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Mueller: Student, teacher, conductor

By STEPHEN GROARK
of the Fine Arts Staff

Not so long ago, while idly twisting a radio dial, a Cardinal staff member discovered an exciting performance of Weber's overture to *Der Freischütz*. The orchestra was not first-rate, but the clean section playing, the delicate dynamics and felicitous phrasing

assistant when he taught conducting at Moscow, and he was sick and I had to take over. Maxim Shostakovich, son of the composer, was in the class. His father was also there and worked closely with us.

Your recent performance of the Shostakovich First symphony here was certainly wonderful.

Otto



marked it as an extremely well-directed performance. At the end of the broadcast, it turned out to be the Waukesha Symphony conducted by Otto-Werner Mueller, conductor of the U.W. Symphony and teacher of conducting, analysis, and theory.

Little did we realize, as we dispatched nervous neophyte Stephen Groark to do an interview, that he would be beer'd, coffee'd and lentil soup'd in the warm bosom of the Mueller family for several hours, or we'd have gone ourselves. We expect there will be more interviews in the future with Mr. Mueller.

How about the usual biographical material:

I was born, or so my mother told me, anyway.

Who did you study conducting with?

Of course, the question depends on what you call conducting. I studied most conducting with people who are not conductors; especially just studying music. Conducting as such is an exterior activity. You have to learn it through the study of theory, and composition of course is number one. Some people take a stick in their hand and think that's it.

I'll tell you who is the most important person in this regard. In our little town, there was a man who was almost blind and who was a wonderful trumpet player. And when he came out of the military service, he led a little brass ensemble in the church. At the age of 7 or 8, I became very intrigued with that man. He arranged things for them and had an impeccable ear. He never had the people blast. He was always concerned with sound quality. That was my first real insight into certain functions of music. He taught me harmony and how to write out for instruments, and he forced me to write out parts without writing the score, to write it into individual parts immediately. He trained my head to write out short little things that I could practice with the ensemble, so if you consider what is my most important teacher, I think you have to go back to this man. He's dead now, and of course this was quite a number of years ago, but he was certainly the greatest influence that I ever had. This man was a true music educator.

Who else did you study with?

William Mengelberg, Clemens Krauss, Igor Markevitch. . . I was Markevitch's

chestra: they listened more than they played.

Before you mentioned Mengelberg.

Oh yes, that was during the war. He was a frequent guest conductor in Frankfurt. I played with him in the orchestra quite often, in the Frankfurt opera, so many people were draft-dodging and we always had shortages, and my trumpet teacher was actually the retired former first trumpet from the Frankfurt opera, marvellous teacher. . . Mengelberg gave a few courses in conducting. Richard Strauss also came and did some courses on orchestration and explained some of his works, particularly *Death and Transfiguration*. There were not too many visiting teachers who would go into the details of what the orchestra was about because the director of our school was more choral oriented. Also, after class, because I played in the Frankfurt opera orchestra, Mengelberg would talk to me more often than the others. I had a chance to have additional private time after the classes. I would ask him why he did certain things the way he did. He gave me the elementary baton technique which was very useful and very good, and he told me the main secret of conducting: that you have to know how to conduct, that's the basic thing, and then you have to know the piece. Not just learn how to conduct the piece. You have to develop a technique that becomes a

everybody gets tired, then that's just too bad.

So you've got to be up there looking strong

There are certain things that are absolute murder. I mean your arms will hurt no matter what you do. Take the march in Tschaikovsky's *Pathétique*. . . You have to put up with the fact that your arms will hurt and you have to know where at certain times to alternate between your two arms, so that you can still hear properly and so that the motion of your arms doesn't take over and dictate the happening, which is so often the case, that the technical aspect of playing an instrument or conducting takes over from what we actually hear.

When did you leave Germany?

I left Germany as soon as possible after the war, after working for Radio Stuttgart for a while under the occupation authorities and teaching in several conservatories. I went to Canada in 1951. I was young, about 24, I had the idea naturally to go out and see something else. Because the years in Germany were not so pleasant. I have many, many beautiful memories. . . childhood. . . (but) you have a hungry stomach and things like bombs falling over our heads, and my friends dying right in front of my eyes, and you try to get away from that.

So I don't have any particular strong national attachment. I went to Canada and she was very good to me, and when I came it was not easy for a German in any country.

Werner



So you had already been a successful performer quite young in the Frankfurt opera?

I did a lot of trumpet playing, in particular a lot of Bach at that time. I started to develop some tooth problems, my teeth started to shake — a lack of certain nourishment — so I finally gave up. I was more interested in the study of music and composing, so I lost more and more interest in keeping myself in shape as a performer. I conducted for the first time at the age of nine for the brass ensemble. I did a certain amount of conducting at school, but it was never my dream to become a conductor. To be the man who stands out there and holds the orchestra together is today not my dream. In that way I'm not a conductor at all. To trade careers with a successful man who travels from one jet to another doesn't

Mueller



If my performance was good, it was because I had the ultimate source. . . I personally study every conductor that I see, what to do and what not to do.

Did you work with Furtwangler?

I was not lucky enough to work with him, but I saw him work. I was hidden in the hall because he would not tolerate anyone in the hall during rehearsals. A Conductor's work is during rehearsals. And the true work you don't even see at rehearsals, that you see at home, when he studies the score, when he prepares the parts for the orchestra. He studies ten other works that are related to the one he will conduct, in order that he will understand that one better. I saw him conduct a few times. I saw him about a year and a half before he died.

People say that Furtwangler could improvise with an orchestra. Can you get very different performances of a piece one night after the next and still get a quality performance?

Oh yes, of course the orchestra had to know him very well. It was very obvious to all the people who played with him that he lacked strict conducting technique as far as the manual side of it. But knowledge of music and this constant pressing and "never-let-go" that I have never seen with anyone except him. . . I felt at some performances I saw that if the beginning of the piece didn't click, it was because he was just too tense before he began. I think he had a certain feel that could not possibly happen properly with an orchestra on account of this lack of arm technique, so that he liked to iron all these things out with his orchestra ahead of time, and they were really friends. He demanded exactly what he wanted. The orchestra he had was to my knowledge the only orchestra at that time in Germany where a conductor could fire a musician on the spur of the moment. It happened if everybody saw that it was necessary. It was a very close family. He did rehearsals as if it was a chamber music group where of course not everybody could talk and have their own opinions, but that was the pride of his or-

part of you. You have to know what to do automatically in certain parts, but there are also times when you have to think about it.

We don't think of conducting technique as we would think of, for example, piano technique.

