ROLLING STONE

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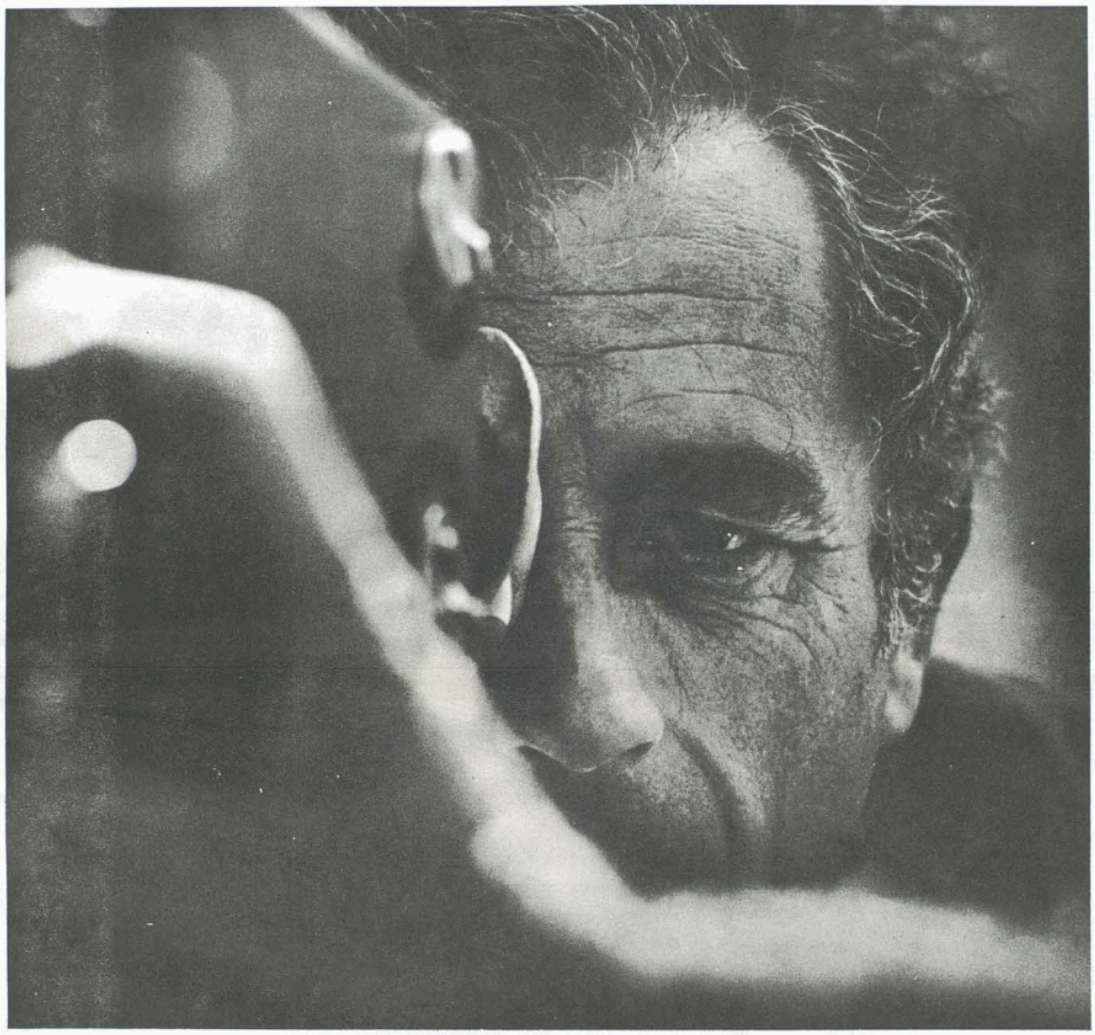

This is Michelangelo Antonioni looking at you: interview on Page 15.

THE HOLLYWOOD HILLBILLIES: WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

randymeisnerretrospective.com

BY JERRY HOPKINS

LOS ANGELES—If you can picture all the freaks and gypsies native to this city's "hip" rock and roll scene gathered together on a Hollywood sound stage and forming squares for an old-fashioned hoedown, then perhaps you can begin to grasp a little of what's happening in Los Angeles.

In the past few weeks, nearly half a dozen "country" groups (C&W, country-rock, rockabilly, Memphis blues, pick the label you like) have appeared here and "country" seems to be what's *au courant* in the pop music scene.

