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Jerry Lee Lewis: A Very Exclusive Interview With A Sometimes Rock Star

By ANDY BOEHM

It was late autumn, 1969, and Jerry Lee Lewis, a nice, friendly man who has spent the last sixteen years of his life on the road with few vacations, stopped briefly at a Chicago motel to talk. Still with his famous "cousin" wife (actually a third cousin), Myra, from whom he has since been divorced, Jerry Lee drank a little and talked a lot—about rock and roll, and piano and elbows and a man called Alan Freed. It's been a while since that Chicago motel in 1969, but Jerry Lee is still around and even, sometimes, in the news—recently, the wire services reported, he filed bankruptcy claims in a southern court. "I haven't seen him since then," Andy Boehm reports, "but mutual friends say he's pretty much the same as he was then, save he has a new wife."

How did you develop all your freakouts on piano—like playing with your feet, and your ass and your elbows, etc.? Did you pick that up from watching other performers or did you invent it yourself?

Everything I do I invented by myself. I do nothing like anybody else. When I make love to a woman, I do it strictly Jerry Lee Lewis style; when I drink whiskey, I do it Jerry Lee Lewis style; when I curse, I do it Jerry Lee Lewis style; but I'm usually a very nice person.

Did it take long to develop those tricks?

It was a little hard to get into. I now play pretty good with my feet, I know what I'm hittin'. When I play with my butt—well, that's kind of different. To hit with your behind and hit it right, you got to hit it perfect. You miss—you're in trouble. (Laughs) Like if I'm in C or G or F, I'll hit in the vicinity of where those notes are at and I'm going to get some of those notes with my behind and it's going to sound pretty good.

Sometimes you go on your knees and play with your head below the keyboard. Did you have to practice tricks like that a long time?

I have to be feelin' real groovy when I do that.

Did you have to practice those tricks for a long time?

No—I never really practiced them—just sort of come naturally as far as I can remember. I don't plot things much.

Is it true that you did "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On" on the first take?

Yeah—"Great Balls of Fire" too.

What did it feel like to you as a young guy to suddenly become a gigantic superstar in the 50's?

I don't think I ever realized it. I think I'm just now beginning to realize what I was doing. I never payed that much attention to it.

Did you ever doubt that you would be a big success?

No. I knew I'd be a hit if I could get a record out. I don't know how I knew it, but I knew it.

I've met several musicians who, when they hit it big, it completely blew their minds.

Most of these people in the business who have big records out and things are nothing but phony people anyways because they have not talent to begin with. It didn't bother me at all.

Your piano style is just about the most distinctive I've heard. How did you develop it and who influenced you?

Well, I started playing piano when I was eight years old, in Ferriday, Louisiana. I taught myself everything I know about piano, I was not influenced by anyone. I lived so far back in the country I don't think I knew anybody who could influence me. Later on, possibly—I don't know who it

was, though. I never thought that much about it. There's a lot of piano players I like, you know, but I had my own style, I taught myself.

What kind of music did you listen to as a kid in Louisiana?

Oh... I listened to country music, of course. Mostly when I was a kid I listened to boogie woogie, you know, like Tommy Dorsey's boogie woogie and stuff like that. And I listened to B.B. King and people like that. I like boogie woogie. I think it's great music. Of course I don't think boogie woogie can be done 'less it's done on piano really.

What country artists did you listen to?

Red Foley, Hank Williams. And always, always Jimmie Rodgers. I loved him. Now you know, his records were the only ones I bought when I was a kid—Jimmie Rodgers records. I went

into a record shop one time and they had these old records, and this guy was playing this Jimmie Rodgers record and I says "Man, that's somthin' different, I have to have that." I bought those records and then found out my daddy had them records when he was a young man himself.

I think there's a similarity between you and Rodgers. He was a country singer but he had a lot of Negro influences; he even recorded with black jazz bands behind him.

He was extremely versatile, and you're just about the only one around who has that same sort of versatility.

Yeah, I think so too. I believe you're right there. Yeah, Jimmie Rodgers was very versatile. He could sing anything. He sang rock, he sang country, he could sing folk music, he could sing blues' he was one of the greatest blues singers in the world.

You invented your own style but it's all American southern music. What part of it do you think is white influenced and what is black?

Oh, I don't know. I play a lot of old blues and stuff which I surely heard some of the old nigger folk singers pick and stuff. Leadbelly and people like that. I just naturally played that stuff anyway without hearing it that much. Of course I used to go down to all the nigger juke joints down on Ferriday there and listen. I used to go to Haney's Big House and I wasn't supposed to be in there, you know, and I'd hide back in there and listen to them. And possible I picked up a lot there from the Negroes. I think they've had a big influence on music.

I've thought there were some piano players, blues players, who are perhaps better than you but they are very restricted to one style.

I never could play the same thing, not

just one certain style. I don't believe in it. I've got a thing about venturin'. I'm bad about venturin'. Even in life; my whole life has been a venture. That's true you know, very true. Ever since I was a kid I was venturing. I ran away from home when I was ten. Slept in a ditch all night; I just wanted to see what it was like. I went back home—I saw what it was like. It's true, you know. A venture—same way in music. I've always ventured in music, played all different styles... (mock histrionic) Who knows where my destiny lies?... I may be the first man on the moon to pick and grin.