Oh yes, I still practice constantly—independence of arms, to have the expressive lines that I want, to use my eyes in place of my arms, but not in relation to a particular piece.

You have to practice to a certain degree to keep in shape. First of all, if you don't conduct at all for a certain length of time, and then you come to your first rehearsal, if you haven't kept your arms in shape and you try to hold your arms up for that length of time it is very hard to do. You would consider that a part of sports, and it is in every aspect of music. Playing any instrument is exercise for some part of the body. If you show fatigue in the last movement and

interest me. What interests me is just to constantly be a student of music.

What did you do in Canada?

While in Canada, thirteen years in Montreal, I worked mostly in radio-television and in opera for television, and I conducted all kinds of music on radio and television—pop, symphonic, choral, anything. I started to get in there basically as a composer of background music, where my knowledge of theatre music from Germany helped me. Television had just started there, so I was somewhat ahead of the others. So having both broadcasting and theatre in my background gave me a long advantage. My French wasn't so good, but then I studied very hard. You had to be able to follow what the actors were saying, and if they made jumps you had to know how to compensate. It was very good experience.

(continued on page 8)

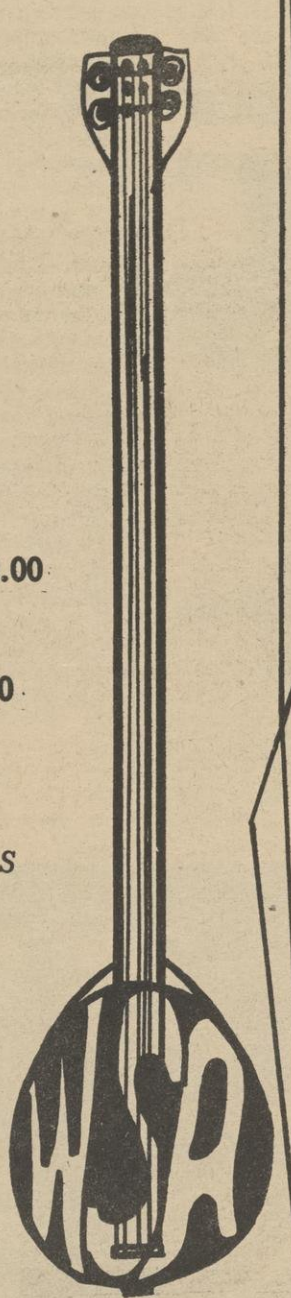
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on**

NEW MUSIC

BIRDS OF FIRE/MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA (Columbia)

The most significant occurrence in recent music is the emergence of John McLaughlin's new band, the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Their new album, *Birds of Fire*, is a powerful statement from a truly cohesive group of musicians. Playing together to the point of becoming one is the hardest thing to do in anything especially music. The musicianship on this album is of such a high degree and the emotional level is on such a dynamic plane that it makes the listener feel that they have become one, a single spiritual entity making fantastic music.

Side one begins with "Birds of Fire." After the initial groundbreaking on the songs, McLaughlin and violinist Jerry Goodman play unisons to state the theme. In the solo passages McLaughlin's playing is slightly reminiscent of Hendrix in one of the latter's freer moods. I think its the tone and also a similarity in the way they bend notes.

"MILES BEYOND" (written by Miles Davis) is the only song that McLaughlin didn't write. Listen to the Goodman's pizzicato solo on violin. On "Celestial Terrestrial Commuters" I find traces of a really strange musical humor. "Saphire Bullets of Love" will zap for about as long as it takes to say the title (to yourself).

"Thousand Island Park" has shades of Debussy or Satie. Really beautiful melodies are suspended throughout this very beautiful arrangement.

Side two opens with "One Word". After starting quietly with a solo bass part this builds up until everyone is trading off licks at a very fast pace. The Moog work on this is intriguing, listen to both the notes he plays and the very nice tone he has achieved on the instrument.

"Sanctuary" is an ensemble piece worthy of the name McLaughlin has chosen to bestow upon it. "Open Country Joy" is country jazz. McLaughlin plays Twelve-string guitar and the theme is reminiscent of The Byrds. The solo work is in contrast to the theme, and quite spatial. The piece works however.

RESOLUTION is the last piece on the album. It utilizes a slow sweeping melody over an insistant single note bass. It approached new symphonic music. The total sound really fills out the space they use.

"I'm lost in music," McLaughlin says. "But it's when we lose ourselves that we find ourselves."

He goes on: "I give all my strength to the music. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita (a Hindu religious text), 'In the midst of intense action there should be serenity. And in the midst of serenity there should be intense action.'"

That pretty much describes what the music is about. It's a successful synthesis of the art of improvisational jazz and rhythm within a complex compositional form. And yet it is also music within a rock idiom in its directness and underlying feelings. The Mahavishnu Orchestra will be in Madison on March 19. It should be a musical event not to miss.

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UW Opera Workshop

Stravinsky's 'The Rake's Progress' at Music Hall



It is only fitting that Stravinsky would use the prints by William Hogarth for inspiration for his only full length opera, *The Rake's Progress*. Hogarth was one of the greatest artists of the early eighteenth century, and is certainly one of the best known today. Stravinsky is among the greatest composers of the twentieth century.

The libretto for *The Rake's Progress* was written by the English poet, W.H. Auden. It is one of the few operas that originated from a painting. Stravinsky and Auden decided that the opera, like the prints, should be set in early eighteenth century. For that reason Stravinsky decided to write the opera in the neo-classical style; that is it is a "numbers" opera. Spoken dialogue accompanied by a harpsichord is used to tell the story, while solo arias, duets, and ensembles are used to reinforce the dramatic element of the opera.

Hogarth's "Rake's Progress" is a series of eight prints showing the progression of a rake. He is naive and egocentric and rich, thanks to an inheritance. Hogarth's best known scene is the rake in a brothel where he squanders his money on wine, women and gambling. He is forced by economic reasons to marry an old woman, a rich widow. The final progress leads him to an asylum; having lost reason and beauty he is not forgotten by his first love, who he deserted when he took the road to destruction.

THE PRINTS show a wealth of detail that can be best appreciated by seeing a large copy of the

prints. The Elvehjem Arts Center owns an original copy of the prints, and in a splendid example of cooperation between different institutions, has agreed to show "The Rake's Progress" during the month of February.

Auden and Stravinsky added the character of Nick Shadow to play the role of tempter and to manipulate Tom Rakewell. They replaced the widow with Baba the Turk, a woman of the world, who is rather unique. Ann Truelove, Tom's original love, is made into a very moving

character, while in the prints she has only a minor role.

