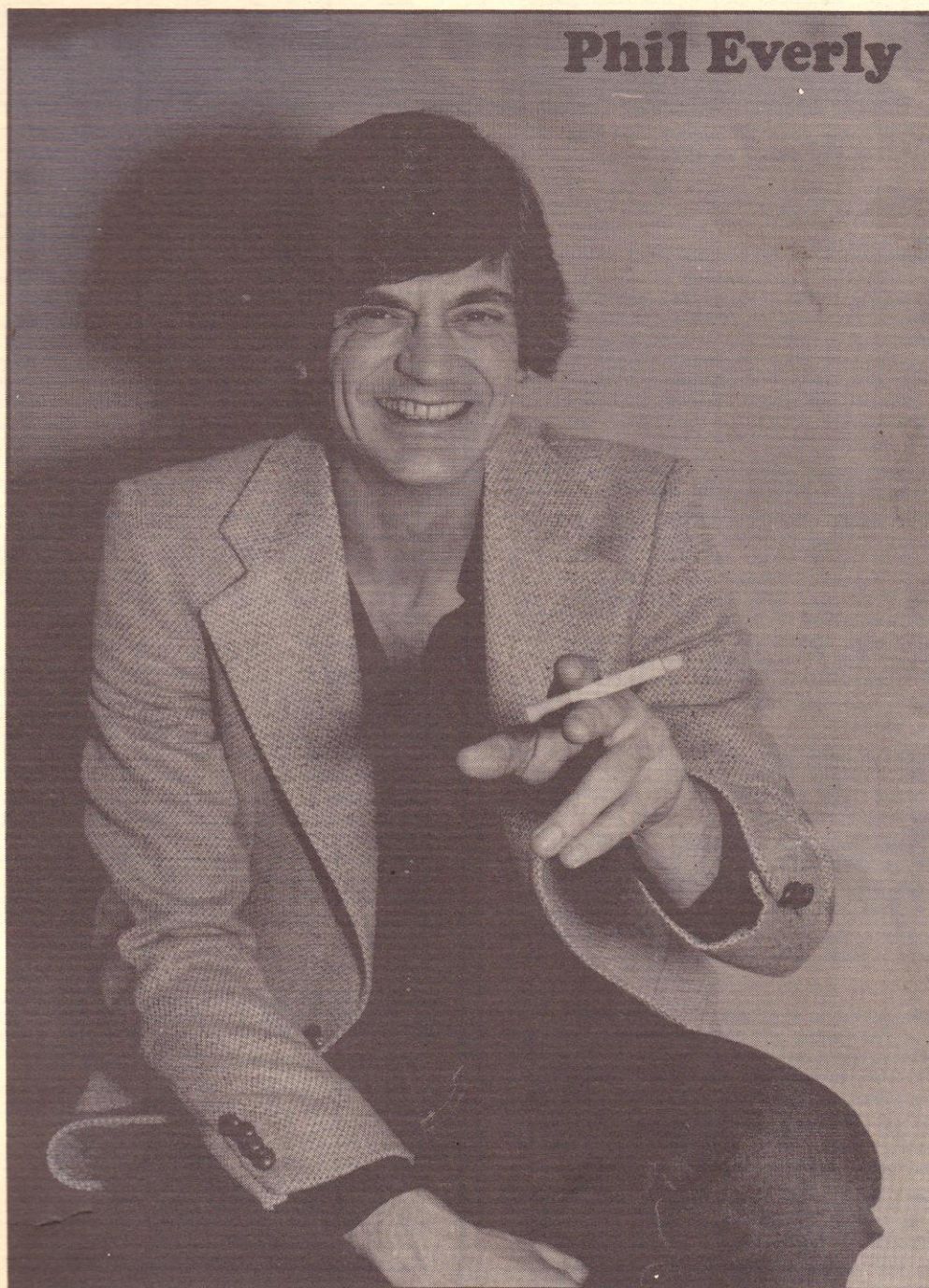


OMAHA RAINBOW

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**Juice Newton John Stewart Steve Young
Richard Dobson Frank Davis Roxy Gordon
Summer 1981 UK 50p: USA \$1.50**



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Juice, let's start off at the beginning - where and when were you born?

