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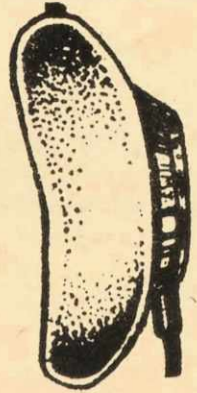
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SOUND TRACKS



Now for a general survey of some of the main trends or developments in rock that have become apparent during the past summer, followed by a few LPs that seemed to stand out from the multitude. Next week we return to regular programming and get back to the basics. Back to the made grind.

It's hard to generalize about a whole summer, let alone a year, but from the stuff these ears caught I'd say it was pretty good. At least on the LP front. And now we're about to be engulfed with the annual Fall flood of new releases. So the future looks good, assuming that there's a few gems in the flood. As for the year, well there's still about 4 months left in it, but at this point it's probably a safe bet that '74 will go down as the Year of the Return/Comeback/Reunion of the Big Rock Stars (Dylan, Clapton, CSN&Y, Steppenwolf, Moby Grape, Joe Cocker, etc., the Big & Expensive Concert Tours (\$12 to see CSN&Y?), and more good-time Nostalgia (mainly '50s r'n r variety—when do we get to do the mid-sixties/Beatles breakout and '67? Now wouldn't that be a gas????).

The summer months only confirmed what was happening earlier in the year: the growing popularity of the jazz-rock movement. A lot of this seems to be an outgrowth of the mid-and late-sixties pioneering efforts of people like Brian Auger and Miles Davis to fuse rock instrumentation with the jazz improvisational style. The 1st Mahavishnu Orchestra led by John McLaughlin LP triggered a fair response back in '72 and since then this music (maybe electric jazz would be more apt) has been on the upswing, with more LP sales, bigger concerts, more interest. Groups/artists like Mahavishnu, Weather Report, Return to Forever with Chick Corea, Santana, Herbie Hancock, Billy Cobham, and Larry Coryell have been developing their own styles within this genre and layin' down some good music that's worth gettin' into. Most of these artists have worked with Miles Davis at one time or another, and all are highly proficient in a technical sense. This music's incredibly strong/tight rhythms give it a solid body feel usually, but it can be pretty spacy too. The whole jazz-rock movement seems like a good thing that'll surely enlarge the frontiers of rock.

The most encouraging thing to happen on the Canadian rock scene in the past year or so has been the emergence of several exciting heavy metal/hard pop-rock groups that have received quite a bit of recognition here as well as in the U.S. Bachman-Turner-Overdrive started blazing the trail with their solid debut album a little over a year ago, and over the past summer Painter and Rush appeared with decent LPs. Plus Mahogany Rush seem to be makin' waves outside of Quebec with their 2nd album. These other groups have a ways to go to match BTO's incredible popularity, but if they keep deliverin' good stuff and get some decent promotion for a change, watchout. In a musical sense, the Canadian scene looks good, with a fine group of perceptive singer-songwriter-guitarists, some solid pop-rock bands, and many other less well-known but capable bands plâying a mixed bag of country, blues and folk rocked —up a bit. But this points up the continual problem of Canadian contemporary music: a lot of creative artists aren't heard in their own country and often are forced to go south of the border to "make it." Or else forget it if they don't want to go that route. One could write pages on this problem, but for now

let's just say things are gettin' better but there's a lot of room for improvement. A lot of the blame for this situation can be laid at the door of record companies (for often treating the Canadian market as a secondary extension of the U.S. and for failing to properly promote their Canadian artists radio stations, Top 40 style (for playing a lot of gutless commercial garbage to fit into their plastic programming mold and not giving creative & original artists a chance to be heard), and the rest of the media, especially print (for failing to get off their asses to cover Canadian pop/rock music period.) Ultimately it's up to the people — Canadians — to care about their own music and take an interest in the people who are making it. We'll try and get back to this topic later.

There has been, and still is an amazing amount of excellent rock of all kinds coming from Britain, especially when you consider the size of the country. Hordes of talented musicians, lots of bands, tough competition — some fine music comes out of the competition. The British scene is especially strong in pop-rock, blues-rock, prog-rock, and heavy metal areas. Where else can you find the likes of the Stones, Kinks, Who, Rod Stewart & Faces, Mott, 10cc, Roxy, Led Zep, Deep Purple, Uriah, Foghat, Genesis, Yes, etc. packed onto the same turf?

The U.S. may have been the spawning ground for the prime original musical forms (blues, country, jazz) that are still vital today and from which rock is derived, but the American rock scene leaves a lot to be desired. Except for a good crop of singer-songwriters, some viable country — and pop-rock, plus Southern rock groups, there's not a whole lot. Steely Dan are by far and away the best new American group to make it in the '70's. But the jazz-rock movement is happening there and maybe that's a good sign for the future. Then again there's always some good funky r&b/soul to be thankful for; hopefully some of its spirit will musically infect an otherwise stale rock scene, there.

What follows are some of the more outstanding LPs from the past summer. (the listing in each group is purely random).

Excellent highly recommended

- Alvin Lee & Mylon Lefevre — "On The Road To Freedom". (fresh Georgia air helps)
- Manfred Mann — "Solar Fire" (& the Earth Band).
- Steely Dan — "Pretzel Logic". (a logical mixing of "Thrill" & "Ecstasy" styles)
- Bruce Springsteen — "The Wild, the Innocent, and the E Street Shuffle". (Watch)
- Savoy Brown — "Boogie Brothers". (the best blues-rock collage in awhile)
- Roxy Music — "Stranded". (Watch out)
- "Montrose" (derivative but finally some solid Yankee heavy metal).
- "Painter" (even though Side 2 slips a bit it's a killer of an LP).
- "Bad Co." (potential super-group makes good on 1st effort—listen to Paul Rodgers).
- Neil Young — "On The Beach" (Welcome back Neil even if its ten times grimmer).
- Robin Trower — "Bridge of Sighs" (Jimi Hendrix is not forgotten).
- "The Souther-Hillman-Furay Band" (a new country-rock band is hatched-solid)
- Bob Dyland — "Before the Flood" (and after the waves).
- Weather Report — "Mysterious Traveller" (spooky good. LP before funky good).
- Good — moderately recommended (take your own chances, though no bad risks here)
- Bowie — "Diamond Dogs" ('74 sci-fi concept job that grows on you; perhaps should be in Exc. above. In heat).