

The World's First Rock Group With a Tuxedo-Wearing Bunny Playing Bass

by TOM NOLAN



Certainly there is nothing extraordinary about being strange in 1974, but to be strange in a comfortable and funky way is a different matter.

Their names are Chunky, Novi and Ernie.

Ernie, ample hair pulled back in a ponytail for casual meetings, comes closest to being the straight member of the trio. But with locks unfettered beneath a black top hat the fellow can look cheer-

fully demonic.

Novi definitely creates an aura of being amphibian. Wearing navy blue overalls and lavender socks, her tennis shoes grungy and stained with chlorophyll, Novi alternates between childlike outbursts of ardor and bashful retreats to a corner sofa in the Warner Records' office where we are all getting together.

Chunky, it is just conceivable, might once have seemed destined

to be hung with the adjective "petite." The hair that could have been trimmed in a pert bob is now a frizzy leonine mane. Indoors she is wont to gaze through wrap-around rose-tinted shades. Her lavender tee shirt is covered by a leather lace-up vest. Her jeans are embroidered with silver-studded moons and stars. The crowning touch (were she standing on that endearing noggin) is the footgear: custom-made platform tennies.

Kookie Cousins

Chunk and Novi are cousins. Their fast friendship formed in a playpen in Pittsburgh, and their musical ambition began not much later. Separated at an early age by Novi moving West, they would reunite in Pennsylvania or California at vacation time and were perennially launching their career.

Chunky had begun piano at age five ("I think that's why I can't straighten out my fingers."). Novi also began with piano but switched to viola in elementary school, turning pro in high school as a classical musician; she now has almost 20 years of classical training, including a composition scholarship, a degree from Cal Arts and a stint with the prestigious Congress of Strings.

Rebecca and the Sunnybrook Farmers

It was in Pittsburgh that the two girls became part of a pop group

that included bassist Ernie. There were sometimes 15 people in this aggregation, which was known as Rebecca and the Sunnybrook Farmers.

Unweildy Rebecca was for years the house band at a Pittsburgh club that booked name acts like Procol Harum and Blood, Sweat & Tears. They even made an album.

Remnants of this group moved to LA permanently around 1970. Times were lean, and personnel dwindled.

Warners' Ted Templeman heard the group and liked them very much, but, as an assistant A&R man, he felt unable to give the band the boost it would need. He urged them to carry on until he was in more of a position to help.

Ernie played many sessions for Warner Bros. Chunky did work on Zappa's *Grand Wazoo* LP and did time with an all-girl group called the Pink Panthers, a "terrible" ensemble dressed in matching pink costumes, short skirts and go-go boots. Novi did session work and was in the string section that backed Aretha Franklin at LA's Forum. The money they made enabled them to keep their "real" group together.

By this time membership was down to four. "Let's say three and a half," Ernie amends. "That last guy was pretty weird."

The fellow began an addiction to Jesus. The quartet was playing each weekend at the LA club Jazz

'Baron' Mickey Addy and the Yankee Doodle Boys of 1914

by HARVEY GELLER

"No matter what anyone says, the man has to be 100. Why Mickey was playin' piano for us, Mae West, Sophie Tucker, Belle Baker, Richman, Cantor and Jolson durin' the Scopes trial in '25 and *then* he was on the threshold of senility."

It is Harry Mills recollecting that crepuscular jazz age when the Mills Bros. performed with a kazoo, and their rehearsal pianist was Michael Joseph Addy, the ditherium dean of all music men.

"Compared to Mickey," Mills maintains, "Methuselah is a moppel."

Addy disputes Mills' computation. "I'm either 78 or 87. I honestly don't know," he shrugs helplessly. "You see I was born before Decca and, in those days, nobody kept records."

When confronted with discrepancies in his biography, the squat, effusive preadamite acknowledges that it may have been awkward for a lesser man to have concurrently performed as a jockey in Juarez, Mexico, a whorehouse pianist in Montreal, Canada, and a "plug" peddler for Leo Feist Music at 145 W. 45th St. in New York. The extraordinary fact is that Addy's most implausible claims are invariably substantiated by his peers.