Well, I'm 29 years old and was born February 1952, but I won't tell you the date. This was in a small town called Lakehurst, New Jersey. When I was about one year old my family moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia, so I grew up in Virginia and my family still live there.

Is there a musical background in your family?

Absolutely nothing at all.

While at high school I believe you played a lot of folk music. Where was this?

Coffee houses and that kind of thing. I started when I was 13, playing and singing in public. I was also getting paid for it, so you could call it professional but that's getting pretty technical about it, if you know what I mean. Of course, I was still at school at

this stage.

What were your influences in the folk field?

There were people like Bob Dylan, Donovan, Joan Baez, Tom Rush and Judy Henske - real folk artists. The Byrds also when electric folk music, so to speak, was starting to happen.

Kingston Trio?

Well, I knew who they were, but that style was not quite mine. I was more into the esoteric material.

When you left high school you went to college in Los Gatos, California.

Yes, the name of the town is Spanish - it means 'the cats.'

Why attend college on the West Coast though, when you went to school on the East Coast?

I didn't go over there just for college, it was also the idea of going to California, which still carries with it a bit of mystique, certainly in the United States. I also knew some people there, that was another reason. You also get to a point where you want to move away from home and I just decided that California was where I wanted to be. This would be the late 60s, early 70s, but I only got through a couple of years at college.

Then you met up with Otha Young (who is now her husband), so did you work as a duo?

We started as a duo, which would be about 1972. Then we had a trio with a guy called John Summers, who's now playing music in another part of the country. Then we had a band, and then Otha and I didn't work together for a while. Later we had a band called Dixie Peach. Dixie Peach was an electric band, meaning it was basically the same kind of music we do now. A great deal of originals as Otha was writing quite a lot, and a great deal of old rock and roll, which is now considered rockabilly.

Did you try to get a recording contract at this stage?

Those were hard times and we didn't have a lot of money, and for a time we were working night jobs. Otha was a waiter and I was a waitress, and I also worked in a factory on the nights we weren't playing. When Dixie Peach broke up we became a trio again after we met Tom Kealey in the Grog and Sirloin pub in Los Gatos in late 1972. We moved to Los Angeles at the end of 1973 with the specific purpose in mind of eventually trying to make records.

(Otha Young) We had a recording contract with RCA within six months of moving to Los Angeles. We recorded the first album in 1974 but it didn't come out till early 1975.

When did the name Silver Spur appear?

We were already Silver Spur - Otha thought the name up. He liked it, we hated it, but we've kept the name ever since.

(O.Y.) There was a suggestion that since we were doing country material, we use the name Juice Newton and Silver Spur. Trying to find names for bands is very difficult.

Were you still using original songs at this stage, or were you using other artists' material?

Basically, what you hear on the first album is what we were doing. In our show we also did some old standards. Before Linda Ronstadt recorded 'I Fall to Pieces,' I was singing that song.

(C.Y.) We've never done Top 40 material. It's either been originals or songs that have been around for a lot of years.

What sort of dates were you playing at this stage?

As a trio we worked pubs and clubs. A lot of places we played didn't want drums because they add an entirely different dimension to the volume. If you're playing small pubs and clubs you just can't have that kind of volume. We did a lot of sit-down rooms, absolutely no dancing. We worked around the country - Colorado, Oregon, Utah - many different states. At that stage there weren't any places where we didn't get a good response. All the people we worked for were interested in having us back, but the first record did not do

well enough to allow us to go back and headline.

Did you find working in the studio different from going out and playing the clubs?

Very, very different. They were both exciting. At the time I thought one was more exciting than the other, but now I think they are both exciting but totally different concepts of music. One is spontaneous and live and very now, the other is long term. You have to record the music so that it stands up beyond the energy of one hearing and the energy of a live performance.

