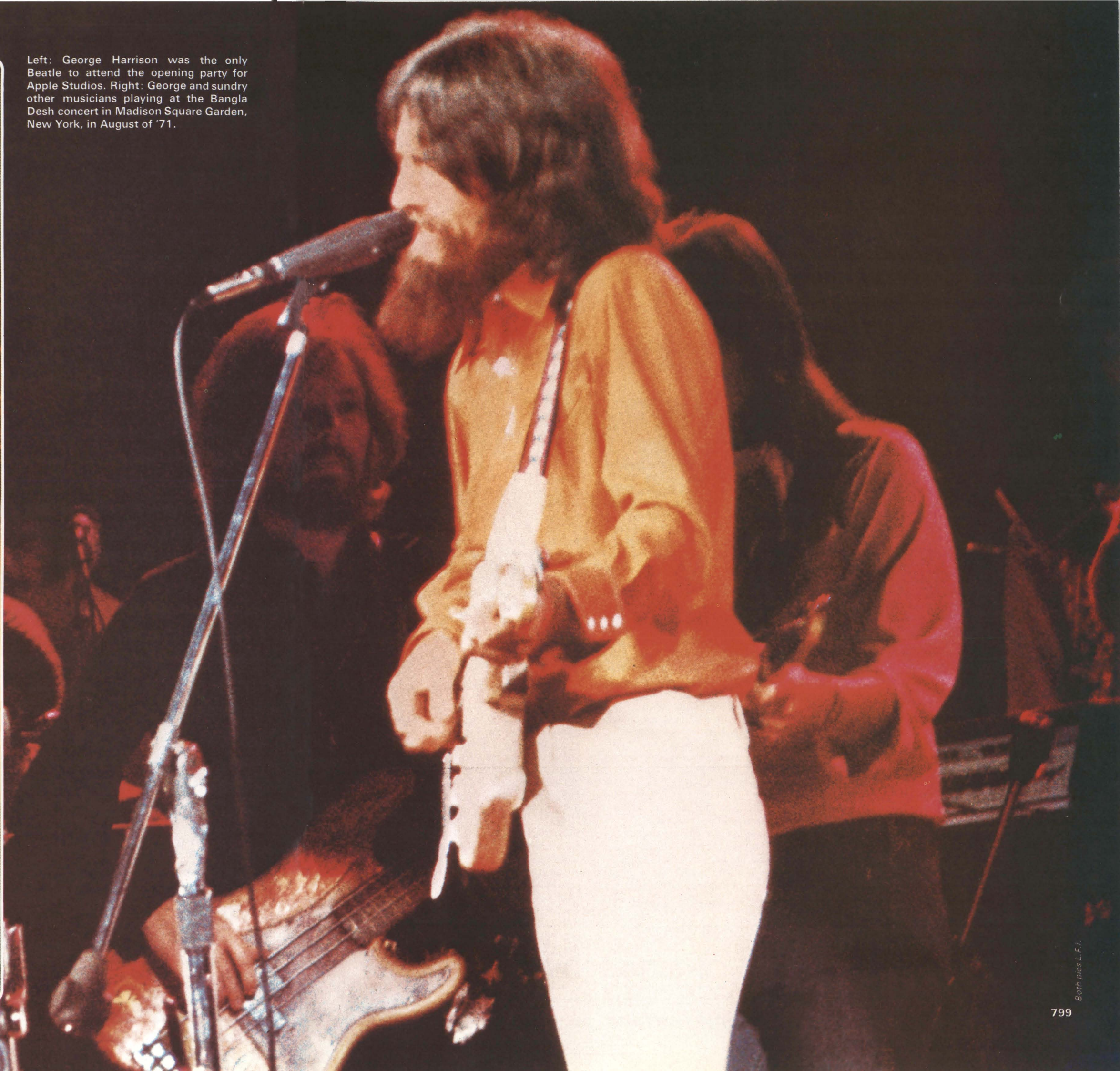
1973, May: 'Give Me Love' single. June: 'Living In The Material World' album.

George helps out Ringo on his album 'Ringo' and co-writes 'Photograph'.

1974: 'Dark Horse' album released.



Left: George Harrison was the only Beatle to attend the opening party for Apple Studios. Right: George and sundry other musicians playing at the Bangla Desh concert in Madison Square Garden, New York, in August of '71.



to escape the self. Thus the lament to our society in 'I Me Mine':

*'All through the day
I me mine I me mine I me mine
All through the night
I me mine I me mine I me mine'*

The sentiments here are spelt out less abstractly in songs like 'Piggies' and 'Savoy Truffle', which remind the listener that George's 'vision' indicates only two ways. One way, and 'the sweat will fill your head'; the other way, and 'little darling, the smile's returning to the faces . . . here comes the sun'. Through this period it became apparent that George's voice and his style of guitar-playing perfectly matched his subject-matter. The voice is thin, lacks arrogance, and can float high above the musical ground, forever seeming to reach forward. The guitar-style is similar; long, keening notes hanging in the air – sad rather than painful – above the rhythms flowing beneath.

Shot In The Arm

In May 1970, the Beatles became independent of each other musically and George went solo at a time when the idea-content of rock music clearly needed a positive shot in the arm. The essentially negative business of clearing the ground, dynamiting illusions and generally painting pictures of a world gone mad, had been done in the great creative breakthrough of the mid-60s. Now, the positive side needed a helping hand – but where was the positive side to be found? The Beatles themselves had always been about enthusiasm and infinite possibilities, all the way from Lennon's sick humour to 'tomorrow never knows'. Now, George in particular seemed to have worked out for himself a way to approach reality through his music that neither contradicted the earlier dreams nor ignored them.

The first evidence of this was the single 'My Sweet Lord', which swept to the top of the charts on both sides of the Atlantic. The album, 'All Things Must Pass', was released a few months later in September 1970. George had spent a lot of time and money on it, using many of the best musicians around and Phil Spector as co-producer. Clapton and Dave Mason helped out on guitar, Bobby Whitlock, Billy Preston and others on keyboards – the list is a long one. The result was a technically flawless record, faultlessly performed. Ultimately though, it would stand or fall on the songs, and, with one exception, these were George's sole responsibility. Those who thought he could only manage two or three good songs a year got a surprise. The 16 on 'All Things Must Pass' were almost uniformly good, melodic and interesting.

This album alone would have been enough to establish George on a level with John and Paul as solo performers, but the underlying philosophic vision took him one step higher, making the album one of the rock masterpieces of the '70s. This vision

is so consistent within itself that it comes almost as a surprise to find it consistent with little else. It's like living in an upside-down room – it doesn't seem strange until you look out of the window. Then suddenly everything in the room acquires a new significance. You begin to wonder how the table doesn't fall off the ceiling, and why people come through the door backwards with their feet in the air. You begin to wonder what, in fact, is reality.

His love-songs on side 2 of the album, emphasize his strong feelings about the individuality of people and free will, even though the two do merge into one. On 'Run Of The Mill' George states:

*'No one around you will carry the blame
for you
No one around you will love you today
and throw it all away'*

. . . for ultimately:

*'Only you'll arrive at your own made end
With no one but yourself to be offended
It's you that decides . . .'*

Not that George himself is that strong. In 'Let It Down' he worries all the time about other people's opinions of him. But he knows his feelings and recognizes his weaknesses, hoping that sharing them will eliminate them to a degree. Compassion is at the heart of his songs.

Love between two people is also part of something wider to George, part of the way of approaching living here in the material world. The rest of 'All Things Must Pass' illustrates both this wider vision and the control George has over all the components of his music. The basic philosophic vision underpins it all, expressed not as philosophy but as a series of 'moods' occasionally illuminated by flashes of lyrical insight.

To have found strength in the truth that nothing is certain and that nothing survives, a truth that is central to all Eastern ways and so foreign to the West, is a measure of the distance George has travelled spiritually. That he can convincingly communicate that strength in the rock idiom, is a mark of the distance he has travelled as a musician.

Occasionally, on 'All Things Must Pass', the underlying Hindu world-view breaks surface, almost as a preface to his second album, 'Living In The Material World'. 'The Art Of Dying', for instance, deals with reincarnation in words that make little allowance for Western sensibilities.

'Do you believe me?', George sings hopefully. The final track, 'Hear Me Lord' is a straight-ahead prayer, not a multi-religious pop anthem like 'My Sweet Lord', but an act of devotion, of total commitment:

*'Help me Lord please to rise a little
higher
Help me Lord please to burn out this
desire'*

In a society bombarded with sexual aspirations, that plea is likely to find few sympathetic ears. As a song though, 'Hear Me Lord' succeeds because it conveys in

the music a mood far wider than the lyrics suggest. The old Harrison-Spector formula of the relentless flow cascading down to flow yet again, has never been done better.

