

circular



Is This Todd Rundgren?

The Story Behind the Rundgren Story—Or Is It?

It began as a shouted question and ended as a baffling and possibly inaccurate story in what can only be regarded as one of the biggest small-scale literary hoaxes of the century, or possibly even the decade. It might not even be literary.

The shout was that of *Circular's* grizzled and grisly Artist Affairs editor, Solomon Penthaus, who had just finished scanning the Warner/Reprise/Raccoon/Bearsville/Capricorn/Brother Future Release Schedule, on which schedule he found an album called *Something/Anything?* by Todd Rundgren.

"Who the merry hell is Todd Rundgren?" came the shout, echoing hollowly in the absence of an immediate response.

The Todd Rundgren "Biography"—Or Is It?

I have been given a great vision and I can't move the load of it from me.

— Crazy Horse

There've been a lot of glorious punks in history inflicted with a vision . . . one too many roads to dance down . . . or just the obsessive desire to create.

Consider the great child poet Rimbaud. Now he just wanted to be another bad boy, drinking behind the church yard gate or stowing away on a hell-bound ship. But no, he had the gift of poetry rising in him. He'd try to chuck it but it kept coming. So he distorted it. He strew a new-colored disarranged language all over Paris. He took what he liked from the old masters and flushed the remains down the toilet.

Crawling Back

Consider the seven-headed music monster once termed Runt. Todd Rundgren just wanted to crawl past the steps he'd just been kicked down, slip out the back door and into a deserted lot

"I think he invented the Nazz," quavered the Itineraries Columnist, embarrassed by the reverberating silence.

"He has red and green hair made out of plywood and is an eccentric recluse who has some sort of a controlling interest in Bearsville Records," volunteered the *Circular* Masthead Dateline Writer, who feared for his job (with good reason).

"Seek him out," shrieked Penthaus. "Expose him! Seek out those who know him. Get the Todd Rundgren story!" The message was clear.

A ringing phone sliced short the tirade, an electronic intrusion which seemed at the time only fortuitous. Later it seemed coincidental. At this point in time it seems neither fortuitous nor coincidental. It suggests, in fact, a conspiracy whose slimy limbs reach even into the very pockets of *Circular*. But then it seemed fortuitous.

so he could raise hell. His major goal was to fill the dreary Philadelphia skies with the most spectacular home-grown sky rocket in history. But as quickly as he fastened his fire wires together the long arm of the law was outlawing private fireworks in the great state of Pennsylvania.

The kid was stuck, he was hot after electricity but he was no Ben Franklin. The only other way to shoot off high-wired energy was the electric guitar . . .

What was once scattered destructive energy short-circuited to creative obsession. Todd began with a guitar that nobody listened to, progressed through a group called Woody's Truckstop that nobody but a few Wildwood hot shots listened to and peaked with an overnite super-hype flashy-fizz called Nazz. Actually the Nazz was real big; Todd was the blood, skin and bones behind them and they even had a hit record. "Hello, It's Me" is a real live golden oldie played regularly in good ole Philadelphia.

Charged Up

By the time the Nazz fizzled Todd had a taste of writing, singing, engineering and eating a record. He was hot to work, he was filled with enough electricity to raise Frankenstein on lead guitar. So the kid with the firework fingers set out to conquer all the parts that make the great whole of rock 'n' roll music.

Now we're moving on to the present



The voice seemed to be that of a woman, though it could have been that of a man with a good falsetto.

"My name is Patti Smith," it said in measured cadence. "Patti with an *i*. Call me a Woodstock national, if you will, for Woodstock is the ground I stomp.

"I know much about Todd Rundgren, in whom you might be interested," she (or he) continued in what seemed like a burst of prescience. "Not only that, but I can write. To top it all off, he has commissioned me to write his official 1972 Bearsville biography. Do you want to buy it for publication in *Circular*, or shall I call *Family Scandals*?"

The answer was inescapable and the Masthead Dateline Writer, who took the call, didn't even try to wriggle.

"How much?" he gasped.

"Three-quarters of a hundred and fifty dollars," paced out the earpiece "Firm."

