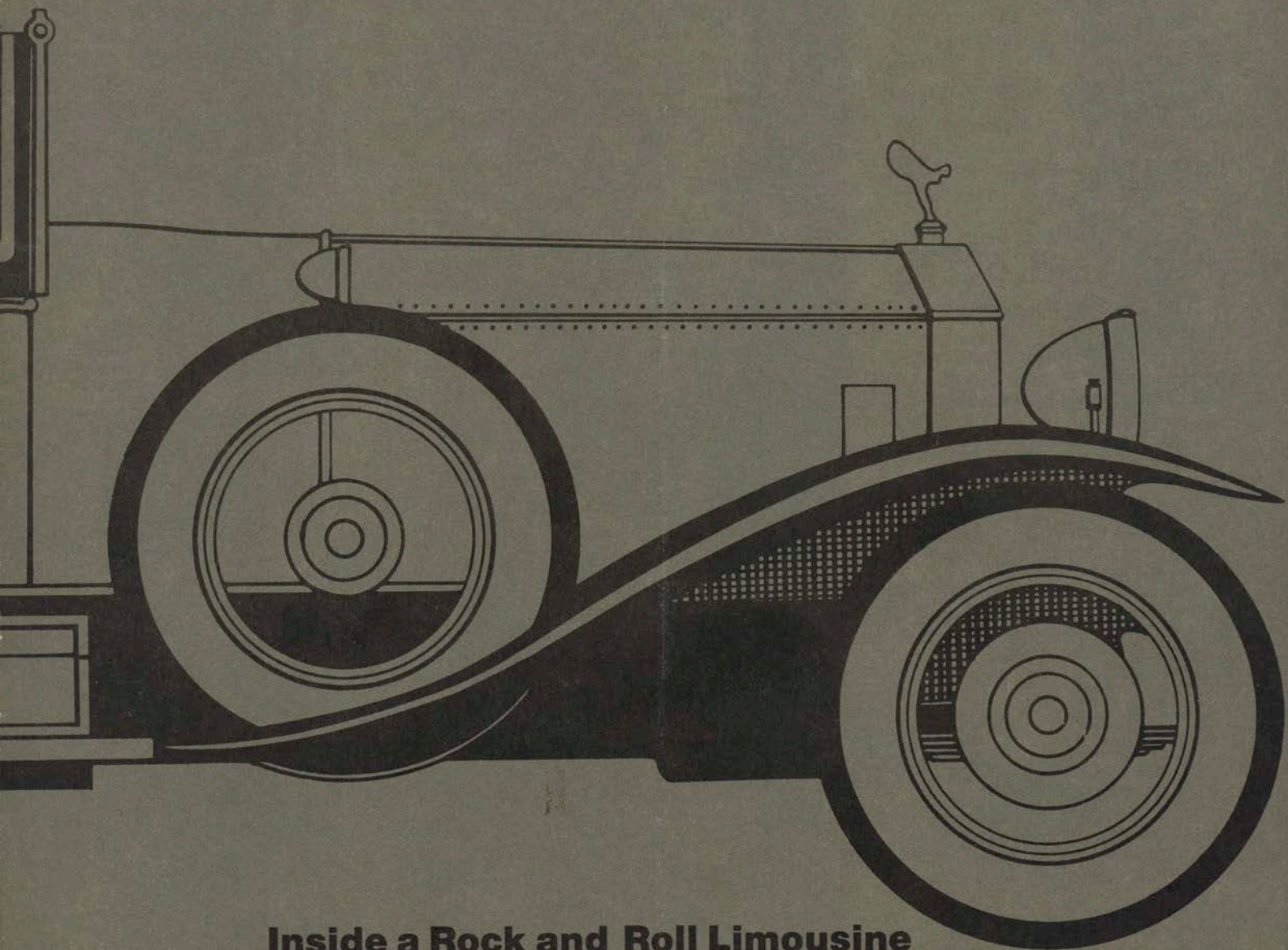


# circular



**Inside a Rock and Roll Limousine**

## Inside a Rock and Roll Limousine

The long, sleek limousine pulls smoothly to the curb on Sunset Strip. The black-liveried driver hops out and trots around the car, one hand reaching for the passenger door and the other for the shiny brim of his cap. Inside, no doubt, some business-suited magnate, buried in the morning paper, oblivious to the squalling reality and curious stares outside the electric, tinted-glass windows. But, no. A cloud of pungent smoke and . . . hair. This limousine is carrying rock and roll stars. Provided by notoriously generous record companies, the limousine and driver are supplied by B.L.S Limousine Service on an hourly rental to ferry the acts to their hotel, to the show and back, and to any stops in between. Like for an occasional hitch-hiker.