How do you do all those glissandos. What finger do you use?

Thumb. Sometimes I use my other fingers. It just depends, you know (laughs).

When did you first start playing professionally?

When I was 13. They took up a collection for me when I played at a Ford agency in Ferriday when the 49 Fords came out. I got about \$13; it was the most money I'd ever seen. I still got that \$13... (laughs). Not hardly. It didn't last the day.

Is it true you started out as a drummer?

Yeah. I played drums quite awhile. I started playing guitar before I started piano.

Tell me what you did musically before you started recording for Sun.

Well, I played the guitar when I was six years old. When I was eight my folks bought me a piano and I started to play that. When I was 13, I earned my first money playin' and singin'. Then I worked at the Wagon Wheel in Natchez, Mississippi.

Is that near Ferriday?

Yeah, twelve miles away. I played at the Wagon Wheel, the Swan Club, the Hilltop, some of them better known as the "bloody bucket". We done quite well there for years. I worked for Julie May and I used Mr. Paul Whitehead on piano, trumpet, and accordion; he played all three instruments. A blind man... well, I'd say Mr. Paul—talking about anybody bein' an influence on me—he was an influence.

Has he ever recorded?

No—he's just a blind man who worked at the Eola hotel in Natchez, and he's a fine old man. I worked with him for years. I played drums then. And then I'd switch over to the piano on Friday and Saturday nights and get another guy, Johnny Littlejohn, to play drums. He used to be a disk jockey at WMIS there. And Mr. Paul would play the trumpet and accordion and we had a pretty good band. And one time I

remember I played the piano, I played the bass drum with my right foot, the sock cymbal with my left, and I sang. Mr. Paul was blowin' the trumpet and playin' the accordion, not at the same time but switchin' off. It was kind of dark and the people would dance by and they thought it was a whole band. And when they got close, they couldn't believe it, you know. I made \$12 a night doin' that. Usually I only made \$8 a night. Julie May said "I don't think you can keep up that pace." I says "Man, for \$12 a night I can keep the pace up... if the pennies hold out." (Laugh) No, I was joking about that. Then I went off from there when I was 21 to Memphis and auditioned for Jack Clement at Sun. And he just didn't dig it too much. He said rock 'n roll was dead.

Dead? It was just starting?

That's what I told him. He said Elvis Presley had done drained it dry and it was all over with, you know. I said, "Well, I don't know about that." Anyway, he played the tapes for Sam Phillips and he flipped over it, and he releases "Crazy Arms" and it was a hit, and "Whole Lotta Shakin'" was the next record and "Great Balls of Fire" and "Breathless" and "You Win Again" and "High School Confidential" and all those were million sellers. Up to date we've done quite well in the music industry, and we've been one of the biggest pop artists and we're now one of the biggest country artists.

Are you psychially ready and willing to be a big star again?

The only way I could get any bigger than what I am right now... wouldn't make any difference if I had nine records in the pop charts. I wouldn't be any bigger is get my own TV show. That's the only thing. That's the secret of success nowadays. That's the only way... back then all you needed was a number one record to become a superstar. Well, now you don't need a number one record to become a superstar, you need a number one TV show.

Or an album.

I think Glen Campbell... You can't do it with an album—you cannot become a superstar with a damn album. There's no way you can do it. Glen Campbell couldn't do it—Johnny Cash couldn't do it. The only way's they could do it... Johnny Cash got this TV show which don't knock me out and he leapt up on it. And Glen Campbell, who ain't the greatest thing that ever walked on two feet—they're all good boys an' everything—but they're lackin' the talent and you know that's it.



Campus News Briefs

ASTRAL PROJECTION LECTURE

The University Parapsychology Organization is sponsoring a lecture on astral projection by world-renowned occult researcher Dr. Douglas M. Baker of London. The lecture is scheduled for 7 p.m. tonight in 3650. Humanities. Student tickets are \$1.50 at the door.

RECORDING LESSONS

The Madison Recorder Society will offer a recorder course for advanced beginners as of Tuesday, April 18, at 8 p.m. in 2531 Humanities. The class will meet 8 times through June 6. Fee is \$16. For further information, call Mrs. Edward Bittar at 231-1623.

RUMMAGE AND BAKE SALE
There will be a benefit rummage and bake sale for the Charm School, a group program for teenage women, on April 22, sponsored by the YWCA and Juvenile Services. Rummage may be contributed at the YWCA office, 101 E. Mifflin, through Friday.

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Screen Gems

By ANN DEAN

Hiroshima, Mon Amour—Winner of the Special Critics Award at Cannes in 1952, Hiroshima has been linked with 400 Blows as the beginning of the French New Wave. It is more memorable for the way writer Marguerite Duras re-created the irrevocable devastation of war on the mental landscapes of those caught not on the battlefield, but in the wartorn spiritual disintegration of their native countries—Japan and occupied France. Director Alain Resnais filmed Duras script word for word, shot for shot, and the visual metaphor between the physical scars of Hiroshima and the mental scars of the film's female character (Emmanuelle Riva) remain harrowingly complete. B102 Van Vleck, 8 and 10 p.m.

The Daily Cardinal

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By ED BERWYNE

While many kids of the twenties and thirties were enjoying raccoon coats, Coca-Cola, and the Charleston, Herb March was out organizing working people and beginning what was to be a lifetime dedication to the cause of the working man. Herb March is a communist.

