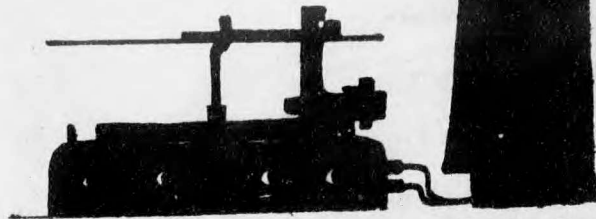


disques

by Stan Twist



Are we alone now dear?

With so many of our top musicians and singers on ego trips these days, it becomes harder to find a band that works well together and can stay that way. What usually happens is that a band will put out a record, the reviewers love it and give Mr. X credit for the quality of the recording and the next thing we know is that Mr. X has decided to leave said band and go it alone. And 90 per cent of the cases, Mr. X would have been smarter to stay with his band. Compare anything from McCartney's "Ram" with his "Abbey Road" work and you'll see what I mean. Now of course, there's that other 10 per cent that seem to express themselves singularly much better than they do in a group context. Neil Young is a good example. He admits himself that his material is too introverted for a large rock group. All of which has next to nothing to do with this article, except that the albums I'm about to discuss are solo efforts.

In 1964, the United States thought they had come up with an answer to the Beatles, namely The Byrds. While the Beatles copied American Rhythm and Blues artists, the Byrds were playing folk music with electric instruments. The Byrds were also the first rock group to do Dylan material, though they certainly weren't the last. As far as original material, the Byrds depended on Gene Clark. The last song he wrote

with the Byrds was "Miles High". After he left, McQuinn and Crosby were forced to busy their pens. So if he was such an important part of such an important band, what ever happened to him.

After leaving the Byrds, he recorded a solo album that's so obscure that I haven't even heard it. Then he rejoined the Byrds on rhythm guitar for a few weeks, didn't dig that, so he set out to form a band with Doug Dillard, leader of the bluegrass-folk band, The Dillards. And so the Dillard & Clark Expedition was born and played their particular brand of country-bluegrass rock for three years. Then Gene decided it was again time for a solo album. He spent a lot of time in the studio, receiving help from the other four original Byrds, among others. As to the fate of those tapes, I'm uncertain. Clark must have scraped them in favour of the tapes he did with the small circle of musicians represented on "White Light" (AM SP 4292). The musicians in this case bear note. Clark himself plays acoustic guitar, harmonica and does all vocals, Taj Mahal refugee Jesse Davis plays lead and bottleneck guitars (as well as producing the LP), Mike Utley, from the Dixie Flyers, plays organ, Steve Miller compatriate Ben Sidran plays piano, ex-Flying Buritto Brother Chris Ethridge on bass and a Van Morrison drop-out, Gary Mallabar, plays drums. Not a bad choice of friends, I must say.

Surprisingly enough, the music plays second fiddle to the lyrics on this recording. I'm the sort of person who first notices the music, then the lyrics, but after listening to the LP a couple of times, there was little left to discover in the music. I don't mean to imply that the music isn't good, in fact Clark's chord changes are extremely appealing, but they're simple and the musicians have obviously been told to keep things at a minimum. The lyrics are the most important aspect of Clark's album, and they, like the music, contain a very pronounced Dylan influence. In fact, the only song on the album that wasn't written by Clark is Dylan's "Tears of Rage".

Clark's use of metaphors and his imagery may be a bit overwhelming for a lot of people. To try and catch the full meaning of one of his songs on first listening is next to impossible. A libretto isn't included with the LP so one has to pick up the words from Clark's vocal. Fortunately the album's production is crystal clear and there's no problem in comprehending the

lyrics. Imagine lyrics like this flying past you at 33 revolutions per minute;

The village of the hills sitting silently at will
Like some prophesy forgotten by an age
With no guns before it's gate, the mysterious estate

Lies waiting for it's history's dawning page.

My personal favourites on the LP are "The Virgin", "With Tomorrow".... Hell, I live every damn song on the record. So I'll spare you from more of my overly bias review of this record.

Marc Benno. Ring a bell? Well, along with Leon Russell, he formed an entity known as The Asylum Choir, who have put out two excellent LPs. Since splitting with Russell, Marc has written songs for other artists (2nd Story Window for Rita Coolidge), popped up as a guest artist on several LPs and released two solo albums. His first LP, called simply "Marc Benno" (AM SP 4273) contained great material, all of which was written by Mr. B, but Marc's voice just didn't seem to fit the type of songs he wrote. He recently released his second solo LP, Minnows (AM SP 4303), and I'm happy to say that both singer and song compliment each other perfectly this time around.

