

Legendary sessions by Beefheart...

By SIOBHAN McRAE

RELEASED LATE LAST year, *The Legendary A&M Sessions* contains the first recordings made by Captain Beefheart, dating from 1965. As the liner notes state, four of the songs were originally released on two singles, while the fifth languished for nearly two decades in an A&M tape vault. Beefheart actually later re-did some of this material for his first LP, *Safe As Milk*, in 1967.

Beefheart's version of Bo Diddley's *Diddy Wah Diddy* shows the young Magic Band to be accomplished and committed. Laced with Beefheart's harmonica work, the song shows him to be in tune with the R&B style which was at that time being explored by such groups as The Rolling Stones and The Animals. But Beefheart demonstrates a more authentic feeling for this type of music than that displayed by its more well-known white exponents.

Nor surprisingly, none of these songs show or even hint at the lyrical and musical eccentricities which were later to emerge with such albums as *Strictly Personal*. The song which might be considered as coming closest to what would eventually become Beefheart's style is the previously unreleased *Here I Am, I Always Am*.

Credit should go to A&M for leaving the recordings in the original mono instead of rechanelling them to simulate stereo.

Cat Stevens rehashes classics in new LP

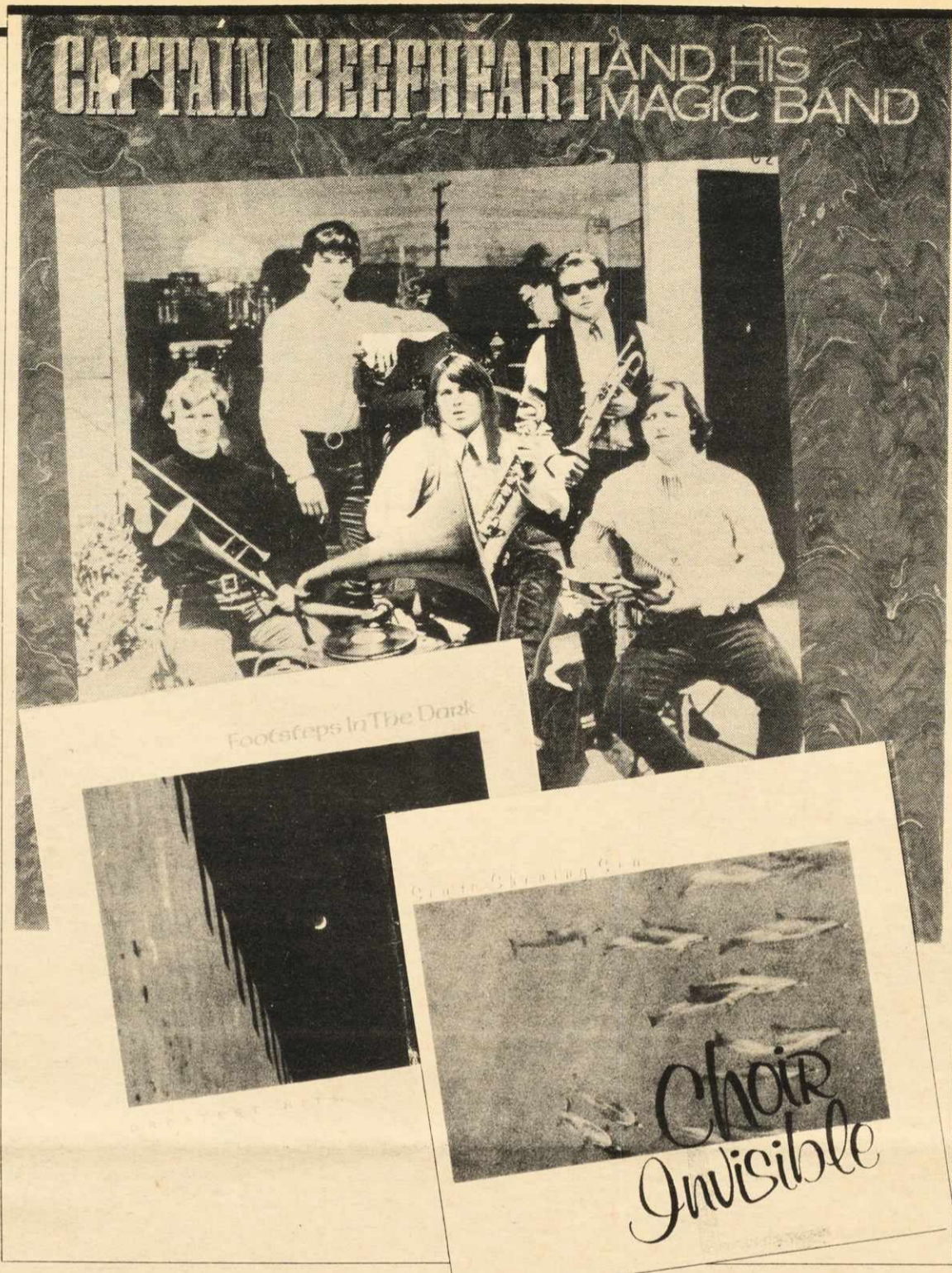
By DAVID OLIE

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO Cat Stevens? Do you, in fact, even remember Cat Stevens?

This is where I begin to date myself: I do remember him; I remember his albums dating back to the very early seventies; I remember his distinctive vocal style, his simple, peaceful melodies on six and twelve string acoustic, his soul-searching lyrics. I remember tranquility with a message.