Still active in the labor movement, March looks back on his early days with the Communist Party, the packinghouse workers in Chicago, and the sheetmetal workers in Los Angeles.

He enjoys talking about the old days and calmly tells his stories of near lynchings, shootings, and beatings through a halo of pipe smoke.

Almost sixty years old today, March is the father of University instructor Bob March, author of the celebrated science textbook *Physics for Poets*.

MARCH WAS BORN in a working class neighborhood in New York City on Nov. 8, 1912, of eastern European Jewish parents; his father was a member of one of the early postal employees' unions.

The neighborhood, March remembers, was quite politically conscious. When he was about twelve years old, the community showed wide-spread support for the two Italian anarchist immigrants, Sacco and Vanzetti, tried and executed for what were believed by many to be false charges.

After World War I, electricity was introduced into the neighborhood, and rents were raised accordingly—but no one could make use of the electricity because the landlord had neglected to supply fixtures with the power. The rents, however, remained raised.

"Us kids dumped ashes in the landlord's open touring car," March remembers with a laugh.

During March's early political internship, he attended school. A bright student, he graduated from high school when he was fifteen. After graduation, he studied at New York City College for about a year.

AT ABOUT THAT TIME, he became interested in the infant American Communist Party. He began reading Marxist theory, and eventually joined the Young Communist League (YCL).

His Communist readings soon influenced March to quit school and begin full-time organizing in the mammoth East Coast factories.

In 1930, March took part in the planning of his first large demonstration of the poor and unemployed. "The press got so alarmed about the Communist Party and the unemployed councils (being involved), and gave it so much publicity," March remembers "that they inadvertently helped build it up. The headline on March 6 was: 'Red Day Dawns!'"

The demonstration pleading for assistance and jobs for the unemployed was held at Union Square in New York City. March was scheduled to speak, but there was an organizational mixup and he never made it to the platform. Another YCL representative spoke and was jailed for six months. It was the first of many close calls for Herb March.

THE GOING WAS rough, but March continued to work for the Communist Party. Later in 1930, he was transferred to Kansas City to be the district organizer of the YCL in the states of Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. At the age of nineteen he was traveling the midwest jumping freight trains. He had little money and depended on sympathetic people and party members to give him food and a place to stay.

In Kansas City, March helped organize a demonstration by about 150 mothers against the local relief office in order to obtain shoes for their children. The office was above the police station, and when the police had overcome their initial shock, they broke up the demonstration and arrested March.

"They proceeded to take me to a little cell and just beat the living hell out of me," March said. "The usual thing you know—they'd ask me a question and before you could answer it, they'd hit you with clubs or fists." It wasn't easy being a working Communist in the early days. People weren't in the party for romance or excitement.

In time, March was brought to trial on the charge of inciting to riot. The trial was speedy—it took only three minutes for him to be found guilty. Meanwhile, March's supporters on the outside weren't inactive; they organized a demonstration of thousands of supporters and all charges were dismissed.

MARCH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY arrested, beaten, and tried many times. If it wasn't deputized American Legion members chasing him out of Jefferson City, it was a lynch mob somewhere else.

While in the midwest, March's YCL became interested in the young black liberation movement. Teaming up with the

NAACP and several local black groups, March worked specifically freeing blacks held in jail on false charges.

In one instance in Texas, a black man had been arrested, tried, and found guilty of raping a white woman. The group worked to get a stay of execution but failed. As a last ditch effort, the group telegraphed the governor of Texas. "It may be that this man is innocent," the governor replied "but sometimes it is necessary to burn a house to save the village." The man was executed.

While in the midwest, March met and married Jane Gerbach. Gerbach was also very active in the movement and after the wedding both went to Chicago to help with the organization of packinghouse workers.

MARCH LEFT THE YCL in 1933 to work in the packinghouses of Chicago. Chicago has always been a rough town, but especially so in the early days of union organizing. Many union people were fired, beaten, and even killed for union activities. And for Communists in the labor movement—well, life was ten times as dangerous, so life was sometimes uneasy for the March family.

The Marches worked in the early Chicago days to organize the workers of Armor and Co. into one big industrial union. At the time there were about thirty different unions—one for butchers, one for live stock handlers etc.—divided up among those brave enough to join a union at all. The divided unions had little or no power. March worked leafleting and speaking secretly to employees about organization and was fired several times. Each time he was rehired, each time under another false name.

One of the objectives of union organization was to gain power to stop discrimination against women and racial and ethnic minorities. At the time blacks and other minorities were discriminated against in hiring practices and women received pay unequal to male salaries for the same work. Through a united front with the men and women of minorities, the unions eventually won non-discrimination and equal pay—on paper.

During the organizing, striking, and recognition period, March built up a



Above: Herb and Jane March in California today. Below: An early demonstration by the Packinghouse Workers. (Herb March is second from left in the first row.)

Herb March: An Old Communist Who Will Probably Never Retire



reputation as a selfless, hardworking union man.

AT ONE POINT, the live stock handlers called a strike, and March was deeply involved in the controversy. His life was threatened several times, but the police refused protection. One evening, on his way home from the factory, someone shot at him from a moving car. March dove into the gutter—just in time to escape being hit. He suffered only a broken nose.