At what stage did Ed Leffler become your manager?

After we got our recording contract. We were introduced to him through Bones Howe who produced the first album.

Ed Leffler mainly manages bands like Sweet and Sammy Hagar. Do you feel that was detrimental?

It was a strange combination and it probably was a bad thing. Looking back on it now, I'm not sure that he understood what we were about and what I do best. It probably was not the best pairing, but you can't always tell that. There certainly was never any problem between us personally in any way.

When did Robbie Gillman and Mickey McGee join the band?

When we went out on our first national tour after the album came out, we had Robbie on piano and Mickey on drums, a guy called Curtis Cloonan, who is a friend of ours, on steel guitar. Mickey McGee had been with Linda Ronstadt for three years and he's a very experienced guy.

When did you record the second RCA album, "After the Dust Settles"?

About eight months after the first one came out.

What do you feel about the two RCA albums now?

(O.Y.) Oh, I think they're good. You see, one problem we had especially with the first one was that we were signed to RCA (Pop), but it was basically a country record and the two divisions were not on the best of terms at that time.

They did not communicate at all, so we got lost.

(O.Y.) We even had our first single on the country charts and they didn't even know till it peaked. Then it was too late to do anything with it, so we lost the single and the album because of lack of communication within the company.

That's not my favourite company. I mean, I'd say that out loud, not because of what happened to us, but because of what I see happening to other acts.

The "After the Dust Settles" album was the first to feature your writing, Juice. Do you write regularly?

I only write when I feel totally relaxed. Writing is not something I feel pushed to do. Most of the time I only write lyrics, although I have written complete songs, but lyrics seem to come more easily to me.

Was the RCA contract only for two albums?

It was their option and after two albums they didn't renew and they knew we didn't want them to renew. We then went directly to Capitol. We actually started recorded what became the "Come to Me" album before we even signed the contract, but there was only a six month gap.

Juice, you were quoted as saying that "Come to Me" was the first album to present your band sound. Do you still feel that?

On the RCA albums we had used a lot of studio players and on "Come to Me" we used all five members of the band, although only Tom, Otha and I were signed to the label.

(O.Y.) We actually went to San Francisco and rehearsed the songs and put it all together in the studio, so I guess you could say it was more of a group-type album.

The first Capitol album seems to mark two definite moves, one being away from country material and the other that it concentrated on Juice as a singer. Was that deliberate?

It was deliberate as far as the singing was concerned. We discussed it, because we were a pretty democratic

band, and we decided the identity of the band needed to be more of one voice. If you think about it, most groups with more than one singer have a pretty hard time establishing an identity. So that was a decision made among ourselves. The change in the type of material was dictated by two things. We were using a lot of material that Robbie was writing and he is a very pop writer. We were also influenced to do other material. I was very flattered because Bob Seger gave me one of his songs. We were still at a point, career wise, where we were too naive to be adamant about our own decisions.

The song Bob Seger gave you was 'Good Luck, Baby Jane'?

Yes, it was a song he'd had for quite a while. Some gals had apparently wanted to sing it, and he'd said no. Then he made a demo for me, which I thought was a very nice thing for him to do.

"Come to Me" was produced by Elliot Mazer. Did you pick him?

We agreed on him after being introduced to him by the company. Talking to him, he seemed an okay person to do it, but in retrospect I would have chosen someone else.

At the time, of course, he was supposed to be one of the whizz kid producers.

Yes, he had a very good reputation because he had worked with Linda Ronstadt and The Band and so forth.

According to the inner sleeve, part of "Come to Me" was recorded at Abbey Road. Did you come over?

No, that was just strings. I've been to England before on my own, but I've never performed here.

The title of the next album, "Well Kept Secret," seems fairly sarcastic?

It was - you've got it.

On this album Robbie, Mickey and Tom had been dropped. Why was this?