Whether because of its style, Stravinsky's genius, or its dramatic strength, "The Rake's Progress" is a very enjoyable opera. The UW Opera Workshop has scheduled three performances of the "Rake" to take place in Old Music Hall for Saturday Feb. 24, Sunday Feb. 25, and Tuesday Feb. 27, all at eight pm. Tickets are \$2.00 for general admission seating and are available at the Union Theatre Box Office. For more information call 262-2201

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The Nanz Company and the staff of Rimrock Hill would like to thank all the many Wisconsin residents (and even one from San Francisco) FOR THE OVERWHELMING RESPONSE TO OUR contest. Some of the entries will be appearing here in the near future. We hope their comments in their own highly imaginative way will convince you too that Rimrock may be just the quiet, hassle-free place for you.

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New music symposium II

The presentation of the New Music Symposium for 1972-73 reflects the faculty and student concern that the School of Music at Wisconsin make a study and performance commitment to contemporary music.

William Thomas McKinley, composer, theorist, jazz musician and teacher, will be in residence at the University of Wisconsin, Madison for the week of the New Music Symposium. Born in Pittsburgh in 1939, McKinley was educated at Carnegie-Mellon Institute, Berkshire Music Center, and Yale University. He studied composition with Mel Powell and Gunther Schuller. Currently a professor of composition and theory at the University of Chicago, he has received commissions from the Tanglewood-Berkshire Festival, the Chicago Symphony, and the Fromm Foundation. As a jazz musician, Mr. McKinley has performed with Clark Terry and other artists, and in the Tom McKinley-Les Thimmig Quarter, founded in 1966 when both men studied at Yale. The quartet was reorganized recently after a three hiatus while Thimmig was on the West Coast. The quartet has played in Chicago recently and will play for the Symposium Wednesday evening.

THE PUBLIC is invited to attend the series of free lectures and concerts tonight through Thursday.

Monday Feb. 19 a lecture by McKinley

'ARS NOVA' — The Composer's Journey — Morphy Hall 8 PM.

Tuesday Feb. 20 Concert—Solo and Chamber Compositions by McKinley—Mills Concert Hall—8 PM Cello Music (1970) Paintings (1972) Trio (1971) Steps (1972-73).

Wednesday Feb. 21 — The Tom McKinley/Les Thimmig Quartet A Jazz Concert—Mills concert Hall—8 PM
Thursday Feb. 22 — Discussion and illustration of the works on Tuesday Night's program by the

composer. Mills Concert Hall Convocation—2:25 PM
Friday Feb. 23 — McKinley concludes meetings with students, theory classes, and performing groups.

AMERIKAN BANDSTAND

Focus/Moving Waves
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Focus, a West German band, blends together a variety of styles, moving from classically oriented pieces ("Eruption," Movement 1), to tastefully melodic jazz ("Janis"), to hard driving rock ("Hocus Pocus"). Focus is an innovative band. In "Hocus Pocus" they incorporate yodeling, a double flute line, and an organ solo that duplicates the sound of an accordion. Among the individual musicians, Jan Akkerman, the guitarist, is of special interest. His song, "Le Clochard," illustrates his proficiency on classical-style guitar. The background mellotron heightens the effect. Akkerman's lead riffs are based around the melodic line of the song rather than any set progression. Because of this, his guitar has a rather unique sound. Organist-flutist This van Leer wrote the majority of the material in the package. His organ work is superior, but sometimes sounds similar to Gary Brooker of Procol Harum ("Focus II") or Keith Emerson ("Eruption," Movement 1). The second side contains an impressionistic piece based on the Orpheus/Euridice myth called "Eruption." The piece is divided into five movements, the second movement having quite a beautiful flowing theme. A chorus of male voices melts into a backing mellotron, then is garnished with Akkerman's haunting melody line. The listener almost feels the spirit of Orpheus making music to appease the gods. All transitions are tastefully handled and executed with imagination. Moving Waves, as a whole, is an aesthetically pleasing work. Definitely for mellow listening.

Ed Lachman



DANIEL HECHT GUITAR By BRUCE THORSTAD

The odd-child orphan of the guitar world has always been the acoustical steel-string guitar, which is usually used to provide a simple strumming accompaniment for the singing voice or other lead instruments.

That the steel-string guitar can be a superb solo instrument has been proven by stylistic innovators like John Fahey and Leo Kottke, who, while playing out of an American folk-fingerpicking tradition, have used folk techniques such as bottle-neck fretting and unconventional tunings to extend the artistic frontiers of the steel-string guitar and its music. But Fahey and Kottke are primarily self taught guitarists with limitations in both manual proficiency and conception: limitations they would have to practically start over from scratch to overcome.

Now we have Daniel Hecht, a Madison guitarist with extended training in the classical guitar, and his first album, on his own Dragon's Egg label. The record was mastered at Compass Sound

Studios in Madison and pressed by a Chicago record company. Sound quality is clear and fine, although perhaps somewhat bright.

The eight cuts are all composed by Hecht and played on a small bodied steel-string guitar with a technique basically classical. The album contains a wide range of texture and mood. From the lyrical "Sweet Mantra" to the stormy barre chords of "Demolition Derby", from the excellent slide work on "Black Cat Lament" to the intricately flowing "Pear-Shaped piece, Hecht exhibits a masterful control of his music.

This album, although a homemade effort, places Danny Hecht already among the finest steel-string guitarists recording today. We look forward to release of his future albums on Takoma Records. Daniel Hecht, Guitar is available at Madison's W.S.A. store.

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RECORDS

Jimi Hendrix/War Heroes

There is an annoyingly persistent theory in the music-listening world, yes, even in some Hendrix people, that the wave of albums released since Jimi's death are not worth giving serious attention to for various reasons—the most common being that the public is being ripped off by money-hungry producers digging up every piece of shit that Hendrix left behind with anyone intelligent enough to have turned on a tape recorder in his presence. The basic premise of that argument, that some people are opportunely trying to make a quick buck at the public's expense, is probably true, exemplified by the less than masterful *Rare Hendrix*, produced on the highly respected Trip label. But one need go no further than *Rainbow Bridge*, *Cry of Love*, or *Jimi Hendrix At His Best*, to make the prospect of hearing any new Hendrix release an exercise of anticipatory excitement. This music is still Hendrix!—so forget your fantastic fiscal fears and listen.

