

COUNTRY MUSIC

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RATTLESNAKE
ANNIE
JERRY FOSTER
ALBUM
REVIEWS
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Number 1
January 6-January 19, 1982

World

Price 30p Every other Wednesday Vol. 2

BEFORE the EAGLES **Another Preflyte**

by **ARTHUR WOOD**

In issue 15 of *Country Music World*, Steve Frampton charted the rise to fame and super-stardom of the Eagles. His story began with the group performing a month's residency at, 'The Gallery', a dance-bar in Aspen, Colorado in the late summer of 1971. Here CMW give you the story of the band prior to that.



Mike Nesmith and The First National Band



The Eagles

In the mid Sixties, it was the fashion for British groups to, 'get it together in the country'. Stevie Winwood's group, Traffic, were the first to use the method. Since Britain has exported many excellent groups in the States, it's not unnatural that some of the lifestyle should also seep through.

Bernie Leadon, (guitar / vocals), Don Henley, (drums / vocals), Randy Meisner, (bass / vocals) and Glenn Frey, (guitar / vocals), formed the group after they played together early in 1971 as part of Linda Ronstadt's backing band. Glenn Frey was already contracted to David Geffen's management company. Geffen was about to launch the Asylum record label, and Frey approached him with a view to signing the band. The meeting resulted in the band's Colorado trip.

It is interesting, however, to investigate where each member of the group came from, since Country-rock was developed from a distillation of many musical influences.

Bernie Leadon was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 19th 1947. By 1957, Bernie's family had moved to San Diego, California, where he met up with

Larry Murray and Gary Carr. They were hanging out at an instrument shop called, 'The Blue Guitar', which was owned by Ed Douglas. The shop had become a meeting place for musicians of many types, but in particular, for those interested in bluegrass music.

The cream of the musicians who frequented the shop, played in the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers and Bernie joined the group as a banjo player in 1962, when Kenny Wertz, (later in Country Gazette),

SCOTSVILLE SQUIRREL BARKERS

left for a short time. Chris Hillman, who later found fame with the Byrds, was also a member of the Barkers. The group disintegrated later that year and Murray and Hillman joined



Randy Sparks' group, 'The Green Grass Group'. Sparks, of course, had formed the New Christie Minstrels and then sold out his interest in that group for a vast sum of money.

Bernie's father was appointed to a teaching post at a Florida University in 1964, and the family moved to the East Coast. By 1967, however, the urge to return to California became overwhelming, and Bernie drove west to join Larry Murray's latest group, 'Hearts and Flowers'. Bernie played on their second *Capitol* album, 'Of Horses, Kids And Forgotten Women', which was released in July, 1968. The album included tracks like; 'She Sang Hymns Out Of Tune', 'When I Was A Cowboy' and 'Second Hand Sundown Queen', and was very much in the country/folk vein.

Bernie, in fact, replaced Ric Cunha in 'Hearts and Flowers'. Cunha went on to join Mason Williams' band, made a pleasant solo album titled, 'Songs' for G.R.C. Records in 1974, and then resurfaced on Emmylou's first two *Warner Brothers* albums. A second solo Cunha album titled, 'Moving Pictures', is currently available on the *Sierra/Briar* label. Murray later recorded a solo album for *Verve Forecast* titled 'Suite Country Suite', and then made a career of producing albums for other artists.

LACK OF SUCCESS

In the summer of 1968, Bernie started hanging out with Doug Dillard. Gene Clark, formerly a Byrd, began to join in their practices, and since he had signed a recording contract with *A&M Records*, the Dillard and Clark group evolved. The 'Fantastic Expedition' album was recorded soon afterwards, and consisted of original compositions by group members, with the exception of the Lester Flatt song, 'Git It On Brother'. Michael Clark, the original Byrd drummer was recruited, along with David Jackson, (ex-Hearts and Flowers), on bass, and Don Beck on pedal steel. Electric instrumentation was tried for a while, but when the band reverted to acoustic 'Bluegrass' music, Leadon left the band. His departure was probably hastened by the fact that Donna

Washburn had been recruited to take over Bernie's harmony vocals.

