

# SOUNDSOUNDSOUNDSOUND

## (blues and roots)

Richard P. Havens, 1983, Ritchie Havens, Verve-Forecast \$7.90  
Who Knows Where the Time Goes, Judy Collins, Electra, \$3.95

White there is no point in comparing their styles (as an apple is to an orange, so . . .) Ritchie Havens and Judy Collins are in the same sort of public position. They both began singing folksongs and then branched out, taking with them a loyal, if small, group of followers. But outside of the sort of people who call A&A's to find out when the next album is coming out, they are pretty well ignored. Pity.

Both had new albums come out just before Christmas that were lost in the rush to buy the Beatles' new one ("Maybe the nude picture of Paul and Yoko is on the inside"). Again, pity.

In Havens' case it is understandable, for he is more of a concert performer than a studio man. His earlier records told that the style and sense were there, but it was really a sort of pointing out — rather deadily, like one of those movies of a live performance by the Old Vic. The drums and electric guitars packaged everything too neatly. In a couple of cuts on *Something Else Again* (the second album) the performer came through, but only on a couple of cuts.

Havens, live, is like the Pied Piper (who mercifully never signed with Columbia. Would that Leonard Cohen hadn't.). The stooped concentration, totally inarticulate introductions and wild, free rhythm shifts on guitar form a kind of vortex. He also has a great ear for lyric meanings, hearing *San Francisco Bay Blues* as a blues, though the rest of the world understands it as a rag. In the same way he discovered a humane, sad undercurrent in Dylan's *Just Like A Woman*. Any piece Havens plays, becomes unmistakably his.

His third album (fifth if you count two on Douglas) comes closest to catching this. Some of the cuts still sound boxed, but Cohen's *Priests*, the Beatles' *She's Leaving Home* and Havens' own *Prable of Ramon* come through with an almost eerie suggestibility.

The best side is the last—the album contains two records—recorded in concert. *A Little Help From My Friends* just comes off very happy, which is what it should do. Donovan's *Wear Your Love Like Heaven* follows with a headier kind of celebration. It's a pleasant and interesting combination.

The last track, *Shaker Life/Do You Feel Good* reveals Havens' in-person power.

It happens rarely that music becomes compulsive for an audience ("Not since the Hallelujah Chorus has . . ."). I've seen it once, although on the three or four occasions I've watched Havens, he has always been skirting on the edge of it. The Rev. Gary Davis was on stage, several Mariposa's back, outside, having performed abominably several nights previous. (He had been dead drunk, so the word went.) It had more saddened than displeased, like watching an old athlete. (Except that folk fans are less cruel than sports fans, witness the recent response to Johnny Bower). However by Sunday, the Reverend had atoned, sobered up and was at his funky best. During his last number rhythmic hand-clapping and response singing were happening all over the audience. Shouting, singing, some crying: all the features that people find so frighteningly stupid about a revival meeting. This was not response that was asked for, as in the old Hootenanny "Clap now" sign, but something that just had to come out. And out of white kids, no less.

This exact process is captured, in so far as tape-recorders can, on the last cut of the Havens album. Try just listening to the audience. Although, once I made that recommendation to a friend who said, "I am the audience", and I had to slink back to the kitchen to make coffee.

As free as Havens' sound is, Judy Collins' is perfected. Her last album, *Wildflowers* made a beautiful foil for *Magical Mystery Tour*, *Their Satanic Majesties' Request*, the Doors and the other always-played-ones of a year ago. It was like Bach after Beethoven. The sound was as meticulous as Czech glasswork.

Collins' voice itself is exceptionally clear (none of the tiring wispyness of Joan Baez or the strain of Joni Mitchell), a sort of common denominator of songs. She changes very little, or perhaps one should say very subtly, and still sounds right by the mood of each piece. Like Havens, she also has exquisite taste, or at least taste that somehow agrees precisely with my own.

*Who Knows Where The Time Goes*, the new album, is a substantial change from *Wildflowers*. It fulfills the second, more violent promise of *In My Life*, a very ambivalent collection of the delicate (Suzanne, the arrangement of Tom Thumb's Blues) and the rough (Weill-Brecht's *Pirate Jenny*, Cohen's *Dress Rehearsal Rag*). It's as if she decided, we've done with the sublime, now let's get down to the erotic.

Joshua Rifkin's baroque orchestrations have been replaced by a small rock band and even a taste of the new country sound that is cropping up everywhere. Mercifully, this rocky group realizes its purpose is to accompany: to provide hard rhythm, nice bridge passages, and otherwise, stay the hell out of the way.

Fortunately, the same lyric taste that distinguished good ornate verse from flowery crap has sorted out the powerfully simple from the mundane. Witness, from the album:

*The door it opened slowly and my father he came in.*

*I was nine years old.*

*And he said "I've had a vision and you know I'm strong and holy.*

*I must do what I've been told.*

*So we started up the mountain.*

*He was running I was walking*

*And his axe was made of gold.*

(Cohen)

*We parted so hard,*

*me rushing round Britain with a guitar,*

*making love to people*

*I didn't even like to see.*

*Oh, I would think of you,*

*yes I mean in the sick sad morning,*

*and in the lonely midnight,*

*try and hold your face before me.*

(Robin Williamson, *the Incredible String Band*)

These are all songs of experience, and one misses the innocence of *Wildflowers*. But then one can always put *Wildflowers* above it on the changer, which is probably what the gods meant for us to do.

However, if you are still looking for a synthesis, there is a remark she made once to one of those magazines for hip teenage girls (*Eye*, *Cheetah* or the like). The question was "What is the first thing you would do if you were elected President?" and she replied, "I'd appoint Leonard Cohen Minister of Defence", which sums things up pretty well.

—bob bossin

reprinted from

the varsity

# HEY!!!

## Gedda loada dis...

The Brunswickan staff is calling for applications to position of editor-in-chief of the Brunswickan. Applications will be accepted until midnight on Wednesday, February 12, 1969. Interview of applicants and voting for the new editor will take place at the regular weekly meeting of the Brunswickan staff at 12:30 on Friday, February 14, 1969, in the new offices in the student union building. Applications should be submitted in writing to either the editor or the office manager of the Brunswickan. Applications may be delivered to the office during the day or in the evening but it is recommended that applicants mail their applications to:

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