We weren't working a lot any more, so we couldn't support a band as there wasn't enough income to keep everybody alive. Tom was wanting to do other things, Mickey wanted to play with other people, and Robbie wanted to do more writing. Of course, as I said before, only three of us were signed to the label. It just seemed we had reached a stalemate and weren't progressing as a group, so we disbanded.

Have you seen any of them lately?

We see Mickey a lot, but we haven't seen Tom or Robbie in ages. Mickey is on the road right now with the re-formed Burrito Brothers and he also worked recently with Rick Nelson.

Going back to the second and third albums, there were a lot of songs that Juice wrote with Robbie, or that all three of you wrote. Don't you regret that partnership breaking-up, as it produced some really good songs?

(O.Y.) To some degree you do regret those things, because they were good songs, but if it's not happening you can't keep looking back all the time.

You might like those songs and we might like them, but apparently the radio people didn't like them. To be perfectly honest, we couldn't exist on nothing, we had to have an income. You don't send me money to live and pay for my rent. I mean, if you're going to be a hard core realist, you have to be a realist all the way through if it's not happening. It's not the way it used to be in the 13th and 14th century when you had a patron.

How do you feel now about "Well Kept Secret" as an album?

It was an experiment. It was a lot of fun to make but it wasn't really our style. We did two of Curtis Stone's songs - Curtis is a friend of ours - and Mickey had a song on that record. To tell the truth, we were pushed to do that record in that style. We were asked by Leffler to do a record which you will recognise as much more his style, something he could relate to, because I do not think he could relate to what we do best. We were also given the distinct impression that the instruction to make the record in this way had come right down from the top of the

company. We only found out later that this was untrue.

You did two covers on that album. One was Bruce Channel's 'Hey Boy,' and the other was the

Holland-Dozier-Holland song, 'A Love Like Yours.' They seem to be strange choices?

I got to tell you, I love that song, 'A Love Like Yours.' This is letting out trade secrets here, but the version you hear on that album is not the version we did in the studio. After we recorded that song and it was totally finished, we sliced it up in the studio. There are five splices in that track. The front of the song is at the end, the second part became the third and so on. We rearranged it totally with a razor blade and this made me feel a little funny, because after that I believe Dotsy recorded that song - our version, lick for lick - and it made it onto the country charts, and I question that. That hurt my feelings, to be honest.

You both co-produced the fourth album with John Palladino. How much did you get involved with that side of things?

Pretty much. I think it was wonderful because it allowed us the experience of making decisions. There was a great deal of learning went on. If you listen to the album, the more country material is the stuff I picked, like Curtis' song. I'm happy that I got to experience that type of work, I can't deny that.

You also got involved in session work at this stage. Who with?

I worked with Bob Welch on "French Kiss" and also with Nicolette Larson and some other people, which was good, because it kept my spirits up. It certainly expands your circle of friends and acquaintances, so you become more aware of different musicians and background singers and so on. One of the singers I was working with was Tricia Johns who, when I left home a month ago, was on Warner Brothers. She used to be married to Jim Ed Norman and she's an excellent singer who's done a lot of singing for other people.

At this stage you also brought out a single version of 'It's a Heartache.' Whose idea was that?

Rupert Perry. He's head of A&R at Capitol and he brought the song to us and said, "Would you record

this? We think it could be a good song for the States even though it's been done by someone else in the UK." I don't think they realised RCA were going to release it with such a push in the United States. So it was a deliberate attempt to make a hit single. Actually, we got a gold record in Mexico and Latin America for that song and that song is included on Mexican versions of the "Take Heart" album.

Which brings us quite neatly on to your fifth album. Only one of Otha's songs is featured on "Take Heart." Was this a positive attempt to get away from self-penned material?

Otha was the producer of "Take Heart" and I think he felt he didn't want the company to think he was pushing his own material.

(O.Y.) We'd been getting comments that the material might have been part of the problem in the past, so we decided to go the opposite way. Also, at this stage I didn't have much time to write songs.