"Yeah. Stop for her, man. Let's blow her mind."

The man who does the driving, stopping and, "within reason," anything in between, is Al Altman.

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*Circular employed Barry Levine, a Los Angeles free-lance writer, to get the low-down on the rock and roll limo business. This is his report.*

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Al Altman  
and His  
Rock and Roll  
Limousine



Al came to California after carefully surveying the possibilities, as they say, in the cloak and suit trade, where he made ladies coats. Playing geography (You used to live in New York, too? Where?), I learned Al and I had been neighbors in Forest Hills. We both had cars stolen from the same type apartment house garage. Mine was a 1966 sauterne gold Mustang convertible. His was not nearly as impressive as what he's now driving.

"Cadillac Limousines. Six of them. We were the first to institute green limousines. We're getting four brand new green 1972 Cadillacs by October 15. They are on order."

Al is all business.

"Do you get off on the glamor associated with the people you drive?"

"Once I start to get impressed, I'm liable to lose all foresight in what I'm trying to accomplish. According to my graphs, for the short time we've been in business, we're very successful. And the key word to that success is service. Once they do business with us, they know what the word means."

"Do you ever think about what goes on in the back of the car?" Commercial Al is willing to give, but lurid confessions . . . a different matter entirely.

"My mind is a blank. I'm just driving. My job is to get my customers where they're going, safely."

"Besides," he adds, "I have a sinus condition and a glass partition between the driver and the rest of the car."

I try another tack, in an attempt to elicit some salacious details for *Circular's* rumor-starved readers.

"But doesn't it cross your mind . . ."

"Boy, is this guy probing," says Norm, one of the five best chauffeurs in Hollywood.

"Let him probe from today 'til

tomorra. He's not going to get an answer out of me." Al defiantly crosses his arms on his chest. He's ready for the bamboo slivers under the nails.

"In our cars, the rear-view mirror doesn't even face the rear," explains John in a voice remarkably like Randolph Scott's.

"You've heard of the three monkeys?" grins toothless Gene, another of Al's company men.

Al comes in right behind. "It's no concern of mine what a customer is doing in the back. Who am I to butt into his business? He's paying \$12 an hour just for me to get him from one place to another, so how can I safely take my eyes off the road in front to see what's going on in the back?" Al ain't confessin'.

In addition to chauffeuring, Al and his men provide many other services to customers.

"If we're asked by the group or the record company, we keep people off the stage, watch the dressing

hoping name-dropping will loosen Al's lips.

"You name it. Grateful Dead, Johnny Cash, Stones, Santana, Don Rickles. From the biggest to the smallest. No job too big or small for B.L.S."

Relating the details of his humble beginnings and the classic big break story, Al tells me: "I started in the limousine business in New York. I moved out here, and for my first job, worked the Devonshire Downs Pop Festival. I only had two cars, and I had to get nine others to work with me. For three days, we worked day and night. That's where I got my niche in the entertainment business."

"I can't believe how the acts treat him," says 21-year-old daughter/secretary/receptionist Debbie. "Like a father!" Al, who also employs his wife and son, beams.

"After I finish a job, we have a very, very beautiful rapport going. I was very kindly invited to the Cas-

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rooms, watch the equipment. In the dressing rooms, I don't let anybody in for a 15 minute dry-off period. Then I let people in the group wants to see.

"We've done all sorts of things, even chauffeuring a boa constrictor. We do everything within reason to help satisfy customers."

A casually placed, "What sort of requests have you gotten?"

Al becomes the harried house-mother. "Oh, they want their food, they want their beer, they want their Coca-Cola . . ." Lurid details, indeed.