From 1938 to 1948, Herb March was the director of District #1, the largest of ten districts in the International Union. He held the post until he was forced out by the Taft-Hartley Act which declared that Communists could not be union officials.

Taft-Hartley forced many of the original union people out due to Communist affiliations and signaled the beginning of official government repression of the Communist party.

After leaving his union office, March became the business agent for the Armor local and took charge of further organization within Armor and other local unions.

THE '50'S WERE characterized by the most blatant repression of the Communist Party in American history. McCarthyism completely gripped the country and no one was safe from accusation. Times were exceedingly hard for Communists and the Marches were no exception.

Threatening telephone calls and the day to day harassment by government and management thugs were stark realities.

As a result, changes were taking place within the party. The membership experienced extreme intimidation by federal and local authorities and their activities were severely curtailed.

Conditions grew worse and the Marches eventually moved west. It was at this time (1957-58) that March quit the party and moved to Los Angeles, where he lives today.

MARCH THEN GOT a job as a sheet metal worker. But in order to work, he had to join the union. And in order to join the union, he had to declare that he'd never had any Communist affiliations. So March, desperately in need of a job, took a chance and lied—no, he had never been a Communist.

Things were going fine until 1959 when a

House committee named March as a Communist in the labor movement. Union leaders discovered the false statement on union records and March was expelled from the sheet metal workers union.

March decided not to take the case lying down and appealed the matter to the International. The International upheld the local decision but granted delaying power on expulsion so that March could continue working.

While March was being put through the red tape of appeal, he decided to study law so he could plead his own case. He worked during the day and studied law at night school until he got his law degree in 1965. His troubles weren't over, though; the California bar refused to admit him because of the union and Communist party affairs.

MARCH APPEALED THE ruling all the way to the state supreme court—in 1967, he won entry into the California bar.

Today, March is a house attorney for the American Federation of County and Municipal Workers. He handles contracts and negotiations and is as much a part of the labor movement as ever.

Although he is relatively "respectable" now—with a home, two cars, and an office—he still feels effects of his early work. Once a year, a man in a non-descript car with non-descript clothes sits w/out

Although he is relatively "respectable" now—with a home, two cars, and an office—he still feels effects of his early work. Once a year, a man in a non-descript car with non-descript clothes sits out in front of the house for hours. If he's a traveling salesman, he's not selling much as he sits there and takes notes. The Marches have come to accept him with the coming of spring each year.

March says that he's getting old and he talks now about retiring and going to live in Yugoslavia where things are a lot slower. Yet, to listen to March talk about the labor movement would convince anyone that he probably never will retire. As long as he breathes, he'll continue to organize.

"The workers won many things, medical insurance, pensions, etc.," Jane March said recently of those early days of organizing, "These are the things that, if a continued struggle is not waged, will be lost or cut down to meaningless amounts."

Scaduto on Dylan

By LARRY SLOMAN

BOB DYLAN: AN INTIMATE BIOGRAPHY

I get suspicious of any biography that purports to be "intimate." "Intimate" is a word that Rona Barrett might use to talk about who Jane Fonda is currently balling. It conjures up images of *Inquirer* headlines, "Grandmother of 10 Was Intimate with Her Dog, Then Butchered and Ate It." What can we learn from an intimate biography of Dylan?

For Christ's sake — talk about demystification — Weberman's already told us what brand of dog food Bob buys. But the *Inquirer* sells over a million copies an issue, so this kind of book about inscrutable Bob was inevitable. Just glance at the back cover: "Bobby and my coming together was inevitable. I was involved with other people and he was involved with other people and when we finally had shed all the other people and met, then we were together...I wouldn't say Bobby proposed to me, no...We talked about getting married. And we kidded about it because we knew, in a sense, we almost felt it was inevitable too. But luckily we both had enough sense to realize it would have been a complete disaster. — Joan Baez"

GREAT, ONE MIGHT SAY, why on the inside I'll bet we'll find out what position Sara likes best. Forget it. This book ultimately fails because Scaduto can't make up his mind whether to be Hedda Hopper or Susan Sontag. It tries to exist in that small space between lurid voyeurism and serious analytic criticism and ends up as the worst kind of pennie-ante sociologizing.

Scaduto, a former *New York Post* reporter, displays about as much integrity in this book as a detective shaking down a junkie. He plays down Dylan's drug use, he hints (almost leeringly) at homosexual experiences, he talks about almost obvious instances of adultery as if he were reporting for *Humpty Dumpty* magazine: "The actress went home at nine the next morning, after listening to Dylan talk for more than seven hours. That night she saw Dylan again briefly, but he was busy with some friends he and Robbie Robertson had made. He told her to return the next morning because he wanted to talk to her some more."

Yet the book has some revealing moments, almost in spite of Scaduto. In the same episode, the actress describes the fascinating process of Dylan creating, making music: "He would have the poetry of it worked out in his head and he would say to Robbie: 'Listen, Robbie, just imagine this cat who is very Elizabethan, with garters and a long shepherd's horn, and he's coming over the hill in the morning with the sun rising behind him. That's the sound I want.' They did this for hours and hours, Dylan creating a scene and everybody playing music to create the sound of that scene." Unfortunately, these passages are the exception.