Then, in the summer of 1973, came another carefully structured album. 'Living In The Material World' had taken two and a half years to make, and this time offered a specifically Hindu view of the world. Once again though, the music transcends the particular. It charts George's journey of self-discovery, starting with the simple invocation: 'give me love, give me peace on earth'. From there George works his way through illuminations and limitations, Beatle hassles and drug hassles, to a calm acceptance of what he thinks life in the material world must be all about.

Rolling Majesty

Musically, the album sounds like a river, from the tumbling stream of 'Give Me Love' through free-flow and rolling majesty and down to the oceanic serenity of 'That Is All'. The music and the vision once again fit each other perfectly. George had at last made a real connection between rock music and social commitment, it seemed. He has since released another album, 'Dark Horse' (1975).

George has always been stereotyped as the Beatle who was most concerned with money, but an early anecdote of the Cavern days tends to undermine this. A girl waiting outside didn't have the money to get in. George slipped a few shillings to the Cavern bouncer, saying "give'er this and don't tell'er I gave it to yer".

In the later days of success he has given away money to what he thinks worthy causes, less perhaps than Lennon but with rather more care and with less publicity.

But the most obvious thing has been his organisation of the Concert for Bangla Desh, which began with a visit from his old friend Ravi Shankar –

*'My friend came to me with sadness
in his eyes
Said he wanted help before his
country died'*

George spent a long time getting the concert together. He knew it was important. Rock had made a lot of noise about the way things were going, but how much had it done? The sale of tickets for the concert and the subsequent record and film receipts raised vital funds for war-torn Bangla Desh.

For the concert George coaxed both Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan out of their semi-retirement. The music was an amazing success due to George's insistence on proper rehearsals, but the concert was much more than that. It was described in a music paper as 'a brief incandescent revival of all that was best about the '60s . . . the magnificence of the music and the selflessness of the motives were proof that the art and the spirit are still alive. And the audience and the musicians and the producers were respectful.'

And George was still the quiet one in the middle.

Moog Music

Like the word 'biro' (ball-point), 'moog' (it rhymes with vogue) has come to stand for a whole class of similar instruments from different manufacturers. The synthesizers originally developed by Robert Moog and others, like the ball-point pen, were sufficiently revolutionary in themselves to become widely known and used — hence they demanded some tag like this.

The moog and its cousins are not just different or improved synthesizers — electronic music synthesis across just as wide a front has been possible since the late '50s — nor are they advanced, yet basically traditional, electrified or electronic instruments. But if they are not simply one or the other of these things, they do owe a great deal to both of them. The synthesizers becoming so evident in pop and rock in the '70s have gained their popularity for much the same sorts of reasons that biros did. Not because they do entirely novel things, but because they do the things they do in far more convenient, acceptable, cheaper and flexible ways.

The idea of electronic music synthesis is an old one. As far back as 1928, Professor Friedrich Trautwein developed the first contemporary synthesizer, the Trautonium. This device predated Robert Moog's classic paper 'Voltage Controlled Electronic Music Modules' by some 37 years, and yet it used the same basic idea. Trautwein's insight, and the progress of his remarkable invention, are in fact typical of the whole field of synthesizing.

At first the Trautonium was used largely as a scientific laboratory instrument to investigate the tonal range of traditional instruments. Trautwein himself visualized the device as a keyboard instrument capable of providing glissandi (glides) and true vibrato (small and rapid changes of pitch on a given note), and in 1931 added a keyboard specification to his original patent. Yet the Trautonium still remained something of a curiosity because the instrument as yet lacked the refinements that would make it more practical and musically interesting. Eventually, though, interest in the machine faded, and it was virtually forgotten.

Wayback in 1914, the Bell Telephone Company had started investigating the possibility of 'manufacturing' musical sounds in order to help the research into the nature of sound. Others, at about that time, were also becoming interested from the point of view of composition and

arrangement. Since those days, however, the moog, as a representative of all contemporary synthesizers, has become outstandingly successful simply because it uses all the knowledge gained in those earlier experimental studies in a device that can be played by an ordinary performer.

The essential ingredient of contemporary synthesizers is the voltage control unit — something that was also basic to the Trautonium. But beyond this, the really crucial problem with synthesizers has not been building the required circuits, but rather arranging them in such a way as to provide a versatile and cheap instrument giving good and reliable sound. The tone makers, shapers and amplifiers, for example, have all been available more or less since Lee de Forest invented the amplifying triode valve in the first decade of this century. The logistical problems, however, have had to wait half a century for a solution.

Trautwein clearly saw the solution in voltage control. And voltage control, which means in essence the use of a single voltage source to control the functions of different circuits, is indeed — *in theory* — the perfect solution. It would allow noiseless control of gain, the ability to use long, interconnecting leads without any noticeable loss of power or quality, and the prevention of problems associated with matching all the numerous different circuits used in a versatile synthesizer (once again, problems of loss of power and the distortion of signals).

New-Fangled Ideas

There are two reasons why voltage-controlled circuits were not immediately used to produce early synthesizers. The first was the natural resistance of musicians and the early music-buying public to such new-fangled ideas — at least until an experimental *mass* music came along. The second was quite simply that there had always been notorious difficulties of stability associated with voltage control. The average listener can distinguish a difference in musical frequency of about 10 Herz (vibrations each second), and the good musical ear can discriminate down to 2 Herz. This means that artificially-produced notes must be stable to at least one part in a thousand, which is no mean feat by any standards.

The Trautonium was used for a while as a solo orchestral instrument, but its limitations soon became obvious. Apart from this, the compositional techniques it was best suited to, and the commercial

possibilities for its use, were still only developing. In the first quarter of this century 'classical' composers like Busoni, Webern and Schoenberg had begun to think in terms of atonal and multi-tonal music. The Trautonium was a useful device for such composition, producing some 1,200 notes over a range of a few octaves. In practice, however, the early classical heretics were quite content to explore the possibilities of traditional instruments, and there were few who would have taken the giant leap to an instrument without predecessors. Then, in the late '50s, Karlheinz Stockhausen began working, mainly with tape and a few discrete electronic instruments, at the West German Radio Electronic Music Studio in Cologne. At about the same time, Charles Babbitt, a trained mathematician turned composer, became a director of the first major American electronic music studio, run by Princeton and Columbia universities at Columbia.

Punch Tape Music

Babbitt had become interested in 'total control' over musical materials. This interest was the logical development of the earlier work by Webern, Varese and Schoenberg, and it led inevitably to explorations with techniques for synthesizing music by electronic means. In 1959, the Columbia studio installed a synthesizer built by RCA. This was a compositional machine that produced musical sounds from information punched on to a paper tape.

The RCA synthesizer occupied a whole room, and was programmed with information about the basic determinants of musical sounds. Once the programme had been 'written' it was fed in one end and the music came out the other. Although the composer could manipulate all the fundamental characteristics of musical tones and sequences, this machine was totally distinct from the Trautonium or a moog. Voltage control didn't enter into it — there was no need to limit size or to make the 'instrument' playable as such. Hence, the RCA machine was restricted to composition and experimentation alone. The dream of a performers' synthesizer — a machine that could actually be played — was, however, about to become a reality.

What made it all suddenly possible was the development of solid-state silicon-based electronic devices, like certain kinds of transistor, in the early '60s. These provided both the required levels of stability, and the possibility of miniaturization which would make voltage-controlled circuits in versatile, portable synthesizers a practical possibility. Moog is the most famous name in the development of this technology for musical purposes, because Robert Moog was actually concerned with building musical instruments. The first Moog synthesizer (around 1965-66) used many of the ideas that had only become realizable with the growth of a sophisticated electronic technology.

One of its two basic building blocks was (and is) a voltage-controlled oscillator

(vco), which is no more than an updated version of the basic Trautonium unit. At the heart of the Moog vco is a remarkable device known as a unijunction transistor. The unijunction has the peculiar quality of negative resistance over a certain range of voltages. This makes it a natural oscillator (like the mainspring of a watch), and it provides the basic notes which are manipulated further in the synthesizer.