Bernie found his next gig as a member of Linda Ronstadt's Corvettes, and he spent most of 1969 as a member of her band. Leadon replaced Jeff Hanna, who had left Linda's band to re-form

SIXTIES PSYCHEDELIC FUNSTERS

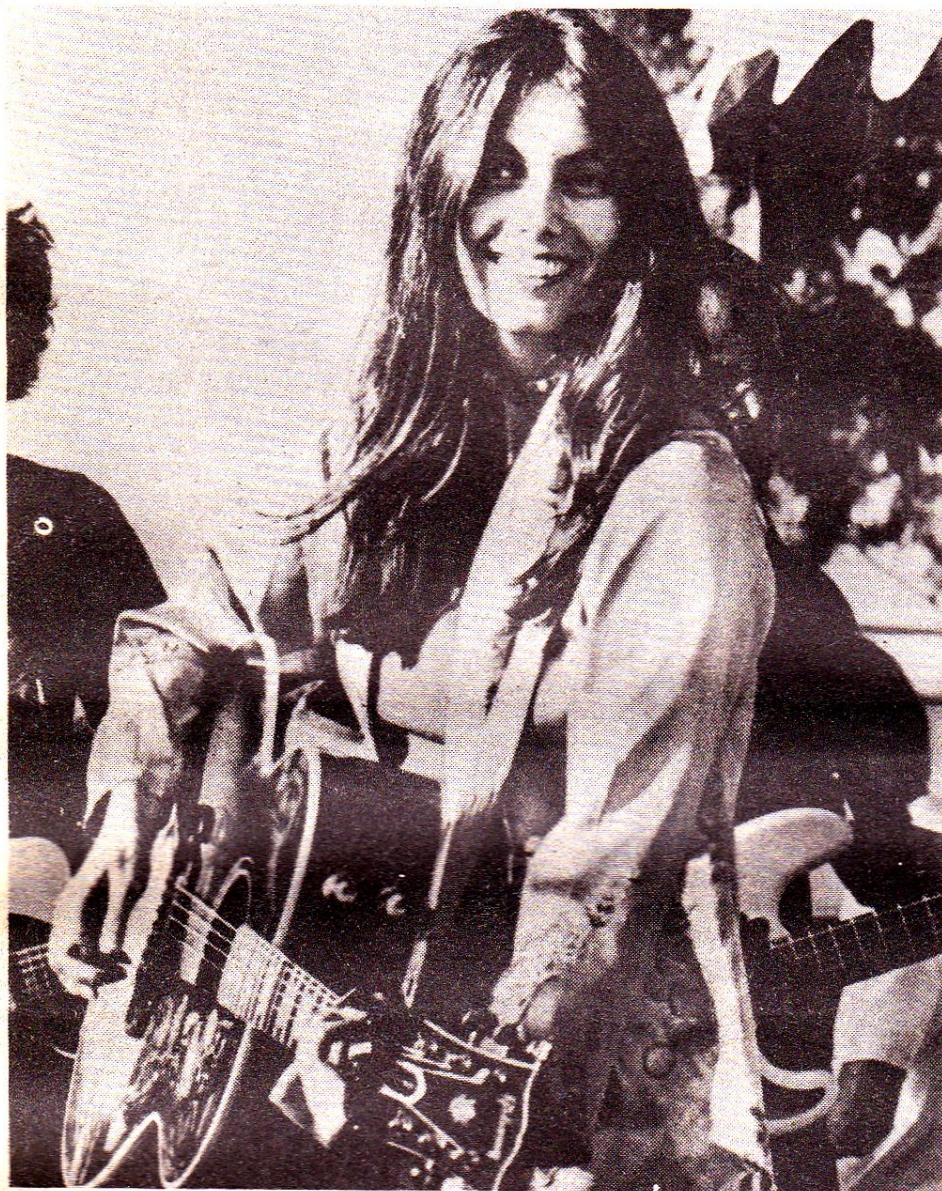
the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. The Corvettes, at that time included; John Ware and John London, later to join Michael Nesmith's 1st National Band. Chris Darrow, once a member of those Sixties psychedelic funsters, Kaleidoscope, was also in Linda's band and he later recorded a number of solo albums. John Ware of course, is now the only original member left in Emmylou's current Hot Band.

