

COUNTRY MUSIC

INSIDE!

WARREN SMITH
SONNY CURTIS
COUNTRY HARP
ROY DRUSKY
AND LOTS MORE



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THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

The music press, like every other form of media, breeds at some stage a sub-world of alternative expression. This expression takes the tangible form of what can best be described as 'fanzines' in the music field.

by Arthur Wood



Joe Ely (left) and Brian Setzer of Stray Cats

It's no use rushing off to refer to the nearest copy of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, because the term 'fanzine' is not included. It originated in the 1920's and '30's as a reference to the published letters and 'mind ramblings' of science-fiction addicts.

How the word came to be adopted by music fans has become shrouded in the mists of time, but there survives within the shores of this sceptered isle a number of these 'underground' publications. A number of them concentrate on some of the more contemporary-progressive artists and groups, mainly in the field of country music.

Since I feel it is wrong for different styles of music to be placed in individual compartments, then the fringes of country diverge into the realms of folk and blues. After all, I am talking about covering the subject which brings the greatest joy — *music!*

In Britain, one of the first 'fanzines' was a publication called 'Zig-Zag', which was launched in the late '60's and which has had a rather chequered history both issue and quality-wise since then. Two of 'Zig-Zag's' founders, John Tobler and Peter Frame, are responsible for the '25 Years

Of Rock' series currently being repeated on Radio-1.

John Tobler has written a number of books on artists such as Buddy Holly and Abba, while Pete Frame's contributions to rock history are defunctive. A selection of Pete's *'Family Trees'* were published in book form a few years back.

It may appear to the reader that the contributions made by Tobler and Frame have little relevance to the folk-country-blues fields. The point I am trying to make is that they were responsible for the birth of a particular style of writing. That style was founded on the written ramblings of people who, basically, were fans of the music they wrote about. But these initial ramblings developed into an almost neurotic attention to detail, both about the musician's life and his writing, while retaining throughout an obvious love for the music.

The mid-1970's saw a boom in fanzines but as the decade drew to a close interest faded somewhat.

Of the four publications I am going to mention, only one is a survivor of the '70's boom, namely *'Omaha Rainbow'*, *'Manna'*, *'Cornbread Moon'* and *'Swing 51'* are all relative

newcomers to the scene.

'Omaha Rainbow' is a one-man operation run by Surrey school teacher, Peter O'Brien. Anyone familiar with the songs of John Stewart will recognise the source of the magazine's title, since it was started as an outlet for news about Stewart and has maintained that goal.

Initially the publication presented an 'article' format but quickly developed into a straight presentation of interviews, usually about three per issue. Recent 'in-depth' interviews have featured Steve Young, Phil Everly, Hoyt Axton and Bobby Bare.

The magazine appears four times a year and, like others I am going to mention, is best obtained by subscription. Currently running at No. 27, a four-issue subscription costs £2.80 for UK readers (£3.00 for Europe) and is available from Peter O'Brien, 10 Lesley Court, Harcourt Road, Wallington, Surrey.

Another one-man operation is — *'Manana'*, which comes from Aberdeen. Loosely based on news about Jimmy Buffett and Michael Newsmith (although news on the latter is now to cease since his company, Pacific Arts Corporation, is moving exclusively into the video-tape

magazine has recently carried features and interviews on Tom Gribbin, Larry Jon Wilson, Bat McGrath, Ian Matthews and James Talley.

The latest issue is No.11 and a four-issue subscription costs £1.50 for the UK and £2.00 for European readers. *'Manana'* is available from Mike Gibb, 'Ronderlin', Station Road, Newmacher, Aberdeen.

'Cornbread Moon' is a relative newcomer to the scene, with only one issue to date, although the second is currently 'at the printers'.

Anyone familiar with Joe Ely will recognise the inspiration behind the paper's title, which is presented in newspaper format. Without a number of issues available it is difficult to assess what direction *'Cornbread Moon'* will take, but the first edition did show promise, with features on Joe Ely and Bobby Bare. Issue No. 1 costs 45p and is available from Bernie Slater, 48 Rectory Way, Yatton, Avon.