Otha, are you currently still writing?

(O.Y.) No, not as much, but I want to get into that when I get home.

On that album you recorded a version of one of Smokie's British hits, 'Lay Back in the Arms of Someone.'

It was a good tune and I really enjoyed singing it. Dave and Sugar made a version which got on the country charts and that hurt my feelings because our version came out first and I think our version was stronger.

Were you touring a lot at this stage?

We'd been on another national tour and we were working a lot. There was a period of about a year-and-a-half where we didn't work and then we took three months to make "Take Heart." Otha and I had written a song called 'Sweet Sweet Smile,' which was a hit for The Carpenters in the States and was also very big in Germany. This gave us an income and allowed us for the first time in eight years, I guess, not to have to work hand to mouth, so to speak, so we didn't work. Then, last year before we started to make the current album, we were bored so we put a band together and started working again.

Who did you tour with?



Otha Young

Robbie Gillman

Juice Newton

Buzzy Buchanan

Tom Kealey

We went out with Hank Williams Jr., Bobby Bare and Tom T.Hall.

(O.Y.) We've done a lot of country shows lately, the same type of music but with a leaner band; two guitars bass and drums, with Juice playing rhythm.

At what stage did you part company with Ed Leffler?

We left Ed at the end of recording the "Well Kept Secret" album, and we haven't had management since then.

But Dick Bernstein and Stu Needman were supposed to be your new managers?

(O.Y.) Yes, they were handling Juice for a while, but that didn't work out.

It wasn't personal management, though, it was films. I've done a lot of TV film soundtracks. One was called "Steel Cowboy" and starred James Brolin and Strother Martin. Otha wrote the songs and I did the singing. We did a mini series called "Roughnecks," where Otha wrote half the material, he wrote the lyrics, and I sang. This was all done live in the studio with a forty-piece orchestra. To be honest the material is pretty nondescript. You know the sort of material you hear on soundtracks.

What about your image as projected on your album sleeves?

Well, I'm pretty much real. I mean, the way you see my hair, sometimes it's wavy, sometimes it's not. I'm a dancer so that image is me. The Chinese robe you see on the cover of "Well Kept Secret" I've worn on stage many times, so that's me, although I look like the hood ornament of a Buick on that cover. Since I'm a guitar player and musician I don't very often wear dresses on stage, although Emmylou does most of the time. I don't really give it a lot of thought, to be honest. A lot of clothes I wear come from second-hand stores.

With the new album, "Juice," you seem to have moved solidly back into the country field. Was that something you wanted to get back into?

Yes, I went to the company because, after "Come to Me" and "Well Kept Secret," the "Take Heart" album was closer to what we wanted. We told them the first albums were okay things to do but they were not right. To be brutally honest, they were pretty much of a waste of something you can never replace, which is my time. I mean, you can replace money. So we said, "This is the type of material we want to do. If it does not fit in with what you want to do, let us know and let us go. Which is more important?" We have a good rapport with our company, we've known these people for a few years, and we can speak to them on a direct basis. We communicate well, so there was no apprehension about speaking as flatly as that. They said, "You're right, those other albums were really not what we thought your image was either, or what you are in reality, and we think it's a good idea to move back towards the country sound."

Your country music horizons also seem to have expanded with the new album. Why, for instance, did you choose 'Country Comfort'?

I thought it was an interesting song. It's two British guys' version of rural life, which they termed 'Country Comfort.' Whether or not it's British or American rural life, country life, it doesn't really matter. As far as I know, the song has never been interpreted by a woman and I think the song holds up. Some people thought it would be strange, but I think it turned out rather well.

You've been compared with artistes like Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris because of the material you do. Do you see that as a valid comparison?