The newest release, *War Heroes*, is so good that I have heard more than one unexcitable Hendrix listener (you know: "I guess he's ok, but there's so much noise") become excited over this album. This is not to say that *War Heroes* is flawless. No, it would be absurd to compare it to *Electric Ladyland* or *Axis: Bold As Love*, but they are in a class by themselves, anyway. The mixing engineers and producers on this album had worked with Hendrix since the Experience days, as a result, the album provides the listener with a rare opportunity to see an otherwise hidden side of the Hendrix personality. As a finished produce, *War Heroes* still can't touch his best, but it does contain several cuts that approach that level. There are a few cuts that lack polish, such as "3 Little Bears" and the "Peter Gunn-Catastrophe" segment, and one wonders whether they would have ever made it onto a Hendrix-produced album in their present state. The album does, however, wonderfully capture the exciting and masterful brilliance of the Hendrix guitar. No less than four cuts on the album are simply superb instrumental pieces, with Jimi's guitar backed up by his perfect complement on drums, Mitch Mitchell, and Billy Cox and Noel Redding alternating on bass. Even the at-times hysterically untogther "3 Little Bears" is musically very strong; strong enough to enable Hendrix to make a remarkable lyrical comeback in the final lines of the song. The remainder of the cuts on the album—"Bleeding Heart," "Highway Chile," "Stepping Stone," and "Isabella"—are absolute

powerhouses. "Highway Chile" is particularly moving; it is not difficult to see the artist writing and singing about himself: "Now you may call him a tramp/But it goes a little deeper than that/He's a . . . Highway Chile." The music of the Highway Chile keeps on moving with him; the Voodoo Chile is still alive.

If your curiosity has at all been stimulated, drop in at the Dogie Stand one of these days and the music-happy Dog Men will be happy to play *War Heroes* for you.

Bull

Dixie Chicken/Little Feat Warner Bros.

The Getaway, Sam Peckinpah's most recent movie, is his own paranoid elegy to Texas. His camera, while following his heroes' romp through the Lone Star state and eventual escape across the border to Mexico, feasts its eye on the violent spirit of the south. Likewise, Little Feat immortalizes that same part of the country on their newest album, *Dixie Chicken*. Lowell George, who wrote most of the music and lyrics, presents his own version of the south, one of fat men in bathtubs, dixie chickens, and the "angels of Houston."

Instrumentally, the album is a mixed bag of "old fashioned rock and roll" and blues. It's polished and slick; there are no mistakes. Roy Estrada, who started Little Feat with George, is gone, but otherwise the original group is in tact: Bill Hayward, drums and vocals; Bill Payne, keyboards, vocals, and synthesizer; and Lowell George, guitars and vocals. For this album, they've added Kenny Gradney, bass; Paul Barrere, second guitar; Sam Clayton, congas; and a bevy of background singers including Bonnie Raitt.

ONE OF THE BEST cuts is "Walkin' All Night" on side two. The story of a streetwalker, "plantin' her feet on the sidewalk, listening for signs of that small talk," it's a brilliant character sketch, a vignette worthy of a Cabiria.

"Roll Um East," from side one, is one of my favorites. It's a beautiful travelin' blues song that reminds me of "Willin'" from "Sailin' Shoes," the group's second album.

This is Little Feat's most successful album so far, one worth owning. It is so successful that I may spend some time in the south.

Martha Zydowsky

A Junior Voice Recital will be presented by Kristi Jo Gjermundson, mezzosoprano, on Friday, February 19, in Morphy Recital Hall. She will be assisted in this free, public recital by pianist Eric Larsen. The public is invited.

The program chosen by Miss Gjermundson will include *Three Arias* from the Pergolesi "Stabat Mater." Six songs by Robert Franz. "Mignon" by Amboise Thomas; three songs by Emile Jaques Dalcroze; and *Three Songs* from a group of the Nine English Songs by Hindemith.

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Talkin' with LOU REED

an interview by

the State Street Gourmet

There are a number of ways of measuring an album's power. But surely no measure could be so rigorous as the one which tested Transformer. The test, of course, was the number of miles that record could take Lou Reed into the midwest.

Viewed from this perspective, Transformer's power is almost miraculous. It took Lou, the most sophisticated and talented creative writer who ever wrote rock and roll songs, to a sold-out concert in Cleveland. But that was nothing compared to what followed. The album's real triumph came when it translated the man who taught the rock world the power of decadence deep into the strange world of the country's

portunity enough to doze off twice and although Lou's very self was waiting in the wings, the crowd was so enthusiastic that they got an encore. I don't know if that's what they expected, but I figured they deserved it for their misplaced energy.

Lou's performance in St. Paul was probably (except for a little rustiness directly attributable to him having just returned from his honeymoon in Jamaica) typical of what he's like in a large theatre, especially one only partially filled deep in the midwest. On stage Lou manages to be both perverse and magisterial. His wrists flail the air and then his hands search for his pouting face to rub and fondle there.

The boys (not one yet 21) from a neighborhood in Yonkers work hard for him. They're much better than I expected, still I was surprised to learn that they are responsible for their own riffs and breaks. It's not unlikely that soon they'll have a role in his recording. They're already getting a sense of their power, complaining mildly that some of their arrangements for Transformer were better than Bowie's.

They may be right. The concert version, for example, of "Wagon Wheel" comes across as one of the best rock songs Lou has ever done. Generally, the later non-Velvet Underground songs come across better on record. Maybe that's just because they rock more. Although the versions of the Velvet Underground things are sometimes interesting, especially the new arrangement of "Heroin," it's hard for an old fan not to yearn for old days. The most significant exception to this is "Sister Ray." In St. Paul that was probably the strongest thing Lou did. None of the people I was with could get it out of their heads.

The power of Transformer had clearly reached deeper into Milwaukee than into the Twin Cities. For some reason beyond my understanding, Beer City is loaded with Lou Reed fans. His concert had been scheduled at the last minute for a bar on the city's northeast side called Humpin' Hannah's. People started queuing up in the damp windy cold as early as 6:00. By 8:00 when the doors finally opened there were close to 2000 ardent bodies jamming the sidewalk and street. But for many the wait was much longer. It took more than two hours for the crowd to file their way into the dingy basement bar. The press of people striving to be the next one to get in was so intense that it was difficult to find the space to dodge the puke that erupted from those who had absorbed too much strain.

Inside it wasn't much better and it got worse. Fourteen hundred of the most

Our own triumph came Saturday afternoon in the Pfister Hotel bar in Milwaukee before that night's concert. We had set up the interview with Steve Hyden, Lou's new road manager (the old one featured in the snaps on the back of Transformer has gone on to other things), in St. Paul the night before. But when we got to the hotel it looked like our run was to be dry. "He's fucked up from the plane ride. An interview now would be just a waste of time," Steve, clearly uncomfortable, apologized. But he proved an engaging fellow and an ardent Lou Reed fan and so we talked, laughed, and swapped song interpretations in the bar while Lou and Betty (Lou's brand new bride) perhaps sometimes looked on from behind a latticed partition on the other side of the small room.