Late in 1969, Bernie was invited to join the Flying Burrito Brothers. Mike Clark had already joined the group from Dillard and Clark. Although the name, Flying Burrito Brothers had been used by numerous players who lived in Topanga Canyon in the late Sixties, it was Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman (late of the Byrds), along with Sneaky Pete, who formed the surviving core of the group which recorded the first album in early 1969. Parsons left the group soon after Bernie joined. During his eighteen month stint with the group, Bernie worked on the 'Burrito Deluxe' and 'Flying Burrito Brothers' albums.

Dissatisfaction with the Burrito's lack of success set in, and Bernie departed in the summer of 1971. He tracked down his old boss, Linda Ronstadt, re-joined her band and that is where he found Don Henley.

Henley was a 'Son of Texas', having been born in Gilmer on July 22nd, 1947. Most of his early life was spent around Linden, Texas, where he first played with a band called the 'Four Speeds'. That group evolved into Felicity, who played throughout Texas in the Sixties, before changing their name to Shiloh at the close of that decade.

Other than Henley, Shiloh



included Al Perkins on pedal steel. Perkins later joined the Burritos, before moving on with Chris Hillman to join Stephen Stills' band, Monassas. Perkins is now a respected studio musician and producer. Brothers, Michael and Richard Bowden were also in the band. Subsequent to leaving Shiloh, the brothers have played in bands too numerous to name, but Richard is now with the Maines Brothers while Michael is a member of Emmylou's current Hot Band. The final member of the band was Jim Ed Norman, who turned his skills to production work, including string arrange-

ments for some of the Eagles' albums.

With their change of name, Shiloh decided to try their luck in Los Angeles and in the fall of 1970, they recorded an album there for Jimmy Bowen's *Amos* label. Fellow Texan, Kenny Rogers was at the controls as producer. The album comprised seven band originals and three traditional songs. Don supplied three of his own compositions and the album had a bluesy, country feel, but was rather ordinary.

The group eventually split up and Henley along with the Bowden brothers joined Linda

Ronstadt's band in spring of 1971. While he had been recording for *Amos*, Henley met up with Glenn Frey. 'The Pressure Brothers' were born.

Frey hailed from Detroit, Michigan, having been born there on November 6th, 1948. During his late teens he used to hang out with fellow Detroit Rocker, Bob Seger. At the close of the Sixties, however, Frey became fascinated by the 'California Culture', so he moved West to give it a try. He met John D. Souther almost as soon as he arrived in L.A. and they formed a duo called Longbranch Pennywhistle. They recorded a rather dire album for the *Amos* label, and it was released late in 1969. Taking its title from the duo's name, the album consisted of six Souther songs, two by Frey, one composition they shared, plus an early James Taylor song, 'Don't Talk Now'. Despite the fact that James Burton, Ry Cooder and Buddy Emmon were among the studio players featured on the sessions, it is a poor singer / songwriter album.

Souther later helped to form the Souther, Hillman, Furay Band, who recorded two albums, and he also made a number of solo albums, all for Geffen's *Asylum* label.

The final member of the quartet that formed the original Eagles line up was Randy Meisner, who was born in Scotsbluff, Nebraska on March 8th, 1946.

By the time he was fifteen, he was in a Nebraskan band called the Dynamics, but he later moved to Denver, Colorado and joined the Soul Survivors. That group evolved into the Poor but an attempt to make the 'Big Time' in L.A. in early 1968 failed and the band broke up.

One of the Poor's roadies, Miles Thomas, knew Richie Furay who was in the process of putting Poco together. Thomas suggested Meisner as a bass



Linda Ronstadt

player, and Furay hired him. Randy stayed long enough to help record their first album, *'Pickin' up the pieces'* but quit after a disagreement over the final mix of the album.