For the most part, this book is a rehash of old articles, interviews, and press releases. Bob's childhood, his early rock roots, his romance with Echo is all familiar territory for those who followed the more explicit and sensational Toby Thompson articles in the *Village Voice*. (later published in book form as *Positively Main Street*. Yet Scaduto interrupts this tolerable narrative with his childish, jargonesque "heavy" analysis.

On p. 18, after a poignant little episode in which young Bobby tells a Hibbing neighbor that she reminds him of his mother, baking a pie like that, Scaduto simplistically intrudes, "Bob Dylan is an outsider, and he was an outsider even as a child...during one of our talks, Dylan conceded that I was "right on target" in discussing the inner Self (sic) that he could not repress, that brought him so much pain he had to make himself invisible, and provided him with the strength to reach for higher levels of consciousness." It is obvious that Ralph Gleason was a big influence on Scaduto. However, Gleason is pompous but still readable; Scaduto's style is more suitable for morgues than musicmakers.

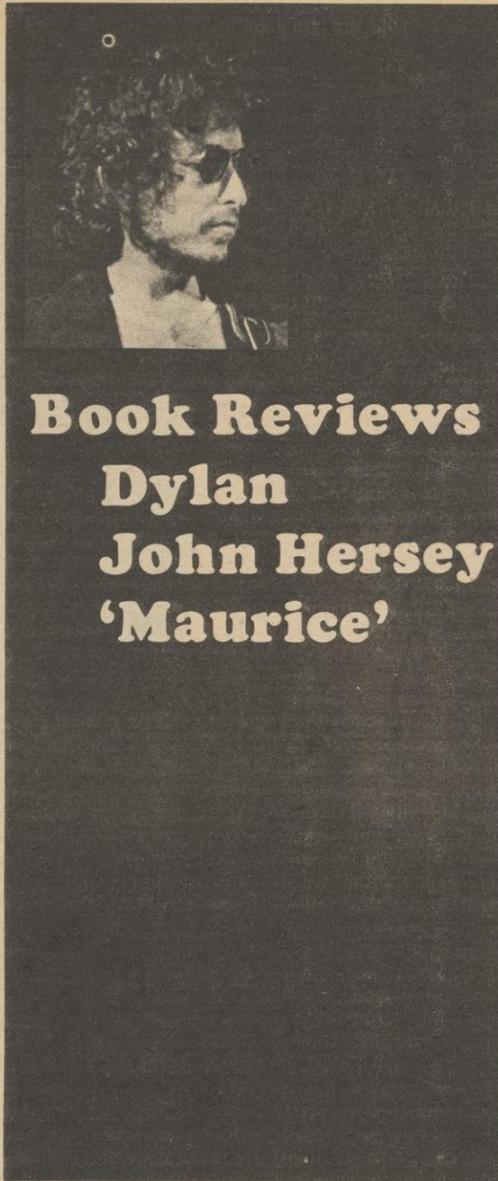
THERE IS something very ironic about this book which purports to shatter myths about Dylan, for, in trying to account for Dylan's work past *Blonde on Blonde*, Scaduto falls prey to a new Dylan-generated mystification — the myth of the moderate man. After describing Dylan for 200-odd pages as a petty, ruthless, vicious egomaniac, he exonerates this punk by hypothesizing that Dylan transcended this nasty being, made the leap of faith and purged Satan from his soul. "A man must die to be reborn," Scaduto sagely advises us, and John Wesley Harding chronicles the "death and rebirth of Bob Dylan."

Dylan is like Rimbaud, Byron and those other mythic artists-as-romantic-heroes — men who attain the heights and depths of experience and then transcend these seasons in hell. "Bob Dylan was continually seeking a new identity because his psyche could no longer comfortably live with the old." Of course these are far from original ideas (Ralph Gleason had compared Dylan to Rimbaud in 1967 in a *Ramparts* article called "The Children's Crusade") and Scaduto's treatment of complex ontological, philosophical and aesthetic issues are starkly sophomoric.

In fact, overlooking Scaduto's feeble attempts at interpretation (he devotes an entire chapter to analyzing John Wesley Harding, song by song, then tries his luck at *New Morning* skipping the hard ones) his book has some serious shortcomings that bear enumeration. For a former police reporter he certainly was less than rigorous in his investigation because all the people that comment on Dylan (Ochs, Paxton, Izzy Young, Van Ronk) are either irrelevant or openly hostile to Bob now.

Due to this sampling bias, Scaduto is forced to squeeze the last six years of Dylan's career into 53 short pages. And the vital questions that come to mind about Dylan go unanswered. What about Grossman's role in Dylan's rise to prominence and their subsequent split? What was the Woodstock exile really like? How did the Basement Tapes emerge? What about Dylan's role in the Band's recording efforts? His rift with McQuinn over the authorship of *Easy Rider*? The Weberman sagas? His relationship with the orthodox Rabbi Friefel and the militant Rabbi Kahane and his Jewish Defense League? What does he do with his garbage now?

IT IS NO WONDER that Dylan told Scaduto "I like your book. That's the weird thing about it." (They have since argued over the relative sincerity of Dylan's last single, "George Jackson" and now denounce each other). For Scaduto has mouthed what amounts to the now current official Dylan party line — that Bob is the quiet family man "searching for salvation." Tony is right on target when he writes that "He (Dylan) is no longer the elusive, almost invisible myth-maker." Dylan doesn't have to be when Scaduto's doing such a fine job.



