

## Hamburg revisited—frivolous nostalgia?

by Ian Holloway

Depending on one's point of view, one can see John Lennon's *Rock n' Roll* as a piece of frivolous nostalgia, or as the work of one of the world's greatest pop stars exploring his musical roots. Either way, one cannot deny that it contains some of the most powerful post-Beatle music ever recorded.

The album took almost two years to record, and its story is one of intrigue and deception. The concept for the album was originally envisioned by the renowned Phil Spector. The idea of such a record appealed to Lennon, who thought that all he had to do was to slide into the vocalist's chair and relive his youth. Work first began on the album in 1973. Spector was working his 'wall of sound' wonders on the tracks, when suddenly and inexplicably, he disappeared. Rumour had it that he had gone to California, so Lennon began his search there. Finally, Spector turned up in Arizona, and Lennon was able to salvage the tapes. He returned to the Big Apple, reassembled the band he had used on his previous album *Walls and Bridges*, and recommenced the sessions. All

the songs were finished when another snag occurred. The owner of Chuck Berry's publishing company had taken the liberty of releasing some rough tapes Lennon had given him of the sessions, as an album on his own record label, Adam VIII. Lennon counteracted with a lawsuit and the Adam VIII record was ordered withdrawn from the market, but not before a few copies had reached the public. Today these are of great value, as they contain Lennon's version of the Ronnettes' classic "Be My Baby", which is not featured on the Apple Record. Finally, in 1975, the album was released.

It opens with Gene Vincent's 1956 hit "Be Bop A Lula". Always a master singer, Lennon successfully captures Vincent's hiccup/stutter. The second cut, "Stand By Me", a Ben E. King hit which must have been covered by every aspiring Rhythm and Blues artist, was released as a single and did quite well. Next is a medley of the Little Richard hits "Ready Teddy" and "Rip It Up". Also on the first side are Chuck Berry's "You Can't Catch Me" (whose first two



lines bear such striking resemblance to "Come Together" that Lennon was sued over the fact—and lost), Fats Domino's "Ain't That A Shame", and another Berry tune "Sweet Little Sixteen".

Side two opens with another Little Richard song, "Slippin' and A Slidin'", followed by Buddy Holly's immortal "Peggy Sue". Lennon stays true to Holly's style, and does

a bang-up job on this number. Also on the second side is a cover of Larry Williams' "Bony Moronie". This is interesting both in that the early Beatles recorded a number of Williams' tunes such as "Dizzy Miss Lizzy" and "Bad Boy", and in that Larry Williams recently died.

The final cut on the album, Lloyd Price's "Just Because" is accompanied with a voiced over farewell from Lennon: "This is Dr. Winston O' Boogie (Lennon's favourite pseudonym) from the Record Plant East, New York. We hope you all had a swell time. Everybody here says hi. . . Goodbye."

