

Wrack n Roll

by Alex Party

In recent years a whole galaxy of independent record companies have developed; offering everything from chamber music to rockabilly to free-style jazz for the discerning ear of the collector. At least two hundred such "specialty" labels exist so it's obviously an impossibility to list them all here. However, I'll outline the major companies and their services, and give you an idea of where to write for more information.

The biggest specialty market at the moment is in bluegrass music, the fast-paced and exciting mountain music of the eastern U.S. The primary distributor of independent bluegrass albums is Rounder Records, which, besides issuing their own series of fine albums, also acts as a mail-order service for about one-hundred other labels. The Rounder catalog is about as complete a listing of accessible folk music as I have seen, and I'd definitely advise the country or blues fanatics among us to get copies immediately. The prices are good [average cost \$4.00 plus postage and customs], and if you buy more than two or three the total cost usually would be less than the cost of popular albums at the inflated prices asked in Canada.

I only have one of Rounders own issues, a record by bluegrass mandolin and autoharp virtuoso Frank Wakefield, but I can vouch for its high quality and interesting music.

Arhoolie, Biograph, Yazoo and Testament are all blues companies, mostly specializing in acoustic or semi-acoustic solo performers. Biograph and Yazoo concentrate on re-issuings of country blues material from the twenties and thirties; for anyone interested in playing the blues their anthologies provide an incredible amount of nice material in a variety of styles. My favorite album from either label is the Bo Carter anthology on Yazoo, which includes much unbelievable music and some distinctly warped lyrics. However... Arhoolie and Testament work by recording the old blues artist with fairly modern techniques [not 16-track by any means though] and as a result sound much more listenable if not as authentic. Arhoolie also issues some great Louisiana music [Joseph Falcon, Clifton Chenier, etc.] while Testament has released some classics by Muddy Waters and Otis Spann, among others. All four companies' products are available through Rounder Records.

Takoma Records is a peculiar little corporation set up by John Fahey, the guitarist [see last week's issue]. They sell an assortment of blues, bluegrass and acoustic guitar records. Their Bukka White, Mike Auldridge, Leo Kottke and Fahey records are all great, and I think they have the highest standards in the record business. Everything I've heard from them has been quite fine.

Possibly the most amazing record issued by any "indie", and perhaps the most amazing record issued by anyone is "ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL", on JCOA records. JCOA stands Jazz Composers Orchestra Association, and besides their own fantastic music, they act as a clearing-house for thirty or forty other small jazz companies. E.O.T.H. is a steal at \$10 for a three record set: it's a "jazz opera" about junkies and suicide, or electricians or something like that, and besides being positively frightening at times it features amazing blowing by jazzmen Don Cherry, Gato Barbieri, John McLaughlin and Roswell Rudd and by popstars Jack Bruce and Linda Ronstad, to name just a few of an all-star cast. Watch out for it to be featured on CHSR some Wednesday night. All the other JCOA albums are almost as good, and anyone into new jazz has to keep up to date with their doings.

The People's Music Works, who distribute through JCOA have issued two incredible albums which range

review of

'The Hollow Crown'

By JOHN LUMSDEN

Tuesday night, the first of two productions done by the Royal Shakespeare Company played before a near sell-out audience at the Playhouse. It was named The Hollow Crown, and was an anthology of readings about and by the past monarchs of England. Songs and ballads were interspersed, played and sung by the very capable Martin Best. The title, The Hollow Crown, was taken from the first reading, by Shakespeare.

The readings tended to be in a light vein, although several were serious. The actors usually retained their books, and balanced from straight reading and acting their respective parts. Sometimes the other actors reacted to the readings, but usually the attention was centered on the readers themselves. The set itself was

simple, five chairs and a table. The intent seemed to be to create an informal atmosphere to help bridge the gulf between actors and audience. Indeed, Miss Prunella Scales, the sole female member of the troupe, stated that their goal was to present "a delight shared" rather than a spectacle.

The readings tended to be fairly short, you never were anxious for one to end. The highlight of the night, in my regard, was James I own "Counterblast to Tobacco". The songs were excellent, and gave a good idea of the cadence involved in such ballads. It's hard to comment on many aspects of acting and set because of the different format and effects the readings caused. But the end product was a really enjoyable evening, and I don't think anyone walked away disappointed.

The next night, a second production was played, which I

didn't attend, Pleasure and Repentance. It was apparently the same treatment that had been given to the English monarchy, but given to love.

Before the performance, two players from the troupe, Richard Todd and Prunella Scales were interviewed. This was their first chance to play in Canada, except for Toronto. They both said they were impressed by the quantity and quality of Canadian theatres. Mr. Todd spoke of the effect of T.V. on theatre, that it was a boon, both as competition and a goal to better theatre, and of the new audience attracted by defecting T.V. stars, such as Richard Chamberlain.

