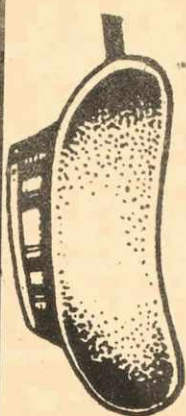
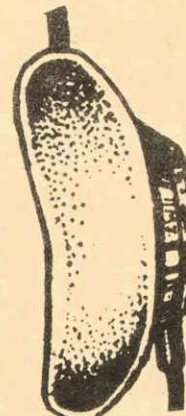


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Welcome back to another exciting (sic) year at Tigerland, and some more of Sound Tracks — for what its worth. Before the perennial Fall avalanche of new releases hits, lets sorta ramble on with some general observations on the contemporary rock scene plus a few comments on summer records. With the large number of new releases each week, even in the slow Summer (from 16-55, usually around 35), it's virtually impossible to hear (let alone afford) everything. So what follows is just a personal impression based on what I've been able to get hold of/into. OK?

PART I

Contemporary popular music — rock 'n roll, pop, rock, and all their combinations (use your own handle) — still seems very fractionalized into specialized areas or genres. This is most true of rock *per se* since its '66-'68 golden crystallizing period, which was followed around '70-'71 by a split-off into different tangents. As early as '68 the seeds for musical fragmentation had been sown, with the growth of Frisco psychedelic rock (Airplane, Dead, Country Joe), the move by some towards what is usually labelled as country-rock (Byrds, Dylan), and the immense popularity of what might loosely be called hard blues-rock (Hendrix, Cream). What really promoted rock fragmentation after '70-'71 was the disintegration of the late sixties youth movement, coupled with the passing of the Beatles — Stones-Dylan "Triple leadership" that up until this time had given the whole rock culture a unity of sorts. In the wake of bad trips like Altamont in late '69 and the government repression, student activism, and Movement divisions that swept the U.S. in '70-'71, disillusionment, cynicism, and apathy set in. A well-intentioned but naive attempt by some groups and political activists to combine politics with the music (rock) had failed, and since '71 rock has been noticeably de-politicized. Another factor to consider is the younger generation of kids that started coming to the fore around '68 and who hadn't been so caught up in the whirlwind of post — '64 events. They wanted their *own* heroes and stars — Grand Funk, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, generally rejecting the laid-back-alternative offered by the likes of CSN&Y and James Taylor. Of course the Music Industry was quick to pick up on this fact and exploit these new/untapped age markets, even zeroing in on the 7-11 weeny-bopper market with stuff like the Osmonds and Partridge Family.

Well anyway, today we've got numerous rock hybrids with their own internal similarities: pop-rock, folk-rock, country-rock, blues-rock, progressive-or-space-rock, heavy metal or hard-rock, classical-rock, jazz-rock, etc. Take your pick and make your own combination up. Naturally these are only general categories and aren't meant to be rigid, but they are helpful in describing, or placing different kinds of rock in a recognizable context. The best group/artists are the ones that can't be tagged so easily and transcend categorization: Steely Dan, Led Zep, Roxy Music, 10cc, plus some of the best singer-songwriters following loosely in Dylan's footsteps (Bruce Springsteen, Bruce Cockburn, Joni Mitchell, and John Prine to name the more notable). Sure you could name others, but that's just a rough example. The best are eclectic while retaining their own individual stamp and

without sounding contrived.

Contrary to the lame cliché that now haunts many a rock mag to the effect that "rock is dead, nothing is happening, everything new sucks, blah-blah-blah," I feel that there's a lot of good music goin' down these days — something for everyone. Rock, and its audience or fans, is getting more mature and complex. While this is especially true of the far-out fringes exemplified by Genesis, Yes, ELP, etc., it also goes for more main-stream rock. Instrumentation and recording have improved significantly in the past 4 or 5 years and though there is the danger of the human element being submerged in a sea of synthesizers, mellotrons, tracks and overdubs, most groups (perhaps not ELP) seem to be coping with the gadgetry alright. An exception to this Sophistication is the '70s — style rock 'n roll that has been so popular in Britain during the past few years. Characterized as glitter-rock, a combination '50s r 'n r simplicity, '60s punk-rock touches and '70s glitter, this genre appeals most to 12-16 year olds and is made up of groups like T. Rex, Gary Glitter, Mud, Sweet, Suzi Quatro, etc. (though the amount of glitter varies; there are signs that this is fading and some of the groups are changing names, style, and musical approach to expand their audience plus grow with them). This nouveau-r 'n r phenomenon has yet to hit big in Canada or the U.S., Although we have had a wave of '50s nostalgia over here (not the same thing). What continental glitter there is seems to be concentrated in NYC, hence the NY Dolls. Maybe the answer over here is glitter-less punk-rock as typified by Brownsville Station and Slade I dunno.

While it is true that nothing radically new is happening in rock today, and that the spirit of '57, '64, or '67 has faded, this should not be so surprising or disillusioning. Rock today is going through a period of consolidation and experimentation; hopefully the fruits of this will bloom in a few years. It's no use crying over spilt milk or faded dreams; this is '74 not '67. The times do change. It seems self-defeating to hunt for the Next Big Thing (new Beatles, Dylan, etc.) — let it happen naturally if at all. Mainstream rock is benefitting from musical cross-fertilization with r&b/soul, as well as jazz, and should grow as a result.

The rock scene is not as desolate as some writers have claimed, but nevertheless there are problems affecting it. The biggest hassle is a natural spin-off from the incredible development of the pop/rock record business into a yearly 2 — billion dollars — plus entertainment industry. This development has fostered a considerable, sometimes unhealthy influence of business/commercial aspects on the music itself; the youth culture (underground/counter-culture) of the sixties has been largely assimilated and commercialized by corporate interests (however subtly). The result is the "commercial treadmill syndrome": record companies, in order to maximize profits, pressure artists/groups for more and more "product" (records — LPs) which has to be promoted with constant touring and perhaps crucial to keep "spirit" in the whole process, often bands are run ragged. Worse is the demand for more product at regularly scheduled intervals. This leads to a situation of more quantity but less quality, as in any similar situation (like hockey). As the market is flooded by more LPs, you've got a higher percentage of trash, or sub-par LPs, and