

The Byrds

Migrating into oblivion

By STEVE GELLER

The Byrds, who once dethroned the Beach Boys to become the trend setters of rock music in North America by instituting a Dylan folk-rock cult, seem to be dropping out of sight as the times and music change.

While the Byrds have attempted to keep pace with the ever-evolving pop scene, they have usually done so unsuccessfully. What could be the beginning of their end is evident in their latest album, *Ballad of Easy Rider* (Columbia CS9942).

Ballad of Easy Rider is a plain case of the Byrds failing to get together. The inconsistencies in arrangement and the overexerted variations in style stigmatize the efforts of the once musically-flawless Byrds.

The title tune, a true ballad typified by a soft, light melody and flowing meaningful lyrics, clashes with the following track which consists of a heavier mood with nonsensical lyrics concerning the

life of a dog, Fido.

Similarly, *Tulsa Country Blue* with its country and western arrangement accompanied by rustic lyrics is too different from the Irish-accented, old-country styled structure and singing of Jack Farr the Sailor.

The Byrds have attempted to extend their music into the different fields of pop rock but with *Ballad of Easy Rider* have failed to achieve a recognizable style which can adequately encompass their various ideas into one coherent group effort.

There is also an over-exploitation of religion and current events, making the album appear to be too commercially-oriented.

Where their music tends to drag, lyrics such as *Oil In My Lamp's* "Sing O' sinners..." or an entire song based upon the declaration that *Jesus Is Just Alright* have been appropriately placed. The commercial trend is furthered by a short, musically-poor, poetically-

weak jingle entitled *Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins*.

For the Byrds then, *Ballad of Easy Rider* is an attempt; not an attempt to achieve a particular goal, but an attempt to stay alive in an ever-changing, highly-specialized pop music world in which they themselves at one time helped to revolutionize.

The group as a physical entity has undergone change, fluctuating in its membership from three to five until its present median of four. Withdrawn are Crosby, Clarke and Clark, three native Byrds and gone is the Mr. Tambourine Man-Bells of Rymny folk-rock sound.

The result has been a sharp decline of a once-faithful following as with such drastic changes the Byrds have been unable to keep their music at the qualitative level obvious in their earlier material.

The Byrds are coming to Massey Hall along with Teagarden and Van Winkle and Morey Haden, on Feb. 1.

Humble Pie proved they were greatest backup group going

A backup group is usually made up of a few fellows whom everyone has some idea of but who haven't yet made their imprint on the music world.

Consensus has it that very little attention is given to them while waiting for the headlines to appear and that backup groups are generally regarded as second-rate performers.

It is because of these commonly-held beliefs that Humble Pie shocked the Toronto audience which waited, at first impatiently, for the Moody Blues to appear last November at Massey Hall.

With very little introduction, four brightly-clad men briskly walked on stage. Three of them picked up acoustic guitars and sat on stools while the fourth grabbed a tympani and as he seated himself on the wooden floor all hell broke loose as Humble Pie got into *For Your Love*, which consisted of wild, seemingly unstructured singing, frantic foot-stomping and constant head-swaying.

About six minutes later they stood up and without waiting for applause hooked up their electric guitars, steadied the drum setup and tore into *Shakin' All Over* before explosively delivering their own moving material.

Displaying excellent showmanship and stage presence as well as musicianship, the only way Humble Pie could be persuaded to leave the stage was by having house lights flashed on and off and even then they reluctantly headed backstage where composer, singer and guitarist Steve Marriott (formerly of *The Small Faces*) declared "I really could have grooved longer if they hadn't turned on those damn lights."

Humble Pie broke all the rules, regulations and beliefs attributed to a backup group — they were great and the audience loved them.

Their first album, *As Safe As Yesterday Is* (Immediate IMOC-101) successfully captures the heavy rock, animal band structure of their endlessly moving music.

If you listen closely you will notice that the voices during the songs differ constantly. This is because all group members sing, and seem to do so whenever they feel the urge. This, of course, is not really the case but due to a superb arrangement, Humble Pie maintains its animal status.

