

# FEATURES

## Poet Ed Sanders: where the Fug were you?

By Elliott Lefko, recorded at Wholly Communion Dec. '81.

Primarily known for leading the sixties psychedelia group The Fugs, Ed Sanders is also a novelist, poet, and performance artist. His books include *The Family* (about Charles Manson), *Tales of Beatnik Glory*, and *Investigative Poetry*. As well, he edited and published "Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts." Sanders, who lives in Woodstock, New York, has just completed a 900 page biography of the rock group The Eagles, which was three years in the making.

**Q:** You've said that you write every day. What are you working on now that the Eagles book is finished?

**A:** I'm writing a novel. I'm aiming for a 250 pager, which is a good length for fiction. As soon as I finished the Eagles book, I sat down and wrote a 50 page presentation of an idea that I'd had for about a year. It takes place outside of New York City and it had to do with politics and music.

**Q:** Are you very serious about your work?

**A:** I decided to take everything really seriously, even if people laugh when you perform. These are serious times — it's time to get to the nitty gritty.

**Q:** How do you feel when you read your name these days and it always has formerly of The Fugs beside it?

**A:** Sometimes when I feel bad it makes me wish I hadn't made a \$50 bet in 1965 that I couldn't form a band and get a contract to record albums. I said, "Are you kidding?" So I went out and formed The Fugs. But I don't mind, there was some good things about the Fugs. We tried to spread around peace and good cheer. I used to feel kind of bad about it, but I went through all of my archives of the sixties and read everything we did, and all in all I didn't feel too bad about it. Just honest-riden mammals like everybody else.

**Q:** You perform with the accompaniment of some homemade electronic instrum-

ents which you trigger by playing your fingers and your te. When did you design these instruments?

**A:** I invented the first prototypes of these little synthesizers in 1978. This is version five and six. I've taught myself how to solder and how to work with resistors and capacitors, and diodes, and transistors.

**Q:** How do you view the combination of music and poetry?

**A:** Poetry had its inception in song. It's never far from dance, lament, and a statement of joy. Ancient poets, I'm sure, hummed and intoned it beyond regular speech. So it always had a tune. It was the medium by which poetry was expressed for thousands of years. I built these very small instruments, which are extremely mobile, and convenient. Right now I'm writing a song about Yiddish speaking socialists in New York City in 1910. With the aid of these instruments I can sit down at this coffee table and start thinking of the Jewish Daily Forward in 1909.

**Q:** Where do you gather your material for your songs from?

**A:** Let's examine the concept of writing songs, or poems that have music. Everything you do, every waking moment, every look out the window, everything you see, and hear, and touch, has to be filtered for song titles. I lived in the lower East Side of New York City all through my youth without paying very close attention to the wonderful heritage of the radicals, from the early part of the century. They got thrown out of Warsaw, and then Antwerp, and then London, and they finally wound up in the same cold water flats that we, the beats, and what were called flower children, the hippies, the reprobates of the fifties and sixties, eventually lived in.

**Q:** How did you get involved in writing *The authorized book on The Eagles*?

**A:** The leader of The Eagles, Glen

Fry, is an old friend of mine. He came to a Fugs concert at Wayne State University in the fall of 1966, and years later I ran into him in California where I was writing the Manson book. We became friends, and years later when he became a big star in the rock world, he called me and asked if I was interested in writing a history, a chronology of their career. My only condition was that I had to write it like I saw it. This was in the fall of '78 and I just finished it last fall. It's more than a book on a rock band. It's a historical, sociological treatise — a sort of giant, boy scout handbook, for garage bands. I think it will be an interesting vast read for people who are interested in that genre of society.

**Q:** To what do you attribute the success of the Eagles?

**A:** Besides their musical talent I think they were fortunate in having good management. The rich rock star is a strange phenomenon. For example the nouveau riche in the business world is a ten or fifteen year thing, but this type of rock nouveau riche is a sudden jolt and I can forgive a lot of people for going berserk for a couple of years. The Eagles, though, had a very honest business management that set up pension funds. Other groups don't do that, and so you have had rock stars ten or fifteen years later. It's like the rhyme of the ancient rocker who says, "I used to play in a band. You think I'm a toothless wreck, but I too stood on yon stage."

