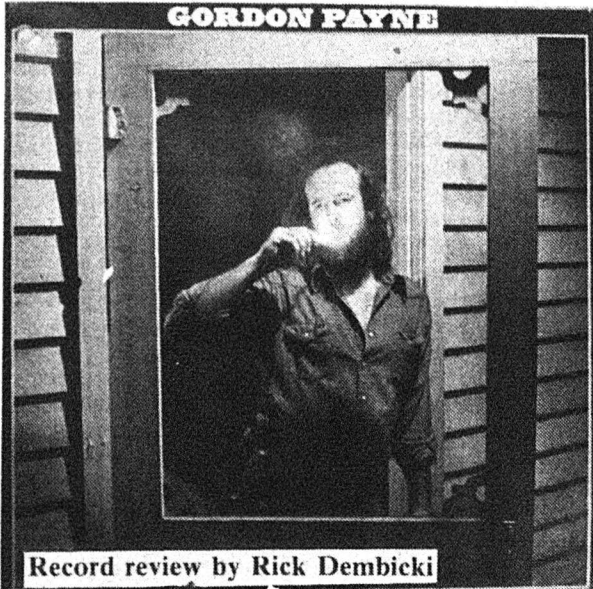


arts

Paynestaking production not worthwhile



J.J. Cale and friends take great pride in introducing you, the discreet record-buying public, to Gordon Payne — the new sprout from the Nashville, Tennessee crop of musicians. Whether his music will

Artistic runt subject of new mag

By Tony Higgins

Photography has long been considered the runt of the arts litter. Its magazines have reflected this for many years, tracing more the technical advances of the field than its esthetic development. Recent times, however, have seen changes; photography is gaining acceptance as a legitimate art form, and after years, a magazine has been created to explore photography as an art and profession.

The publication is *American Photographer*, a slick, thick and glossy overview of the esthetics of this founding of the arts. Only recently set on the stands, in its first year this monthly has set a standard which many other arts magazines would have difficulty meeting. *American Photographer* features material for the serious photographer; technical wizardry, however, takes a back seat to the artistic value of the work.

The magazine carries regular segments on many areas of interest to professional and amateur photographers. Columns such as "Monitor" (news photo work), "Inside Advertising" and "Contact" (the difficulty of getting the one *right* shot) help the reader keep track of the state of photography in North America. In each issue, a special feature letter describes

take root and flourish though, or wither and die remains to be seen, as Payne is very new to the business. So the former session musician is making his premier bid for success with this solo effort.

As the artist's locale suggests, Payne's album does have that Nashville country flavor. But there is more than that, because with some slick horn arrangements and electric piano, the *Gordon Payne* album invites a wider audience. A point of clarification though: don't try to figure out who plays back-up to Payne, and when. Because virtually each cut is recorded in a different studio with a new set of musicians accompanying Payne each time. Fine for "Who's Who of Nashville Music" enthusiasts, but confusing for the average listener. In fact, the collage of efforts may have worked well, had each participating member emphasized his own talents. Instead, the J.J. Cale production seems to focus on achieving close to the same sound on each track — a quality which (not unlike your average Donna Summers album), soon leads to boredom.

Let us see how it happened. Gordon Payne has some decent stories to tell, so there is nothing wrong here. "Red Light" has that *Howdy fella! C'mon in and join the party!* feeling to it. And "Oklahoma Posse" has your basic wild outlaw headed to the safety of Mexico plot line. Payne's guitar work is simple, but pleasant.

the conditions for photography (be it film availability, laws, ease of exhibition or whatever) in some area outside the U.S. Writing in all areas focuses more on the ability of the photographer's eye as his primary tool rather than extolling the virtues of the well-stocked gadget bag.