The other basic building block of modern synthesizers is the voltage-controlled amplifier (vca). The most important use of the vca is to control what is known as the 'envelope' of a note. A tone produced by a vco is continuous and of fixed volume, rather like an organ note. Most instruments, though, give notes which rise to a peak of volume, remain at that peak for a short while, and then die away. The particular form of this attack-duration-decay pattern is the envelope, and it is a crucial determinant of what certain instruments sound like. The guitar, for example, has rapid attack and gentle decay, woodwinds have a much gentler attack and a rapid decay, and so on. The vca controls this envelope by changing its gain according to a given control voltage, so that a tone will start, become louder, die away and stop as the control voltage starts, increases, decreases and stops.

White Noise

The Moog Synthesizer 1 contained two vco's, two vca's, an envelope generator (providing a control voltage for the envelope), a voltage-controlled filter (which, together with a set of passive filters, affects the tone quality and harmonic content of the final sound), a reverberation unit, a white-noise generator (making a noise like a long hiss of indeterminate frequency — used to good effect on 'The Sea' from the Who's 'Quadrophenia') and a regulated and stable power voltage supply.

Larger and later models contain more of the same, plus a four- or five-channel mixer to blend different sounds into one complex note. With these basic units it then becomes possible to control all the really important features of a musical note. The synthesizer can produce its own basic tone to be enveloped, subjected to tremolo or vibrato modulations or whatever, or, of course, it can treat external tones such as those produced by an electric guitar. One useful trick is to play an instrument through the envelope generator-vca complex to alter its attack and decay characteristics. Such an effect can be heard on the O'Jays' 'For The Love Of Money' (from 'Ship Ahoy'), where a vocal refrain is so treated to give the impression that it is being played backwards — rising slowly at the beginning and falling off rapidly.

To perfectly mimic traditional instruments, the synthesizer would require a far more complicated system of controlled interaction between the various characteristics of the musical note. In fact, the synthesizer is no longer thought of as a device to mimic instruments — it is now

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On their '73 tour, to coincide with the release of their album, 'Quadrophenia', the

seen as an instrument in itself. It is already possible to create far more realistic copies of instrumental (and vocal) sounds by computer (remember HAL singing 'Daisy, Daisy' in Kubrick's 2001?). The Mellotron does better in this respect too, by keying a tape of given instruments, voices or whole orchestras playing single notes. But neither of these is as exciting as the synthesizer, which represents a complete re-thinking of the idea of a musical instrument. Unlike even the electronic organ, the moog allows complete control over the characteristics of a musical sound or sequence by the performer.

It is not surprising that the moog really took off in rock and pop, rather than in 'classical' music, in which such innovations had an allotted place within a separate tradition of 'modernism'. But before the moog could become acceptable to performing musicians it had to escape two traps.

The collection of circuits we have outlined still leave the thing a laboratory device, or, at best, a composer's instrument — because the emphasis is on *controlling* a sound, rather than *playing* it. This required the introduction of an interface — like the Trautonium's two keyboards — a means of actually realizing sounds. The second trap was the still powerful scepticism of performers. This was, perhaps, Moog's greatest insight and innovation. He could have chosen all manner of playing devices — touch plates using body conduction, Theremin-type transducers which work by the proximity of the player's hands — but he picked a traditional keyboard.

The keyboard itself is a fairly simple device: each key operates a switch to bring in a particular basic tone from a vco and another switch operating a control voltage to 'turn on' the note. Everything else is switched into the circuit as part of

Who had a two-hour rock show with tape loop synthesizers and quadrophonic sound.

the pre-programming, but this programming can be adjusted while playing. A glissando can be produced by using an extra that the Moog Company introduced. A gold contact strip stretched over a high-resistance ribbon can be pressed down to give an infinitely variable source of control voltage. The one remaining major defect of the Moog keyboard arrangement is that it can only produce one note at a time. This suggests how much of a studio instrument it still is, since to build up chords or more complex sounds the moog must be used with a tape machine.

In 1969, George Martin, former producer of the Beatles and a label manager for EMI, opened his own studios, AIR-London. The AIR complex was the first to introduce a Moog (Series III) as standard studio equipment. In the few years following Robert Moog's first steps towards the creation of really versatile instruments, a host of companies and individual inventors

had brought out different models more or less suited to performance. Among these the British EMS VCS 3 has been the most popular.

Initially designed for 'serious' electronic music in about 1968, the addition of a keyboard to the basic design has given the VCS 3 enormous popularity. Among other features, it includes a cordless patch-board for the interconnection of various units without messy wires and leads, and a 'joy-stick' that can simultaneously alter two control settings while playing. This version has found great favour with Pete Townshend, who has had a lasting interest in 'sound experiment', and can be heard to great effect on 'Who's Next'.

Interestingly, one of the first groups to use a synthesizer on record was the Monkees. It clearly fits with their image as a studio, not to say artificial, group, and can be heard on their 1967 album 'Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn And Jones' — credited

to Micky Dolenz and Paul Beaver. Beaver was at UCLA at the time, and in 1968 he produced the 'Nonesuch Guide to Electronic Music' with Bernard L. Krause, a two-record set with a booklet that explains the elements of electronic music and puts the Moog Series III through its paces.

In March, 1968, an American West Coast group, steeped in avant-garde movements and contemporary classical music, brought out an album of virtually all-electronic rock under the name 'The United States of America'. The synthesizer they used was called the Durrett Electronic Music Synthesizer and Ring Modulator, after its inventor. This instrument, though, seems to have disappeared without trace along with the group. The album nevertheless remains a brilliant foretaste of what is possible with this sort of instrument — an extraordinarily inventive and exciting amalgam of pop, electronic music and poetry featuring the vocal and songwriting talents of Dorothy Moskowitz, who went on to play keyboards with Country Joe, and can be heard on the 'Paris Sessions' album.

The Mini-Moog

Until the end of the '60s, the moog remained very much a studio instrument. The most often cited album of synthesizer music from the period is Walter Carlos's 'Switched On Bach' (1968), a completely formal exercise in sound-effect and studio technique. Even Pete Townshend's work is studio orientated, and the Who's synthesizer effects on stage rely heavily on tapes. Then, at the beginning of the '70s, the demands of performing musicians like Keith Emerson in ELP and Rick Wakeman with Yes impelled the development of simpler operating techniques and the introduction of synthesizers consciously intended for live performance. In 1971 the mini-Moog was introduced.

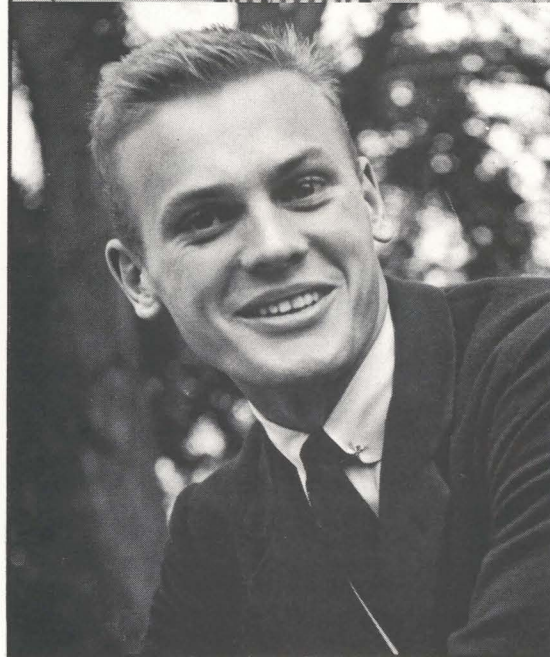
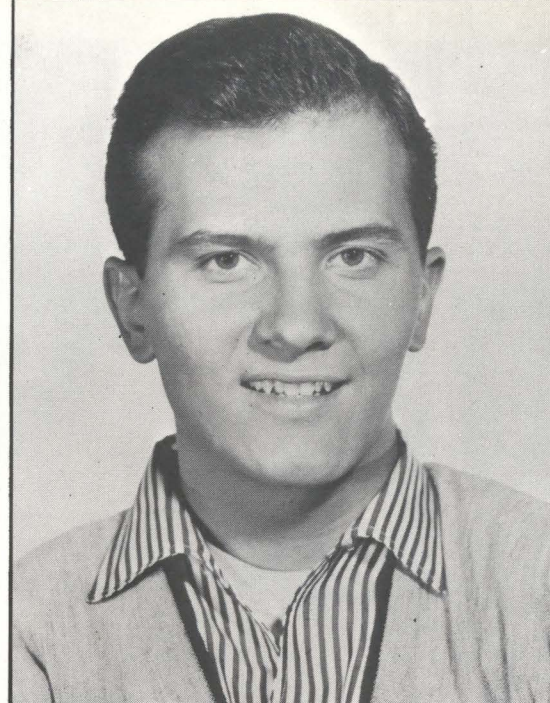
A simplified version of larger studio models, the mini-Moog can be used as a third keyboard placed on top of an organ console. The advantage of this arrangement is that the one-note synthesizer can be played in consort with a polyphonic organ or piano. In the same year the British Freeman synthesizer was introduced — the first polyphonic synthesizer designed specifically for the reproduction of orchestral backings on stage. Portable keyboard consoles patchable into independent synthesizer modules now allow performers like Edgar Winter to move around on stage while playing. Perhaps the most successful use of the moog, though, is to be found on soul records. Stevie Wonder on 'Music Of My Mind' (1972) and later albums, the Isley Brothers on '3:3' (1973) or Ike and Tina Turner on 'Nutbush City Limits' use the synthesizer with effect and restraint to give an extra depth and dimension to beautifully produced sounds. On the other hand, the success of Roxy Music, almost a synthesizer band, has given the moog the final seal of approval as a stage instrument. In every area of pop and rock, the moog is here to stay.