'cause the kid moves fast. He tried the whole shot on his first album, *Runt*. He taught himself to engineer, play the drums, six different guitars, singing, mix down . . . all that stuff. The rest came under something called vision. He never bargained for it, but it was erupting. He was developing a personal system of sound . . . of production . . . of musical montage. No one is saying *Runt* was flawless but it was absolute personal vision . . . Solo Vision . . . and the Beatles hadn't even broken up yet.

Hot All Over

All kinds of stuff happened. Suddenly he was a hot engineer. The Band wanted him. Then he was a hot producer. The Band still wanted him; so did Jesse Winchester, American Dream, Paul Butterfield, James Cotton and Halfnelson. Then he was a hot artist—his single "We Gotta Get You a Woman" was rising like a firecracker. But, most important, his vision was getting clearer and he lit on to his second, more cinematic album, *The Ballad*.

All these events are history, recent but behind him. The greatest thing about Todd Rundgren is that what has passed isn't half as exciting as what's coming.

Mathematics has never been a strong point of the *Circular* staff, much less the Masthead Dateline Writer, who broke the point of his pencil in mid-calculation.

"Um, that sounds a bit steep," he coughed, "but we'll take it. You're sure Rundgren really talked to you?"

"Sure!" sputtered the voice on the phone. "He even offered me a prune while humming 'Hello It's Me.' He has red and green hair made out of plywood. Give me the money in advance. It's the real thing."

A hurried call to the Warner/Reprise Accounting Department yielded a figure of \$112.50. An unmerciful raid on *Circular's* tubercular coffers produced the scratch. A midnight meeting in the wilds of Staten Island, an exchange of envelopes and the story was *Circular's*.

Or was it?

The story was rushed into type by

He gets crazier, looser and more apt to put the block in shock as he moves up.

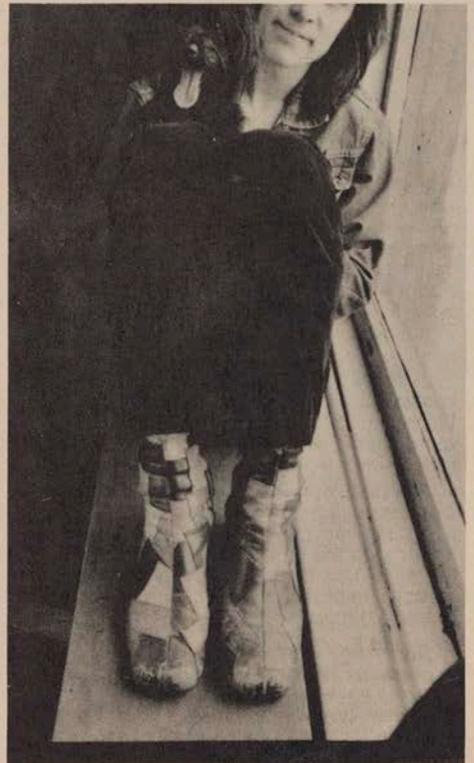
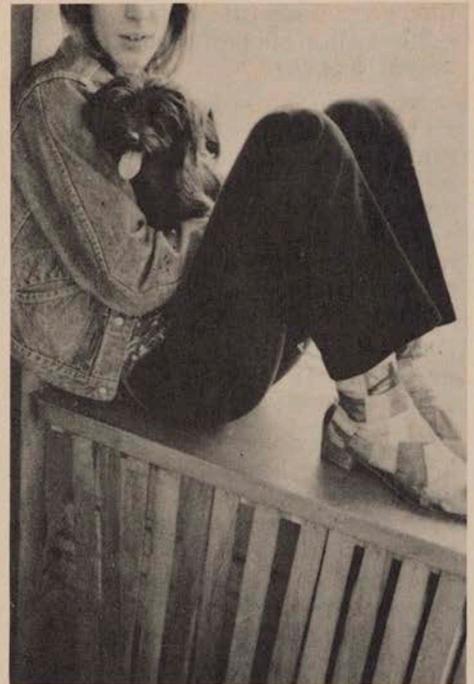
. . . *are you devil or death*
you'll have to bow
there ain't no power on earth to stop
me now . . .