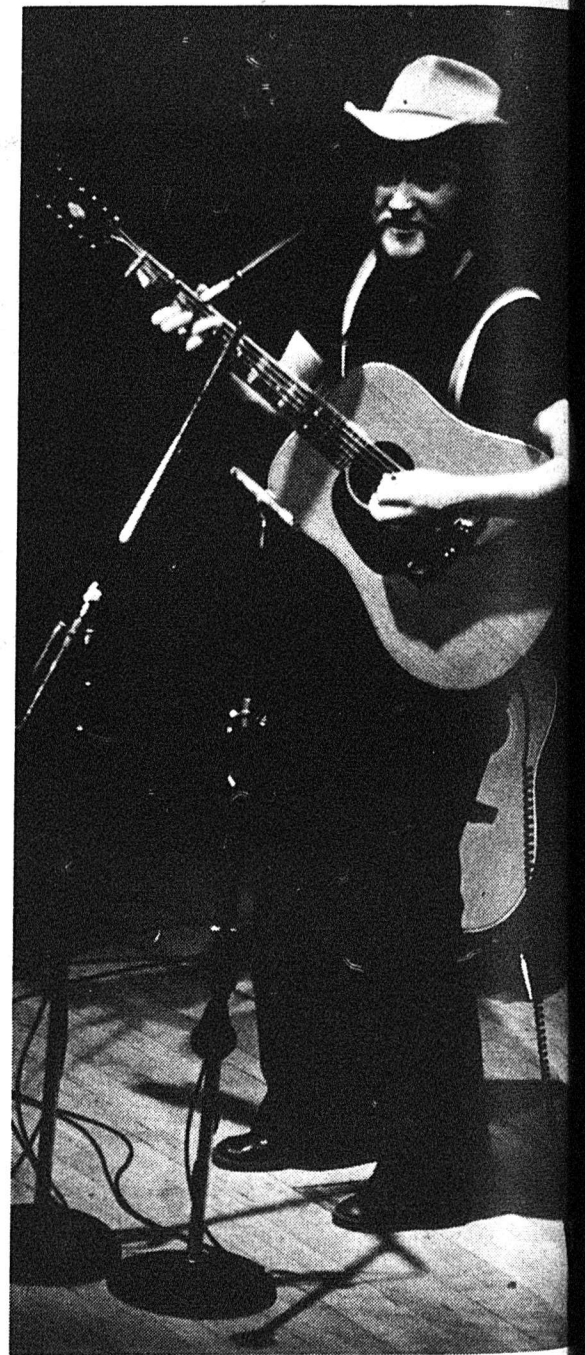
Another welcome sign is the inclusion of well-edited portfolios by various artists of the medium. Analysis of works printed in *American Photographer* is clear and well-thought, but rarely does it avoid controversy. Nor are unconventional photographers ignored; a recent article profiled Norman Seef, who makes pictures of rock stars for album covers. In other areas such as man might be considered a pariah, to be shunned.

Photography as an art is a weak child, product of a difficult and painful birth. The past hundred years have proven that the medium is flexible and fully capable of being used for art in the truest sense of the word; Cartier-Bresson and Smith have given us images as meaningful as those of Van Gogh, as full of impact as a Picasso. Now, finally, the *art* of photography has enough self-confidence to evidence itself, and it is very evident in *American Photographer*.

When he casually strums a melody and voices lyrics, there is no attempt to demonstrate any "guitar work." In effect, the man is just striving to some down-to-earth songs; tunes which sound cluttered when trombones and electric pianos vying for attention with his soft acoustic guitar.

I hate to pick at the album like this, for Gordon Payne has shown his talents, irrespective of barrages of instruments featured throughout, almost throughout. There is one little shelter from storm titled "Flow River Flow" — in which Payne relaxes under a piano accompaniment and comes to sing some truly fine material. On a track like "Gordon Payne sparkles. Proof positive that what LP needed was not a "name" producer like Cale and entourage of helpers. No. A competent bass player, drummer, and lead guitarist would have sufficed. Winchester (who pens close to the same sort of material) is one example of someone who performs well under this type of format.

So as to my initial query, I still don't know what will happen to this sprout. My hope is that Payne's next release on A&M will be a little less complex, with a back-up department, but with the same Gordon Payne guitar and lyrics. That should yield a strong, healthy plant.



Paul Hann's solo performance at SUN Theatre met with an enthusiastic reception from his Edmonton fans last Tuesday night. Performing his best-known compositions from his three albums as well as some new material, Hann had them screaming for more at the end of the concert.

The entire show was recorded by CBC's "Touch the Earth" radio program and will be rebroadcast at a later date.

Photos by Rick Lawrence.