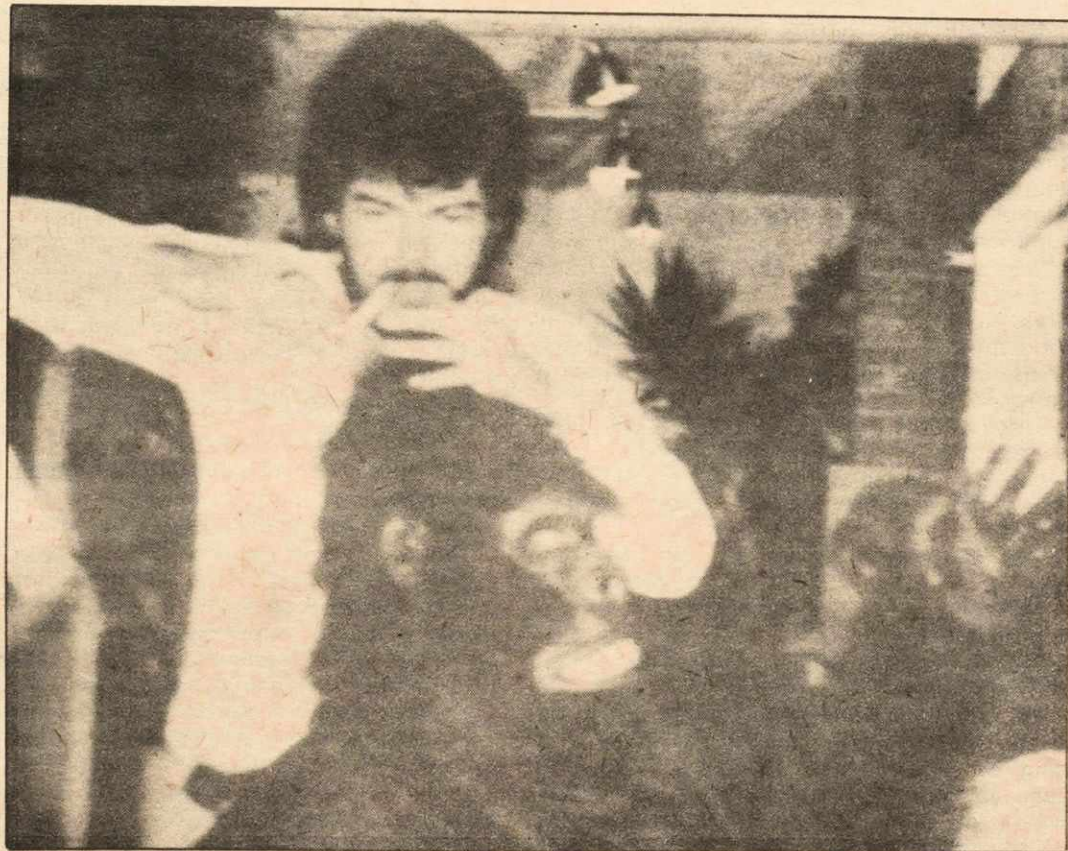
One can detect an incongruity between the different tracks on the album. The Spector tracks are embellished with the characteristic 'wall of sound' strings, and feature the familiar 'echo chamber' vo-

cals, while the Lennon tracks are much more straightforward rock and roll. Indeed, John Lennon is one of the few pop stars who have recorded 'golden oldies' albums to include the ever present 1950's sax.

The cover provides a fitting cap to the album. It features a 1950's vintage shot of Lennon sporting a DA haircut and a leather jacket. Lennon is leaning against a doorway, looking just too cool, while the hustle and bustle of everyday life is passing him by.

This album proves conclusively that in spite of the psychedelic excursions, the eastern junketings, and the political meanderings, John Lennon remained the greasy scouse rocker who went to Hamburg with his mates to belt out primal rock and roll. As it says on the back cover, you really should have been there.

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## To Forget Venice

by Elliott Richman

To Forget Venice (directed by Franco Brusati et al) is a poignant movie encouraging its audience to forget the past. "To face the future with bright eyes" is the point in the movie.

Pucchio and Nicky (two homosexuals) meet at a soccer game and eventually become business partners. (What business they are in is an enigma.) They, along with two lesbians, (Anna and Claudia) repeatedly try to "escape to Venice." Unfortunately, Martha, Nicky's sister dies, and as she does, Nicky and Anna relive their pasts with fiercest emotions. Anna remembers with agony the moment when Claudia and she played darts using a picture of Anna's parents as the target. (Anna hates her parents and had an unhappy childhood where her parents were constantly at each other's throats.) On the other hand, Nicky remembers with pleasure a birthday party his

father and he held for Martha. They enacted a play with the father looking into a crystal ball and predicting Martha's future. She is to be "much loved," "wealthy," and "she is to marry a prince."

After a few twists in the movie, it ends with all four main characters finally coughing up the courage to prevent their pasts from interfering with their futures.

There are a lot of symbols in this Italian flick ranging from a canary to Venice to a magician's crystal ball. There seems to be an individual object serving as a symbol for each of the characters. The eventual annihilation of these symbols shows their respective owners' willingness to view the future optimistically.

The acting is superb for each character. The script, on the other hand, is poorly organized for one could not figure out how or where the little pieces fit until the movie's conclusion.