



## boyhood with gurdjieff

(penguin, \$1.25)

Upon reading the title, "Boyhood with Gurdjieff," it appears that this is a book about a poor child's heroic struggle with a dreadful bone disease.

In fact, Gurdjieff is not a disease at all (except perhaps in the eyes of critics). It is, or rather he was, a Russian spiritual leader and teacher, expatriated by the Bolshevik revolution, who founded a "School for the Harmonious Development of Man", in France.

In his autobiographical reminiscences, the author Fritz Peters, tells the story of his years at the institute, revealing the essential elements of Gurdjieffian philosophy as they appeared to a student and child of twelve. However, the book is not particularly interesting for its autobiographical content (although the author relates many amusing and often relevant anecdotes) but rather for its vivid descriptions of Gurdjieff, his philosophy of spiritual development, and his methods of teaching.

As a teacher, one of Gurdjieff's fundamental tactics was to deliberately provoke, ever so subtly, friction amongst the members of the institute. Human nature inevitably emerged from these incidents and provided the persons involved with a valuable opportunity for "self-observation", and Gurdjieff a propitious opportunity to create a lesson.

An important element of Gurdjieffian philosophy was this emphasis on self-observation, not with the expectation of self-improvement but only with a desire for understanding one's motives and weaknesses. Consideration for others and an understanding of one's self were the natural fruits of such self-observation.

Gurdjieff did not presume to guide people to what he himself had not attained and he created a remarkable (although perhaps not particularly enviable) example. He succeeded in acquiring tremendous insight into human psychology and he was a master of communication

to the point of being hypnotic. He succeeded in channelling all his emotions at any one time into anger, or compassion, or love, or sensuality but significantly into the emotion that was appropriate to the situation.

Throughout the book, the author creates a lucid picture of this enigmatic character. Gurdjieff was a stern but perceptive and sensitive person. He had a rare quality of listening with complete interest and concentration to whatever one had to say to him before passing judgement on what was said.

His teachings were founded on compassion but ruthless in their application. For example, he likened the creation of a complete, "developed" man to the growth of an acorn. The oak produces many acorns but few of these may ever become fully grown oaks. The rest are ground down for fertilizer. This harsh view, which he put into practice in his institution by banishing unpromising students, is a logical consequence of the premise that God accepts only perfected

souls into his realm.

But the greatest enigma of all about Gurdjieff, and the one that haunts the reader throughout the book, is the question of his ego. He never admitted error (his logic was usually irrefutable anyway) and he presumed to instruct people to develop towards perfection. Yet he was never arrogant and never proud (at least not in the eyes of Peters.) Had he in fact attained a state of perfection that was enviable or was it flawed by egotism? Was his confident and commanding manner a manifestation of inner harmony or simply an expression of pride?

Peters becomes disenchanted with Gurdjieff partly over this question of Gurdjieff's apparently omniscient perfection and the story as well as their relationship sours. The book seems to be developing some significant ideas when it unexpectedly withers and dies, leaving one with the suspicion that perhaps there was no substance there after all.

Arthur Savage

## rock notes

A new version of the Who's rock opera "Tommy" has just been released. It features an all-star cast, including members of the Who, Rod Stewart, Richard Harris, Sandy Denny, Richie Havens, Merry Clayton, Ringo Starr, and -believe it or not- the London Symphony Orchestra. Producers are Lou Reisner and Lou Adler, famous for his work with Carole King among others. If you would like to hear the record, listen to the Midnight Special on CFRN-FM (100.1) 8:35 p.m. next Saturday.

Paul McCartney wrote and recorded the theme for the new James Bond movie "Live and Let Die", starring Roger Moore as Bond.

The new Elton John single "Crocodile Rock" looks promising. Elton captures the excitement of the late fifties/early sixties rock n' roll, and stamps it with his own, individual style. The single is exemplary of his new album "Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player," which is set for release in January.

## tom northcott dec. 13

Tom Northcott and Spring with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, will be at the Jubilee Auditorium, December 13, 8:30 p.m.