Their music is forceful and constantly driving as is evident with such electrifying cuts as *Buttermilk Boy* and *I'll Go Alone*. Humble Pie also displays a strong element of humor which is fairly constant throughout their first album.

"...she weighs 200 pounds instead. She'll keep you warm in bed..." or declarations of "Your mother is a freak" accents their mischievous, light mood as do song titles such as *A Nifty Little Number Like You*.

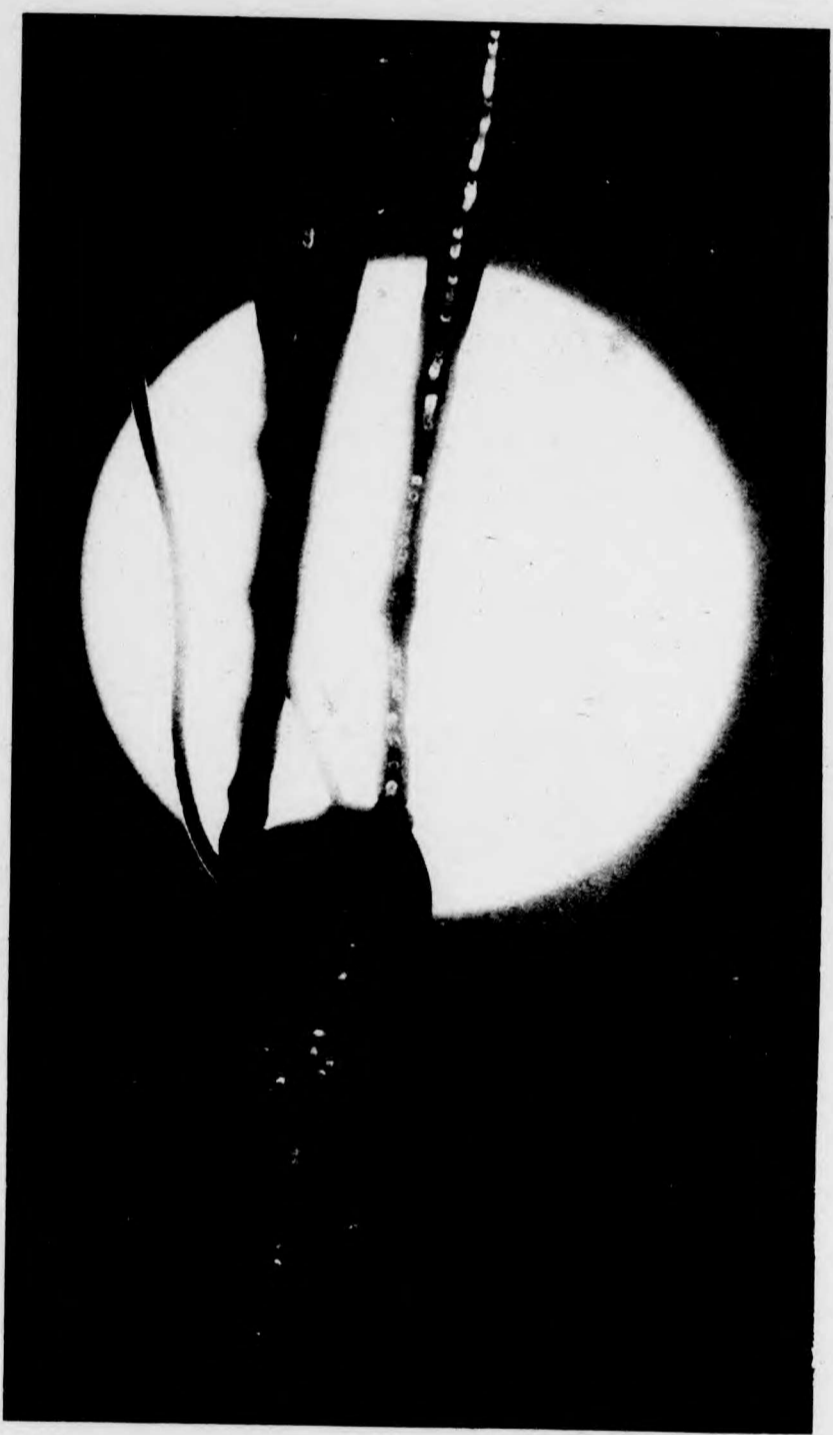
The only regrettable aspect of *As Safe As Yesterday Is* is the fact that there is no acoustic work resembling their concert material.

