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THE SONGWRITER'S
CRAFT

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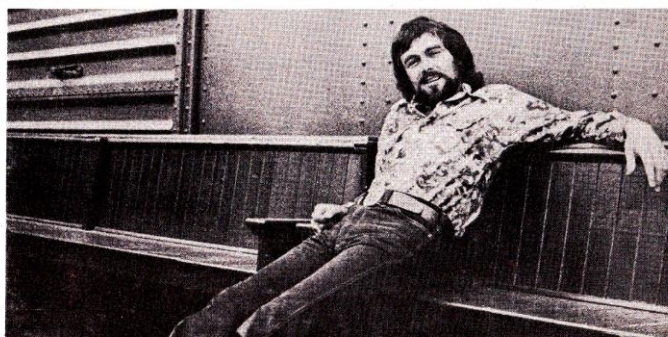
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EVERY OTHER
WEDNESDAY

A POUCHFUL OF KANGAROO Or—Do Aussies Do It Better?

In the last few years, Australia has 'come in from the outback' in many fields of the arts. The recent Australian Film Season on BBC2 confirmed the leaps and bounds in quality that their home-bred cinema product made in the Seventies.

On the Country Rock front, they have bred a number of excellent performers and CMW takes this opportunity to look over the recording careers, to date, of a few sports from 'down under'.



Digby Richards



The Dingoes

Digby Richards started out in the early Sixties, as leader of a rock and roll group called the RJ's. Over the years they managed to build up a string of some dozen entries on the Australian singles charts.

If the Sixties saw the emergence of the singer/songwriter/performer, then by the end of that decade, Richards, who was working as a solo artist, realised that his future lay in penning and performing his own material.

Around 1969 he came to Britain for the first time, but he had little success in obtaining a recording deal. With a little application however, he soon began writing songs and he drew a lot of attention when George Hamilton IV recorded one of Digby's early compositions, 'People call me country.'

In 1974, he was visiting the States pushing his songs, when the opportunity arose of signing a solo recording deal with RCA. Digby quickly grabbed the opportunity and with Larry Murray (once a

Hearts and flowers

member of the seminal country rock band, Hearts and Flowers) at the controls, his first, self-titled album was released in the summer of that year.

Nine of the eleven tracks on that album were composed by Digby, the exceptions being, 'Be My Day' by Larry Murray and 'Rock & Roll (I gave you the best years of my life)', by fellow Aussie, Kevin Johnson. Johnson's own version of the latter song made the British charts, reaching 23 in January 1975, when Jonathan King released it on his UK label.

The album was recorded at RCA's Music Centre of the World in Hollywood, with backing provided by ace session players like Joe Osborn, Jim Gordon, Kim Keltner and 'Sneaky Pete' Kleinow, plus assistance from some members of the group, Lobo (that group included Emory Gordy, later a member of Emmylou's Hot Band Mark I).

Though the album was pleasant, it didn't enjoy earth-shattering sales, and it was another four years before Digby's second album appeared.

By 1978 Digby had crossed the Atlantic, where he teamed up with fellow Aussie and old friend, Dave Mackay. Along with Barrie Guard Mackay produced Digby's second album, 'Whiskey Sundown'. Most of the songs on the eleven track set, consisted of Digby's originals, one of the exceptions being the Larry Murray/John Beland composition, 'Hymn for Rosie'. In 1970, Beland had been a member of Linda Ronstadt's backing band which later evolved into group,

by ARTHUR WOOD

Swampwater. That group recorded an album for RCA the following year, which was co-produced by Larry Murray.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Digby's second album clearly showed that his style of writing had improved immensely and was reminiscent of the light-duty songs recorded by the Eagles in the mid-Seventies. With such standout tracks as, 'Falling', 'In his songs' and the album title song, Joe Public still managed to resist purchasing Digby's latest recording. Digby and his brand of Country Rock was even given some national exposure that year, when he opened for Dolly Parton on her November tour of Britain.

As the Seventies gave way to the Eighties, Polydor released a number of singles by Digby and though they were well received, even moderate sales failed to materialise. Late last year Peach River Records released Digby's most recent single, 'Beautiful to me'/'Go for the Doctor' and it was a stalwart of the Radio 2 playlist for a number of weeks. The latest I heard, Digby had returned home to Sydney. Let's hope we haven't heard the last of the tall Australian.

Without a doubt, the most successful Country orientated group to emerge from Australia is

the Little River Band. Prior to their formation in 1975, the four original members, already had a wealth of touring and playing experience behind them.

Graham Goble, rhythm guitarist, vocalist and unofficial band leader, had helped to found Mississippi, the musical forerunner of the Little River Band. During its short life time, Mississippi enjoyed a number of chart successes down under. In recent years, that band's work has been repackaged on the 'After Hours' and 'Beginnings Vols I and II' albums, but is sold under the Little River Band banner (oh the joys of commercialism). Prior to joining the LRB, Lead singer, Glenn Shorrock, had been a member of early Aussie groups, the Twilights and Axiom, as well as recording

The Little River Band

with the early Seventies English rock band, Esperanto. Rhythm guitarist, Beeb Birtles started out playing bass in bands in the mid-Sixties and along with drummer, Derek Pellicci, eventually became a member of the seminal Mississippi.

