

The Life and Times of Jim Croce

by Harold Kuckertz

Not so long ago Jim Croce was just another folksinger/songwriter who travelled from one college to another playing to everyone who was willing to lend him an ear.

The times are a changing as Dylan observed and Jim's fortunes changed last summer when *You Don't Mess Around With Jim* became an international hit.

Three hit singles and one album later—*Bad Bad Leroy Brown* became a number one—Jim has established himself as a major act. His album *Life and Times* will consolidate his new found fame.

Life and Times is a collection of eleven folk-rock tunes. All songs were written by Croce himself and every cut is a potential hit single.

Croce writes very simple melodies with nice catch lines and it is no surprise that his songs are frequently heard on middle-of-the-road stations.

His lyrics are good but not outstanding. Most of them recall episodes from the life and times of Croce. His humour shines on *Bad Bad Leroy Brown*, *Roller Derby Queen* and *Next Time, This Time*.

The words to *Dreaming Again* and *It Doesn't Have to Be That Way* could also belong to Andy Williams' or Donny Osmond's latest efforts but Croce somehow manages to make them sound convincing.

Like many other sonwriter/singer albums, this record tends to sound a bit samey after a while.

There is a slight melodic and structural resemblance in his faster songs, but fortunately these numbers are the ones with the strongest lyrics.

On the slower numbers Croce cleverly changes his phrasing to create more variety.

For *Alabama Rain* he uses a phrasing quite similar to that of Dylan.

Production and back-up music are professional, and Maury Muehleisen provides good guitar work. A few touches of organ and a few vocal harmonies have been thrown in for good measure.

Life and Times certainly is not a trendsetting record but it is worth finding its way into many record collections.

If you want to enjoy some gentle folk-rock after your daily dose of hard rock - give it a try.

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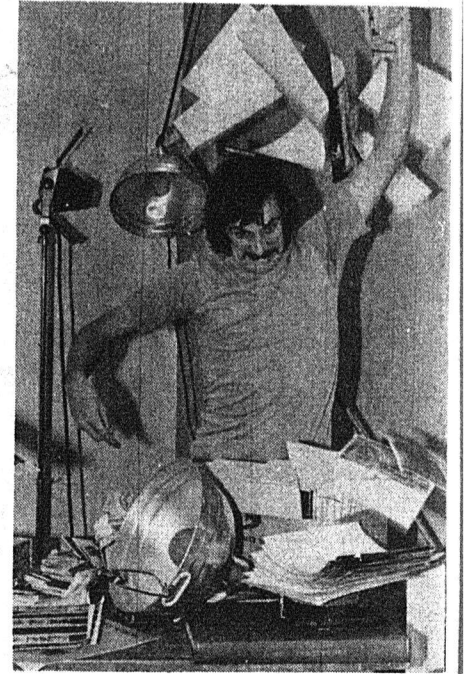
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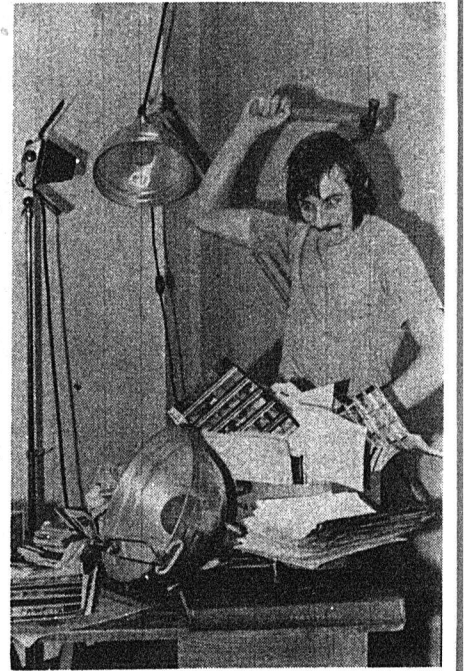
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