Actually, it shouldn't have surprised anyone when the sound normally associated with Nashville and other points east and south made its presence felt in L.A. A year-end listing of the top C&W record sellers for 1968 showed Glen Campbell, Merle Haggard and Buck Owens in the top three positions, and all three record in Hollywood.

Others who live or record in L.A. include Roger Miller, Jerry Wallace, Tex Williams, John Hartford, the Everly Brothers, Rex Allen, Molly Bee, Johnny Bond, Wynn Stewart and, until recently, Johnny Cash. Plus . . . there are two 24-hour country radio stations, RCA Victor and Capitol (two of the largest producers of C&W music on disc), several country music clubs, two country music publishers (Central Songs and Blue Book) and the influential Academy of County & Western Music all are located here, all of which may be a natural outgrowth of the Okie invasion of Southern California that started nearly forty years ago and hasn't stopped yet.

It was perhaps logical, then, when many established pop acts (from Dylan to the Monkees) went to Nashville to record, some of the new talent would follow the musical trend, but stay in Hollywood, where country music was not as alien as most thought. Thus four of the most talked-about groups in L.A. all recognize rock's country roots. They are, in no particular order, Pogo, Delaney and Bonnie and Friends, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and Dillard-Clark and the Expedition. Still another new group, formed by David Crosby, Steve Stills and Graham Nash, begins recording in Los Angeles February 8.

Although Crosby, Stills & Nash (that's what they're calling the group) couldn't be described fairly as C&W, there definitely will be a country sound involved, and it is this new "super-group" that has attracted so much interest in recent weeks, rather than any of the newer bands.

The way was cleared for this alliance to record last week when Nash, formerly with the Hollies, was released from his Columbia contract in a trade deal with Atlantic, who released former Buffalo Springfield Richie Furay to Epic which is owned by Columbia. Stills already had been under contract to Atlantic and Crosby had been free. So . . . Crosby, Stills & Nash will record for Ahmet Ertegun.

According to inside sources, the agreement finally reached "an exceptional six-figure deal."

The band goes into Wally Heider's Studio Three in Los Angeles to record a double-LP set, two sides of acoustical material, two sides of electrical music. Those recording with them will include Harvey Brooks, formerly of the Electric Flag, on bass; Paul Harris, also ex-Flag, on keyboard; and Dallas Taylor, ex-Clear Light, on drums. Sessions are expected to run 8 weeks.

Dave Geffen is leaving the Ashley Famous Agency to manage this new group.

Pogo was the first new band to acquire some acclaim, largely because two of the members, Richie Furay and Jim Messina, are former Buffalo Springfield, and the Springfield (not too far removed from C&W) had a large local following.

Pogo is perhaps the most commercial of the four indigenous L.A. C&W bands (with Delaney and Bonnie running a close second), combining, as did the

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Pogo: Tight country rock—fun and exciting

—Continued from Page One

Springfield, much of the country-blues vocal sound with a tight rock and roll beat. But whereas the Springfield leaned more toward rock, Pogo is aimed at C&W. In part, this is because the band features Rusty Young on pedal steel guitar, which serves as the band's lead instrument. Young also contributes a second voice, to Furay's lead.

Others in the band are Randy Meisner, a Nebraska boy who plays bass and sings most of the songs demanding the highest range, and George Grantham, a native of Oklahoma on drums. Furay plays rhythm guitar and writes all the group's material, most of which is exceptional. Messina is the band's producer, plays semi-lead, rhythm guitar and provides an additional backup voice.

Pogo recently signed with Epic—following gigs at the Troubadour here and the Fillmore in San Francisco—and is currently cutting an album. Pogo's music is exciting and fun.

Delaney and Bonnie and Friends is a seven-man-one-woman "Rhythm and Country Blues" group with an album a ready cut for Stax-Volt, a second LP upcoming from Elektra, the label they signed with last week. (However, the band will be on the Apple label in England.) The first album, as yet unreleased, has the Stax-Volt sound. Delaney and Bonnie, who are husband and wife, were deep into blues in this period—the album was cut a year ago—and Bonnie sounds (there's no other way to say it) Gospel-black. Headlining at the Whiskey a Go Go last week, there was was more of a country sound.