However, Humble Pie has a second album circulating throughout their homeland Britain (as well as Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany and other such places) where the group has been excitedly received. This album should reach Toronto in about a month and will probably pick up where the first leaves off.

Because of their powerful first album and their first stage performance, Toronto will know what to expect from the greatest backup group going, the next time Humble Pie rocks into town.

—S.G.

EXCALIBUR
staff meeting
to discuss
- CYSF elections
- the editorship
today at 4
important - come



Excalibur -- Dave Cooper

MOONLIT ICICLES?
Not really. Just a bit of magic manufactured by playing with the diaphragm and shutter speed of a Nikon F on a bright winter's day

Miss Cellany (from Britain)

By DAVID McCAUGHNA

LONDON — Coming back to Britain after an absence of about three years is like visiting an elderly lady friend of one's grandmother in a home for retired folks. There is the sad, fading dignity of old age about her and the traces of senility are setting in. But she's an old friend and you're happy to see her again in spite of all her faults and frailties.

Everything is pretty much the same. Malcolm Muggeridge is still spouting off in every other paper and on the BBC. Harold Wilson, poor old Harold Wilson, is still in number 10, and there's *Private Eye* on the newsstands with Mrs. Wilson's Diary in the back, there are the usual strikes and labor controversies and, on the Sunday after Christmas the papers arrive with their fat travel supplements telling of the sunny regions to the south where lucky Britons can escape from their chill-ridden isle for a week or two.

Mary Quant, certainly the most significant fashion mentor of the sixties,

the girl responsible for the mini and for putting the spotlight on London is still in the news. She predicted that the seventies will see the emancipation of pubic hair. Not only will pubic hair become public, but says Miss Quant it will be shaved into various shapes. She then told how her own husband, Alexander Plunkett-Greene, shaped her pubic hair into a 'delightful' heart.

In many ways the British pop scene seems light years behind the North American. Of course many of the best progressive rock and blues groups are British but unless they have a hit single it is impossible to hear them on the radio. With the government silencing of the pirate stations the only pop available on the airwaves is the BBC's Radio One and Radio Luxembourg. Both are mostly bubble-gum orientated.

So to a large extent are the British music weeklies like *New Musical Express* and *Melody Maker*. It came as quite a surprise

to see in the *Melody Maker* chart of the most popular artists of 1969, Fleetwood Mac as number one with the Beatles a distant second. Fleetwood Mac is a first-class group and their success in Britain has not been repeated here. In North America they are still an "underground" group whose following is slight.

Malcolm Muggeridge, the ranting old squire of British journalism, wrote a huge article in the *Observer* magazine on the sixties, which he thought were essentially comic. "The decade's most spectacular event," he said, "was a death — Winston Churchill's; its most spectacular non-event, the European Common Market unjoined." How's that for British insularity. Of course ole Malcolm got onto his favorite subject: "Above all, there was the Pill. If there was one single symbol of the decade, this was surely it. It was the Decade of the Pill. As easily swallowed as an aspirin — down it goes, and then, ah! Then the gateway opened up to pleasure

unafraid and unconfined, the demons of agnst and unease all driven away. Guarantee of sterility, of pleasure without conception; handed out to one and all by doctors and family-planners, dispatched in bulk to the underdeveloped as a precious gift from the overdeveloped, with love and good wishes. Population explosion dissolving in its presence; they asked for bread and we gave them the Pill. None virgo but all intacts — the Pill, the Pill, the wondrous Pill."

This was the first Christmas in nearly 20 years that Britain (and the Commonwealth) had to do without a televised Christmas message from the Queen. A radio station in a large Midlands city took a survey among listeners to discover whom they would like to have replace the Queen with a Christmas broadcast. The winner was Jimmy Saville, a hideous bleached-blond, mile-a-minute speaking disc jockey. Saville duly recorded his Christmas message which was broadcast to the people on Christmas day.