"Requests like what you're trying to find out, you'll never find out."

"Who have you driven?" I ask,

sus Clay fight by Mr. Joe Smith of Warner Bros. I've had groups give me some wonderful gifts."

"I was also invited to the Alice Cooper party," Al recklessly discloses. He quickly adds, "While they are on the job, drivers are not permitted to participate as an audience. I did not drive that night."

"What did you think of the party?" I ask.

"It was something . . . I'm going to be, in November, 56. In my life, I would not believe . . . I've only just heard that parties like that went on. Unless you were there, you'd never believe anything like it could ever happen."

Semper fidelis, I try for an opening. "It gave you a taste, perhaps, of



some of the things you never see going on in the back of limousines?"

After all, it is confessions we're after, isn't it?

### What You Don't See

"It gives you a taste of what you don't see in a lifetime," Al delivers, in raised eyebrow tone. This from the man who chauffeured the Stones 24-hours-a-day-at-\$12-per-hour-let's see-that's-\$288-and-I-sure-missed-one-hell-of-an-Alice-Cooper-party.

An appreciation of a well-run affair, gained on the New York wedding/Bar Mitzvah circuit, shines through, though.

"That was a party. And it was so beautifully done." He practically kvells.

Another thing that makes him happy is the way his company runs. Talking about the rules, Al carefully enunciates every "r," giving him an odd, accentless New York accent.

"I run a tight ship," Al metaphorically advises.

"Considering you're a car company," I helpfully add.

"No. For an organization. I have now five of the very top men in California and I'm very pleased with the way they are following the company rules. We've gone through more than 30 to get them. Our drivers are never permitted to leave the car unattended."

"Any ex-taxi drivers in the company?" Here, I've struck a sore spot in the hierarchy of drivers-for-hire.

John answers in a slightly pained Randolph Scott voice, "Taxi drivers? I don't think they'd have any place driving limousines. We're highly selective."

### Wild Horses

John is an ex-Brooklynite who worked at Steeple Chase Amusement Park. "I worked the elevated horse ride that ran around the outside of the park. It was one of the only free-running rides ever built.

The horses could attain a speed of 43 mph, making the ride one of the fastest in the world. With all the curves, too many people fell off, so they closed it down and I was out of a job."

The phone rings, and Al's ears perk up as Debbie handles the caller, writing information on a form.

"I have a very high regard for my telephone. I am always making calls."

Debbie hands him the job order just received. His eyes, which no

## New Album

### Ronnie Milsap

*Ronnie Milsap*

(Warner Bros., WS 1934, \$4.98)

"Dedicate the Blues to Me," "Sunday Rain," "Please Don't Tell Me How the Story Ends," "Sweet Little Rock and Roller," "Blue Skies of Montana," "Sanctified," "Keep on Smiling," "The Cat Was a Junkie," "Crying," "Not for the Love of a Woman," "Why."

Ronnie Milsap says that the most influential piece of advice he ever received was from Ray Charles: "Ray touched me on the shoulder," he recalls, "and said 'In all respect to you, sound like Ronnie, don't sound like anybody else.'"

The "anybody else" that Ronnie had been sounding like was Ray Charles himself, and while the Master's influence still weaves in and out of Ronnie Milsap's vocal style, his debut album on Warner Bros. convincingly demonstrates how well he has heeded that admonition.

Ronnie, sightless since his birth in Robinsonville, N.C., attended the State School for the Blind, where he learned violin, cello, string bass and piano. He received a college scholarship, and after graduation enrolled in Atlanta's Emory University Law School. But he soon dropped out to pursue his dream of a musical career.

doubt have seen an untold (much to my chagrin) amount of debauchery, flicker expertly over the ticket.

"Peter Asher . . . to the airport, Troubadour and Malibu. That can only mean one thing. I don't wanna . . . shut that thing off for a minute," he tells me . . . Quickly, I punch the "stop" button, and start the recorder in my head. Must get every word . . . don't miss a . . . Oh, here it comes . . .

Al motions me closer with a conspiratorial crook of his finger . . . "Jimmy's coming."