Of course, I can recognise the comparison. We would probably all be able to do the same songs, but all three styles or approaches to the song would be somewhat different. I think I am closer to Emmylou's style than Linda's, material-wise, but I'm much more aggressive on stage than Emmy. We both play guitar, like Bonnie Raitt, who's also an excellent guitar player, but I'm much more aggressive. It's just a different style. I don't mind being put in the same category as what I think are two terrific singers.

Interesting that you re-recorded 'The Sweetest Thing' for "Juice." Why?

It's one of my all-time favourite tunes and I felt the song never ever got the exposure it should, because it's a terrific piece of material. We just decided to re-do the song, but we had to wait till it was free. I wanted to do it because I felt a great affection for the song. We'd actually like to release that track as a country single.

Was 'Angel of the Morning' always intended as a single?

At first we had an idea it could be, then as we cut more tunes we were no longer so convinced that it was the correct choice. Then as we were finishing the record and it was coming down to virtually the last mixes, the song again came to light. It began to take on the character of a good, solid first single. I think that happens many, many times when you're making a record where there are ten songs. We were all very surprised that this record has done this. I like Chip Taylor's material, I think he's an excellent writer. The song was actually brought to us by Steve Myer, who works for Capitol. I don't know whether the single will make number one, but it would be just as well with me if it did not.

It's a very emotional song. Do you get totally involved when recording a song like that?

Absolutely, I think that's the secret of a good performance, if you can step inside the material and become the character.

What sort of material do you look for then?

I look in two directions. One of them is material that says something. I'm not saying it has to be cosmic, but I think it should convey some sort of emotional message. A lot of material is poignant, kind of touching, thinking material. I also, to be totally honest, look for material that is fun to sing, fun to play, that is not heavy, because I do not feel the listener, the artist, anyone, can be bombarded all the time with esoteric life approaches. I just don't feel that's the way it was meant to be. If that was the case, then everything would be grey and there wouldn't be any red, yellow, blue and pink flowers and the sun would never shine. So I look for fun material that falls out of my mouth easily and people have a good time listening to.

How much has the success of 'Angel of the Morning' helped you to expand in America?

I don't know, I haven't been home in a month. I know I need a new guitar desperately. I think it will allow me and Otha to play for bigger audiences, although I've never been interested in playing for 50,000 people. It's wonderful that number of people would see you. I just think they don't get their money's worth. I know they pay less in the back than they do in the front, but I still feel you can't project hundreds of yards away.

What sort of material will your live set cover?

We'll do material from all six records. That's fortunate for us, because if this success had come to someone who had only one record they are, to a great degree, limited to that record - to ten songs. Whereas I've recorded nearly sixty songs, plus I know another hundred good songs, so I think the live show will have a fair cross section. That's a good thing for us and will stop us from getting bored.

Any chance of playing in Britain?

We'd like to play here but, to be honest, the decision rests to a great degree on the radio and the record buying public. The cost of travel is unbelievably high and we can't travel with less than ten people. That's very small, because we're actually now a seven-piece band and a three man road crew. Some people travel with fifty people. That's a bit extravagant in my opinion. If the record could do well, then we'd come and work. I think the best thing a performer does is perform.

Finally, where does the name Juice come from?

It was a nickname when I was a kid.

(O.Y.) Juice means 'a lot of energy.'

I'm like electric. "Give it the Juice," means turn on the energy.

I first saw a copy of Sandra Kauffman's "The Cowboy Catalog" when I was in Texas last summer. Roxy Gordon dismissed it as being aimed at what Phil Kaufman calls "the urine cowboys." I can see what he means - and it certainly is aimed at that market - but for those of us not raised on West Texas ranches, it does have some interesting background detail on why real cowboys wear what they do.

Having been to Cutter Bill's Western World - Roxy felt my cowboy education would be incomplete without seeing their boots made of Malaysian crocodile inlaid with white mink (I swear to God, and have their catalog to prove it!) - I can assure you the clothes shown in Sandra Kauffman's book do exist.

Omnibus Press have made her book available over here for £5-95 (ISBN: 0-86001-796-6).