Eventually a sultry voice drawled its way across the bar. "Stephen," is said, sounding like the start of a new song and I figured it wouldn't be long now. And it wasn't. Steve came back somewhat excited and told us that Lou and Betty would shortly join us. I figured it was about time. But we'd been talking about Lou so long that I at least didn't remember that I had much more to say, and so the interview got off to a slow start, a start made even slower by Lou's natural defensiveness.

After the normal preliminaries I asked him why, except for the quieted versions of old rockers like "Waiting for the Man," he didn't do any of his slow things like "Pale Blue Eyes."

Lou: Oh ya, oh that's nice, I like to do that one. The time will come. It's just not now. We did "New Age."

ME: One of the repeated comments in the reviews of Transformer I've read is that you've abandoned rock and roll, yet your concert last night was...

Lou: Records are different.

Me: Why?

Lou: Well, the audience is there and they're stoned and they like their rocks off, so you give 'em the shit, that's all. When we get to a different situation where they want to have their minds blown, then we'll work on that. Right now this is the level we're at. I went to a Kinks concert and it was the same situation. They just wanted heavy, hard songs, no "Waterloo Sunset."

Me: Do you like "Celluloid Heroes"? (from the Kinks' "Everybody's in Showbiz")

Lou: That's what "New Age" is about. I did it first, I beat Ray, I was into movie stars first, but "Celluloid Heroes" is pretty good. "Fat Blond Actress" isn't half bad either.

Me: (with a disarming gush) "Celluloid Heroes" may be the best non-Lou-Reed-rock-song of the year.

Lou: Non-Lou-Reed-song, (he repeated slowly seeming to savour the idea)—no I haven't abandoned rock and roll. Like the next album may be an animal.

Me: The next album is going to be incredibly important.

Lou: They're all important.

Me: But more important than ever because you're on the verge now.

Lou: Well, I've been verging for years.

Me: You've got it within your grasp to be as big as anyone now.

Lou: Well I've been doing it all along. It's just that they're getting hip to it. The Beatles were doing "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" and I'm sitting around writing "Heroin" and everybody was looking at me like I was a freak. I mean we were very heavy for them, and it's just now that people are getting into what was going down then. Meanwhile I got bored with it, I'm into something else now.

Me: Each of your albums has had its superb things but there have been flaws like "Mystery Story" and maybe even "Sister Ray". Everything was so hip that people found it much easier to react to the flaws. It was an easy out. It seems to me now you're in a position where you can't afford to give people an easy out. Do you know what I mean?

Lou: No. I like flaws. They're very human. I like mistakes. I like it to be real.

Coleen (a photographer): Did you write Sister Ray?

Lou: I put lyrics to it and I told everybody to do whatever they wanted. I wrote it on a train. It's very sick. That was 1967 and we were talking about bisexuality and now it's the thing on records. About "Makeup", a guy asked me how come I wrote it now. Four years ago I wrote it too. I just thought they needed a theme song.

Me: When we talked on the phone before, you said that you impersonated people in your songs, that you introduced your audience to people they hadn't met so they'd be safe.

Lou: Yeah, but one of them might be me. Yeah, that's why some people don't believe me because I act it another way. I have fun being all those other people.

Me: Is that changing? Is "Make Up" about you or an impersonation of a homosexual coming out?

Lou: Yeah, that's what it's about.

Me: Is Transformer a concept album like you've maintained elsewhere like the 3rd Velvet album is?



heartland: to Minnesota, a world so frozen that even Dylan couldn't move it; to Milwaukee, a city so cumbersome and phlegmatic that it can't even get itself up enough to support a baseball team.

LOU REED live at the St. Paul Civic Theatre—seems like a joke grotesque enough even for one of his own albums. But the irony of such a joining of opposites was intensified because he shared the center this night with the regional midwest camping show which bustled in the center's great hall oblivious to what was going on around the corner.

Although the audience in the Twin Cities pretty clearly wasn't an overflow from next door, neither did it seem in any way a distinctively Lou Reed audience. All the men wore pants. But more surprising, no one seemed particularly excited or even bemused that Lou Reed was in St. Paul. Just a thousand or so people confidently and quietly waiting to take their seats in a theatre that could hold 2500. The only hopeful sign was the groupies that waited patiently to be enjoyed by the band that night.

Lou was traveling with a certain Garland Jeffries who's also managed by Heller Associates. Jeffries more or less plays piano bar music on acoustic guitar and sings. The audience's response helped demonstrate that the Twin Cities aren't really ready. Although his set was long enough to allow Beverly, a notoriously light sleeper, on-

Meanwhile, his hips jut and jerk in time to the music but perilously close to the microphone stand. Then, when he really wants drama, he dips and wiggles his knees.

THERE'S NO doubt that Lou loves this variety of camping and believes in its power. And sometimes it is powerful, but unfortunately Lou hasn't mastered the mysteries of his high-heeled silver shoes; they betray him. They make him seem clumsy, and this awkwardness is destructive to his performance not only because it makes his moves seem tentative and half-hearted but worse because it makes him seem old—much too old. Sometimes in Minneapolis Lou's act seemed not so much a gay semi-parody of a rock and roll star as it did an enervated parody of that semi-parody.

It was a tribute to the man's charisma that he was able to bring off his performance in spite of those shoes. His power on stage is in part at least a function of his self-possession. You've got to be self-possessed to pull off the moves he pulls off in those shoes in front of an audience in St. Paul. But his dignity comes through in other ways. When his musicians are making their licks he seems almost regal. Standing back from the microphone he watches them perform as though he were their only audience. When Eddie or Vinnie pull off a new riff in a different place, Lou condescends and graciously nods or smiles his approval.

stalwart and dedicated had managed to work their way past the management's ineptness and jam the place solid with flesh. It wasn't long before the heat and damp from our bodies pervaded everywhere. I couldn't believe that Lou would trust himself to the makeshift wooden stage that rose a whole foot above the floor damp with the sweat of very stimulated asses.

Poor Garland Jeffries. Even under the best of circumstances it's doubtful this audience would have had any patience with him, but on that night the best of his audience were those who failed to notice he was there.

When Lou came on stage the place went crazy. Although the fans contained their emotion, the excitement hardly abated at any time during the set. The intimacy and excitement caught him up and he was fantastic. There wasn't time or space for the kind of self-consciousness that enabled him to camp it up so outrageously in Minnesota. For the most part he just leared, strutted, and at times forgot himself to such an extent that he actually belted out his songs. With his band doing things that you couldn't have imagined they could do the night before, he laid down some of the finest driving rock and roll that anyone needs to hear. By the end everyone was on his feet boogieing, clapping, and screaming for more.