Randy Wood, founder of Dot Records and current director of Ranwood Records, encomiastically testifies, "Of all the people in the music industry, you'd be hard pressed to find anyone who hasn't met or heard of Addy—a man of many talents. When Mickey was Dot's East Coast manager in the late 50s, I casually mentioned that it would be nice to record Debbie Reynolds. 'The child adores me,'

he said, 'I'll have her call ya tomorrow.' I was pretty skeptical but sure enough she phoned and two weeks later she was cutting for Dot. 'Mickey,' she told me, 'is the one enduring love of my life.'"

Performer-music historian Ian Whitcomb, in a recently published volume, *After the Ball*, describes those aboriginal Tin Pan Alley men as "bright Yankee Doodle boys . . . racy types who liked to gamble and were natty dressers. Mickey Addy wore a fresh carnation every day and actually set dress trends, introducing the polo neck shirt around 1914."

Suggestions to Addy that his "Dean of Pluggers" title is a split copyright, to be shared with Irving Berlin, George Joy, Irving and Jack Mills, Harry Ruby and several other octogenarians, are greeted with mock indignation.

"They're imposters—" he protests, "songwriters and executives—not bona fide pluggers. Maybe they plugged for 20 or 30 years, but I've been at it since 1914—before radio and juke boxes, television and disc jockeys . . . when

the talkin' machine was just learnin' to walk."

Human Phonographs

Though Thomas Alva Edison's first experimental tinfoil cylinder was invented in 1877, recorded sound was still, in 1914, an infant industry. Victor had introduced the pre-electric 78-rpm record in 1901. Columbia invaded the scene in 1902. But double-faced discs didn't arrive until 1908. In the September, 1906, issue of *Appleton's Magazine*, "March King" John Philip Sousa, in an article titled "The Menace of Mechanical Music," prophesized "a marked deterioration in American music and musical taste, an interruption in the musical development of the country and a host of other injuries to music in its artistic manifestations, by virtue—or rather by vice—of the multiplication of the various music producing machines. Those talking and playing machines . . . reduce the expression of music to a mathematical system of megaphones, wheels, cogs, disks, cylinders and all manner of revolving things.

"What of the national throat? Will it not weaken? What of the national chest? Will it not shrink? When a mother can turn on a phonograph, will she croon her baby with sweet lullabys, or will the infant be put to sleep by machinery?"

"If, in their infancy, [children] hear only phonographs, will they not sing, if they sing at all, in imitation and finally become simply human phonographs—without soul or expression?"

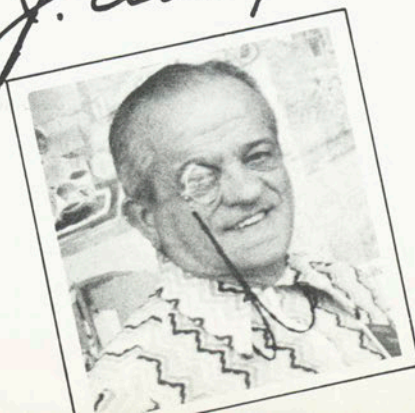
Nevertheless, the Victor Talking Machine Co. prevailed upon Sousa to record his marches. Grudgingly, he conducted on only 10 of about 100 sides released under his name. He was subsequently persuaded to endorse the product. The testimonial, quoted in Victor's circa '14 advertisements, was predictably restrained. "Victor Records," he wrote, "are all right."

Sousa, who loathed radio, the fox-trot and swing also detested jazz. "Some of it," he once remarked, "makes you want to bite your grandmother."

Beltin' Their Wares

At the start of the 20th century Tin Pan Alley was a group of about 30 one-room publishers renting reconverted brownstone flats along New York's West 28th St. The furniture most generally consisted of a broken-down piano, second-hand desk and several wooden racks to hold the stock (sheet music). More often than not they were one-man organizations. After the song was accepted and printed, the publisher would set out for the music counters of NY, firms like Siegel-Cooper on 18th St. and 6th Ave. A singer would be commissioned. Several thousand copies would

Mickey J. Addy.