Finally, we come to *'Swing 51'*, which is actually folk-orientated, but is nonetheless an excellent publication. The love and care taken in putting this magazine together leaps at you from every page. Recent issues have featured interviews with Robin Williamson (ex-Incredible String Band) and Happy Traum (who, with brother Artie, was responsible for the Mud Acres albums on *Flying Fish*). Peter Rowan was recently featured in the first part of a series and the album review section crosses many boundaries without prejudice.

Hard Country

(ORIGINAL Soundtrack)
Various Artists Epic SE 37367
(American Import).

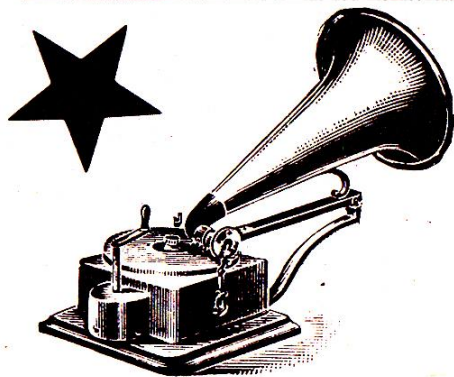
Hard Country (Michael Murphey with Katy Moffatt) / Hard Partyin' Country Darlin' (Michael Murphey) / Texas (When I Die) (Tanya Tucker) / Cowboy Cadillac (Michael Murphey) / Break My Mind (Michael Murphey) / Take It As It Comes (Michael Murphey and Katy Moffatt) / Somebody Must Have Loved You Right Last Night (Tanya Tucker) / Gonna Love You Anyway (Tanya Tucker) / I Love You So Much It Hurts (Jerry Lee Lewis) / West Texas Waltz (Joe Ely).

I've never been convinced by soundtrack albums, they're always a bit like patchwork — some pieces fit, but most are out of place.

'Hard Country' appears to be yet another in the current spate of 'contemporary cowboy' films, (I don't have to quote titles, do I?). The five songs that feature Michael Murphey are all original versions by him, while the remaining tracks have been available before and appear courtesy of *MCA Records*. On the album the outstanding tracks are Murphey's duets with Katy Moffatt. In fact, 'Take It As It Comes' is already climbing the American country Hot-100. The remaining Murphey tracks, including the version of John D. Loudermilk's 'Break My Mind', would probably be more relevant with a knowledge of the film storyline. Murphey acted as musical supervisor on the film and also co-wrote the story.

A passable album but far from being 'classic' as far as Michael Murphey's contributions are concerned ●

JO PAUL



CLASSIC TRACKS

A nostalgic look at some of the great albums from the past

WINDMILL In A Jet Filled Sky

John Hambrick Brown Bag Records BB 14201 (American Issue) Hard Faced Road/Me And My Friend / Silence Of My Heart / Share 'Til Tomorrow / I Ain't Never Seen A White Man / Feel What I Understand / The Land / Purple Haze Under The Moon / Courage, Dignity And Grace / After The Song.

How do I begin to describe this album? Well, for a start, I know absolutely nothing about the guy; where he comes from, where he has gone to, whether he made any other albums.

Bryan Chalker says John Hambrick is part American Indian, which may be the case, as he appears on one of the album's inner liner photographs at a tribal gathering.

A few years ago this album littered numerous record shop bargain bins and could usually be purchased for less than £1. It is the fate suffered by many albums, but for those who risk buying them, then occasionally a gem appears.

Of the ten songs on this particular gem, eight are Hambrick's own compositions; the exceptions being 'White Man', composed by D. Monda, and 'Purple Haze', by Frank Scout.

Hambrick's voice could be described as 'lived in'. It is certainly mellow in tone and, as a writer, he obviously works from personal experience. His songs seem to indicate that he is a hobo,

constantly on the move, never settling or making permanent ties. Love is treated philosophically and he accepts it while it lasts. He sees human beings not as races of many creeds and colours, at odds with one another, but as one thing — *MAN* (Oh that it was so).

Through all the songs on the album comes the feeling that Hambrick is extremely close to

the earth, and is a man who wishes that it remains unspoilt and in tune with nature. (The Indian ethic?)

Recorded in Nashville in 1972 with fairly understated backing by stalwarts such as Charlie McCoy, Hargus 'Pig' Robbins and Denis Linde, this album deserves to be heard as it contains boundless human feelings ● JO PAUL.



The kind of rugged land that Hambrick is 'in tune' with.