Those words are from his first album. They're starting to mean something. He's moving as fast as a 78-speed record. Not superstar fast, 'cause he's still worshipped underground. It's his vision power that moves like light. His production power is entering a comic book outer space warp. The elements he has been juggling in his music range from the heaviest Motown, the brightest Ravel to the most intricate and unlistenable popular electronics. He mixes all this up like the mad scientist he's becoming and pops out his single material. His piano is littered with orchestration manuals, dirty comic books, lives of the great composers, the best of Stevie Wonder and new parts for his Putney synthesizer. All of which appear in his latest killer album, *Something/Anything?*

Just Starting

Now some skeptics may believe he's blown his wad on this one. But the kid has just begun.

At the moment he is taking a breather. He's completed production of the new Apple smash Badfinger *Straight Up* album.



Circ's unwitting (not to say witless) editors when second thoughts began to occur.

No one in Burbank was absolutely certain of ever having seen Todd Rundgren. A lean-faced male with red and green tipped mink-colored hair recently had toured the Southern California waxery, freely identifying himself as Todd Rundgren, sure, but did anyone know if that was the real Todd Rundgren?

He was awful tall for someone who headed a group called Runt, wasn't he?

Once that doubt was raised, the fabric of what had seemed truth began to unravel into a webbing of what seemed to be not truth, but something else.

Circular's New Singles Columnist, keen of ear and short of wind, erected new suspicions by declaring that the albums of the Nazz, *Runt*, *The Ballad of Todd Rundgren*

and *Something/Anything?* were the work of no less than four separate artists programmed to avoid any stylistic overlap through an IBM 370/145 computer.

An increasingly inconsistent mass of data pointed to the conclusion that Todd Rundgren does not exist and that he never has existed.

How then to account for the so-called "Todd Rundgren" biography written by "Patti Smith?"

Its actual origins remain a mystery, though there are numerous stylistic links with a research project undertaken by the Rand Corp. to develop the universal rock and roll bio, a work within which any names or places could be plugged as necessary.

The money, alas, has long since been digested by the Staten Island night. There's no getting around that.

In an attempt to justify the expense, *Circular* has deemed the

resulting document of historical interest and is reprinting it with that excuse firmly in mind.

It's too late to stop the new album, which fortunately stands up proud even if it doesn't have an artist to call father.

The story remains somewhat unresolved, but it's been an interesting series of adventures for the *Circular* staff, which is doubling up to assimilate the duties of its former Masthead Dateline Writer.

Curiously enough, officials of Bearsville maintain that "Todd Rundgren" is an actual person, that "Patti Smith" exists and that the "Todd Rundgren" albums are the work of one real individual.

Whether that story can stand the scrutiny of live performances and promotional tours remains to be seen. One thing's for sure—*Circular's* not in the market for any further Todd Rundgren bios just now.

But he won't be breathing low for long. Visions keep slamming his skull. He's getting ready to direct an 80-piece orchestra for his next release. He is structuring a live act complete with classical music, hot rock and acrobatics.

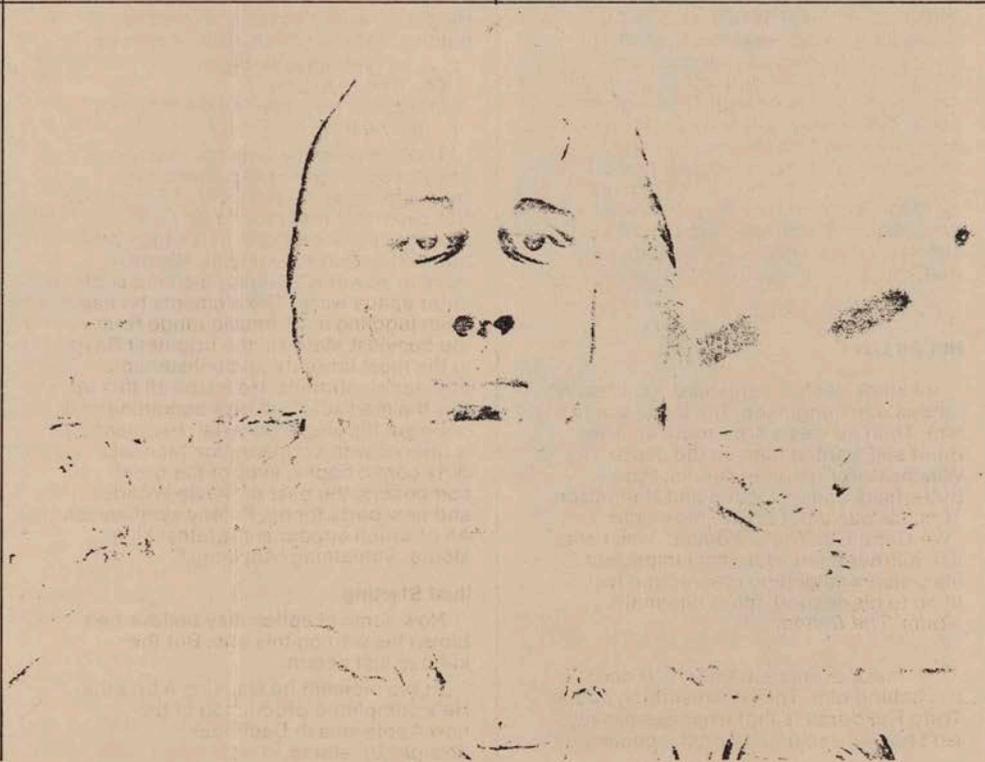
He is always on the move and is still known to import huge quantities of rare sky rockets from all corners of the globe. Often he can be spotted whizzing from jet planes like a comic wizard. Last week he was searching for low budget castles in France. One can only speculate the apparitions he'll conjure in the dungeons with the aid of his magical Putney.