“I’d work at an upright with the guys standin’ Indian file on the piano, singin’ through megaphones . . . songs like ‘Take Your Girlie to the Movies (If You Can’t Make Love at Home).’ ”



The Yankee Doodle boys of 1914—a rare photo of ASCAP’s first dinner meeting, held at Luchow’s Restaurant, NYC on Nov. 27 of that year. Victor Herbert, John Philip Sousa, Oscar Hammerstein and Irving Berlin were in attendance, along with Al Jolson, seated fourth from the left at the front left table. Addy later joined ASCAP when he composed “There’s No Christmas Like a Home Christmas,” a Perry Como evergreen.

be sent there on consignment and a girl pianist would arrange a time for each publisher’s demonstrator, who would perform the same song again and again, simultaneously selling and wrapping the copies.

At the time music sold for 10 cents a copy. On a given Saturday afternoon several thousand might be sold at one counter. Songs were exploited in burlesque houses, vaudeville theaters, nickelodeons; and even “dumb” acts (animals and acrobats) exposed new tunes as “entrance” and “bow” music. Folklorists chronicle one enterprising music man, who demonstrated a tune titled “Won’t You Come Home and Flirt With Me?” by testing it in a rather unconventional location—the lavatory of Manhattan’s Cadillac Hotel. He was promptly arrested for procuring.

In the summer Brighton Beach

and Coney Island were covered from New York, Revere Beach from Boston, White City from Chicago. Between 1900 and 1910 over 100 songs topped a million, including “A Bird in a Gilded Cage” (1901), “In the Good Old Summertime” (1902), “Sweet Adeline” (1903), “In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree” (1905), “I Wonder Who’s Kissing Her Now” (1909) and “Down by the Old Mill Stream” (1910).

Addy recalls plugging from a horse driven wagon. “We used to hit the populated neighborhoods with the backboard down and singers like Jimmy Flynn, Murray Abrahams and Al Wohlman belting their wares through rolled-up sheet music . . . a plugger in those days had to be an artist—either a pianist or a ‘boomer.’

“Charlie Fisher was the most

resoundin’ ‘boomer’ of all. He was known as ‘leather lungs.’ He’d sing at the Polo Grounds—without a mike—and you’d be hearin’ him in Ebbets Field.”

Biggest Plug in Town

If 1914 wasn’t, as described by one inordinate historian, the “zenith and nadir of civilization,” it was certainly a momentous date for Tin Pan Alley. It was in 1914 that George Gershwin joined Jerome H. Remick’s publishing firm as one of 20 demonstration pianist-pluggers. Jerome Kern was emerging as a major musical figure with his first Broadway smash, *The Girl from Utah*, and its principal song, “They Didn’t Believe Me,” which accumulated the sale of 2 million copies. Irving Berlin, a former plugger for Harry Von Tilzer, had just com-

pleted his initial solo score for the musical *Watch Your Step*, starring Vernon and Irene Castle and introducing his credo classic, “Play a Simple Melody.” It was the year that Victor Herbert, backed by Sousa, formed ASCAP and Mickey Addy, teamed with a 14-year-old, Joe Davis, was hired to promote “Mother” (“M is for the million things she gave me . . .”) into what was to be a colossal copyright. “We stayed the entire season at Atlantic City, goin’ from one bistro to another, ‘til the damn thing caught on.

“When work was over we’d all get together at Child’s Restaurant on the Boardwalk, talkin’ shop through the wee hours. There was Harry Ruby, Ira Schuster, Harry Bishop, Joe Sherman, Tony Pace, Prince Piotti, George Gershwin, Irving Caesar, Mose Gumble, Harry Tenny, Jack Robbins. On Sunday nights we’d go down to Coney Island . . . I worked with a team of four guys at a place called Stauch’s—there were seven restaurants within its compound. Ol’ man Stauch was the biggest plug in town. I’d work at an upright with the guys standin’ Indian file on the piano, singin’ through megaphones . . . songs like ‘Take Your Girlie to the Movies (If You Can’t Make Love at Home).’

“In the winter we’d be back to the burlesque houses, political rallies and dance palaces, especially the ‘shortwaist’ dances at the Central Opera House. The six-day bike races at Madison Square Garden were a prime plug, particularly the 3 a.m. sprints when the burlesque, vaudeville and cafe performers arrived at the Garden.

“It was the golden era,” Addy

Mickey Addy

eulogizes, "when the publisher was king. But it was the plugger, maybe more than anyone else, who created those million-sellin' standards."