Rick Nelson then asked Randy to join what became the Stone Canyon Band and he brought with him, two former members of the Poor; Alan Kemp and Pat Shanahan. Randy played on the *'Rick Nelson in Concert'* album and even did a tour of military bases in Europe with the band.

However, when he returned to the States early in 1970, he quit, because he felt stifled in the band. Randy returned to Nebraska and worked in the John Deere tractor factory for eight months, but when Allen Kemp rang him up, he decided to rejoin Rick's band.

On his return (to the Stone Canyon Band), Randy helped to record the *'Rudy the Fifth'* album. Early in 1971, he was asked by John Boylan, to fill in as bass player for Linda Ronstadt's band at a show in San Francisco. The

occasion marked the first meeting of Messrs Frey, Leadon, Meisner and Henley and eventually resulted in the formation of the Eagles.

It was actually John Boylan, Ronstadt's producer at the time, who first suggested the idea. The first album which featured the future Eagles playing together, was Linda's third solo album for Capitol, *'Linda Ronstadt'*.

If this tale proves anything, surely it is that musically, incest is a good thing. ●



DR. HOOK: Live in the U.K.

You make my pants want to get up and dance / Sexy eyes / Cover of the Rolling Stone / Carry me, Carrie / I got stoned and missed it / When you're in love with a beautiful woman/Ooh-Poo-Pah-Doo/ Sylvia's Mother. (Capitol EST 26706).

This seven piece band led by those two lunatic eccentrics, Ray Sawyer (the one with the hat and the eye patch) and Dennis Locorriere, were recorded in concert during last year's British tour, and this, their last album for Capitol, is the result. Now signed to Mercury Records the release of an album of new

material is imminent.

In the meantime, let's have a look at this one. Of course, it isn't too much of a coincidence that the release of the album has been timed with their latest British tour.

Shel Silverstein songs have always been one of the band's trademarks, and those two outrageous numbers, 'Cover of the Rolling Stone' and 'I got stoned and missed it' are given a suitably loose treatment. 'Carry me Carrie' which closes side one, opened beautifully but became really tedious with its extended

ending. Capitol must be congratulated in linking the tracks with some of the band's irreverent patter.

Not unnaturally, there is the obligatory inclusion of 'Sylvia's Mother' and 'When your in love with etc', but personally I found 'Sexy Eyes' translated best in this live situation. Most concert albums never manage to capture that truly 'live' feel when pressed on vinyl and this album is no exception, though it is a pleasant souvenir. ●

ARTHUR WOOD

SLEEPING WITH YOUR MEMORY

Janie Fricke. Do Me With Love/Homeward Bound/ Love Me / Don't Worry 'Bout Me Baby / Sleeping With Your Memory/The Heart / Always If YOU Could See Me Now/ There's No Future In The Past/ Midnight Words. (CBS — review done from advance tape).

I can remember way back in 1978 when I first heard Janie Fricke's 'Singer of Songs', God, I thought, it was one of the greatest voices and amongst the best albums I had ever heard. Well, Janie no longer records with Billy Sherrill. In fact, this is her second album with Jim Ed Norman at the helm, and I'm afraid her material now veers on the regular side of insipid.

It really is a crying shame that a superb voice should be used to deliver a string of ten ballads, that hardly vary in

tempo. Janie has now established herself Stateside, with a string of hits to her name and undoubtedly more to follow from this, her fifth, album.

Everything, however, about this album reeks of safety and there isn't one song that challenges the listener. I found the jingle-jangle banjo break on Paul Simon's 'Homeward Bound' totally out of context. The arrangement and Janie's phrasing completely misinterpret Simon's lyrical meaning of the song.

Don't get me wrong, the production and Janie's voice lack nothing in the smoothness stakes. I just wish she'd taken a gamble with material by some of the more contemporary writers, because she's definitely got the vehicle to deliver the goods.

Maybe next time. ●

ARTHUR WOOD