Book Reviews Dylan John Hersey 'Maurice'

The Conspiracy

THE CONSPIRACY by John Hersey
Alfred A. Knopf, 274 pages

By ARLENE LEVINSON

Exposing the inter-office correspondence of people in high places can leave them nuder than nudist. Daniel Ellsberg's revelation of the Pentagon Papers had the effect of obliterating the masks and costumery of the American military put-on. Discovering the con artists' secrets was at once alarming and exhilarating. For one shining moment, the democracy fabulists were stuttering.

Novelist John Hersey performs a similar sort of strip show in his book, *The Conspiracy*. Excepting that the real live personalities really lived in Rome of 65 AD, and the exchange of memoranda concerns a suspected plot to assassinate Nero. This is an intriguing reconstruction of the malignant development of a classic purge, one which saw the elimination of several of the infamous virtuoso's greater contemporaries. Among these victims were the playwright and philosopher, Seneca, and a woman, Epicharis, the original Jane Fonda.

THROUGH A SYNTHESIS of authentic source material and Hersey's own poetic journalism, the flesh and blood of antiquity rises again not extraordinarily different from those who have taken their place in time. The important figure of ancient Rome we see quite as protective of their glory as our contemporary equivalents. They were as ready to accuse their critics of madness and as prone to hiding fear behind loud voices and prominent muscle.

For instance — as the messages circulate to and from the main desk of Nero's chief bodyguard, Tigellinus, a proud and bullish man who despises the local intellectual clique, it appears that the criminal fibre of policemen remains an ageless standard.

Hersey's choice of the epistolary gimmick benefits the telling of his story by creating a highly visual drama. The reader becomes an omniscient observer, as well as privileged snoop. Surely a certain cultural if not political relevance emerges from this historical treasure which contains such lines as: "I see from the time of your message that you, too, have come out of your recent funk."

The Conspiracy is one of the less profound Hersey proliferations, viewed alongside *Hiroshima* and *The Algiers Motel Incident*. What it may lack spiritually, the book more than makes up for with Mediterranean subterfuge and emotional momentum. This Book-of-the-Month Club selection does well on a long rainy afternoon.

E. M. Forster: To A Happier Year

BY GARY L. KRIEWARD

Maurice, E.M. Forster's posthumously published novel written in 1913-1914 bears the inscription "Dedicated to a Happier Year," and indeed throughout the novel, Forster makes a concerted, albeit, at times, strained effort to create and develop an aura of happiness. Forster particularly constructs the novel's central figure, Maurice Hall, a young man concisely described by Forster in a terminal note as "handsome, healthy, bodily attractive, mentally torpid, not a bad businessman, and rather a snob." Such a description could be neatly applied to a great many staunchly-British junior executives of the time; however, Forster continues: "Into this mixture I dropped an ingredient that puzzles him, wakes him up, torments him, and finally saves him."

This element of torture and salvation is Maurice's homosexuality, and it is this distinguishing aspect of his otherwise solid and well-ordered upper middle class character that Maurice must recognize and define, and with which he must ultimately come to terms.

MAURICE IS involved, throughout much of the first part of the novel, in an intellectually prominent clique at Cambridge, which elevates male love as a type of intellectual idea. It is within this circle that Maurice meets Clive Durham, a young intellectual who has not only realized his own sexual inclinations but perceives as well the potential for true fulfillment with Maurice: "Something of exquisite beauty arose in the mind of each at last, something unforgettable and eternal, but built of the humblest scraps of speech and from the simplest emotions."

Their relationship is a platonic and idyllic one, but Forster (probably unlike many of his modern readers) never devalues it for this reason; for him it is as real and intense as consummated love. It is through Clive that Maurice is initiated into the homosexual milieu, and it is for him a liberating though ephemeral experience: he finds not only love, but beauty, intensity and self-esteem, in short — happiness.

There follows one of the most jarring and incongruous incidents of the novel. Clive, on a holiday in Greece, becomes critically ill. Upon recovering, he writes an insensitive letter of dismissal to Maurice, breaking off their affair. Clive's disillusionment with and ultimate rejection of his own homosexuality is never adequately dealt with by Forster — it is as though Clive has simply opted for a comfortable existence in the world at large and realizes that his sexuality must be carefully molded to suit the sexual mores of that world. Looking back years later on his interlude with Maurice, Clive sees it (or has so programmed himself to see it) with a mixture of contempt and regret.

THE BETRAYAL BY Clive begins for Maurice what he calls his "Year of Hell." His solitude and despair at the loss of Clive's love transforms him into a living cliché of the guilt-ridden homosexual: his lust for handsome young men he observes on the street leads to paroxysms of anxiety and self-recrimination, which are intensified by the sexual

advances of a greasy old man on a train, a figure in whom he suddenly sees his future self.

It is at this point, on a visit to Clive, with whom he is superficially reconciled, that Maurice meets Alex Scudder, the young gamekeeper of Clive's estate. Alec seems a mysterious, omnipresent spectre, turning up whenever and wherever least expected, and it is this aura of mystery which characterizes their first encounter. Maurice, in his troubled and lonely state of mind (he has just that evening met Clive's fiancée, an English rose of the respectable provincial gentry) cannot sleep; he opens the window of his room and murmurs to the moonlit night "Come." Alec, who has been observing Maurice from the garden appears, enters his bedroom, and they make love.