Mind you, I didn't discover Stevens that far back. Maybe around 1977 or so. I'm not that dated. But even so, I recall him with a smile. He was a heaven-sent refuge from disco in that foul year, if nothing else. (Do you remember disco? You poor sap.) And even now, when it's time to mellow without the aid of chemicals, Cat Stevens fills the bill.

Stevens disappeared suddenly from the music scene a few years back, and rumours began to fly. I had it on good authority that he was dying from stomach cancer, and was no longer able to



perform. Whatever was happening to him personally, his career was clearly dying, and aside from an occasional play of *Another Saturday Night* or some other hit, Cat Stevens disappeared from the airwaves and the public mind.

Now, after more than six years, Stevens has reappeared. However, he isn't really Stevens and he hasn't really reappeared.

The new album, entitled *Footsteps in the Dark* is, in fact, the second volume of Stevens' greatest hits. There are no new songs on this album, although there are three pieces not to be found on any of his previous albums. *Don't be Shy* and *If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out* are taken from the soundtrack of the movie *Harold and Maude*, while *I Want to Live in a Wigwam* was previously only available as the flipside of the single *Morning Has Broken*. All three are valuable additions to the Stevens album library. On the other hand, for some strange reason the song *Father and Son* appears here when it was already included on the first greatest hits album.

To clear up the first point above, Stevens is no longer Stevens, but rather Yusuf Islam. In the liner notes to the album, Islam explains how he discovered and accepted the Moslem faith in 1977. He now lives with his family in England, quietly

working for his religion and for peace.

For these reasons, *Footsteps in the Dark* is more than another record; it is a learning experience. It is also a transport back to a time when music was a little more simple, a little more peaceful and a little more meaningful than much of it is today.

Choir Invisible so cold I caught a draft...

By BARRY WALSH

THESE DAYS, AFTER THE barrage of synth-pop that has permeated the radio airwaves for the last few years, music is returning to its roots. With the advent of explosive new black artists reviving the sagging spirits of R&B, music is starting to have feeling again. It's getting warm. So where does this leave Choir Invisible, a new band of fresh-faced, nice-looking young men, who've quite recently released their debut EP *From Sea to Shining Sea*? Probably right where they want to be--out in the cold.

The six songs on this EP are so cold I caught a draft listening to them. Mind you, there are some bands who use cold, detached songs to their advantage. This

band isn't one of them. It seems that the members of Choir Invisible are stuck in a rut of writing music similar to the debut LP of A Flock of Seagulls. This is not meant to criticize that LP, for it was quite good. The point is that it has been done, it has been done better, and there is no point in rereading stylistic tendencies that are years old.

The production of the EP is quite dense, reducing Don Romire's drums to a bare 4/4 beat and the keyboards and bass to levels simply too low to reveal anything interesting.

Perhaps the problem is that there wasn't anything interesting even before the band reached the studio. The only one I respond to is *I Walked Away*, which should be picked up by FM radio. The rest of the selections plod along like tired mules. Lamentations about cloudy, windy days and piercing eyes are becoming cliches just as fast as shots of breaking glass in videos. Vocalist John Curry has a nice, smooth voice, but his enunciation is not as good as it should be, as most of the lyrics are incomprehensible. Those that are able to be deciphered sound like excerpts from graffiti in art school bathrooms. When joined with the bland, lifeless musical performances, these lyrics definitely lose any interest that they may have had for the

listener.

The final verdict on Choir Invisible's *From Sea to Shining Sea* is not a good one. Given time, the band could evolve into a classy post-Roxy Music entity, since the potential does indeed exist. This time around, the potential is buried by dense production and more than a few overblown pretensions. 'Tis a shame. Indeed, the first song of the EP seems to encapsulate the band's situation. Its title: *Grey At Present*.

Slugs have begun slimy slide into commercialism

By KIMBERLY WHITCHURCH

DOUG AND THE SLUGS, the eclectic sextet from the west coast, has begun a slimy slide into commercialism. *Popaganda* is an unfortunately apt title for their latest album.

The album is slickly engineered without being overproduced. For the most part it manages to capture the fresh energy they're known for. Doug Bennett's distinctive vocals are immediately recognizable. He's the vocal equivalent of a character actor--there's loads of cynicism and charisma in that knowing sneer.

Individual tracks are not without merit. *Dancing on the Powerlines* is a bouncy dance tune with a sophisticated edge. It doesn't really need the trendy holocaust-hook already worked to death (so to speak) by Ultravox, Kate Bush, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, and countless others. To wit: "This is not a test/this is not a drill/this is real" plus scary mechanical sounds. Sigh.

Opinions has a nice intro and even begins to approach the Slug-music style. Forget about *It Must Be Love*. It sounds fine on the surface, but the lyrics are no better than anything by the infamous K.C. and the Sunshine Band. The chorus goes like this:

*I feel no pain
I feel the same
I feel so strange
It must be love*

*I feel the heat
I feel the beat
I feel complete
It must be love*

Definitely not what one would expect from the same group that put out *Cognac and Bologna* and *Music for the Hard of Thinking*.

Please please please is a sexy rock song with a bassline that starts right at the hips.

Somewhat disappointing on the whole, but there is still a glimmer of the group's original promise. *Waiting for You* has some of the stylish ironic-raconteur feel sadly lacking in the aforementioned songs. Similarly, *Let Go*, another pop tune, ends the album on a hoped-for high note.

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