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SOLID GOLD

AMERICAN 1957

	TITLE, Artist	Weeks At Number One
Jan 30	DON'T FORBID ME, Pat Boone	1
Feb 6	YOUNG LOVE, Tab Hunter	6
Mar 20	BUTTERFLY, Andy Williams	3
Apr 10	ROUND AND ROUND, Perry Como	1
Apr 10	ALL SHOOK UP, Elvis Presley	8
June 5	LOVE LETTERS IN THE SAND, Pat Boone	5
July 6	LET ME BE YOUR TEDDY BEAR, Elvis Presley	7
Aug 24	TAMMY, Debbie Reynolds	5
Sept 28	HONEYCOMB, Jimmie Rodgers	2
Oct 12	WAKE UP LITTLE SUSIE, Everly Brothers	2
Oct 26	JAILHOUSE ROCK, Elvis Presley	6
Nov 30	YOU SEND ME, Sam Cooke	3
Dec 21	APRIL LOVE, Pat Boone	1
Dec 28	AT THE HOP, Danny & the Juniors	7



Top picture: Pat Boone.

By 1957, Elvis Presley and, to a lesser extent, Pat Boone, had the national US charts sewn up with each single they released. In many ways they were opposites: Mr. Clean himself had a Tin Pan Alley image smoother than whipped cream; while Elvis, king of the crepe-soles, could be saucy ('Teddy Bear') or anarchic ('Jailhouse Rock') in turns, and outsell everyone in sight. Today the crutch-heave and moodiness — those demonic eyes! — may seem almost comic, but there can be little doubt that all his imitators were moved by flattery.

Yet US rock & roll in 1957 certainly had room for both Presley and Boone. In fact, the ballad seemed to be regaining popular ground. 'Jailhouse Rock' was arguably the raunchiest sound the Jordanaires ever achieved, it was probably the archetypal single from the King, and certainly the last of his great belters. Others soon caught him up and sweetened his sound, while Boone's success also had a widespread effect.

Elvis and Boone were in fact the only US artists to have hit no. 1 before 1957, and that year obligingly threw up a number of highly competitive crooners, two of whom — Andy Williams and Perry Como —

are at least as successful today. Pat Boone was to have a four-year wait for his next no. 1, and Tab Hunter, thanks to exposure in a TV series, only temporarily established himself with a song better known now as Donny Osmond's smash hit, 'Young Love'.

A number of singles in 1957 also managed the old trick of following their US success in Britain. The year started with Guy Mitchell's 'Singing The Blues' topping out in transatlantic style, both sides at once, becoming the song of the moment to the extent that a British cover version by Tommy Steele followed Mitchell's to the no. 1 spot in Britain... offering a clear pointer to the difference in musical aspirations and attitudes between the two countries.

In Britain the raw influence was rooted as much in the melody as the beat, and grew out of that rather insipid experience, British mainstream jazz. Tommy Steele, a wonderful rock & roll performer if you can believe that today, rose on the wave of this new British music, which soon became known as skiffle. He was hotly chased by Lonnie Donegan, whose frenzied style, backed by washboards, kazoos, and almost anything else that came to hand, eventually leant towards self-parody, as his second major hit, 'Putting On The Style', shows.

In Britain Frankie Vaughan followed Tommy Steele to the top



Above: Tab Hunter and Harry Belafonte.

with 'Garden Of Eden', his first hit in a string of moody ballads. He was succeeded by Tab Hunter; Lonnie Donegan struck with 'Cumberland Gap', and then Guy Mitchell hit again, with 'Rock-A-Billy', which had missed the top spot in the States. Andy Williams however repeated his US success, and was followed to the top of the British charts by a peculiar phenomenon, Johnnie Ray. He was deaf, his most popular numbers were tear-jerkers that actually jerked tears, and he often broke into onstage weeping; he inspired motherly affection, and was obviously about as abnormal as he seemed. In 1957 he had his biggest-selling single, titled with spectacular irony, 'Yes Tonight Josephine'.

The Stateside battle between Presley and Boone nonetheless lasted all summer long... with Presley winning out. Boone's 'Love Letters' nevertheless remains a classic. By July, in fact, Presley had no. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic: 'Teddy Bear' in the States, and his first major UK hit, 'All Shook Up'. After that, only three more singles topped out in Britain in 1957, thanks to teen-lover Paul Anka who headed all the European charts with 'Diana'. In Britain he actually held on to the spot for two months before rock & roll again took the stand.

The Crickets, who with vocalist extraordinaire Buddy Holly, held a special place in British hearts, scored with Norman Petty's

sing-song taunt, 'That'll Be The Day'. The production was hollow, but the vocals came out clean, and the arrangement was simple enough for the British palate.

It was only really towards the end of the year that the major differences between US and British tastes began to show. Summer in America had ended with a Debbie Reynolds weepie and then the stylish Jimmie Rodgers hitting the top. Then the Everly Brothers came through with the first of many monster hits, a subtle version of the schoolboy snigger 'what will people think of us staying out all night', 'Wake Up Little Susie'. 'Jailhouse Rock' followed, and then the only no. 1 in Sam Cooke's sadly short career, 'You Send Me', a song with only a small portion of the power displayed on other great recordings like 'Shake' and 'We're Having A Party'.

The conclusions are apparent: the British charts were still mainly influenced by America, particularly by a handful of major artists; while the endemic British movement in skiffle went unappreciated in the States. British taste and imagination meanwhile generally seemed to lag well behind American...

US charts derived from *Billboard*, and/or *Billboard's Popularity Charts*, reproduced by permission of the copyright owners, Billboard Publications Inc. UK charts extracted from *Rock File* edited by Charlie Gillett, information courtesy of *NME* and *Record Mirror*.

BRITISH 1957

	TITLE, Artist	Weeks at Number One
Jan 4	SINGING THE BLUES, Guy Mitchell	3
Jan 11	SINGING THE BLUES, Tommy Steele	1
Jan 25	GARDEN OF EDEN, Frankie Vaughan	4
Feb 22	YOUNG LOVE, Tab Hunter	7
Apr 12	CUMBERLAND GAP, Lonnie Donegan	5
May 17	ROCK-A-BILLY, Guy Mitchell	1
May 24	BUTTERFLY, Andy Williams	2
June 7	YES TONIGHT JOSEPHINE, Johnnie Ray	3
June 28	GAMBLIN' MAN/PUTTING ON THE STYLE, Lonnie Donegan	2
July 12	ALL SHOOK UP, Elvis Presley	7
Aug 30	DIANA, Paul Anka	9
Nov 1	THAT'LL BE THE DAY, Crickets	3
Nov 22	MARY'S BOY CHILD, Harry Belafonte	7

All pics Pictorial Press



MOVIES: 1956

THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT

Directed by Frank Tashlin · Starring Jayne Mansfield · Tom Ewell · Featuring the music of Little Richard · Gene Vincent & the Blue Caps · Eddie Cochran

As a film, *The Girl Can't Help It* almost didn't work. In many ways, even today, it remains a film of and for its age. A rock & roll film because it features performances by Little Richard (who wrote the title song), Eddie Cochran (singing 'Twenty Flight Rock'), Fats Domino, Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps and others, it might seem at first glance to slot neatly into that peculiar area of mid and late '50s kitsch cinema.