Lost Art

Addy, who is of Italian extraction, invariably affects a monocle beneath his bulldog brow. He explains he contrived the foppery "just to be different" while performing as a piano-pounding German judge on a musical comedy radio series aired Sunday nights on WMCA, NY, in 1923. "By then I was developin' into a pretty fair dialectician."

But several years earlier he was broadcasting "on carbon mikes suspended by four rubber bands—before there were even call letters" for Dr. Lee De Forest. It was De Forest, inventor of radio's triode vacuum tube, who staged the world's first wireless concert from the Metropolitan Opera House in 1910 and later aired a weekly show from his home in Kearny, New Jersey. Many trivia buffs recall that Vaughn De Leath and Bobby Schaeffer were the first regularly featured vocalists on radio. Still most are unapprized of the fact that it was Addy who backed those pioneer performers.

Among Mickey's minor claims to immortality is that he was the only man to be married in Tin Pan Alley. The event, held at Leo Feist's offices in 1929, was attended by nearly every major star in the industry. Composer Abel Baer tinkled the ivories while eye-rolling, turtle-neck sweated Al Jolson sang "I Love You Truly." "It was covered," reminisces

Addy, "by every newspaper in New York."

In the 50s and 60s, during his 15-year tenure with Dot Records, Addy canvassed jocks along the East Coast, masquerading as Baron Michael J. Addy, a heel-clicking deejay from Bremerhaven, Germany, solemnly describing his format—"Strauss und Oberdecker valtztes . . . but I also play for zee bobby sokers—sides by Pots Boone, Shtan Kenton und Elvis Pretzel." Handing a jock his Dot plug-list, Mickey would inexorably lower his eyes, raise his monocle and menacingly mutter, "You haf relatiffs in Chermanny, ya?"

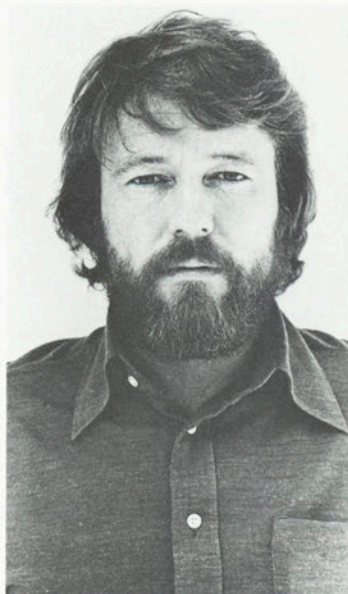
"Plugging is a lost art," insists Addy, who for the past five years has served as *Billboard's* East Coast sales rep to music publishers, songsmiths and MOR talents. "Once it was a very specialized, skilled profession . . . a music man's time was never his own. If a plug was sick at 4 a.m. he'd call, and you'd be there with soup and sympathy."

"Payola? The word was born in the music business. Sure, a lot of singers got bribes to perform our songs. Sometimes it was front money, sometimes a percentage of the royalties and credit as co-writer. Jolson's demands for 'a piece of the action' are legendary, but he was one of many."

Addy is credited with a classic Tin Pan Alley one-liner. Collaring Jolson at a ringside table at Reisenweber's Restaurant-Café during the late 20s, Mickey reached into his breast pocket for a fresh lead sheet. "Hey Al," he crowed, "I'd like ya' to look at a song ya' just wrote."

©Harvey Geller, 1973

Promotions in the Burbank Hotbox



Clyde Bakkemo



Don Schmitzerle

Two in One Week. They went to Clyde Bakkemo, who used to be the general manager of Warner Bros., and Don Schmitzerle, formerly general manager of Reprise. Clyde is now monikered executive director of artists and repertoire, while Don's being called executive director of label management. What it all means is that Clyde gets to worry about studio recording costs and signing new artists and Don gets to worry about every artist currently on the roster. Fortunately for Don, he has able-bodied General Manager David Herscher to help him. These proud fellows are pictured herein, but probably not too close to this item because *Circular's* art director has recently become cross-eyed.