Tom Northcott is a slight, gentle-looking folk-rock singer who pioneered the marriage of popular and orchestral music on the West Coast.

His biggest hit is "And God Made Woman", a twelve-minute marriage of rock and orchestra described as a "sad, moving, defiant composition", but lovers of the good sound treasure his other recordings: "1941", "Sunny Goodge Street", "Girl From the North Country", "Rainmaker", and "Suzanne".

Spring - being Terry Frewer (guitar and vocal), Bob Buckley (organ, piano, flute, sax), Kat Hendrikse (drums), and later, Kenny Passarelli (bass) - started as a back-up group for Tom Northcott.

Spring will bring "Song Cycle" to Edmonton. "Song Cycle" is based on the story of Sidhartha, a man in search of peace.

They recently received the Maffat Award for "The Best New Canadian Artists" (others receiving it in the past were Guess Who and Poppy Family).

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra will be conducted by Edmonton's Tommy Banks.

Tickets are \$5.00 and \$4.00.

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## boz scaggs

Boz (William Royce) Scaggs was born in Ohio (June 8, 44) and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. It was in Dallas, at age 16, that he formed his first band, with high school friend Steve Miller. After several years of wandering in Europe, Boz returned to the States in 1967 and joined the Steve Miller Blues band. However, during the course of two albums it became clear that Scaggs and Miller were developing in two different directions, so once again Boz went on his own. He then spent the next several months on the road with Mother Earth until, back in Dallas in Dec. 1969, he ran into George Rains and Doug Simril and put together his current band. Boz Scaggs' band is a tight disciplined unit, a product of exact arrangements.

They will be playing on Friday, Dec. 8 at the Jubilee Auditorium at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$3-4-5, reserved at Mikes.

## life and music of woodie guthrie

At RATT tonite (Tues.) at 8:00 P.M. the Edmonton Folk Club is sponsoring a workshop on Woodie Guthrie. Woodie Guthrie was a folksinger in the big Dustbowl era of the '30's and 40's. Bob Dylan and Pete Seeger and Rambling Jack Elliot have all credited Woodie with being their main influence. Always politically active, Woodie was an avid union supporter, and many of his songs reflect this. Some of his better known songs include This Land is Your Land, Hard Travellin', Deportee, 1913 Massacre, and I Ain't Got No Home.

The workshop will feature various local entertainers singing and talking about his songs, plus giving samples of some of his very witty quotes. It will be hosted by Chris Mitchell. Everyone is invited. No admission charge, although donations are appreciated.

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The Christmas edition of the Gateway will be out next Tuesday. Stories, poems and articles with a Christmas air are welcome. Deadline is Friday. Gateway office, SUB.

New Albums: "Journey Through the Past" - Neil Young's soundtrack for his film of the same name; "Home Coming" - America; "War Heroes" - Jimi Hendrix; "Back to Front" - Gilbert O' Sullivan (only released in England so far).

The rule that Motown artists can't make hits after leaving that label has come to an end. The Spinners have their greatest hit ever with their first Atlantic release, "I'll Be Around." Similarly, the Four Tops, now recording for Dunhill, have their fastest-rising single in the American charts for quite a while with "Keeper of the Castle", taken from the album of the same name. Do you remember their old Classics, "Reach out I'll be there", "Bernadette" and "Baby I Need Your Loving"?

Best soul single of the month: "Papa was a Rolling Stone" by the Temptations. I like the Shaft-like wah wah guitar of the instrumental intro.

The Moody Blues are certainly one of the outstanding groups in rock music. Their musical durability was recently proven by the no. 1 success of their 5-year old single, "Nights in White Satin" from the album "Days of the Future Past," which went simultaneously to no. 3 in the album charts. Listen to their new album, "Seventh Sojourn" for further proof. It is not a concept album like their previous ones, but a collection of several beautiful songs. One can almost hear the four and a half months work and love involved in making it.

Harold Kuckertz, Jr.