But Frank Tashlin's 1956 comedy is much more than a failed rock & roll film. First and foremost, *The Girl Can't Help It* is a film made by a past master of comedy — the man who taught Jerry (not Lee) Lewis most everything he knows about wicked situations and subtle slapstick. Secondly, if *The Girl Can't Help It* is a film of its time, it is not because it's a rock & roll film, but because it's a Jayne Mansfield film.

The whole film hinges around the Jayne Mansfield character — a girl called Georgy who is being promoted by her ex-gangster fiancé, the failing Fats Murdoch, played by Edmund O'Brien. Murdoch hires a publicist and agent played by Tom Ewell (of

The Seven Year Itch fame) to discover a niche for Georgy as a star. The agent's last step towards the Big Time was his association with Julie London, who haunts him in drunken moments singing her big (only?) hit 'Cry Me A River'. The inevitable happens. Georgy replaces Julie, she marries her agent, and Fats makes it as a star with a no. 1 hit entitled 'Rocking Around The Rockpile' and a host of follow-ups — including the immortal 'There'll Be No Lights On The Christmas Tree Tonight, Mother — They're Using The Electric Chair'.

The joke of the film is built around various assumptions about the commercial use of techniques of deception, which much of the rock & roll explosion seemed to embody. Not long after Tashlin's film there was a real explosion of no-talent, one-hit-wonders. Stan Freberg, for example, made 'The Old Payola Roll Blues', backed with 'I Was On My Way To High School', in which a lad is pulled off the streets with all the right qualifications for a rock & roll star . . . except that he can't sing. The 'A' side told the story of the session, the 'B' side presented the resultant travesty. Fabian must have turned in his vocal booth. But Tashlin's film goes far deeper than a simple statement or demonstration of this deception.

THE INDUSTRY: '60s-'70s

The Studios

The modern recording studio is at the heart of the pop music industry. It is here that performers are rehearsed and recorded, here that the sounds on radio, TV or hi-fi are prepared, processed and manufactured.

Even music publishers, the last bastions of the old tradition, are recognising that their ultimate aim is to sell records. And with that aim in mind, Tin Pan Alleys all over the world are becoming breeding grounds of studios where songwriters become song-makers and treble clefs and crotchets give way to magnetic tape and mixing consoles.

Of course studios, or rather the places where performances are recorded, have not always looked like the interiors of intergalactic spaceships. Only in recent years have steel and plastic, subdued lighting and leather-bound control desks become the order of the day. Even as late as the mid-'50s, the studio was seen as a luxury only the real giants of the record industry could afford – and then usually only at the business centre of their operations.

RCA Victor's expansion in the Nashville area, for example, is typical of how the major record companies have moved into the studio business. In 1957, Chet Atkins became manager, and later the company vice-president in charge of all RCA's operations in the area after having worked on sessions for them for some time. This has grown into a complex of three recording studios, two studios for tape mixing, and three lacquer-cutting rooms where tape masters are processed into lacquer discs for eventual manufacture. The Nashville studios are luxurious by comparison with any New York counterparts, but it has been real estate costs and the hectic pace of living in major cities that has been behind the setting-up of studios in the country and in smaller towns. In Britain, Rockfield and the Manor studios are notable in the country, and Strawberry Studios in the provincial city of Manchester.

A parallel development to these moves by the majors has been the great increase in the number of independent studios to cope with the enormous increase in demand for studio time and the increase in the time taken to record material. Several performers, like the Rolling Stones, Pete Townshend and George Harrison, have even built their own studios to work in at their leisure and in an amicable atmosphere.

The increasing complexity of the recording business has, of course, helped

to bring these changes about, but it is classical music that is most often associated with advances in equipment and technology for home reproduction. While pop also impels developments in recording technology, the classical music lover's demand for high quality and naturalistic reproduction has always been a driving force. Classical music is a composer's music, and scores are written for orchestras or other ensembles which are already internally balanced with respect to instrumentation, relative volumes and the tonal characteristics of traditional instruments. Small groups of electric instruments, however, demand special attention to the balancing of instruments and vocals, so that, for example, the bass is not too loud or the vocal too soft. This in turn has to do with the fact that the roots of pop and rock lie in an ever-changing aural tradition which is unwritten and performer-oriented. Even those classical composers, like Stockhausen, who have specifically composed in a tape medium, have in the end been more concerned with the putting together of sounds rather than with the transmission of songs.

Records For The Rich

The developments in recording technology have been nothing short of spectacular. Large studios like Command or AIR in London and the Record Plant in Los Angeles, have had a 24-tape track facility since 1973. Yet by the time the Beatles' 'Sgt. Pepper' was recorded in 1967, most studios hadn't even progressed to eight tracks. That album was recorded on only four tracks – a feat that can still produce raised eyebrows. By 1967, though, the standard of studio design and equipment, and a thorough knowledge of the devices at the disposal of the production process, had placed production within the reach of anybody with a few thousand pounds to spare.

In some respects, and in the opinion of many people, the studio itself is the most important category. Clearly there are features of the studio and its situation that can be crucial to the final sound. Two completely opposed points of view are presented by engineers and sometime producers Glyn Johns and Martin Birch (between them they have worked with the Stones, the Who, Boz Scaggs, the Faces, Jeff Beck and Canned Heat). Johns argues: "If you've had a lot of experience . . . you can engineer anywhere; a good engineer can get a good sound in someone's living-room." Birch, on the other hand, says emphatically that

"without good acoustics you can't do anything in a studio."

The problem is that what constitutes good acoustics is very much a question of taste. Excellent records have often been made under atrocious conditions. They have turned out to be excellent, perhaps, for no other reason than atrocious acoustics suited a particular sound. Technically speaking, what constitutes good acoustics is easy to define. Two characteristics are relevant. First, the reverberation time, which is a measure of sound reflected off walls and other surfaces and heard as reverberation or echo. Secondly, the frequency characteristic of a room, which is a measure of which frequencies can be heard best and worst in a given room.

Equally important under the studio category are non-measurable things like atmosphere, studio layout, location and even the friendliness or otherwise of engineers and other personnel. Ideally, a producer will allocate a particular studio to a particular performer or group only after consideration of these factors. An un-business-like group recording in a business-like and efficient studio could be disastrous to the final sound; engineers and groups who dislike each other, or a performer who loves to walk in the countryside between takes and is stuck in the middle of a city, could equally ruin an expertly set-up session.

Taping And Mixing

The set-pieces of any recording studio are the tape machines and the mixing console – the desk from which the engineer controls the sound signals and the tape machines.

A typical mixing console might accommodate 24 inputs and 16 outputs. That is, 24 separate signals may be fed into the desk for processing from microphones, tape decks or even straight from instruments ('direct injection'); and these 24 signals can be fed to any, or between any or all, of 16 output channels, which usually go straight to the tape machine. Clearly, if two or more inputs are switched or wired into one output, the signals will be *mixed*. Hence the title – mixing console or mixing desk.

Each of the separate channels will have volume and tone controls, rather like sophisticated versions of those on a domestic record player, and often also pre-set level controls (level, in this context, is virtually synonymous with volume). The pre-set controls are set at the beginning of a session, when the microphones or other input devices have been placed, tested and routed to their respective input channels. This leaves the other channel volume controls with a fine degree of adjustment over a relatively small range of volume between highest and lowest level.