This relationship, which initially comprises denunciations, broken promises, even threats of blackmail, in fact survives; that it does, is, quite simply, a testament to the power of love. Previous to his meeting Alec, Maurice's attitude toward members of the working classes was typically British upper-middle class: "They want drilling a bit," he asserts. "They haven't our feelings. They don't suffer as we should in their place."

He learns, however, that not only can members of the lower orders feel and suffer, they can actually love and be loved! Upon this startling discovery, Maurice sets out to restructure his entire existence: it is an act of courage as much as an act of love. Maurice is obliged to renounce his profession, family, social position, and the most prized possession of his class — respectability.

HE BECOMES, from this time, an outsider; he has willfully destroyed his former life and it is this destruction which becomes for him, a pre-requisite to salvation. Simply stated, Maurice consciously destroys himself in order to save himself (applied aesthetically this formula can be viable).

Class is a recurrent theme in Forster's novels, and Maurice's unsympathetic attitudes toward the lower orders are expressed many times by many characters who ultimately either become enlightened or remain fools and prigs. Maurice shares his social enlightenment with other Forsterian characters, but nowhere in Forster's works is this enlightenment so total and far-reaching as in *Maurice*. To deny one's class was not a social passtime among the well-to-do young of the Edwardian world; when it occurred (and it almost never did), it occurred from necessity, not from choice.

But the moral of the book is that you cannot love a class, only another human being, and it is a typically Forsterian notion: concepts in the book are individualized, no broad social conclusions are posited, only personal and aesthetic ones suggested.

Yet Forster was, in a sense, writing a treatise, and he was determined, as he states in his terminal note, to write a happy ending to show what was for that time, and still is to a great extent today, a morally radical concept — that homosexuality does not degrade or corrupt, that it has as great a potential for beauty and fulfillment as heterosexuality, that it can engender dignity, contentment, and self-esteem.

Amerikan Bandstand

By The Original State Street Gourmet

Lou Reed — Lou Reed, RCA: Note well: I know that the Velvet Underground has at least as strong a claim as anyone else of being the best Rock and Roll band that ever was. (Some of you will know that because you may have read the article I wrote about that group on February 14th of this year. I sacrifice my sense of modesty and decorum — the new gourmet has taught me that much — by recommending that you read that article.) Lou Reed, for all practical purposes was the Velvet Underground. And that makes Lou Reed second best (and not always) only to Dylan himself. (Now if you're saying something like "so what" to yourself at this point, then f-k you, f-k yourself, and don't demean me by reading any further.)

The most striking thing about Reed's first solo album is the song "Wild Child." Although Reed kept getting better during the Velvet's career, his finest work, "Heroine," was on his group's first album. With "Wild Child" Reed has surpassed "Heroine." When Larry first heard the new song he mumbled earnestly: "It's the best thing I've heard since Blonde on Blonde." Larry has a gift for understatement. "Visions of Johanna" is no better than "Wild Child." (And I never thought I'd be pleased enough to say that.) Of course, I could do no more than violate the integrity of "Wild Child" if I tried to deal with it in the space I have. Imagine how silly I'd be if I attempted to explain "Visions" in one or two paragraphs.

The rest of the album is not unworthy of "Wild Child." It's incredibly rich. It's incredibly witty. And it's basically hard rock. Among other things Reed

burlesque's Jim Morrison ("Ride into the Sun"), joining Kurt Weill with Freddy Cannon ("Berlin '00, and probably writes the first Rock song I've ever heard about male impotence ("Lisa Says"): "Lisa says, 'Hey baby, you stick your tongue in my ear/then the scene around here will become very clear.'" The record ends with a terrifying, nightmarish ditty about the ocean which among other things "washes the eyes of men who have died," that I suggest no one listen to stoned.

A record like this is so important because it does what all great art does: It rearranges your soul, modifies all your previous experience, and takes you places you've never been before and never would have gotten to any other way.

Detroit — Detroit — Paramount Records: With this record, energy music comes of age. The driving, heavy, motor city sound is there, all right, but it's so disciplined that it's supple and flexible enough to effectively accomodate marvelous and even lovely ballads (e.g. "It's You"), and some of the finest rock and roll outside of the Rolling Stones.

Besides an obvious lock for Rock and Roll, the album is consistently undergirded by a mature intelligence and taste. Detroit is the first and only group to have the sense to record a Lou Reed tune, "Rock and Roll." (You remember Lou Reed. He was the leader of the Velvet Underground. Detroit brings off their borrowed version with such style and originality that I can imagine someone preferring it to the one from Loaded.)

Oh, yes, and by the way, Mitch Ryder does the vocals. He may be the best rock and roll singer since John Fogerty.

"Babbacombe" Lee — Fairport Convention — A&M: This is probably the most important English folk rock group. They typically go back to the real roots, the roots the pseudo-rednecks and country music buffs don't even

know about, to the appalachian music that existed before appalachia did.

Unfortunately the group has so regularly and so often undergone personnel changes that each record is the creature of at least a partially different entity, and so the product that bears the group's name is uneven although generally and surprisingly quite good.