Given the heat and terrible thrust of the crowd it is difficult to imagine a performer pulling off a greater personal triumph.



Lou: Transformer isn't a concept album. Me: Yes, but doesn't the second side start with a homosexual coming out full of fight and end with him lonely and aging?

Lou: It's not clear in my own mind. I wanted to write a gay song and that's the only way I could understand it, like the way I know about it. What I wanted to do was paint a picture that was prettier than the reality. "Make Up" is a very happy song, the reality isn't. The reality of gay life isn't happy. Me: The unhappiness comes out in "Goodnight Ladies."

Lou: I thought "Goodnight Ladies" was kinda fun myself. Me: But it seems to be a song about an old lonely homosexual.

Lou: No, that's not true. It'd be easy for me to say it was true but "Goodnight Ladies" is just "Goodnight Ladies." I wanted to do a 1930's kind of thing and I got together with David. David got this Dixieland band together and we did a Dixieland number which happens to be about somebody who's very very lonely. Like the lyrics are very sad but the music is very happy. It's kind of funny, He'll say something really sad and you'll hear a trumpet doing' a (here Lou imitated a trumpet). I get a kick out of the duality of the emotion. The musicians who played on it didn't know what I was singin' about. They didn't have to know.

Me: How come you didn't get a tan in Jamaica? (In spite of his Jamaica honeymoon, Lou still looked leached.)

Lou: I did. I got a real burn.

Betty: It rained for two days.

Lou: See like the whole gay thing. It's just now that people are starting to get hip to what's happening, to who did what to whom which was "New York Telephone Conversation."

Me: A show tune.

Lou: Yeah, a show tune. I'll never do that again. Just like I won't do "Murder Mystery" again. "Murder Mystery" is filthy. Unfortunately, it's unintelligible. But if it were intelligible.... By the way it was published in the Paris Review. The lyrics of it anyway. They made seven typographical errors. It's published. It's all there and its also on record. And actually it's intelligible. All you gotta do, it's in stereo, is flip one speaker off and you can get it especially the last part with the piano.

What I was trying to do is what the writers who put a poem in black and a poem in red on top of it. I saw one in a poetry book, I forget by who, and I said, that's stereo, that's stereo. It's so simple it's ridiculous. So I said I'll say one thing in this channel and maybe the opposite in the other channel. So that one's sad and one's happy, and so if you know what they're both saying you're in the middle. It's a freak out. I did it once and I did it as good as I could and that's the last time I did it. I'm not interested in it any more cause I did it. It's like all the other stuff. I did "Sister Ray" and I don't wanna do it anymore.

Me: The version of "Sister Ray" you did last night is a different song. It may have been the best thing you did.

Lou: I don't know. I thought "New Age" was and then "Lisa Says". My favorites are a lot different than anybody else's. Nobody seems to care.

Me: What are they?

Lou: "Lisa Says," "Berlin," "I'll be Your Mirror." I love those things but the thing is

your audience's react and they don't want to hear about that. On the records at home they'll do it, but on stage....I've gone through this. They'll be some hard core fans who'll want to hear "Pale Blue Eyes" and there's gonna be the other people.

Me: I'd like to hear you do "Some Kinds of Love."

Lou: Oh, that's one of the best I ever did. It was another plea for perversion.

Me: It reminds me of Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." I even taught it in a class.

Lou: How did you get the lyrics, 'cause I don't print them? I'm the only one who doesn't. Everyone else and their mother is an egoman and prints their lyrics. I have never printed a lyric.

Me: It's not impossible that not printing lyrics is as egotistical as printing them.

Lou: I absolutely refuse. I just don't have the ego for it. First of all I'm lazy. It would mean I'd have to write them out and then type them, plus punctuation, plus deciding about capitol letters. Fuck it, it's just a fucking record, so if you want the lyrics, listen to the lyrics.

Richie (a photographer): When you compose don't you write the lyrics down?

Lou: Yeah, I write them down. You know I still didn't have them memorized when I made Transformer. I had to read them. David (Bowie) saw my handwriting and went out of his mind. But he said, what is it about us that makes our handwriting like this—because it is totally undecipherable. Richie: Are you going to work with him again?

Lou: I think our schedules conflict.

Richie: He's in this country now?

Lou: Is he? I thought he was going to Japan. David on a train going to the moon. I like that.

Me: You said you only play rock and roll for the audience.

Lou: I also get off on it. I like the savagery of the whole thing. In the studio I can get off on "Berlin" and everything like that, but on stage not so much because I had my time with it. I like animal stuff and violence. I like to hear stuff going on back of me.

Richie: Do you miss playing with the Velvet Underground?

Lou: Not at all.

Richie: How was the Andy Warhol experience?

Lou: That was fabulous. I mean I told a lot of people if I had been in New York and it had been going on and I had not been a part of it I would have killed myself. I mean what was going down was so fantastic it was phenomenal. New York hasn't been the same.

At this point Richie presented Lou with a rock on which he'd printed an advertisement for Trash featuring a picture of Joe Delesandro. Lou was obviously surprised and chuckled ironically, "Joe Delesandro? I'm wild about Joe Delesandro." Richie was a bit hurt and so Lou told us a parable.

Lou: Let me tell you a story. I met this girl once. I don't know how we met—she was from Greece. Oh, I know, we were in this clothing store and she said, you're Lou Reed. Do you mind if I talk to you? So we sat down on a curb in New York and the traffic is going by and she is from Greece speaking with an accent. She says to me that she has been a very big fan of mine and knows all the albums, lyrics and everything. I said gee

any open windows and then she split.

I played a concert and these girls are going crazy. I got off stage and one grabs me and says I gotta talk to you. She'd been screaming at me the whole show. She said, you're the son, you're the son. She said, look just let me tell you who you're the son of and then I'll split. I said, O.K., who am I the son of? And she said, you're the son of the devil.

What David's worried about is that he'll be shot on stage. I understand what he's talking about because I know who a lot of the people are who come to my concerts and where they're at and what they're capable of. That's why you don't get "Berlin," "Pale Blue Eyes," and "Candy Says." Right now anyway.

Me: It's the same thing Dylan was afraid of. Did you read Scaduto's biography of Dylan?

Lou: No, I'd rather have my friends read the Autobiography of Virginia Wolfe. That's more up my alley. I saw Don't Look Back and I just thought it was stupid.

Me: Nasty little son-of-a-bitch wasn't he?

Lou: Wow. Mean. Mean. Really mean as shit.

Me: I told you the story about Webberman. The guy who goes through Dylan's garbage.