Ronnie Milsap

His description of his music as "a combination of soul and country" is on the button. That Ray Charles influence colors his timbre and inflections, but it is balanced by an original brand of blue-eyed country soul that incorporates hints of pop and rock styles.

His warm, expressive singing and versatile playing are matched by the consistently high-quality material, the excellent production by Dan Penn, and full, elaborate arrangements that combine the best of Muscle Shoals-Memphis elements with the strings-horns side of the "new country sound."

A most impressive bow.

## Items

### The Stuff Songs Are Made Of?

★ At his postponed Hollywood Bowl concert, James Taylor told the audience that the event had been delayed because "A directional chute from a chipping machine fell on my hand."

### Singles Action

★ Warner/Reprise maintains its sizzling singles streak this week with "Charity Ball" by Fanny (#53 in *Billboard*, 164,000 copies nationally, about 80,000 in the last 10 days), "One Tin Soldier" by Coven (#52 in *Billboard*, 170,000 nationally, 96,000 in 10 days), "Wedding Song" by Paul Stookey (#25 in *Billboard*, #21



Van Morrison with wife Janet

in *Cash Box*, 400,000 nationally), "Wild Night" by Van Morrison (#83 in *Billboard*, 110,000 nationally, 74,000 in the last week), "Desiderata" by Les Crane (#87 in *Billboard*, 82,000 nationally, 69,000 in last week), "Long Ago and Far Away" by James Taylor (#58 in *Billboard*, #33 in *Cash Box*, 230,000 nationally, 60,000 last week).

### A Bullet for Randy

★ Randy Newman, fresh from his triumphant East Coast tour, was ecstatic to learn he had earned his first bullet. Bullets are symbols the record trade mags use to designate fast-rising albums on their charts. Randy earned the bullet from *Cash Box*, wherein his *Live* album debuted at 129. With a bullet.

### Eloquence in the Trades

★ The music business supports three trade magazines, *Billboard*, *Cash Box* and *Record World*, each of which delights in opening new vistas to the written word. This week's Impassioned Language Award was easily netted by *Cash Box* which swept the field with an editorial titled "Sticking with an Artist," containing these shining words: "It's simply that potential hit-makers may need time to emerge or develop that certain disc sound that truly puts them in their best-sounding light." And as if loud illumination weren't enough, the editorial concluded, "More than ever, a long-range view of artist potential is necessary, especially when that 'faith' just lays there in one's gut."

### Natal Specifics

★ Donovan and Linda Leitch are proud parents of Astrella Celeste Leitch, born September 26 at 12:40 a.m. Seems that Don and Linda attended the Hollywood Bowl gala of Jesus Christ Superstar, when midway through the second act the labor pains began and Linda was dashed off to Cedars of Lebanon hospital. Astrella weighed 6 lbs. Linda also has a six-year old son, Julian.

### New Faces

★ Seals & Crofts, acoustic Texan duo, are now happily on Warner Bros. Records, whereon their album, *Year of Sunday*, will be released in November. Both Jim Seals and Dash Crofts are adherents of the Baha'i faith, a religion that incorporates a belief in the oneness of mankind and of all religions.

### Egad

★ The October Warner/Reprise release schedule contains no less than eight new-to-Warner/Reprise artists: John Stewart, John Hartford, Colosseum, Quiver, Ronnie Milsap, High Country, Jesse Frederick, Lazarus.

### Bold Jennifer

★ Jennifer (Warren) made her acting debut on a segment of "The Bold Ones," winning TV critics' hearts and praise. She's working on her first Warner Bros. album, maybe out in January.



Jennifer

### Birthday Bazookas

★ This week's birthdays include the following two musical notables: Bert Kaempfert (Oct. 16) and Cozy Cole (Oct. 17).

### More Natal Specifics

★ Paul and Betty Stookey have twin girls, born September 24 at Roosevelt Hospital, New York City. Paul Stookey now has four reasons to celebrate, the other two being his chart-leaping album *Paul and* and single "Wedding Song."