A Grievous Error. Shipping on February, with a load of other LPs

to stampede your ears, is a new-old Grateful Dead album titled *The Best of the Grateful Dead (Skeletons From the Closet)*. If you chance upon this 33 1/3 disc on your local record store, you'll notice a blank sticker covering part of the album spine. Heh heh. It's covering an incorrect price code which read \$5.98. Actually this LP is one of our specials and retails for a staggering \$6.98. In order to avoid any further false advertising charges, gnomes will be working far into the night to cover the misnomer. Someone around here better crack down on the Editorial Department—late hours and bad wine seem to be taking their toll lately.

Quote of the Week from *Daily Variety*. Congress, that sharp-sighted, ever-protective body of hard workers, recently



David Herscher

charged the oil and utility companies with conducting a propaganda blitz which makes them look good in this day of energy crisis. "Chief offenders, they said, are institutional TV ads by oil companies. Typical are Shell Oil spots that are 'very misleading and difficult to substantiate.' They cited an ad that implies that the presence of oil rigs has led to increased fish yields in the Gulf of Mexico. Nowhere does Shell tell viewers that 'even a junked car' on the ocean floor will attract fish, the petitioners said." Hmmm. A Credibility Gap, perhaps?

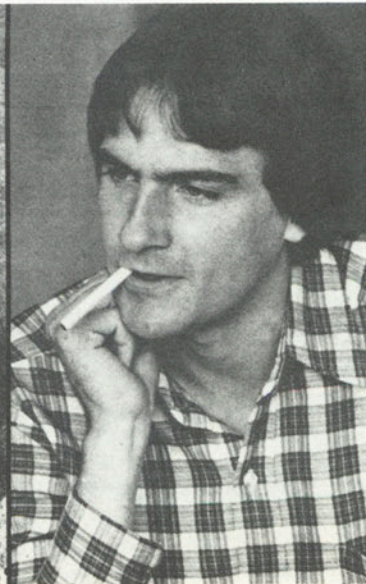
Ruby's Run-Ons

◆ It's that time of the month again, you all. **Russ Shaw**, movin' and groovin' man-in-perpetual-motion for the Artists Relations Department, has awarded **The**

Russ Shaw Most Cooperative Artist of the Month Award to Maria Muldaur. "Due to her gracious cooperation in a never-ending series of interviews and the fact that she was second-billed at San Francisco's Boarding House until the headliner act pulled a no-show," sez Russ. At that point Maria became headliner and sold out the House every night for a week straight. Ms. Muldaur is the first lady to be honored thusly by Mr. Shaw. Which proves he's no sexist pig. ◆ Kudos at last for **Ruby Monday's** favorite sound track album of the year. It's **Alan Price's O Lucky Man!** and the Young New York Film Critics (is there possibly an organization that calls itself the Old New York Film Critics?) just awarded it Best Musical Score of 1973. Warner Records Tub Thumper **Liz Beth Rosenberg** accepted the award in Gotham for



the lucky man himself who, at the time, was resting in London smiling. ◆ Baby, baby, who had a baby on January 8? **Carly Simon** did the work while **James** the husband watched. Their new nine-pound daughter, **Sarah Maria**, saw her first daylight in New York Hospital. Mother, father and child doing well, particularly mother, whose new LP, *Hotcakes*, is zooming up the charts. ◆ TV appearances in the wings for such diverse WB artists as **Alice Cooper** and **Rod McKuen**. Alice will debut on the box as a young witch (how beguiling) on an episode of everyone's favorite sitcom, *The Snoop Sisters*, called "And Up Jumped the Devil." Rod McKuen's just been signed as a circle on everyone's favorite game show, *The Hollywood Squares*. ◆ Well again is **Gary Brooker of Procol Harum**. He was struck down with laryngitis



Mother Carly and Father James

during a British tour, causing PH to cancel several British appearances. ◆ And finally for the Platinum platters. **The Doobie Brothers** get a Platinum copy of *The Captain and Me*, while **Seals and Crofts** receive same for *Diamond Girl*. This means, of course, over a million units sold. Considerably more cash involved here than with the Golden discs, which mark a million dollars in sales. ◆

Top Ten

Warner Bros. Sales Figures for Week of January 14-20.