Lou: He goes through everybody's garbage, man.

Lou: I was shocked that Dylan read Rock magazine though. That was in his garbage.

Me: Dylan is apparently as schizophrenic about his position as anyone. He sneers at his fame the same time that he keeps abreast of the scene which made him famous.

Lou: I think people should leave him alone.

Me: I don't think so. It's part of his job. But let me tell you the story Webberman has probably never told to anyone else because he never thought it was interesting. When Webberman went to meet Dylan at the sound studio.

Lou: Where?

Me: Dylan's sound studio; guess what Dylan was listening to?

Lou: What?

Me: He was listening to Loaded.

Lou: What!!!

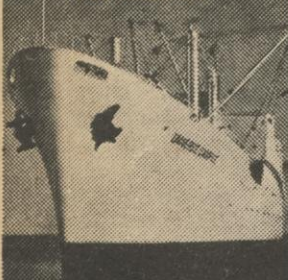
Me: Yeah.

Lou: To Loaded, heh, heh, heh. In the Warhol days I kept notes on what everybody said. It's all written down. It's ridiculous. It's a diary. It has the names of plumbers. Addresses of where to cop, what to do, and then it has things that people say. It doesn't say who says them. That's the only thing it doesn't say. But it says things like, "Amphetamine makes you so thin you can get through any situation." Or it says things like "I feel like a deaf mute in a telephone booth." That's what it's like.

Cardinal photos by Richard C. Fulwiler

that's great. Meanwhile she is emaciated—total bone. So then she says to me do you take Valium, and I say, yeah and she says, I take Valium too. And I say great and she says that if you don't take Valium it is like swimming under water. I said, yeah that's right. And then she rolls up her sleeve and says, see. And there are all these razor cuts where she had tried to commit suicide. And then she says to me, I want to give you a present (which is where this whole story is going). Then she gave me this ring with some strange kind of rock on it. (And then it gets heavy—people who are fans of mine are into things, like some of them are coming closer and closer to the edge). And then after she shows me both arms, man, with these incredible cuts (and I was getting off on it—I thought it was kind of funny) and I take the ring, I say to her, well I have to split. And she says, can I see you again? Will you tell me where you live? And I said, no. Well take my address in Greece, she said. And I said, I don't want your address in Greece. You wanted to talk, we talked and that's it. She says—O.K. man, if that's where you're at but just don't stand near



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Ein Gespräch mit Otto-Werner Mueller

(continued from page 1)

So then after I started to travel a little bit more, I started to conduct more things that I had written, but I didn't consider myself a conductor, particularly.

You say that you returned to conducting because of things that you were writing at this time?

Yes, because at the same time I was writing works for theatre and in the mean time I was home studying other works. I spent much time doing musical analysis. I wanted to find out what bugged me in so many performances. If I wrote something and it wasn't right, or if I was listening to a performance I might think, a composer cannot write such rubbish, if I didn't know the work. I would study the work and find, hah! he has been misrepresented here. And that has stayed with me until today.

One of the most frustrating things about listening to a lot of recordings is, for example, I've heard several performances of the Mahler Seventh which I haven't liked but I'm still convinced that it is a good piece of music, but I'll have to wait until someone conducts it properly.

It's a very difficult piece of music to perform, to get the continuity in this work, because the sections are somewhat distorted on purpose, and they are, in comparison with earlier music, a little in the direction of Picasso as far as the general outline is concerned. . . . To keep the whole thing together, to see the larger architecture is very hard to do.

I hate to hear a first performance when I haven't had a chance to look at the score. It has happened much too often that I got a completely wrong impression of what the piece was about. All these years composers have been complaining about what conductors do to their music. . . . it takes a long time to study properly, and if it is your job to constantly produce performances, how much time do you have? You must not only study the work but everything that surrounds it.

Henryk Szeryng said the same thing in an interview I had with him last year. He said he spent a lot of time studying the Bach fugues for organ and harpsichord before he even began practicing the fugues for violin.

Well, of course when you have

people who can talk about clarinet repertoire, they talk about the Brahms sonatas. . . . What garbage you hear performed. Remember the clarinet quintet, which is one of the most mature, most beautiful works that Brahms ever wrote. I'm worried that conductors don't know these pieces, which will open their eyes to the symphonies. You shouldn't conduct Beethoven symphonies without studying the piano concertos and the string quartets. But you shouldn't play the string quartets unless you study the symphonies. I think you do a disservice to the composer, because it is your duty to find out as much as you can, as your time allows. If you can play something on your instrument and it sounds good and feels fine, and play the right number of beats per second, this is not enough, that doesn't work. . . . There are good and bad performances of a piece of music, but there is not only one good way to perform a work. This naturally being related to the performer's temperament. Yet when two sensitive musicians get together, they can iron out their differences quickly. My first rehearsal with (pianist Sviatoslav) Richter of the Tschaikovsky First lasted only two minutes longer than an actual performance.

You were in Canada. . . .

I met Markevitch, who I had seen conduct the Rite of Spring in Boston. He was very important to me because of his ease of handling, which is something that I have put in a lifetime of fantastic effort just to get the coordination together. I did Wozzeck for television and Markevitch came to the rehearsal and the performance. At that time we were working closely together. I started to listen and watch more conductors rehearse, to learn what to do and what not to do. Certain conductors, whose names I won't mention, showed me how to completely destroy a piece. . . .

I started to break away from broadcasting in Montreal and began to teach more. If you have a young orchestra, trained to a certain sensitivity, they can perform works much beyond their technical know how.

As long as you work in university situations, will you ever have an orchestra that can perform the most difficult works?

Oh yes, you can have a much

higher level. This school has enlarged somewhat from a music education school. Here I am a little bit disturbed that one comes in to study music education in the first year, which I think is completely wrong. That you immediately study something that you have no idea about. And to study how to teach it! No one knows such an animal in medical education, for example. In other places, they first study music, and then they decide. . . . There are still too many students here who decide to study music education before they decide to study music. The U.W. symphony had no pride in itself when I first came here. Partly because they had been told that playing chamber music was more important than working as part of an orchestra. Now they have a sense of pride in their work. As an ensemble, this group is as sensitive to textual and dynamic qualities as any I have worked with. Also there is lots of self-teaching among members of the orchestra. New members learn a lot from more experienced members, in this way they are more autonomous than they used to be.

Did you originate the Orchestra Committee?

Yes. This is a group of students from the orchestra elected by the orchestra which has the power to give scholarships to a certain number of its members. The money for this comes from the paid concerts.

I get the feeling that if you had to choose between a career as a conductor and teaching, that you would choose the teaching path.

