

Tom Paxton sings from the Briar patch

by Cheryl Downton

"Everywhere I go, I meet people who remember the old songs and welcome the new ones. Call it folk, call it 'living room music', call it 'homemade music', I don't care. People love it as much as we do who make it."

Tom Paxton from the jacket of **New Songs From The Briar Patch** (March 1977)

In Greenwich Village in the sixties, young singers performed in coffee houses, mostly for an audience of peers. They played

their own songs and people sang along, and a new era of music was born, music that still lives today. Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Tom Paxton. Tom who?

Tom Paxton never made it really big, especially in terms of public recognition. (A casual canvas of Halifax record store personnel elicited responses of: "Tom who?" and "Tom Pakistan?") Does he play 'Indian' music?) Very few people know that **The Last Thing On My Mind** was written and sung by Paxton, although other musicians (Peter, Paul and Mary, Baez, Dylan) continue to include it on albums

and in concerts.

Paxton was in Halifax for a single concert recently, and although the crowd was small, the Cohn has rarely witnessed such a responsive and close-knit listening audience. No warm-up was necessary and people joined in song without having to be asked; the coffee house informality and togetherness had survived.

Paxton sang a variety of songs—some from as far back as the early sixties and the Newport Folk Festival of 1963; songs from the middle and later 1960's (**Leaving London** 1968) and a number of selections from his first album to be released in many years, **New Songs From The Briar Patch** (1977).

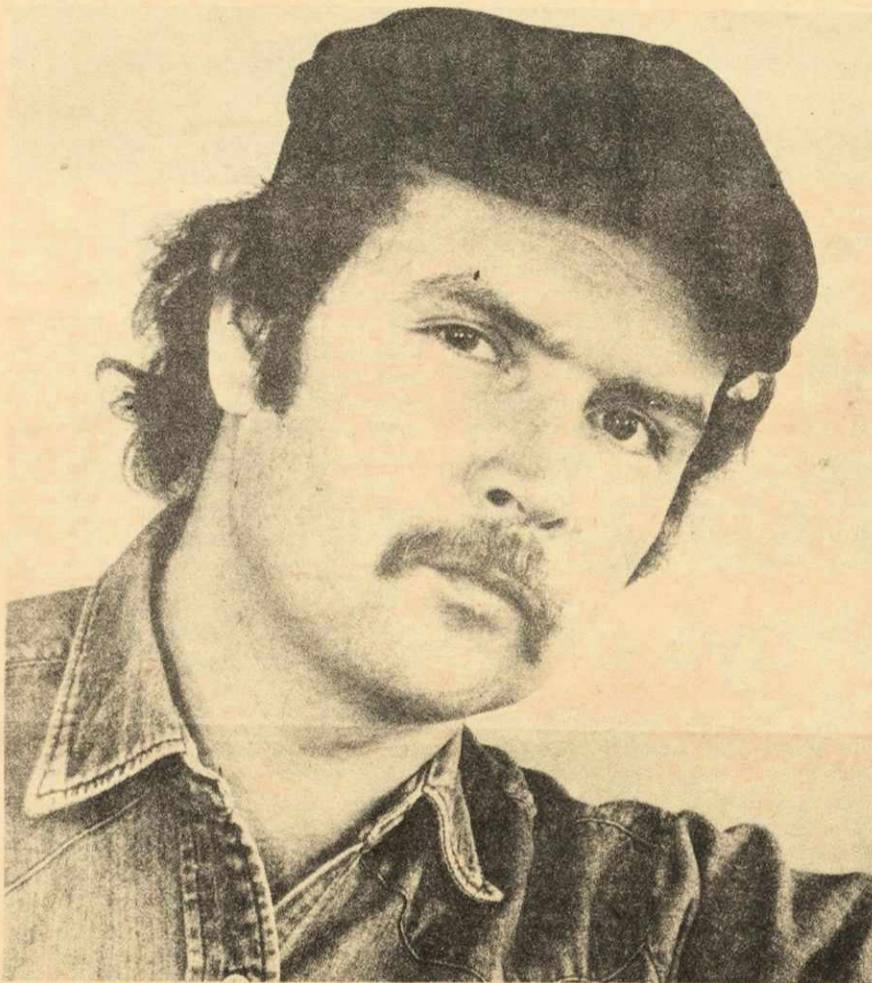
His new album has been long awaited; it includes some protest songs (**Born on the Fourth of July**—an emotional playback of one young American marine's life as it became twisted and tortured in Viet Nam), and a song, **There Goes the Mountain**, which cites one aspect of the abuse of the environment and ecology. It also contains songs of a political nature, **Talking Watergate** and **Mister Blue / White Bones of Allende**. **Bring Back the Chair** and **You Can Eat Dog Food** points an accusing finger at society's general condition.