1. Black Sabbath/
Sabbath, Bloody Sabbath
(BS/M8/M5 2695)
2. Foghat/*Energized*
(BR/M8/M5 6950)
3. Gordon Lightfoot/
Sundown
(MS/M8/M5 2177)
4. Gregg Allman/*Laid Back*
(CP/M8/M5 0116)
5. Alice Cooper/
Muscle of Love
(BS/M8/M5 2748)
6. Todd Rundgren/
Something/Anything?
(2BX/L8/L5 2066)
7. The Beach Boys
in Concert
(2RS/K8/K5 6484)
8. Billy Jack Sound Track
(BJS/M8J/M5J 1001)
9. Frank Sinatra/
Ol' Blue Eyes Is Back
(FS/M8/M5 2155)
10. Graham Central Station
(BS/M8/M5 2763)

Chunky, Novi & Ernie Is *Not* a Bagel Manufacturing Firm

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West for a fast \$10.

Ernie: "He started out with this huge freak hairdo; then each week his hair would get a bit shorter, and the Bible he brought would get a little bigger. Finally he didn't have any hair left at all. Just this huge Bible. Then he just stopped showing up."

Chunky, Novi and Ernie thought their group was being whittled into extinction; but it took only two weeks for the trio to get the recording contract its larger versions

had sought for six years. Ted Templeman made good on his word. Ironically, now that their sponsor had gotten them signed, he himself was so busy with other artists it was another year before C, N & E's album was finished.

Just released on Warner Bros., it's called *Chunky, Novi & Ernie*.

The music itself poses some descriptive problem for its own makers. Is it satirical? "Some of it," Chunky and Novi respond in unison.

Novi: "We do some silly things.

But even those, are, like, ah, ya know?"

Chunky: "Usually there's something in the words that will catch you offguard . . . if you *really* watch for them. A lot of things aren't evident at all. We do some cartoonish sounds. Maybe it's classical cartoon music. Sort of soft-rock."

Ernie: "With a lot of three-part counterpoint."

Novi: "Someone said it was a cross between the old Mothers

and the movie *Bambi*."

The three of them are looking forward to the inevitable public appearances. These are the costumes they're thinking of wearing: Novi wants overalls with a frog sewn on that hops up and down when she moves, and plastic warts for her viola. Chunky and Ernie want black tie and tails. Ernie's tux would have a fluffy bunny's tail and furry bunny feet. Chunky's suit would have a lion's tail that swayed in time to the music.

I Love Them

by LEONARD BROWN

I was once cousin (through a since-cold marriage) to the infamously lovely creative consortium called Chunky, Novi & Ernie, which lends a proprietary authority to my opinion that their music is everything the best, most sensitive critics will claim for it. I mean, it really is all that sweetly mad, that madly sweet . . .

You see, I *know* who Mad Daddy and Toots (see album credits & acknowledgements) are in real life. Just as I know the true identity of "Chunky" and "Novi," and the unmistakable magic which is the mark of those two unheeding elves. My respect and admiration for Ernie spins off my understanding of the company he keeps.

What worries me is that the beauty and subtlety of their music may be out-hollered by hustle and hype, by crude and gleeful emphasis on the zaniness of their

image. That is, Chunky and Ernie were *always* weird little ladies, fidgetful and gigglesome. But *always* aglow with an easily perceived aura of exceptional talent and purpose. Very young. Very freaky. Somewhat shy. With prizes and scholarships, and with people believing in them, backing that belief in substantial ways.

So I was around for a while to watch them grow, to observe how seriously they checked out all the territory.

On occasion, there was Novi improvising brilliantly on her viola with various instrumental groupings for a free-form radio show I once produced. Another time, I was touched nigh to tears by the delicacy and precision of Chunky's singing. And I was ever amazed at their interchangeability at the piano.

I wondered, as they junketed to

and from Pittsburgh, where they were reported to be gigging, where it would all end.

Now, of course, I can see where they were headed, although it isn't exactly easy to see how they got here.

Because Chunky, Novi and Ernie make a unique music. Its texture suggests that it be described as a kind of rock chamber music. Perhaps Novi's viola conveys that feeling, but possibly it comes from the consistently graceful arrangements by another notable violist, John Cale, and by Kirby Johnson.

They seem to have attempted, and generally achieved, an idiom of their own, refreshingly free from pop music's lazy system of ready clichés. Chunky's material (she does all the writing) is pretty stuff, enhanced by jazz licks and sly quotes somewhat like

musical puns. The rock beat serves to steady rather than stultify.