### Some Choice

★ Gary Davis, District Sales Manager for the West, submits this report: "At Tower Records in San Francisco and the Record Factory in San Jose, we are painting the outside of the buildings with the Grateful Dead cover and having a one-day promotion where we will tie in all news media, calling it 'The Rise of the Dead.' We are renting a casket, limousine and all the sales and promotion staff will be dressed in mourning suits. We will deliver the albums in a hearse to kick off their month. At the stores we visit, we will set the casket up in the middle of the floor, and either have a naked woman jump out with The Grateful Dead painted on her body or maybe have Jerry Garcia pop out."

## You're Probably Wondering Why I'm Here

★ *Circular* regrets learning of it too late to announce its coming: Frank Zappa appeared as a Mystery Guest on "What's My Line?" The show, scheduled to air last week (Oct. 7), featured Zappa and four blindfolded panelists, Arlene Francis, Gene Rayburn, June Lockhart and Soupy Sales. Zappa's appearance prompted subdued applause from



Frank Zappa and Arlene Francis

the studio audience and wonderment from the panel. Just when it seemed he had stumped them, reported *Circular* witness Allen Richards, Soupy Sales began screaming excitedly, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, everybody. Do you have a mustache? Are you Frank Zappa?" All were amazed at Sales' revelation, but the amazement persisted after they removed their blindfolds—they still didn't know quite who he was. Several minutes later, MC Wally Bruner introduced Arlene Francis to Frank Zappa, prompting the embrace captured for *Circular* readers by photographer Maureen Thorp.

## New Singles

### One Too Many Mornings

Turley Richards  
WB 7510

This track, from Turley's first album (*Turley Richards*, WS 1870, issued July, 1970), is not easily forgotten, as can be figured from WB's 15-months-later release of it as a single. The song is vintage Bob Dylan, the topic is cooled passion and urges for going, the voice is Turley's warmest and the production (Lew Merenstein) is tasty and tasteful. Everything sums into an engaging single whose merits reward every level of listening. This record could be the one which introduces Turley to the large public he has long deserved.

### Green Power

Little Richard  
REP 1043

A squawking guitar twines its way into a brassy backing track as Little Richard huffs and puffs and gruffs his message about Green Power, which he's inclined to credit as his favorite color of leverage. Little Richard himself picked this track



Little Richard

from his just-released *King of Rock and Roll* album and it's an undeniable piece of the multicolored fabric of energy which is the artist. H. B. Barnum produced.

## California

Joni Mitchell  
REP 1049

This was an instant favorite on Joni's recent *Blue* album and it's welcome to hear in a 7-inch format. What a great song. What a perfect vocal performance for that great song. It sounds inevitable and beautiful and just the sort of thing people



Joni Mitchell

would love to remember the fall-winter of 1971 for in the middle of the 70s, if there is a middle of the 70s. Syncopated, subtly poetic, inviting, varied and compact. Not to mention the steel guitar.

### Dirty, Dirty

Crazy Horse  
REP 1046

The *Crazy Horse* debut album some months ago is the prosperous parent of this track, which is a stand-out on an LP of stand-outs. The title comprises about 90% of the lyric line, a constantly recycling refrain embroidered by the bottleneck guitar work of Ry Cooder, all quite compelling and hypnotic and natural for a single record. The group has re-formed since its untimely break-up and a tour and a new album should result not too distantly, but this single could warm things up prematurely all by itself.

# Artist Itineraries

OCTOBER 11-17, 1971

## Arizona

### Black Sabbath

10/17, Phoenix Travelodge Theatre, Phoenix

## Arkansas

### James Taylor

10/16, Little Rock Coliseum, Little Rock

## California

### John Stewart

10/12-17, Troubadour, Los Angeles

### Kindred

10/13-17, Papa Joe's Redondo Beach

### Gordon Lightfoot

10/14, Univ. of Calif. at Davis, Sacramento  
10/15, Community Concourse, San Diego  
10/16, Civic Auditorium, San Jose  
10/17, Berkeley Community Theatre,  
Berkeley