Everything he touches changes into something else. He's sort of the Marcel Duchamp of rock. And this monster is quite young, so the most intricate is to come.

The people of Philadelphia often wonder what he would have become if fireworks had stayed legal. They also shudder at the fact, had he not changed his ways, that this seven-headed musical monster might have become a juvenile delinquent.

*Don't take yourself too seriously
there are precious few things
worth hating now-a-days
and none of them are me.*

Todd Rundgren
"Chain Letter"



New Singles

Numbers

Paul Parrish
WB 7556

It stirs and rouses and progresses inexorably (but light-footedly) with a message of togetherness and hope. Paul Parrish plays piano and sings it in a sweet high voice which breathes life into the words he wrote about how people can complete each other. The track is a favorite from Paul's excellently-received debut album, *Songs*. He continues to gain new converts in personal appearances, the most recent round of which won him near-dithering reviews in the entertainment trade magazines. Justly.

Be My Lover

Alice Cooper
WB 7568

This side is almost already a hit, thanks to concerted exposure from its parent *Killer* album. Its incarnation as a fast-spinning single should cement its hitdom. Alice belts out a semi-autobiographical song anent the dating possibilities for a member of a rock and roll band, noting that guys named Alice frequently get asked questions. The band pours several kilowatts of energy into each stroke of the beat, adding much propulsion to Mr. Cooper's vocal. Shades of "Eighteen." Shades of "Strangers in the Night." Great.

Sugaree

Jerry Garcia
WB 7569

"Do it," says the reaction from a multitude of commercially-oriented radio stations, so doing it is what Warner Bros. is doing, releasing "Sugaree" as the new singles contender from the well-played *Garcia* album. For the occasion, Jerry has edited the song down to 4:35 from its original 5:56 timespan, an edit which hurts the song not the least. The song is a Garcia-Hunter-Kreutzman adaptation of a tradi-

tional folk theme, a singularly nice, easy-striding piece of music. As an album cut it's already decorating numerous stations, AM as well as FM. Going up.

Money Honey

Ry Cooder
REP 1071

Irresistible. Ry Cooder reached back to about 1954 for this one, saw the glints in Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters' version of the Jesse Stone song and promptly whisked it into 1972 with an absolutely stellar



remake. He sings fine, he lays down a perfectly compelling guitar line and he tops the whole thing by leaving space for Gloria Jones to feed him some saucy jive. *Into the Purple Valley* is its album source point. Heaven is its destiny.

Walking on Eggs

Arthur Conley
CPR 0001

Faster than a ballad, slower than a tango, this single is what you might call a mid-tempo selection, an apt reintroduction to the voice of Arthur Conley, last heard from with "Sweet Soul Music," the Otis Redding-produced hit. The feeling is that of vintage Sam and Dave, a good place to recapture. Flip side of the single is Arthur's new visit to the terrain of his big hit, "More Sweet Soul Music." This single is Capricorn's first through WB's distribution auspices, and auspicious it is.