Back here on earth, Ken Hunt called in the other evening, hot foot from the printers and bearing the fourth issue of his fine magazine, Swing 51. There are 52 finely produced pages, Peter Rowan on the cover and inside, joined by Peter Bellamy, Sylvia Woods, Happy Traum, John Kirkpatrick and Robin Williamson.

Send Ken £1-25 at 41 Bushey Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1QR and a copy will be yours.

Ace record company executive Mike Gibb has come up with the eleventh issue of Manana magazine. Tom Gribbin (good album out on Country Roads Records, who also have a Steve Young compilation out: "Seven Bridges Road" - CRLP 1002), Richard Thompson, John Fogerty (now there's someone I'd love to talk to), Larry Jon Wilson and Jimmy Buffett.

For a copy, send 45p to Mike at Ronderlin, Newmachar, Aberdeen, Scotland.

In the last issue of OR I mentioned the first three issues of Starcluster, an impressive German magazine/book published by Heinz-Dirk Zimmerman, Rauherfeld 15, 5750 Menden, West Germany.

The fourth issue is now available and is devoted exclusively to The Flying Burrito Brothers. Knowledge of the German language is an advantage, of course, but it is chock-full of family trees and great photographs, so I can recommend your investing DM10.00. Add an additional DM3.00 and ask for his latest Starcluster Info, which updates previous issues of Starcluster, as well as carrying a front cover article on John Stewart - remember him?



OMAHA RAINBOW PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY PETER O'BRIEN 10 LESLEY COURT HARCOURT ROAD WALLINGTON SURREY SM6 8AZ ENGLAND

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4...STEVE YOUNG, interviewed by Peter O'Brien at the Tudor Court Hotel in Paddington, London, on Tuesday 14 April 1981. Special thanks to Paul Toms for setting the wheels in motion.

9...PHIL EVERLY, interviewed by Peter O'Brien at the EPA Press Office in Soho Square, London, on Thursday 23 April 1981. Special thanks to the Epic Jonathan Morrish.

15...JUICE NEWTON and OTHA YOUNG, interviewed by Mike Davies and Arthur Wood at Beacon Radio, Wolverhampton, on Thursday 23 April 1981. Special thanks to Wally Slaughter of Capitol Records and the Staff of Beacon Radio.

19...RICHARD DOBSON - Poor Richard's Newsletters. The tenth in a continuing series.

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23...The LOMAX GOLD Record Collection.

The cover photograph of Phil Everly, along with those on pages 9, 10, 11 12 and 13, were all taken by CBS' resident whizz-kid photographer, Terry Lott. The photograph of Steve Young on page 4 is courtesy of David Sandison at Country Roads Records, and page 6 is courtesy of Lee Simmonds at RCA International in London. The photographs of Juice Newton on page 15 and Juice Newton and Silver Spur on page 17 are both courtesy of Debbie Bennett at the Capitol Records Press Office in London. Finally, the photographs of Richard Dobson on page 20, and of Frank Davis and Daddy Banjo performing at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, Texas, in 1978, are both from the Richard Dobson collection.

The first 8 issues of OMAHA RAINBOW and issues 19 and 20 are completely sold out. At the time of going to print, OR's 9 through 18 and 21 through 26 are still available. OR's 9-17 cost 45p each, OR18 is 55p, OR's 21-24 are 65p and OR's 25 and 26 are 70p. All 16 cost £7-70.

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OR26..Neil Flanz, Hoyt Axton and all the regular crew.

JOHN STEWART is featured in every issue of OMAHA RAINBOW

A four issue subscription to OMAHA RAINBOW will cost £2-80 in the UK, £3-00 in the rest of Europe and by surface mail elsewhere.

A subscription by air mail outside Europe is £5-00 or \$12.00 (US).

Please make all cheques, etc., payable to 'Peter O'Brien.'

I shall be in America and Canada during August, so I shall be taking even longer to deal with any letters that arrive during that time!