A typical desk will also include metering facilities, to measure incoming and outgoing signal strength, and comprehensive monitoring, so that the signals can be listened to in the studio as they are being recorded. The monitoring system will have its own amplifiers, which would be used



THE STUDIO

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 machine wall sockets | 27 monitor echo control |
| 2 16-track recorder | 28 tape machine selectors |
| 3 stereo recorder | 29 studio playback selectors |
| 4 24-track recorder | 30 monitor and foldback panel |
| 5 portable limiters | 31 echo send equaliser and echo |
| 6 jack field | plate remote control |
| 7 portable oscillator | 32 ancillary microphone and line |
| 8 Dolby M24 noise reduction | channel amplifiers and |
| units | equalisers |
| 9 monitor speakers | 33 echo send and foldback send and |
| 10 control room/studio window | prefade listen |
| 11 tape machine auto locator | 34 monitor master fader |
| 12 limiter/compressors | 35 talkback buttons |
| 13 4-track meters | 36 monitor faders |
| 14 24-track meters | 37 echo return meters |
| 15 talk back microphones | 38 echo return equalisers |
| 16 group selectors | 39 ancillary echo send and |
| 17 4-track panoramic | foldback send and pefade |
| potentiometers | listen |
| 18 foldback mixers | 40 16-track tape machine remote |
| 19 group redirectors | 41 channel faders |
| 20 panoramic potentiometers | 42 group faders |
| 21 cue lights and talkback switches | 43 quadrophonic fader |
| 22 oscillator and ancillary meter | 44 quadrophonic panoramic |
| 23 echo return selectors | potentiometers |
| 24 ancillary group selectors | 45 stereo panoramic potentiometers |
| 25 ancillary panoramic | 46 24-track tape machine remote |
| potentiometers | 47 oscillator switch |
| 26 microphone and line channel | |
| amplifiers and equalisers | |

The mixing console is essentially a system for routing signals through various different circuits into a tape machine. Tape machines are of the sync-head type, which use several heads stacked and independently switchable, so that any input can be simultaneously recorded with any other input on the same track which is being played back. This arrangement, first introduced by Ampex under the name Sel-Sync, is the basis of multi-tracking and overdubbing. Using a sync-head machine, a single performer can fill all of the tape tracks with his own performances – taking one track at a time and playing to the accompaniment of the other tracks being played back and heard over the foldback. When all the tracks are laid down separately, they can be combined by feeding the playback of one or more heads, through the mixer, into a head that is recording over another track. This mixing and overdubbing process is known as reducing. Typically, a reduction is two tracks mixed down from, say, eight or 16 tracks, so that the final two tracks have a stereo spread. The stereo spread is achieved by a device known as a pan-pot, which distributes a signal in a set ratio between the two stereo tracks.

There are more devices, linked into the mixing console, which help to avoid other troublesome noise. The Kepex Expander is widely used to automatically drop the recording level on a tape track when the signal itself drops below a certain level. For example, if a microphone is temporarily out of use and picking up a low level air-conditioner hum, the Kepex will automatically drop the recording level so that the tape doesn't record the hum. When an instrument or vocal signal is again received in this microphone channel, the recording level will be restored.

One other problem interferes in recording and especially in recording electric music. Very often the range of volume being recorded (the dynamic range) is too great for the ordinary control settings to cope with. The human ear automatically compensates when it picks up rapid changes from high to low-level signals or vice versa, but this is a psychological mechanism that recording equipment doesn't have. Instead, if there is a sudden peak of volume, it is most likely to cause unbearable distortion, or if there is a sudden drop in volume, the quiet signal is liable to be lost in the deluge of sound that precedes and follows it. The limiter/compressor solves this problem by 'taming' the dynamic range of the incoming signals.

In effect, a limiter/compressor is an amplifier whose amplification decreases if the signal it is meant to amplify goes above a certain set level, and which automatically increases the relative level of signals below a certain threshold. The result is that the sound seems to become denser, with no sudden peaks or drops in volume. This means that overloading distortion is highly unlikely, and that every part of the tape will be loud enough to hear, despite any passages too quiet to hear in the original material.

(Photograph and information courtesy of Air Studios (No. 2), London.)

to feed high-quality speakers in the studio control room. It is usually possible to monitor the sound produced in the studio with control settings different from those affecting the sound signals being recorded. This enables a producer to judge whether he should put the inputs through a different mix without committing himself to

tape. A similar facility to monitoring, called foldback, allows the musicians in the studio to monitor their own sound, sometimes in different – but simultaneous – mixes. There are also master faders on the desk which act as volume controls for whole groups of input or output channels, reducing or increasing volume across the board.

NEXT WEEK IN THE INDUSTRY: Cutting A Disc.

John Sebastian: A Single Spoonful

On September 12th, 1970, rain drenched the audience at the free concert in London's Hyde Park. They sat there huddled together, miserable, clammy and too wet to move from under their polythene sheeting. The sky was a solid, heavy block of dirty grey as a tie-dyed, bespectacled figure ambled on stage carrying a guitar; and then, almost simultaneously, a shaft of sunlight shot through the clouds and illuminated a beaming smile on the face of John Sebastian.

Within seconds the crowd had forgotten both their blues and the sodden ground and were on their feet swaying in the sun to the warm, happy sounds of Sebastian's voice and guitar. It was almost as if he'd made an arrangement with the sun to come out just as he reached the stage.

Two weeks earlier, John Sebastian had been the only artist to arrive for the Saturday morning programme at the Isle of Wight festival. He'd told the audience that they should "Just holler 'em up and I'll play whatever you want to hear." For 140 minutes they did just that, and he once again worked in harmony with the weather as the sun warmed the audience and he entertained them with his songs old and new — with 'Daydream', 'Nashville Cats', 'She's A Lady' and 'Red Eye Express' — and with his sheer innocent joy of life.

Sebastian once remarked to a magazine shortly after the release of the 'John B. Sebastian' album, that "the best aspect (of the current music scene) is probably the 'living-room music' feeling that's coming back lately. People just get up and sing like they would at home". In the late summer of 1969, Sebastian had himself set the standards for this when he played in perhaps the biggest musical living-room of all-time — the legendary Woodstock festival in upstate New York. John Sebastian's performance there was caught on film for the *Woodstock* movie, and he can be heard on Atlantic's first soundtrack album singing 'Rainbows All Over Your Blues' and 'I Had A Dream'.

Yet Sebastian had never been booked to appear on stage at Woodstock. He had hitched a ride in on a helicopter and spent most of the weekend in a euphoric haze. Then, when the time felt right, he went up

on stage and turned on the waiting crowd.

Robert Adels of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, described Sebastian's success at Woodstock as being "the power of one guitar, one voice and one broad smile", and asked John for the secret of his happiness. What would seem to be the whole philosophy of his post-Lovin' Spoonful life-style was in his reply: "It's no secret at all. Fall in love, smoke a bit, and most of the rest kind of falls into place".

John Sebastian's role in the rock world, however, has not always been that of the ultimate Mr Good Vibes. Born into a New York showbusiness family in 1946 — with a father who was a harmonica virtuoso — John has had several changes of career within the music business in the years since.

In his teens he was part of the Greenwich Village folk scene along with Roger McGuinn and David Crosby — who later formed the Byrds — and Felix Pappalardi, who was to produce Cream and later become part of Mountain. Sebastian, like his father, evolved into something of an expert on harmonica — indeed, he has 'ghosted' a book on harmonica techniques for the Hohner company — and formed his first group, the Even Dozen Jug Band, which numbered from six to 13 members and recorded an album for Elektra before it split up.

The Seeds Of Spoonful

John then went through a series of other groups and associations, the most important of which bore the name of Mugwumps. The Mugwumps played together in New York for some time and eventually dissolved, but they were, nonetheless, an important group as they contained the seeds of both the Lovin' Spoonful, in the shapes of Sebastian and Zal Yanovsky, and the Mamas and Papas, in the shapes of Cass Elliott and Denny Doherty. All this information is available in the autobiographical song, 'Creeque Alley', by the Mamas and Papas, which traces the genealogy of both groups.

John also encountered Paul Rothchild during this period. At the time Rothchild was a young production man with the then embryonic Elektra recording company, although he was later to achieve fame as the producer of the Doors and was, in fact, the producer of Sebastian's three solo albums. He assisted Sebastian in the early 1960s, however, by letting him play

Both pics Joe Stevens



Above: John Sebastian at Woodstock. In 1966

harmonica as a session-man with some of the folk acts that Elektra was at that time recording in New York.

For a short time during this period, John made one of his many exits from the music business — exits that were to become characteristic in later years. He moved to Marblehead, Massachusetts, and spent his time learning sail-making. Soon after, however, he returned to music, and spent some time in the South with the legendary blues guitarist and singer Lightnin' Hopkins, with whom he studied and from whom he gained a sense of the roots of his music that was to colour his writing from then on. While with Hopkins, John also met Mississippi John Hurt, who had a song which contained the line: 'I love my baby by the lovin' spoonful . . .'. Hence the name of the next group which John was to form in New York.

The Lovin' Spoonful hit the American music scene in 1965. Members were Steve Boone, Zal Yanovsky, Joe Butler and John, and they played all-American music. It was a little bit of everything — jug-band, blues, folk, country and western, ragtime, village ethnic and gospel. And John Sebastian, who was the leader, also came up with most of the Spoonful's material and



the Lovin' Spoonful played their last tour of the States. From L. to R.: Zalman Yanovsky, Steve Boone, John Sebastian and Joe Butler.

sang lead on nearly all their hits: 'Do You Believe In Magic?', 'Younger Girl', 'Nashville Cats', 'Summer In The City', 'Daydream', 'You Didn't Have To Be So Nice' and 'Did You Ever Have To Make Up Your Mind'. In his writing for the Spoonful, Sebastian first demonstrated his romanticism, his sunshiny sense of poetry, and his *joie de vivre*, and also showed he knew how to string them together to produce melodic songs. His writing indicated a perception and awareness which was rare among his contemporary tunesmiths.