**Q:** What led you to write a book on the Manson Family?

**A:** That group of people represented everything I did not believe in. It was the type of thing where I had just broken up the Fugs, and I wanted something interesting to do. I didn't think it would take very long. So I went out to California and got all kinds of letters, from *Esquire* magazine and a publisher, and started interviewing people, and going to the trial. The horror and terror of that case was hard to watch. Nobody who wasn't there



Sally Hutchinson

Ed Sanders: Just an honest-riden mammal like everybody else.

will ever know the kind of climate of bloodshed, murder, threats, and weirdness that occurred. It overwhelmed me personally for a couple of years. Really I feel sorry for those reporters who are on the murder circuit and have to go from murder trial to murder trial. It must be a spiritually debilitating course of life.

**Q:** Any objection to the word commercial in reference to a book like the Eagles biography or the Manson book?

**A:** I earn my living through writing, so some things I write have to generate some moolah. I've got to send my daughter to college, and all the other expenses like everyone else. And I don't want to teach, so I write books that will make money. Sometimes it's not the most fun, but nevertheless you have to make sure by polish and rewrite that it's done well.

**Q:** In amassing the information for your books you had to call upon a lot of people, some of

whom I'm sure didn't want to be disturbed. How did you do this?

**A:** You have to overcome shyness. It's funny, a lot of intelligent and sensitive people are very shy. I think that's why there hasn't been enough good investigative journalism. Not only do you not want people hanging up on you and yelling at you, or even threatening you, but even if you have a nice person, you have to keep coming back at them if you want a broad spectrum of information. Over and over again. My approach is to be like a gentle bazooka shell. Or like a robot that gets knocked down and keeps coming at you with a tape recorder in hand. That's what you have to be, to get information, even from friendly sources.

**Q:** Do you like being a writer?

**A:** I get physical pleasure from writing. Even my fingers pounding the typewriter is a sensuous pleasure to me. And I try to write a variety of things. I write chants, songs, novels, poems, short stories, investigations, and lectures. It's two hours of eternity every day.

## New Year's resolutions scarcely merit description

Paul O'Donnell

For years and years, or at least more than my nineteen, people have been making resolutions at New Years. Why? You ask. Perhaps it's to improve the morbid, vile and disgusting characteristics that make them human. It seems people at the beginning of every year try to start over again — a rebirth. They swear never to drink, swear, smoke, overspend, bite their fingernails, bite their toenails or otherwise offend the moral majority.

Excalibur, in its tireless search for the truth has searched out high York officials and lowly students to come up with this list of resolutions. The joke's on you, guys, we will be back next year to see if you did. *Randi Robinson* (on behalf of the Jewish Student Federa-

tion): "To be better organized to reach out to more students and to watch the budget more carefully to cope with 1982 inflation."

*Mitch Solsman* (worker at Soundproof Records): "Buy more music at Soundproof and go see the band Burnam Wood as much as possible."

*Elliott Lefko* (Editor, Excalibur): "To see my novel, 'Just Another Waitress at Woolworths' converted into a big budget film which will make a lot of money, save the Canadian Film Industry and put me on E-Z rider street."

*Norma Ellfester* (Winner of Excal's empty balloon contest): "Not to judge people on names or looks alone."

*Jules Xavler* (4th year Geography student and Excalibur Sports Editor): "To



write the exclusive sport story of the year by getting the jump on

the three big Toronto dailies, and also to make expanding strides in my photography both on and off the field of play." *Sylvia Stanley* (Secretary, CYSF): "I resolve not to be so nasty on the telephone and to people coming into the office." *Anthony Finn* (Business Manager, CYSF): "I resolve to quit laughing when people come asking for money."

*John Wright* (Manager of Soundproof): "To take off my toupee."

*Greg Gaudet* (President of CYSF): "To continue to prove, through unending hard work, that York students are the best in Ontario." *Michael Monastyrskyj* (News Editor, Excalibur): "I resolve not to spend hours arguing politics with my father or Berel Weinstein."

*Alex Watson* (Business Manager for Excalibur): "Life is too short to make resolutions."

*Jim Agnelli* (Photo Editor for Excalibur): "Date a blonde."

*Interlibrary loan office*: "We're all going to lose a combined 50 pounds by February 5th."

*Harry Pollock* (Associate Fellow, Stong College, Writer, Actor, Bon Vivant): "I don't make resolutions. I try to live each day as meaningfully as possible as it were the last day of my existence, and if I live until tomorrow I will try to make up for what I missed the day before." *President MacDonald*: "As usual I made half a dozen resolutions. Since five are already broken and I expect to shatter the sixth by the end of the week, they scarcely merit description!"