Others in the band are Leon Russell, from Tulsa, formerly of the Asylum Choir, on lead guitar; Jim Keltner, Tulsa, formerly with the MC-Squared and Gabor Szabo; Carl Radle, also Tulsa, formerly with Colors, on bass; Bobby Whitlock, Memphis, on organ and singing falsetto; Bobby Keys, Lubbock, Texas, on tenor sax; and Ken Lindsey, also from the South, on trumpet and flengelhorn. Three years ago, Delaney Bramlett, who is from Mississippi, was lead singer of the Shindogs that duo on *Shindig*—and his wife, born in Missouri, is reputed to be the only white singer who has ever toured with the Ikettes. The band is also the only white group ever to have been signed by Stax-Volt.

The third new group, Dillard-Clark and the Expedition, also has two lead singers, Gene Clark, formerly of the Byrds, and Douglas Dillard of the Dillards. They have their roots in bluegrass and C&W and one from an area noted for root music, Missouri. "We are doing mixtures of all the things we've picked up in our travels through the years," says Dillard. "Much of the music we've written for the album (on A&M) sounds like bluegrass but also has elements of jazz mixed with it. It's really not traditional, yet it has the traditional sound and the traditional-type harmonies. We now use all electric instruments, but still all solid country with a lot of vocals, sometimes four-part."

The Expedition part of the band includes another ex-Byrd, Michael Clarke on drums; Dave Jackson, formerly with the Good Time Singers, New Christy Minstrels and Hearts & Flowers, on bass; and Bernie Leadon, another ex-Heart & Flower, on guitar. Their first album has been released and currently they are cutting an old Elvis Presley hit, "Don't Be Cruel," as their next single.

The fourth group, and perhaps the flashiest—at least so far as appearance is concerned — is the Flying Burrito Brothers. Led by Chris Hillman, still another ex-Byrd, and Gram Parsons, formerly of the International Submarine Band and the Byrds, this group has been dressed by Nudie, a Hollywood-based Western costumer who drives a Cadillac with a Continental kit that features pistols and rifles mounted on the fenders and trunk, a saddle embedded with silver dollars between the bucket seats. Parsons' white linen suit is covered with sequined marijuana plants and poppies; Hillman's white suit has a red-sequined sunburst on the back.

There are three others in the band someone called Sneaky Pete who plays steel guitar; Chris Ethridge, who has played with Johnny Rivers and Judy Collins, on bass; and a drummer who hasn't been decided upon. The sound is country, but not especially exciting. Headlining a Saturday night party at A&M, for whom they record, the only number that roused the 300-odd who were there was a reprise of an Everly Brothers hit, "Wake Up Little Susie."

Nonetheless, the Burritos are soon leaving for England to join the Rolling Stones on a European tour beginning in March. They will remain in London to cut their second album with Keith Richards producing.

The Burritos were scheduled to visit England two months ago to appear on the Stones' TV special, but had to cancel when they were refused work permits.

It was also for this group that A&M threw its hoedown and the best thing about that evening was the square dancing. An unidentified local C&W band, complete with a caller in a Stetson and red neck, roused all the hippie folk there:

Now, number four you
Rip and snort
Head for the middle
And cut it short

As half a hundred longhaired folk laughed and bowed to their corners and then to their partners, joined hands and ripped and snorted again.

When you get an invitation to a record company press party, and a half a pound of straw falls out of the envelope, you begin to think something's happening after all.

Dillard & Clark: 'Things we've picked up over the years'

HOT PROSPECT

Columbia's Bid Bags Johnny Winter

NEW YORK—Texas guitarist Johnny Winter, the ultimate white bluesman—he's an albino originally brought to public attention via a starring role in the special Texas issue (ROLLING STONE, Dec. 7, 1968), has signed a recording contract with Columbia Records in the middle and, for Columbia, unprecedented six-figure range.

Winter reportedly turned down an offer of over $500,000.00 from RCA Victor Records. This followed nearly a month of unimaginable hype in New York City which was a true life imitation of major league baseball bidding on the hot new prospect everybody expects to develop into a star pitcher for either the New York Yankees (which is also owned by Columbia) or the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Following his "discovery," Winter was flown to New York where he predictably knocked out the predictable second string New York critical set. This opened the way for New York club operator Steve Paul to announce that "sealed bids" or the like would be accepted from "selected" record companies, including Elektra and Atlantic in addition to those already mentioned. Bidding was high and spirited, and Winter accepted Columbia's offer, although not the highest in cash advance.