She has an astonishing voice, and she knows and uses its nuances, from limpid to heavy, from lightly warm to hotly sexy.

Since this is a blatant whoopee of an album review to appear in a label's house organ, I wish I could honestly snipe just a little to make it more convincing. But hell, I simply cannot. I *love* this album, the way I doted on Laura Nyro's debut, or the first Sweetwater sides, or Steve Goodman's first album.

I feel two things about it: one, that it will have to make its own way because it is so utterly unusual; and, two, that Chunky, Novi and Ernie are going to have an enormous influence on the music of other writers and other bands.

The Automatic Phonograph Evolves

Nowadays one may take for granted the availability of machines that play the music of one's choice continuously, untouched by human hands save the ones that eventually arrive to turn them off or change the programming. Carousel-type cartridge players will give you wall-to-wall San Sebastian Strings the whole year 'round; even your old faithful record changer will gladly repeat *ad infinitum* as much music as can be gotten on one side of a disc. With only slight human intervention (say once every two hours), changers of discs and cassettes alike can make music as varied as Minnesota weather. Set up, sit back and relax is the word for the 1970s.

Needle and Crank

It wasn't so in the phonograph's salad days, of course. But back in the century's first quarter, folks were so enthralled with the mechanical presence in their living rooms of Caruso, Jolson and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band that no one seemed to mind that after each three-minute side you had to not only (1) change the record, but (2) change the needle also and (3) apply about 15 seconds of vigorous circular motion to the windup crank. (Come to think of it, that *did* save an awful lot of electricity!) Even if you only wanted to hear the same record again, you still had to perform (2) and (3) every time, though you could skip (2) if you didn't mind having worn-out records.

Sooner or later, people were bound to get tired of all this rigmarole for the sake of music. Two things hastened the process:

the quick development of entertainment radio in the early 1920s (you didn't have to wind up a radio) and the appearance of full-length symphonic recordings during the same period. The change-the-record-change-the-needle-wind-it-up process, onerous enough at any time, was about the last thing anyone wanted to do right in the middle of the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. And so, lo and behold, came the record changer, a case of need-fulfillment on the part of America's music industry if there ever was one.

To tell the truth, changers did not change the record business overnight. Though electric motors and semi-permanent needles (good for 100 plays or so) made them reasonably practical as early as 1927, the early models were likely to scuff, chip or fracture one's favorite records if they got eversoslightly out of adjustment. And they were expensive, which was no help at all when the Depression came.

Age of the Console

By the late 1930s, however, the Depression had eased, and mass production helped make the changer a part of nearly every cultured middle-class American living room (usually as part of an imposing console radio-phonograph). Radio and records combined to push symphonic music to an all-time popularity peak in the 1940s, and despite their bulk and unwieldiness, multiple-disc sets of symphonies and concertos sold like San Fernando Valley land right up to the coming of LP in 1948.

And now, on to last week's question! Most changers made during the mid-1930s and 1940s operate, like the ones made today, by dropping records one by one onto the turntable from a position slightly above it. Except for some ultra-sophisticated, expensive models like RCA's "Magic Brain" (and the jukebox-type background music systems available today), they are not capable of turning records over. So, in order to enable a symphony to be played in proper sequence, Side 2 had to be on a different disc from Side 1, Side 3 on yet another, and so on. Ideally, each side would be on a separate record, but that would take an awful lot of shellac, so Victor and Columbia (which had about 90% of the classical business between them) compromised by using the B sides for the second half of the work. It was all arranged so that when you finished playing the first half, you flipped the entire stack over and got the second half in proper sequence, like so:

Part 1 coupled with 8
Part 2 coupled with 7
Part 3 coupled with 6
Part 4 coupled with 5

This was called "automatic sequence." All well and good, save that it just happened that you still had to flip over Beethoven's Ninth right in the middle of the slow movement.

Different Discs

And there was a substantial minority of purists who still didn't go for changers. Playing automatic-sequence sets on a manual machine could get to be quite a pain, because you had to go to a

different disc for each side-change except the one right in the middle. So the long-suffering record dealer had to stock his inventory in both "automatic sequence" and in "manual sequence," which had Side 1 coupled with 2, 3 with 4, and so on.