The latest album attempts more than anything ever done in

this group name. It tells the story of J.B. Lee who survived three attempts to hang him for murder. (Four attempts the British apparently felt would have been too cruel and unusual). You could probably make a case for Lee as the group's best album, for it's the most ambitious thing ever done by them and I think it works at least to some extent. But it's not my favorite. Although it has some good things on it too much of the music

hardly rises above recitative. If you like the idea of English folk rock, I'd suggest "Unhalf-bricking" or Full House by Fairport. Thanks to NMC and Peter Greenberg.

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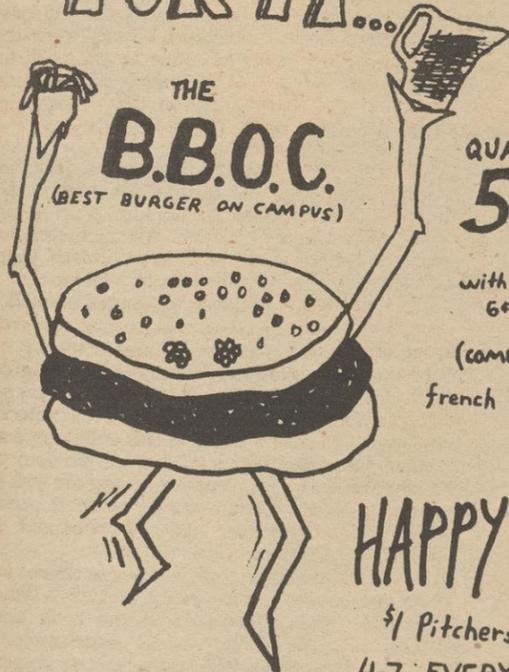
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Wild Child: 'One of the Finest Young Bluesmen Alive'

By STEVE MERTZ

On Friday, April 21 Chicken Little & Co., the student blues cooperative, will present Wild Child Butler and His Chicago Blues Band in a dance/concert at Room A-1 of Gordon Commons, beginning at 8 p.m.

It should be some of the toughest electric blues to hit this town in a long time.

Wild Child Butler is one of the few bluesmen working today whose music cannot be labeled or categorized by the region from which he comes. It's not Chicago Blues, Texas Blues, Alabama Blues or Mississippi Blues. It's Wild Child Butler Blues, pure and simple.

That should tell you something about the man AND his music.

THE MAIN REASON for Wild Child having a style so much his own is probably due to the variety of artists he's learned from and worked with before branching out on his own.

Born George Butler in Autaugaville, Alabama in 1936, Wild Child developed his distinctive harmonica technique by listening to a number of local musicians around his home town; by the time he was twenty, he had a steady gig backing boogie piano player Roosevelt Sykes in the bars and clubs along New Orleans' famous Basin Street.

His next term of apprenticeship was served working on the road with the great Lightnin' Hopkins. 'Child toured extensively with the Texas bluesman, and appeared on a number of Lightnin's recordings before branching off on his own in the early '60s and moving north to establish himself as a solo artist in Chicago.

In the Windy City, Butler met and became influenced by Howlin' Wolf, whom he had admired since since his boyhood days in the South. From Wolf, Wild Child learned the final essentials of



being a crowd-pleasing entertainer, and in 1966 he was brought into the recording studio by Jewel Records.

BACKING WILD CHILD was an all-star cast including Big Walter Horton, Johnny Twist, Jack Myers and Willie Dixon. Two singles were released from this session, both of which are now unfortunately quite rare, and much sought after by collectors.

More readily available is Wild Child's 1970 album on Mercury, *Keep On Doin' What You're Doing* (Merc. SR-61923).

A number of fine original compositions by Butler's close friend, Jimmy Dawkins, highlight the LP, and the backup band includes Dawkins on lead guitar, Lafayette Leake (piano), Mojo Elam (bass), Mighty Joe Young (rhythm guitar), Bob Richey

(drums) and Johnny Young (mandolin)...another all-star lineup if there ever was one!

On stage, Wild Child Butler is First Class Dynamite.

These days, most bluesmen seem to come under two general headings: the "showmen" and the "music" men.

The latter are content to stand, sit or otherwise hide somewhere among their amps and play, period. The former are all to hell and gone: on the floor, in the audience, playing behind their head, et cetera...and more times than not, the music suffers incredibly.

HAPPILY, WILD CHILD Butler is a little of both while being all of neither.

Wild Child Butler is one of the grooviest, finest human beings I know. He gets off on making people happy. He knows they've paid good money to hear him, and he works his ass off to deliver.

And he does deliver. He delivers for a lot of reasons: one reason is because he's the type of person he is, and when people

watch him get it on, working and having a good time, they just naturally start getting it on themselves.

And he delivers because he's one of the best damn singers and harp blowers working today. His vocals are driving and forceful, and his harp playing is smooth as honey.

"I DON'T BLOW Chicago style," he told me once. "I'm from the country. I blow like the boys down home. Sonny Boy and the Wolf. That's where I'm at."

It's going to be a tremendous show, by one of the finest young bluesmen alive.

This will be the Chicken Little co-op's last show of this school year. Admission is one dollar, and the doors will be open at 7:30 p.m.

There will also be 25¢ beer and plenty of room to boogie.

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