Solo Trail

After a particularly sordid drug bust in late '66, in which Zal Yanovsky, a Canadian, was threatened with deportation, the Lovin' Spoonful began to fall apart. Early the next year Zal left the group to go solo, and after one more album had been released John himself hit the solo trail.

Following this, little was heard of Sebastian until he went up on stage at Woodstock and it was often assumed during this interim period that he had moved away from the music business altogether. Admittedly John hadn't been exactly overstretching his talents, but having written

two film scores — one for *You're A Big Boy Now* which featured the charming 'Darling Be Home Soon' and a score for Woody Allen's *What's Up Tiger Lily* with the group — Sebastian was approached to write the music for a Broadway show titled *Jimmy Shine*. However, his score was not used, and the play — which starred Dustin Hoffman — opened and closed with little excitement.

In 1970, when Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young visited Britain for a Royal Albert Hall appearance, Stephen Stills was asked about John Sebastian, as little had been heard of him for some time. Stills replied that Sebastian was living in a tent and writing beautiful songs . . . which is exactly what he was doing despite the rumours that he might be joining CSN&Y after his appearance on the title track of their 'Déjà Vu' album. His tent home at that time was in fact a commune called 'Chicken Flats', where he lived with wife Catherine, accompanied by a large dog. They were photographed there for the sleeve of the 'John B. Sebastian' album released in the summer of 1970 after a one-year delay brought about by contractual complications.

It was, in fact, Warner Brothers/Reprise who released 'John B. Sebastian', and this

only served to heighten the rumours that Sebastian might have joined up with CSN&Y, as many of the people associated with that outfit appeared on the recording. David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Graham Nash were all present, as was Dallas Taylor, the band's drummer. Also helping out were the Ikettes, Paul Harris and Buzz Linhart, and there were some magnificent orchestral arrangements by Paul Harris.

Mixed Reviews

The album was generally well received in Britain although there was a slight undercurrent of feeling that perhaps Sebastian had not lived up to some of the promise he had shown with the Lovin' Spoonful. In the States, however, reviewers went into ecstasies. A reporter, in the *San Francisco Examiner And Chronicle*, wrote: 'The new Reprise album by John Sebastian, 'John B. Sebastian', is just about the prettiest, sweetest and most delightful album since the first Crosby, Stills and Nash album. It is not cloying, there is sentimentality in it but it is not sticky, forced or pretentious in any way. In fact, it is just straight ahead, simple, uncomplicated (on one level; quite complicated on another) songs about life and this

love and what's happening. And John Sebastian sings about them all beautifully.'

This review was right on the ball. As in his work with the Spoonful, Sebastian drew his musical inspiration from several contemporary sources — 'Red Eye Express' and 'What She Thinks About' were definite rockers; 'Baby Don't Ya Get Crazy' had an R&B feel; 'How Have You Been' verged on blues.

The lyrics were as strong and beautiful as any written for the Spoonful, and Sebastian could still see round the corner of love affairs and spot those glaringly obvious faults that no one else noticed. In 'What She Thinks About', for example, he sang of love in a less restricted fashion than in earlier songs, extending his writing to set out generalized rather than specific problems. 'How Have You Been?' a tale of a necklace, a broken guitar string and a turtle, was undoubtedly the most delightful song on the record, but it was in 'I Had A Dream' that John Sebastian really gave his listeners a chance to hear how the spirit of Woodstock had become embedded in his thoughts:

*'I heard a song last night, what a lovely
song it was
I thought I'd hum it all night
Because all of the players were playing
together
And all of the heavies were light as a
feather.'*

'John B. Sebastian' was a moderate commercial success, and it was followed up with a long string of concerts and a live album, 'Cheapo-Cheapo Productions Presents Real Live John Sebastian' released in July, 1971, which successfully captured his personality and the special flavour of his concerts.

Four Great Shows

Just looking at the liner notes and the record gives an indication of Sebastian's innocent and carefree outlook. Instead of listing 'Side One' and 'Side Two', Sebastian puts 'Live One' and 'Live Too'. And the liner notes continue his idea of playing as if he were part of the audience — he would often slip down off the stage and sit cross-legged, playing his guitar and singing, in the front rows: '... the tape-recorders were there for four fine shows in California where lots of songs came out of the audience ... weird oldies ... tunes I'd never played ... tunes they thought I'd never played ... this is the best of those good times with more to come.' As well as Spoonful numbers the record includes 'In The Still Of The Night' and 'Blue Suede Shoes' as part of the John Sebastian Party Piece. But the strength of the record is as much Sebastian's "Gee, I'm in a groovy mood tonight" raps with the audience as the actual music itself.

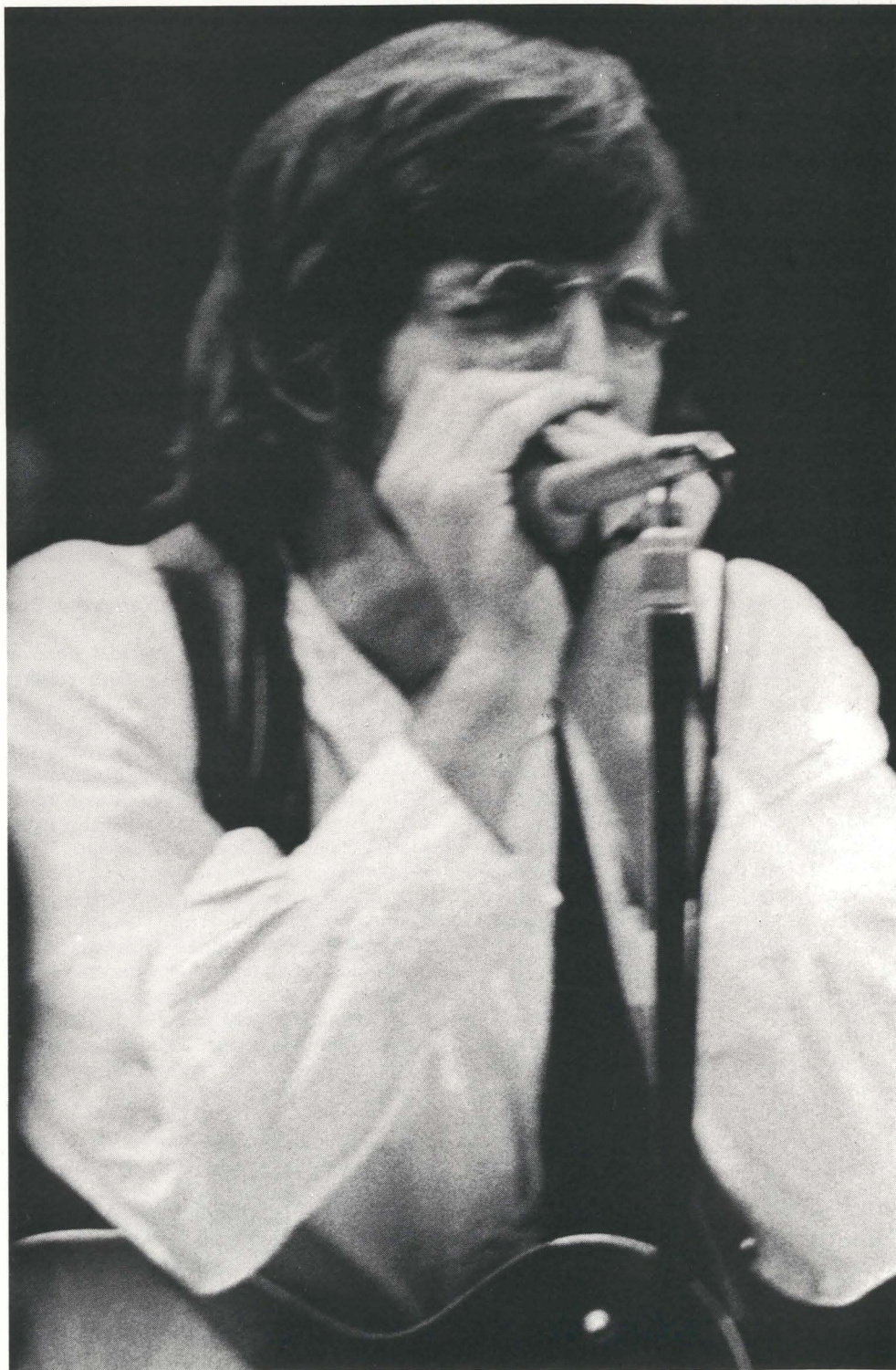
The third solo album, 'The Four Of Us', was released later that year. One whole side of the album chronicled, in stylistically varied terms, the adventures of Sebastian, his wife and two friends, on a

trek across the States. Like some modern-day Huckleberry Finn on a search for the American Dream, he perhaps felt that he had to come to terms with his feelings in the context of the growing vogue of extended songs as 'suites'. Whatever his reasons for making the record — he did in fact claim to be greatly pleased with it — 'The Four Of Us' was neither a commercial nor a critical success.