The guitarist was signed at a private ceremony at a winter estate on the Hudson River several Sundays ago by Columbia president Clive Davis who described the deal as the "largest amount ever given to a new performer in Columbia's history." The contract is for five years.

Winter: Up from Texas

It was not revealed whether souvenir pens were given away after inking the contract.

No date or producer has yet been set for recording although everyone is anxious to get product as soon as possible. Winter may or may not be accompanied by his group, currently titled "Winter," which consists of a bassist and a drummer.

For those who simply cannot wait, Winter has already recorded one LP for Sonobear, a tiny Austin, Texas, independent. It's called *The Progressive Blues Experiment*, Sonobeat (R-1002B), and only two or three hundred were pressed. It's said to be a fine recording, technically and musically. Winter plays four originals and six standard blues on it. For $6, Phil's Record Shop, 705 W. 24th street, Austin, will send you one. It figures to become an instant collector's item.

It is expected that Johnny Winter will be "the next super star" if the hype isn't too heavy.

'FOREIGNISM'

A Dictatorship Clamps Down

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MADRID—Spain has clamped down on foreign pop music for at least the next six months because of what the Spanish Ministry of Information and Tourism calls "excessive proportions" of non-Spanish artists on radio and TV.

The problem for the dictatorial Francisco Franco government is that Spanish workers and students at several universities have wrought so much havoc—demonstrations have closed down several institutions—as to bring on a state of national emergency. The ruling class feels that ridding the media of foreign influence is one way to forestall the incipient revolution.

The government has decreed that no less than 55 per cent of all pop vocals broadcast must be in Spanish, that 40 per cent of the music played must be by Spanish composers, and that 10 per cent of all music airtime will go to classical music. These percentages are to be increased later.

This should entirely alter the makeup of the Spanish Top Ten chart, on which five out of ten artists last year were foreign. (Tom Jones is No. 1, followed, down the list, by Cliff Richard, the Beatles, Richard Anthony, and, at No. 10, Bobby Goldsboro.)

The head of Spanish radio and TV explains that the dictatorship's restrictions are intended to stop "the growing foreignism of music in both media. Spanish-speaking artists will be able to *impose* a style that is closer to our customs." (Italics ours.)

'VERY GREAT THRILL'

Tim's Triumphant Two-Week Tour

LOS ANGELES—Tiny Tim has just completed a two-week, six-city promotion tour for his *Second Album* and "Great Balls of Fire" single, and it wasn't just that he pulled 100,000 fans—it was the *way* he did it.

Not only did a Detroit suburb declare a "Tiny Tim Day"; not only did Mr. Tim dine with Mr. Hugh Hefner in Chicago; not only were the critics uniformly effusive in their praise; but Mr. Tim's fans exhibited an altogether new enthusiasm, as witnessed by this Dallas News story:

"Pandemonium broke out at North Park, Thursday, as an estimated 8,000 youngsters packed in to catch a glimpse of Tiny Tim, the sweet-voiced boy wonder. 'We Want Tim,' they screamed.

"As more and more rushed in, they knocked the sliding glass door on the mall off its runners. It was a mob scene, and security guards and police were rushed in to halt the human wall that continued to come in from the mall."

It reminded some Texans of nothing so much as the Beatles during their touring days. Commented Mr. Tim, at tour's end: "It was a very great thrill."

Jack Bruce and His Friends LP

LONDON—Since Cream has separated there has been much speculation as to what Messrs. Clapton, Bruce and Baker will do next—and now it develops that bassist-composer Jack Bruce has been doing it all along.

Even prior to the Cream's farewell tour of America Bruce had recorded his first album under his own name. To be called *Jack Bruce and His Friends*, it features Bruce on acoustic bass with tenor saxophonist Dick Heckstall-Smith, guitarist John McLaughlin and drummer Jon Hiseman in a program of purely instrumental "free" playing on Bruce originals.

Before this one is released, Bruce will cut another, less far-out LP of his songs, hopefully utilizing musicians like Duane Allman, the guitarist on Wilson Pickett's "Hey Jude."

"Everybody tells me I've got to do that," says Bruce, "or the second one [with the "free playing"] won't work. They don't think an instrumental album can be a seller, but it might if I establish my name as a solo artist first."

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