Fredericton is now the start of their tour of one and two night stands, wending its way westwards. The rest of Canada, as well as Fredericton will be thanking them for exposure to this new trend in theatre.

Valdy to come to city

In the time since Rock N' Roll Song was first released, Valdy has firmly established himself as the most important songwriter and performer in Canada today. While others may be better known, it is Valdy who speaks most knowledgeably of these persons, places and feelings which make up Canada.

Our travelling minstrel is a warm and straight-forward man. He and his family live on Woody Island, Newfoundland when he isn't on the road, which isn't too often these busy days. The whole family often travels together in an old truck to a slew of towns and cities all across the country when Valdy is touring.

He possesses the rare talent to make a powerful moving statement in a short time without becoming either trite or heavy handed. Valdy's songs are complete works-whereas some musicians let the music carry the lyrics, Valdy brings forth the song as a whole.

Listening to Valdy's two albums

from symphonic music through musique concrete and Beach Boys pop. They are also worth getting, and again, cheap at both for \$5.00.

There are any number of other fine little record companies; again this a most sketchy outline of what's available. Perhaps we'll even have one going here in River City someday...

Takoma Records
P.O. Box 5369
Santa Monica, Calif., 90405

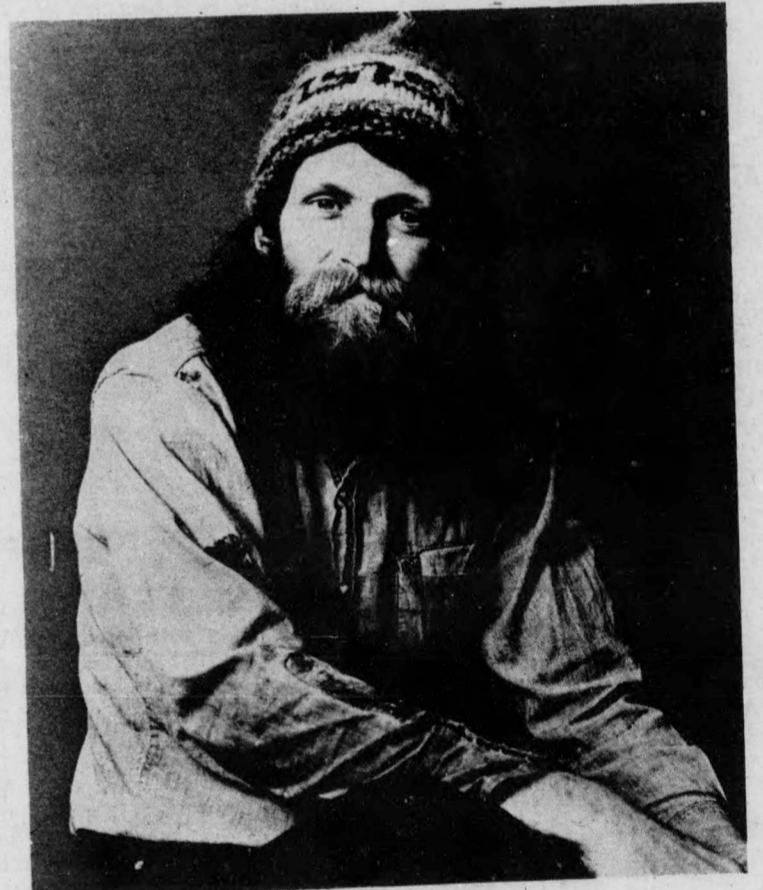
Yazoo Records
390 East 8th St., N.Y. 10009

Jazz Composer's Orchestra Assn.
New Music Distribution Service
6 West 95th St., New York
N.Y. 10025 [catalogue \$0.50]

Rounder Records
65 Park Street
Somerville, Mass. 02143

Peoples Music Works
220-16 Hempstead Ave.
Queens, N.Y. 11429

Arhoolie Records
Box 9195, Berkely
California, 94719



is like having a conversation with him. He talks to you - never at you. Valdy paints brilliantly moving scenes of contemporary life, aimed particularly at those people who strive to find alternatives to the

presently accepted conditions of liveing. He lives his music, making his songs more than just pieces of music, more even than extensions of himself but rather an integral part of his existence

His vast repertoire ranges from soft, gentle musings to humorous and sometimes biting commentaries, from good timey songs to simply beautiful ones.

Valdy's new LP, "FAMILY GATHERING" was recorded partly live and in the studio - the new LP includes RENAISSANCE (Dance That Same Old Dance Once More) which is Valdy's first single in nearly a year. The live tracks were recorded with the "Diamond Joe" at Massey Hall (Toronto) April 4, 1974.

Valdy will appear at the Playhouse with Bruce Miller as the warm-up act October 9th. Advance tickets go on sale in the SUB October 1st for \$3.00. They will also be available at the Playhouse.