He has since released an album, 'Tarzana Kid' (1974), and he has also made occasional tours of the States — at one time he spoke of forming a band with Phil Everly, though nothing came of it — and was scheduled to visit Britain in 1973 ... but the tour was cancelled.

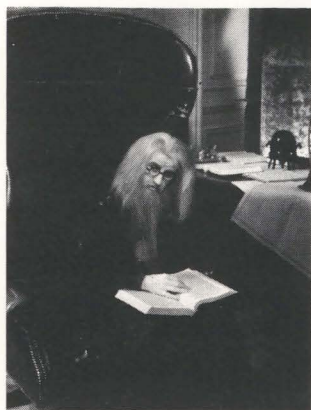
Like Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Sebastian has experienced a loss of popularity which is probably due as much to the fact that the reign of the singer/songwriters, who were so closely associated with the Woodstock generation, is now over and seen as passé, as it is to his lack of records.

No doubt, though, the time will come when John Sebastian will return to favour and release further records, for songwriting and performing is for him a totally intuitive action. He was once reported as saying: "You know how some people sit down and take out a cigarette as a kind of natural action — they're not even thinking about it. Well, that's exactly how it is with me and a guitar."



Joe Stevens

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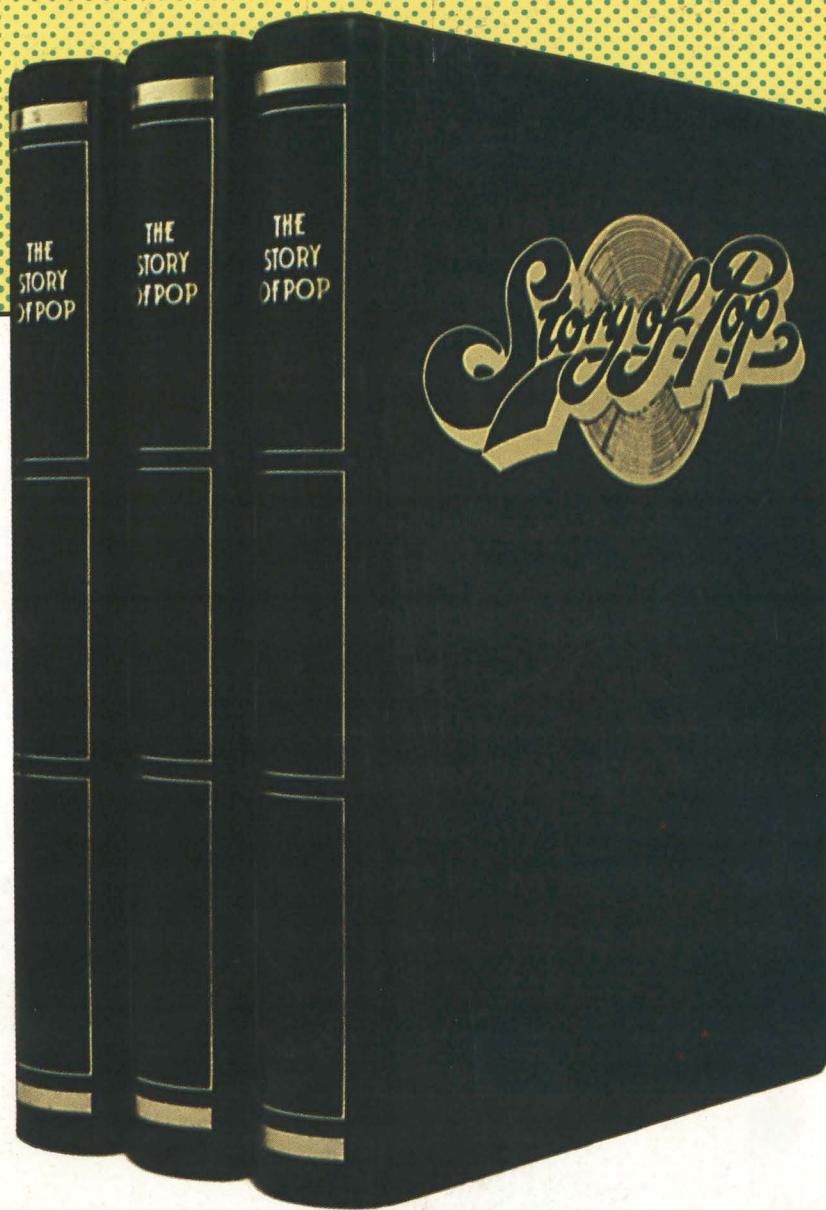
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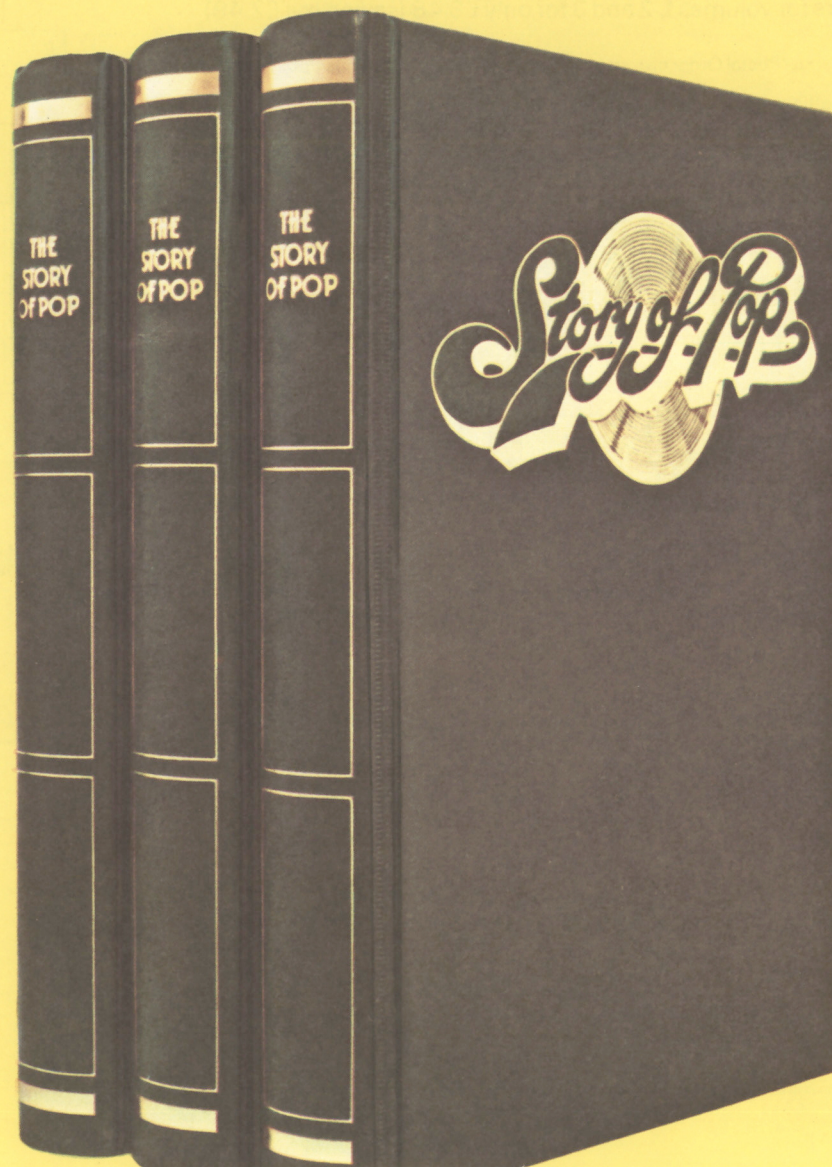
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