Items

Golden Nod

★ The third Warner Bros. album by Faces, succinctly titled *A Nod's as Good as a Wink . . . to a Blind Horse*, was just certified solid gold by the lurking RIAA. A million in sales, no less.

Golden Snake

★ Lest *Circular* forgot to mention it earlier, lest readers forgot to remember, Alice Cooper's fourth album, *Killer*, was also duly certified by the hulking RIAA. Sold a million dollars' worth, it did. Celebrating that event were Alice (far right), Warner/Reprise President Mo



Ostin (seated right), Alice manager Shep Gordon (far left), WB Executive Veep Joe Smith (third from left) and Alice group members (all other positions).

Inspirational Verse

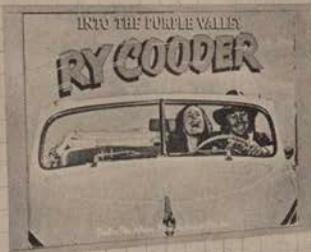
I been up so long
It looks like down to me

— Randy Newman
"Uncle Bob's Midnight Blues"

Not a Bad Flick

★ In its never-ending efforts to make Ry Cooder the household word he so richly deserves to be, Reprise Records has erected billboards and posters all over the country (and, in New York, under

42ND ST. 40TH ST.



the country — in subways). The smallish billboards and bus placards are beautifying America while bringing to the people the simple message of Ry Cooder's new album, *Into the Purple Valley*. As soon as the billboards were visible in Los Angeles, the billboard company received several phone calls from people who wanted to know where the movie was playing.

Now That's a Response

★ The Captain Beefheart TV commercial was recently run on Channel 52, local UHF outlet in Los Angeles. Shortly after said commercial was run, the station received somewhere between 150 and 200 phone calls from ecstatic, crazed, happy listeners. The station was sowhelmed by this response they have asked Warner/Reprise to run the spot again.

Summer Harvest

★ Many smiles of good will and happiness to Neil Young and Carrie Snodgrass, who expect their first child around August.

Place Bets Here

★ Anyone want to guess when the next Neil Young album will be released?

Thank God It's History

★ Ten years ago this month, Warner Bros. made its bid for the popular market with the following LPs: *New Perspectives in Piano Sound* by David Swift, *Ingenuity in Sound* by Buddy Cole and *The Fourth Dimension in Sound* by Shorty Rogers.

Birthday Ballyhoo

★ This week's celebrations include the following musical notables: Ron Nagle (Feb. 21), Enrico Caruso (Feb. 25), George Harrison (Feb. 25), Fats Domino (Feb. 26), Jackie Gleason (Feb. 26) and Johnny Cash (Feb. 26)

The Kink Kronikles

★ Have been delayed until March.

Who Is David Buskin?

★ Mary Travers' second solo album, *Morning Glory*, blooms in March,



full of Mary's fine voice and several stunning songs by one David Buskin, of whom *Circular* knows little but would like to know more.

Fancy Rapping

★ The National Association of Record Merchandisers, of all people, are holding what they term a "Super Rap" session at their 14th annual convention March 8 in Bal Harbour, Fla. Attending swingers will, uh, rap on four subjects—"The Retail Explosion," "The Role of the Smaller Rack Jobber," "Data Processing: A Tool for Improving Merchandising and Diminishing Returns" and "Today's Challenges in Radio Promotion." Groovy.

Gold Dip

★ Fewer gold records were awarded in 1971 than in either 1970 or 1969, according to the Recording Industry Association of America, known to the pros as the RIAA.

The Sunset of the British Empire, Part I

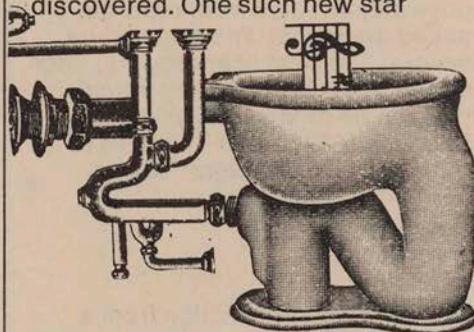
★ Because of the current power failures, blackouts and fading lights in England, Warner/Reprise



of London decided to press and stuff their albums in Germany, where there is always enough power of one sort or another.