### The Doobie Brothers

10/15, Woodland High School, Woodland  
10/15, Woodland High School, Woodland

### Tony Joe White

10/15, The Forum, Inglewood

### Flemming Rasmussen

10/16, Solano College, Fairfield  
10/16, Solano College, Fairfield

### Van Morrison

10/16, Pauley Pavilion, U.C.L.A., Los Angeles

## Florida

### The Association

10/14, Orlando Municipal Aud., Orlando  
10/15, Sarasota  
10/16, West Palm Beach Auditorium,  
West Palm Beach

### Jethro Tull

10/15, Bayfront Center, St. Petersburg  
10/16, Jacksonville Coliseum, Jacksonville

### The First Edition

10/16, Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall,  
Sarasota

## Illinois

### Ides of March

10/16, Illinois Inst. of Technology, Chicago

## Iowa

### Fanny

10/14, Simpson College, Indianola

### Doug Kershaw

10/14, Simpson College, Indianola

## Kansas

### James Taylor

10/15, University of Kansas, Lawrence

## Maine

### John Baldry

10/13, University of Maine, Bangor

## Maryland

### Frank Zappa/Mothers of Invention

10/17, Lyric Theatre, Baltimore

## Massachusetts

### John Baldry

10/15, Paramount Theatre, Springfield

## Michigan

### Doug Kershaw

10/15, Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti

### Fleetwood Mac

10/15-16, Easttown Theatre, Detroit

### Fanny

10/16, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

### Brave Belt

10/17, Grand Rapids

### Ides of March

10/17, Hillsdale College, Hillsdale

### Jimmy Webb

10/17, Schoolcraft College, Livonia

## Minnesota

### The Association

10/11, Winona State College, Winona

### James Taylor

10/11, Sports Arena, Minneapolis

## Missouri

### Fleetwood Mac

10/14, Factory, St. Louis

### Jimmy Webb

10/16, Kansas State Univ., Kansas City

## Nebraska

### James Taylor

10/13, Pershing Auditorium, Lincoln

### Jimmy Webb

10/15, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

## New Jersey

### Seals & Crofts

10/16, Princeton University, Princeton

## New York

### Dionne Warwick

10/7-20, Copacabana, New York City

### Frank Zappa/Mothers of Invention

10/11, Carnegie Hall, New York City  
10/16, Stony Brook, Long Island

### Fleetwood Mac

10/13, St. Lawrence University, Canton

### Seals & Crofts

10/15, Queens College, Flushing

## North Carolina

### The First Edition

10/15, Appalachian State Univ., Boone

### Jethro Tull

10/17, Coliseum, Charlotte

## North Dakota

### Jimmy Webb

10/11, North Dakota State University, Fargo  
10/14, Dickinson State University, Dickinson

## Oregon

### Black Sabbath

10/14, Coliseum, Portland

## Pennsylvania

### Randy Newman

10/14-17, Main Point, Philadelphia

## Rhode Island

### Seals & Crofts

10/14, Roger William College, Bristol

### Frank Zappa/Mothers of Invention

10/15, Lowes State Theatre, Providence

### John Baldry

10/16, Veterans Auditorium, Providence

## Tennessee

### James Taylor

10/17, Mid-South Coliseum, Memphis

## Texas

### Black Sabbath

10/15, Civic Center, Amarillo  
10/16, Coliseum, El Paso

## Wisconsin

### Brownsville Station

10/12, Wisconsin State Univ., Superior  
10/13, Crystal Lake, Appleton  
10/15, Wisconsin State Univ., Oshkosh

## Canada

### Frank Zappa/Mothers of Invention

10/13, Massey Hall, Toronto, Ontario

## Television

### Labelle

10/14, Mike Douglas Show  
10/15, David Frost Show

# Top Ten

## Week of October 11-17

1. James Taylor/*Sweet Baby James* (WS 1843)
2. James Taylor/*Mudslide Slim and the Blue Horizon* (BS 2561)
3. Jethro Tull/*Aqualung* (MS 2035)
4. Black Sabbath/*Master of Reality* (BS 2562)
5. Neil Young/*After the Gold Rush* (RS 6383)
6. Paul Stookey/*Paul and* (WS 1912)
7. Black Sabbath/*Paranoid* (WS 1887)
8. *Black Sabbath* (WS 1871)
9. Deep Purple/*Fireball* (BS 2564)
10. Neil Young/*Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (RS 6349)