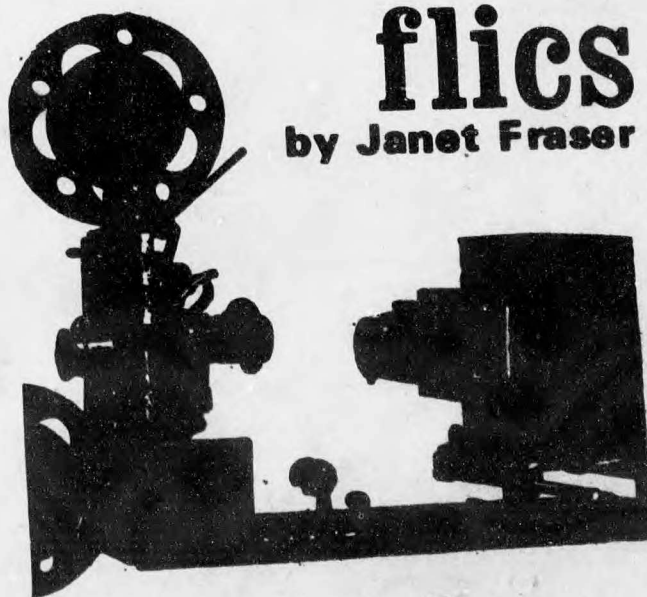
"Franny" sounds like a more melodic version of any given number of those slow, trippy little ballads that Hendrix used to do and the vocal backup from Rita Coolidge, Clydie King and Venetta Fields is superb.

The Byrds' guitarist Clarence White puts his distinctive trademark on "Put a little love in my soul" and Benno's own guitar playing on "Stone Cottage" (the 3,349th tribute to 12-bar blues) is quite a trip too.

Benno's material sounds like a cross between Elton John and Leon Russell (Gee, I wonder Why?) with a little something extra thrown in. That something extra is most likely Marc Benno, but don't quote me on that.

Benno has never had a hit 45, but there's lots of potential gold here, like "Franny", "Good Times" and "Don't let the Sun Go Down" (my personal favourite).

And as the morning sun rose behind his back, the Almighty God of Rock Journalism stood facing the silent multitude and lifted his hands to heaven as he spoke these immortal words; "...and it is written that this decade will once again see the rise of the solo artist and perhaps you will realize the value of the single man over that of the horde." Amen.



flics

by Janet Fraser

The Andromeda Strain

The "Wildfire" team has ninety-six hours in which to stop "The Andromeda Strain", a totally new, destructive organism which threatens to infect the entire world. It can survive under almost any conditions and bewilders the team of top scientists who are collected in an underground, futuristic laboratory. The intention of the movie is not only to build up suspense but also terrify the viewer. Can Man stop this new strain that because no one

can comprehend its nature, is invincible? The thought is expressed at the end of the movie that the international crisis could occur again and maybe this time there will be no solution.

The key to the problem lies in the lone survivors of a tiny Californian village: a six month old baby and an old man. All the other inhabitants lie dead in their tracks. What has made these beings, so directly opposed in age and blood type, able to resist what stronger and healthier men could not?

Somehow "The Andromeda Strain" loses the impact it should have on the viewer. In attempting to impress you with the authentic data and "scientific information" and sure-fire dedication of the scientists, it ends up boring you at times and alienating you from the situation. In my opinion, the acting seems poor, primarily due to phony dialogue and the tension the producer must feel when he realizes that the two hour movie centers around one thing. If there had been more of the action and suspense concerning time limits that you are near the end of the movie it would have been vastly improved. As it stands, there is too much time spent on modern devices and illustrating the nature of the Andromeda Strain.

The members of the top scientific team are stereotyped characters, but there are interesting

little touches. The head of the team is suspected of having previous knowledge concerning Andromeda perhaps, it had been planted in that village to see if it could have been used for biological warfare. The tough, sarcastic, and (naturally) brilliant woman scientist convulses in an epileptic fit at the crucial movement. We also see the scientists, whom the whole world depends upon, indulging in snappish remarks and childish arguments due to the unbearable tension and seemingly hopeless situation.

flawed, but interesting

Machines guide and direct the characters at all levels which at times can be both frustrating and amusing. As in most science fiction novels or movies, the sets are stripped of individual taste or human personality but the characters in the movie do not seem mechanistic, also. Identical white uniforms, bare rooms, voices from loudspeakers contrast with the concern for humanity in the movie.

The authenticity of the film makes the viewer wonder if this incident really happened or not. Although flawed, "The Andromeda Strain" is interesting, particularly to the science-fiction addict.