The Sunset of the British Empire, Part II

★ Under the tantalizing title, "Puff My Sink," this small but bizarre clipping appeared in an English newspaper. It's all about a radio show called "Opportunity Knocks," whereon, apparently, new stars are discovered. One such new star



"... has been appearing on the programme playing a rather unusual wind instrument—a kitchen sink, to be exact. She huffs and puffs down a large pipe attached to a metal sink and plays tunes; much the same technique is applied to tubular steel chairs, though apparently she has less success with more conventional instruments, like tubas."

All Power to the Bunny; Art Edges out Asphalt

The malcontent, the ne'er-do-well and the snide were one-upped recently in the Georgian Room of New York's Americana Hotel. There it was, in the Annual Meeting of Shareholders of Kinney Services, Inc., that Bunny Power (i.e. the Warner Bros. image) overtook and finally trounced the Kinney image (parking lots, building maintenance and other conglomerata).

Name-wise, Kinney Services bit dust.

Kinney Services has for many moons been the old name for the big rich company that owns (among other nifty things) *Circular*. Other impressive holdings are Warner/Reprise, Elektra, Atlantic, Warner Bros. picture studios, *Mad* magazine, some TV cables, Warners' music publishing Warners' television company, DC Comics (starring Batman and Superman), Independent News Co. (which distributes magazines such as *Playboy* and *Rolling Stone* to newsstands), Sterling Publications (puts out the ever-popular *Movie Mirror* and other fan books), the Paperback Library (lotsa little paperback books) . . . *is everybody following this? . . .* Licensing Corporation of America (which takes your hit [Batman] and licenses its use to another company that then makes a game or sweatshirt of it), Panavision (the lens people) . . .

Etc.

The name for all that was Kinney Services. Then Kinney Services voted to change its name.

No more Kinney.

No more parking lots and funeral parlors (those got sold).

No more people coming up to *Circular* staffers asking, "Guess you have to buy your shoes at Kinney now, huh?"

(Which shodding company, inexplicably, never was the same as the big Kinney that owns *Circular* & Co.)

So from now on, Warner Bros. Records and everyone else listed in the monster paragraph above will be called a new brand name. That company is now called Warner Communications Inc.

Love it?

A name which undoubtedly will shortly be shortened up to something like WARNCOM. That's just a nasty guess.

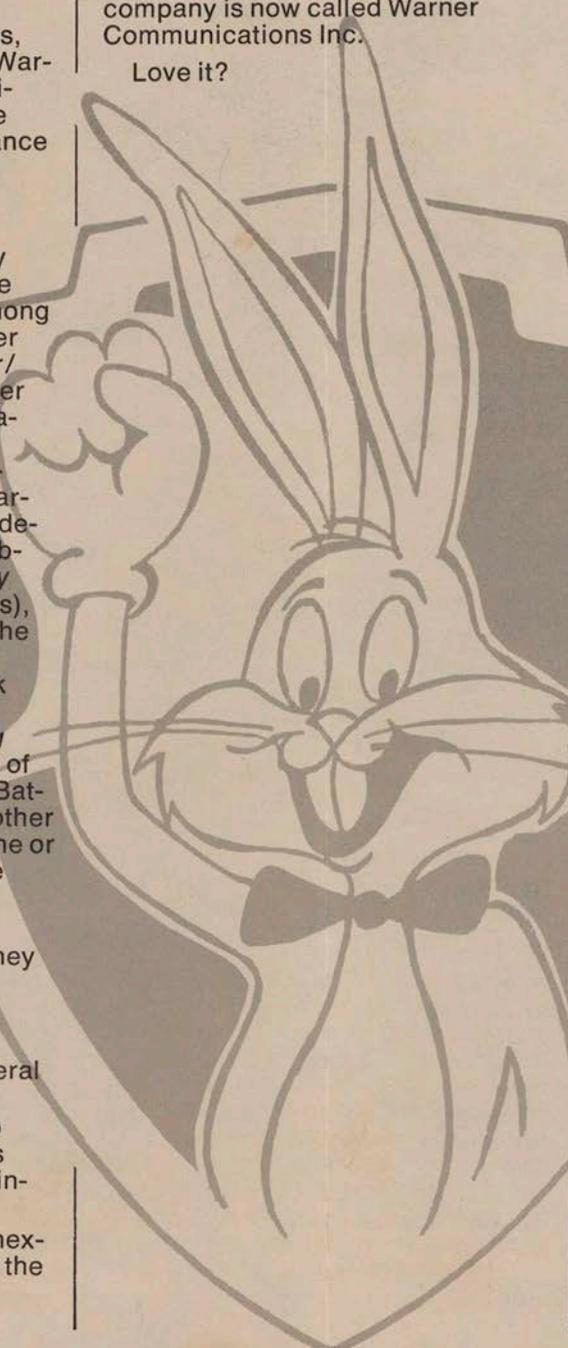
Ever-visioning *Circular* envisions certain changes because of this titanic identity switch from Kinney's asphalt image to Warner Communication's show-biz-of-the-future preoccupation:

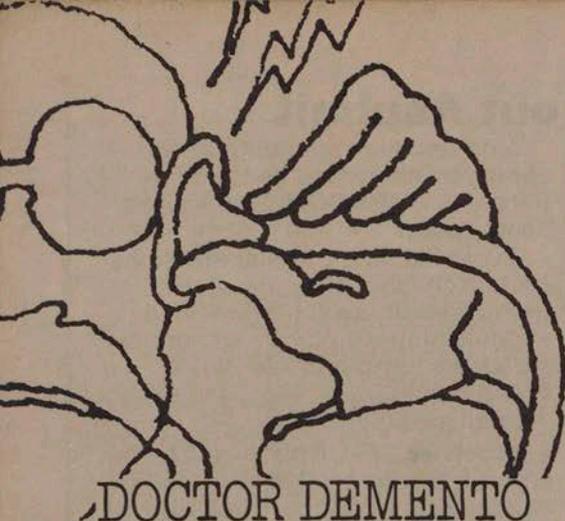
Such as:

- Jack L. Warner, who a while back sold his and his brothers' Burbank studio, by this change is guaranteed a little bit more immortality. His name now stays firmly stuck up on his old place in Burbank.
- Music trade papers, only now just barely accustoming themselves to think of Kinney as a corporate music giant, suddenly will have to get used to another name for that big lump of record makers.
- Bugs Bunny, Warner Bros.' longest-lasting contract player-animal, may be taking over a Board of Directors chair[at]HQ in Rockefeller Plaza, NYC., proving once again that you can't keep a good hare down.
- Warner Bros. Records, still fond of the old WB in a shield, will cling to its symbol even the more clingingly, while another wave of sign printers again clammers with bucket and brush over real estate from Panavision to Krypton.
- The stock market will move up, down or both.
- All those companies that *Circular* listed in Paragraph Two will soon be getting talked about as one damn hot combo, showbiz-wise, thus allowing Warners' record men to feel like they belong to something more romantic than it once seemed.

That's the way it is, this day in history, as seen from the posh Elmer Fudd Room, high atop Warncom's Warner Bros. Records.

Kinney now but a memory
Sic transit parking lots.





DOCTOR DEMENTO

The redoubtable Arthur Alexander, protagonist of the recently-released WB album of the same name, made his first appearance on the *Billboard* Hot 100 just 10 years ago Feb. 24 with, of course, "You Better Move On." It was on Dot. You may hear the Rolling Stones' later interpretation of this song on London PS 451 (*December's Children*); you may hear Arthur Alexander's moving interpretation of newer songs by himself and several other fine writers on Warner Bros.' *Arthur Alexander* (BS 2592).

Question for Next Week

What is a master, from the standpoint of the record business?

