

Quicksilver's Happy Trails powerful, tight

By STEVE GELLER

With the high visibility of the recent big boom in American pop music, it has become evident that certain areas have been the haven of very specific sounds not native to other musical centres.

For example in Motown, Detroit was the mother of 'soul' sound which with groups such as the Temptations, the Miracles, The Supremes and Four Tops, held the attention of the music trend for about two years.

Chicago and many smaller towns

in Illinois have hosted Buddy Guy and Bobby Bland as well as many other blues greats who have paved the way for many of the contemporary sounds with their influence. Chicago has also been considered the home of jazz-rock the newest pop sound fusing rock instruments with a brass backing.

Catching on with groups such as Chicago and Ten Wheel Drive, jazz-rock has spread from the Windy City but is still largely a Mid-West, North-Eastern musical phenomenon. From the Atlantic

Coast the white soul of groups such as The Rascals have been created while country music, rock'n'roll and the recent swamp music trend has spread out from Tennessee, Louisiana, Georgia and Alabama to encompass most of the remaining Southern states.

Recently, the California music scene seems to have caught the attention of a large portion of the North American populace. Triggered by The Jefferson Airplane, The Sons, The Greatful Dead, etc., the San Francisco sound still rates very high in the popularity polls since its conception in 1964. One group in particular, the Quicksilver Messenger Service has just recently caught the attention of music critics.

The one factor which brought large scale attention to the Quicksilver Messenger Service was their second album, Happy Trails (Capitol ST-120). Their style becomes easily detectable with the first side of the album which consists of a 25-1/2 minute version of Ellis McDanials' classic song.

Recorded in 1962 by Ronnie Hawkins and again in 1966 by a Chicago group called The Whoolies, Who do you Love has never been so powerfully exploited as it is when Quicksilver gang render their interpretations to it.

Evolving from two drawled notes from John Cipollina's guitar and three beats from the drums of Gregory Elmore, the constant moving drive of Quicksilver commences, leading to the traditional

**"I walked 47 miles of barbed wire,
Had a Cobra snake for a neck-tie,
Got a brand new house by the roadside,
Made outta rattlesnake hide....."**

The vocal work, by David Frieberg with Cipollina occasionally backing him, is kept to a minimum; however, when lyrics are called for, they are evoked in a rough raspy manner, characteristic of the West Coast sound.

It is the group's overall tightness evident in the forceful constantly moving instrumentals which are the most striking feature of the album. The main format varies from a hard straight rock basis to the fringes of an acid atmosphere, the result of lead chord and bass slides.

The other cuts on Happy Trails follow the premise asserted by Who Do You Love have in a manner which makes the album one of the most style-coherent LPs released last year. (In one poll,

Happy Trails was rated among the top 20 albums of the year.)

Mona, another Ellis McDanials' song, again evolves from long drawn notes into a steady-paced instrumental piece with short precise vocals before it leads into two non-lyrical works written by Quicksilver's Gary Duncan. Both Maiden of the Cancer Moon, and Calvary bear a pleasant, marked resemblance to the previous material.

Before the recording of their newest album, Shady Grove (Capital SKAO 391) the Quicksilver Messenger Service took a year off to rethink their sound-selves. Gary Duncan left the group while the British organ-piano player Nicky Hopkins decided to join up with the California crew. (Hopkins had previously played for such names as the Rolling Stone, Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, The Who, Jeff Beck, Donovan, The Kinks, The Small Faces, Jackie Lomax and The Steve Miller Band.) His acquisition left nothing to be desired as far as talent and ability were concerned.

The group presently consists of David Frieberg, (bass, violin, viola, lead singer), Greg Elmore, (drums), John Cipollina, (guitar), and Nicky Hopkins, (piano).

With Shady Grove, the format of Quicksilver's previous material has been forsaken. The driving forceful paced instrumental work has been replaced by a strictly straight light rock sound mixed with a touch of ragtime and honky-tonk (with one cut as an exception.)

Shady Grove is an attempt at the musical reflection of the life style and mind-being of its creators in what occasionally resembles a rock-ballad form. Frieberg's vocals are at times both shaky and weak and the guitar work is constantly over-powered by Hopkins' piano.

The redeeming feature of the album comes in the form of a cut entitled Joseph's Coat. Here the vocals merge with the steady pace of instruments while a choral background makes for a majestic moving track, defiantly the best on the album and definitely one of the finest hard rock songs to come out of the San Francisco area.

While Shady Grove is by no means a poor album, it is a let down to the high expectations which resulted from the Happy Trails album.

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