This mild confusion remains with us today; for some years, most multiple-disc LP sets have been "automatic sequence." But with the increasing popularity of manual turntables today, there may be a change soon. For instance, the upcoming Bearsville double album, *Todd*, will be (by Mr. Rundgren's request) issued in manual sequence.

Question for Next Week

Some nine years ago a record became a modest hit in the USA and a rather large one in England. The title: "It's Alright." The artist on "It's Alright" has in more recent times played a key role in the career of another artist, now blossoming on Warner Bros. (as recently reported in *Circular*). For the reward detailed below, be first to name the gent who sang "It's Alright" and the other gent who, thanks in part to Gent #1's efforts, is doing alright for himself these days.

Winner of Dr. Demento's 1/7 contest is Bob Henschen of Tempe, Arizona, who correctly identified Randy Newman as the composer of "Golden Gridiron Boy."

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, 3701 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Ca. 91505) wins any *single* Warner/Reprise catalog album. (Please specify choice.) Answers will be geographically pro-rated; ties will be judged on the basis of penmanship, wit and lucidity.

Mr. Energy to the Rescue

LONDON—On account of our well-publicized crisis, the government appointed a so-called "Mr. Energy" whose duties included persuading the public to cut down on consumption of domestic electricity. He is not popular, and no wonder. After suggesting that people could save power by brushing their teeth in the dark (thereby causing an instant rash of comics with toothpaste-festooned noses), he confessed this was impractical. His classic boner, though, was to be photographed shaving by candlelight—with an electric razor...

Sheathed Sheaths. Meanwhile the darkening of the telly each

night at 10:30 has led panic-stricken family planning authorities to request mail-order contraceptives for teens.

Overwhelmed Orchestra.

Visiting Martin Mull has been perpetrating his own fiendish power failures on the benighted Britons. While guesting on the Jack Jones Show, he reduced the orchestra to such helpless hysterics that they were unable to play.

Doobies Devastating. Tour manager Mick Coles rang from Germany to say that the Doobies are devastating Europe. No encore shortage there. A Montreux-based WEA exec has invited the band to swell their lungs with pristine Swiss mountain air at his glamorous high-altitude retreat. Hope the Doobies breathe deep because now they've got an extra date to play at London's Rainbow, due to the first one selling out. The sell-out was a gratifying surprise as the Doobies have yet to get a record in the British charts, but there has been a sudden surge of interest in them here, the press office accommodating ceaseless calls for pix and fax. I think it's a healthy sign that the public is tiring of queen-rock and over-sold hermaphrodites from New York...

Most Overrated English Trade Paper. A dubious honor has been heaped on the "In Memory of Bruce Lee" single by John and Roselind: The *N.M.E.* has rated it the worst record ever made. While I'm all for conscientiously applied superlatives, I figure recording nadirs are a matter of personal non-preference.

Anyhow, the *N.M.E.* seem to be so disenchanted with the business they're supposed to be reporting that they've asked the punters in their current readers' poll to vote on the "most over-rated hit" in both British and world categories. Ho hum.

Socko Slade. Nothing jaded about those incredible Slade fans though. The coming Slade LP has been awarded a pre-natal Gold disc, two weeks prior to release. As if one needed any further proof of the great British passion for Slade after their Christmas single sold more than a million copies here. (To be comparable per capita

success, a single would have to sell four million in the States). It took me forever to acquire a taste for Slade, but at last, like countless others, my upper lip was permanently unstiffened by TV exposure to the inspired Noddy Holder. I defy you to watch him, and keep a straight face.

—SHELLEY BENOIT

Inspirational Verse

I have never kissed
A car before
It's like a door

— Marc Bolan
"The Slider"

Vinyl Statistics

Circular is pleased to present a running account of newborn Warner Family Records. The past week has given birth to six singles, no albums.

SINGLES (January 23)

- "Unborn Child"—
Seals & Crofts—WB 7771
- "What I Had With You"—
Marion Love—WB 7778
- "Have You Ever Tried It"—
Ashford & Simpson—
WB 7781
- "Dance With The Devil"—
Cozy Powell—CHS 2029
- "The Goose—Part I"—
Parliament—NEB 0003
- "At the Tropicana"—
Kathy Dalton—DIS 1191

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