* * *

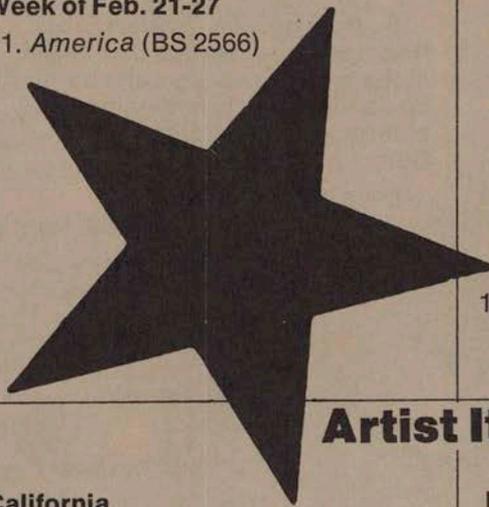
The winner of Dr. Demento's two-weeks-ago question (Q: What Reprise favorites launched their chart career 10 years ago Feb. 17, what was the title of the quintet's initial missile and what label did it bear? A: The Beach Boys, "Surfin'" and Candix.) is Steven G. Weiner of Milton, Mass., who requested *Charity Ball* by Fanny. Honorable mention, but no album, to Jim Parrett of Ottawa, Ontario.

Each week the good doctor poses a music lore question whose answer is the focus of his subsequent column. The earliest reply to his question (mailed to Dr. Demento, c/o *Circular*, Warner Bros. Records, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Calif. 91505) wins any single Warner/Reprise catalog album (please specify choice). Answers will be geographically prorated on the basis of two days per time zone, ties will be judged on the basis of penmanship, wit and lucidity.

Top Ten

Week of Feb. 21-27

1. *America* (BS 2566)



2. *Malo* (BS 2584)
3. Jerry Garcia/*Garcia* (BS 2582)
4. Peter Yarrow/*Peter* (BS 2599)
5. Faces/*A Nod's as Good as a Wink . . .* (BS 2574)
6. *A Clockwork Orange* sound track (BS 2573)
7. T. Rex/*Electric Warrior* (RS 6466)
8. KRATFE/*Calico* (2XS 6476)
9. Dionne Warwick/*Dionne* (BS 2585)
10. *\$(Dollar)* sound track (MS 2051)

Artist Itineraries

California

Cold Blood

2/24, Bodega, Campbell (San Jose)
2/25, Chico State College, Chico
2/26, Civic Auditorium, Redding

Malo

2/24, Forum, Inglewood
2/27, Sports Arena, San Diego

John Baldry

2/25, Community Concourse, San Diego
2/26, Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, San Jose
2/27, Palladium, Hollywood

Doobie Brothers

2/25, Chico State College, Chico

Fleetwood Mac

2/25, Community Concourse, San Diego
2/26, Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, San Jose
2/27, Palladium, Hollywood

Herbie Hancock

2/25, Angela Davis Defense Fund Benefit, Oakland Coliseum, Oakland

Labelle

2/26, Berkeley Community Center, Berkeley

Connecticut

The First Edition

2/23, Bushnell Auditorium, Hartford

Florida

Dion

2/25, The Armory, Tampa
2/27, Sarasota Civic Auditorium, Sarasota

Illinois

Allman Brothers Band

2/21, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago

Joni Mitchell

2/21, Airie Crown Theatre, Chicago

T. Rex

2/24, Auditorium Theatre, Chicago

Indiana

Kindred

2/27, Roberts Municipal Stadium, Evansville

Massachusetts

The First Edition

2/25, Municipal Auditorium, Springfield

T. Rex

2/26, Fenway Theatre, Boston

Nebraska

Kindred

2/25, Pershing Memorial Auditorium, Lincoln

New Hampshire

The First Edition

2/27, New Hampshire College, Manchester

New Mexico

Fanny

2/24, New Mexico Univ., Las Cruces

New York

America

2/21, State Univ. of New York, New Platz
2/23-28, Bitter End, New York City

Tracy Nelson

2/22, WLIR Live Concert, Long Island
2/25-27, My Father's Place, Long Island

Joni Mitchell

2/23, Carnegie Hall, New York City

Crazy Horse

2/25, Fordham Univ., New York City

T. Rex

2/27, Carnegie Hall, New York City

Ohio

Kindred

2/26, Hara Arena, Dayton

Oregon

Allman Brothers Band

2/25, Paramount Theatre, Portland

Alex Taylor

2/25, Paramount Theatre, Portland

Washington

Allman Brothers Band

2/26, Paramount Theatre, Seattle

Alex Taylor

2/26, Paramount Theatre, Seattle

Canada

Allman Brothers Band

2/24, PNE Gardens, Vancouver, British Columbia

Alex Taylor

2/24, PNE Gardens, Vancouver, British Columbia

Joni Mitchell

2/25, Massey Hall, Toronto, Ontario