Paxton is a family man who writes and puts to music thoughts and ideas which he feels affects all who live. He is able to sing of the ills of the world and also keep his distance and not let these problems erase all else from his life and his music. He writes tender 'tributes' to his family members, and feels at ease sharing himself and his family with those who come to hear him sing. Poking fun at love songs and writing material that dares to tell of how it may be, both sexually and mentally, gives him and his listeners great delight: **Not Tonight Marie**, and a "true hanky weeper" about a junk dealer's daughter and Howard of the highway patrol and

their lovemaking escapades in the wreck of a golden cadillac. A sense of humour, not tarnished by years of instability and little acknowledgment, shines brightly forth; a similar sardonic wit is hard to find, and to find one belonging to a man who incorporates it so much into his music, is almost impossible.

Admittedly, Paxton has a very limited voice range, and is not a particularly good vocalist. But he picks an excellent guitar, and has an easy, sincere manner. His material is excellent and is indeed most topical. When singing environmental protest songs, he sounds remarkably like Joan Baez, and has the same powerful and forceful "you know it's true" effect.

He received a standing ovation, and his chosen encore, **The Last Thing on My Mind**, saw very few people not singing along. The concert itself was not really a concert; it was a trip down memory lane (and back again); a trip which can only safely be taken with an expert guide to ease one through the often sharp and painfully jagged edges. Paxton and his music were what was needed.



Tom Paxton, folk-singer song-writer of Greenwich Village fame, takes it cool.



Love You Live The Rolling Stones/RS

Since Mick and the Stones have received so much celebrity that their contact with the roots is most often invisible, this two-disc live album proves a point. That's a rarity for double live albums, which are normally just low-priced party things that come in handy on Hallowe'en and after exams. The interesting thing about this Stones double live album, though, is that it does come in handy for partying.

For quite awhile people have been sitting down to get into the Stones' albums—the subtle session players, the wistful ballads, the grunting and sighing of Mick on the reggae tunes. Now, when you buy **Love You Live**, stand up and listen to it. This album is Mick Jagger's, completely his, and to meet him on his terms on a live recording you should stand up. The relentless backbeat of "Around And Around", "If You Can't Rock Me", "It's Only Rock 'N' Roll" and Muddy Water's grinding "Mannish Boy" are the solid messages of this

record. They are its, ah, *raison d'être*—and those songs are roots material. I am really impressed by Jagger's absolutely faithful reproduction of Waters' vocal on "Mannish Boy." It alone will tell you Jagger is respectful, about two years after he might have lost it all. The rendition of "Angie" on this album should be mentioned, because its weight is almost theatrical (Jagger is so *bad* a vocalist) and because of its good melody and atmosphere also.

Aja Steely Dan/ABC

For almost three years Steely Dan has been only two men—vocalist Donald Fagen and guitarist Walter Becker. The two compose the Steely Dan material and use session men to record the albums. They do not make public appearances (though they plan to this fall). Their concentration on the studio product has made albums like **Pretzel Logic** and **The Royal Scam** worth far more than the regular \$6 bet in Kelly's or incompetent Sam's.

Aja is pronounced like "Asia", and is the name of a carefully obscure song on side two of this album. Still it seems all the lyric for this album is carefully obscure, as if the authors have struck on a formula for avoiding unambiguous statement, or perhaps any statement at all.

Except for tasty guitar by Becker and sax by Pete Christlieb—and fat-back drumming by Steve Gadd—the music really has a sameness to it, as well as the lyric. The musicians used are not to blame, either; with Gadd are Bernard Purdie, drums; Crusaders Larry Carlton and Dean Parks, guitars, and Joe Sample, piano. It is just a cool formula for steamy ballads that Fagen and Becker have come up with incorporating a sophisticated Latin sound with lots of real piano in the mix. It is still **Steely Dan** and it is still better than almost anything else on the shelf; but try **The Royal Scam** first, just in case I'm right.

Visual arts conference

Visual Arts Nova Scotia is sponsoring an artists' conference from October 28 to 30. Artists from all parts of Nova Scotia are being invited to attend this two-and-one-half day event.

Arts Conference 77 will open Friday evening at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Registration will take place between 6 and 7 p.m. The opening session will be a discussion on the relationship between galleries and artists and the use of contracts. The conference continues Saturday with a session covering areas such as copyrighting art works, business set-ups, contracts and other topics of interest. A following session will deal with accounting, taxation and insurance.

An afternoon talk on grants, awards and services will give artists an opportunity to meet with Canada Council members. Later sessions will include talks about the Canada Council Art Bank and the Art Bank of Nova Scotia, to be followed by a series of exhibitions and a buffet supper at the Carleton Hotel.

The final day of the conference includes a discussion titled "Art and the Community" to be followed by a general discussion of problems and how Visual Arts and Department of Recreation can help. A bus trip is being arranged to take a tour of some of the local galleries.

Registration fee for the conference is \$20.00. Registration forms and further information are available at the V.A.N.S. office located on the 4th floor, Saint Mary's Student Union Building, or by phoning 423-4694, or by writing P.O. Box 3306 Halifax, N.S., B3J 3J1.



Dalhousie Arts Centre Rebecca Cohn Auditorium

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Jazz

Friday, October 28, 7:00 & 10:00 p.m.

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