Yes, I need my time to study music. It's my most valuable time. To me the study of music is much more exciting than any performance. The most perfect performance takes place in my head. No mistakes. First of all, there is absolutely no distortion. I can adjust to the particular space and time that music lives in, when I study. I can alter it, I can restudy it, I can try to see the continuity. I have always had a secondary interest in research. At one time I could not make up my mind whether to go into mathematics or music. It was a very difficult choice to say that music would be my profession, because that thing that I love most might suddenly become profanity, as it becomes a profession.

AMERIKAN BANDSTAND

West-Bruce-Laing/Why Dontcha

Energy is the essence of Rock. This energy, to quiet those howls of "reductionist pig" I seem to hear being hurled by misfits, may be primarily verbal (as in Dylan or Lou Reed) or rhythmical (as in the Stones) or lyric (as in almost any Eric Clapton solo) or any of the above in various combinations, or even, hopefully, but exceedingly rarely, all of the above. Energy by itself, however, cannot long continue without deteriorating into meaningless obscurity, mere noise, or meandering pyrotechnics. Form must be added to structure energy and allow it to be transmitted in a meaningful fashion.

This brings us, by a somewhat roundabout process, to West-Bruce-Laing, which has arisen out of the still smouldering embers of Mountain and the long dead and scattered ashes of Cream. Cream, of course, was one of the greatest rock groups (as how could it not have been, combining rock's greatest lead guitarist with its move inventive bassist, even throwing Ginger Baker in to boot), and was largely responsible for breaking the four-minute barrier of the 45, thus giving artists the chance to transform themselves from miniaturists to creators of epics.

Cream founded because nobody could write a song (everything they did sounded like the blues even if it wasn't) and because the boys grew to despise each other. Mountain, while not to be spoken of in the same exalted tones, proved that post-Cream hard rock could still be tasteful. It also proved that a good lead guitarist (West) and good material cannot overcome completely the lack of rhythmical energy ultimately traceable to the muted bass of Felix Pappalardi (Cream's ex-producer, who should have known better).

West-Bruce-Laing, if it lacks the brilliance of Clapton's playing and the mysticism of Gail Collins' lyrics from Mountain's music, also lacks the flaws of its illustrious forbears. After repeated listenings over the past two months, I have come to feel that there are now weak tracks on this album, although there are, of course; a few (such as "Love is Worth the Blues," "The Doctor," "Third Degree," "Why Dontcha," and "Shake Ma Thing") stand out as superb bluesy rockers. Listen to the album repeatedly. Reflect. You will discover why Dylan backed by the Band sounds better than Dylan backed by a crew of recording-studio musicians.

Park Street Glutton

The Happy People by Cannonball Adderley Quintet (Capitol Records).

This looked like a fun album from the cover and you won't be disappointed when you get inside and set it gently upon your record player. The four songs were inspired by a trip to Brazil and the hot flesh and blood of Rio as interpreted by the Adderley is a fresh, imaginative and as the cover says, "hot and humid and happy and imaginably real...."

The musicianship on the lp is of a very high quality with the Adderley Brothers being accompanied by George Duke on keyboards, Ron McCurdy on drums and Walter Booker on string bass. Duke doesn't take flight in solo until side two but the setting is worth waiting for. Cannonball's playing throughout is superb: While I don't particularly care for the vocals, the longer I listen, the more I hear and the more I see how the vocals are necessary to the context of the material.

Money Jungle

Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus and Max Roach (United Artists)

This

is the third incarnation of Money Jungle, and the first one I've heard without an annoying amount of distortion. Recorded in 1962, the trio of Duke Ellington, piano, Charlie Mingus, bass, and Max Roach, drums, will go down in history as one of the greatest, along with the Bud Powell Trio (Fantasy 86006) which also featured Mingus and Roach. On Money Jungle, all three retain their own personalities, yet the proceedings are dominated by the Duke. All the tunes are his, from the exotic Fleurette Africaine to the exquisite Solitude. On Africaine, Roach and Mingus embellish the mood so as to render forever banal the bird noises of Arthur Lyman. This is chamber music for the most tasteful chambers. Like your pad. Run out and buy it with the money Aunt

Petunia gave you for a hot meal.

Money Jungle is food for your head and it won't give you heartburn.

Don Clarke

Mose 'In Your Ear' — Mose Allison — Atlantic Records

This album was recorded live at "In Your Ear" in Palo Alto, California, and is a return to the flat-out, no holds barred style of piano playing that Mose Allison rarely records. Usually his studio recordings are short with tight solos. Here he gets a chance to show what he can do. He's the master of the laid-back jazz and blues style vocal which is complimented by his unique piano playing. On this album are some standards and also Fool's Paradise, a long-time Mose favorite. Both Powerhouse and Seventh Son make one wish they never had faded out.

BRUCE PARSONS

Less Than a Man/Hoyt Axton
A&M Records

Hoyt Axton's new A&M album, "Less Than a Man", is really disappointing. But that's not much of a surprise, because ever since Axton got his musical start in the days of the "folk music revival" with "Greenback Dollar" in 1962, he has always seemed to show a potential that he's never realized. He's always spoiled his promising vocal style and songwriting with pretentiousness, catering to stylish and forced emotion. Still Axton has enough real talent to keep one hoping for a change.

The current album exhibits the same failings that characterize his whole career. To stress his songwriting—Axton penned all but two cuts—the instrumental and vocal back-up is very low-key and understated. So much so that except for a chord change or two, the same instrumental track could be used for every cut. A vocal group which includes such a fine singer as Linda Ronstadt is wasted mainly on unison melody lines an octave above Axton's lead.

All this could be justified if the lyrics could keep the totality interesting. Unfortunately, most of the songs are moody musings that don't really go anywhere or even mean very much. The titles are indicative—"Sweet Fantasy", "Sweet Misery", "Mexico City Hangover". The one song that attempts a little narrative, "Peacemaker", is completely ludicrous. It tells of a draft-evader who was "almost to sweet Canada's border" when he was gunned down by a man "high on gunpowder and Federal order."

THE MAIN reason for Axton's consistent failure is his denial of his musical roots and toning down his style to appeal to the "wider audience". His guitar and piano playing, his vocal style and his lyrics belong in the Country & Western genre.

One of his best recent efforts, "When It All Comes Down", is also closest to pure C&W. The nice dobro picking almost makes up for the forced "have a nice day" line in the chorus. Unfortunately the latest album represents a retreat from this direction and a return to a non-descript "folk" style. I'd say pass up this album, but don't write off Axton yet. He may just decide to play it honest and make the good music he seems capable of producing. Then again, he may just disappoint everybody once more.

Richard March

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