The Little River Band took its name from a road in the Australian outback and they recorded their first, self-titled album, in Melbourne during 1975. Production of the album was shared by some of the band and their manager, Glenn Wheatley. Unleashed on the unsuspecting Australian public, the album shot the band to the forefront of the Antipodean music scene.

When it was released in America and Europe, in April

1976, the band undertook a short promotional tour. Stateside the album peaked at 80 (a promising start), and yielded two hit singles: 'It's a long way there' and 'I'll always call your name.'

Returning to Australia, one of Linda Ronstadt's early boy-friends/producers, John Boylan, assisted the band to produce their second album, 'Diamantina Cocktail'. The album, named after an Australian rum-based drink, was another strong concoction of 'Down under' country rock.

In the process of recording their second album, the group's sound was bolstered by the addition of George McArdle on bass and David Briggs on lead guitar (not I hasten to add the Nashville producer and keyboard wizard, David Briggs). Briggs has remained with the group, while McArdle was later replaced by Wayne Nelson. During August 1977, the album reached 49 on the American charts, eventually earning the group its first Gold album, and selling over one million copies worldwide. 'Happy Anniversary' and 'Help is on its way', two singles drawn from the album, charted Stateside, the latter peaking at No 14 during November 1977.

Boylan was retained to produce the Little River Band's third album, 'Sleeper Catcher'. The album's title was yet another piece of Australian linguize, being the

name for agents who retrieve bets from elusive gamblers in the native game of Two-Up. During 1978, the band undertook its third world tour and in the process, 'Sleeper Catcher' became the first Australian recording to earn a platinum album. The two singles, 'Reminiscing' and 'Lady', taken from the third album, made the American Top 10, earning the group yet further gold awards. Upon returning home, the group swept the board in the Australian Rock Awards for the second year in a row.

Further gold and platinum awards followed the release of the group's 1979 album, 'First Under the Wire'. Being yet another Boylan/group co-production, the first single, 'Lonesome Loser', reached No 3 in September '79, giving the group its highest single placing Stateside to date. The next single, 'Cool Change' made the Top 10 in January the following year, at the close of what had been the group's most extensive North American tour. During that tour, the group recorded many of its concerts for a projected 'Live' album.

Early in 1980 the members took time off to undertake a number of non-band associated projects. Birtles and Goble recorded and produced their own duo album, while Glenn Shorrock was signed up to star in a film.

In the spring of 1979, the Little River Band had played a concert in Adelaide backed by the city's Symphony Orchestra. Some of the recordings made at that date formed side one and two of the 'Backstage Pass' album, while highlights from the aforementioned American tour completed the double-album set. Careerwise, the album indicated a marking of time since no new songs were included nonetheless.

Night Owls

it sold well, bringing further worldwide success, sales and accolades.

Early in 1981, the group began work on their sixth album at George Martin's Air Studios on the West Indian Island of Montserrat. Released late last year, the album, 'Time Exposure', peaked at No 30 on the American album charts during November, while the first single 'Night Owls' shot into the American Top 20.

The Little River Band

embarked on yet another tour of America, and also found time to play a one-off date in London. That show was broadcast on BBC1's Saturday night 'In Concert' series, during January. To date, British chart success has eluded the group, but it's hardly from the lack of trying.

Sad to say, there's very little I can relate information-wise about the Dingoes (Australia's dogs of rock?). They first appeared on the A & M label in 1977 with an album titled, 'Five times the sun', produced by Californian whizz kid Elliot Mazer. Musically, the Dingoes lean heavily toward the Southern styled country rock played by the Outlaws, but they are (were?) nonetheless an excellent band. A second album, titled 'Orphans of the Storm' saw the light of day, two years later, but sadly, not in Britain. In the interim, the band line-up had been reshuffled with one of the main songwriters, Chris Stockley, departing and two other players joining. The second album recorded at the Hit Factory, in New York, musically repeated the previous recipe and is well worth checking out. Kerryn Tolhurst, the other main songwriter in the band, has composed a number of songs with Little River Band Alumni, Glenn Shorrock.

Doug Ashdown first released a

Orphans of the storm

single version of the song, 'Winter in America' as far back as 1974. The album of the same name on the Decca label was recorded partly in Sydney and Nashville but didn't appear until 1977. Players on the Nashville sessions included Larrie Londin (now a Rodney Crowell Cherry Bomb) and solo artist Troy Seals, with production by THE David Briggs. The title track is a highly atmospheric peice of work, and was co-written by Doug and his friend, Jimmy Stewart, as were most of the songs on the album. Whether Ashdown ever recorded anything prior or subsequent to this album, I've never been able to find out, and I can assure you I've tried lots of avenues. Whatever. If you ever see the album, check it out, as it's a singer/songwriter album with slight country tinges, but lots of class. It was one of my favourite albums five years ago and it never fails to please, even now. ●

THE ROOTS TO AND FROM POCO

A-Z of a Country Rock Band

In terms of continuous existence, Poco are undoubtedly the longest surviving country rock band. Over the years, eleven musicians have featured in the various line-ups of the group. Discounting the compilation albums released by their first label, Epic, fifteen albums of original material have been recorded by Poco in the past thirteen years. In the States, Poco have just released their sixteenth album. It is probably an opportune moment therefore to review the band's career to date.



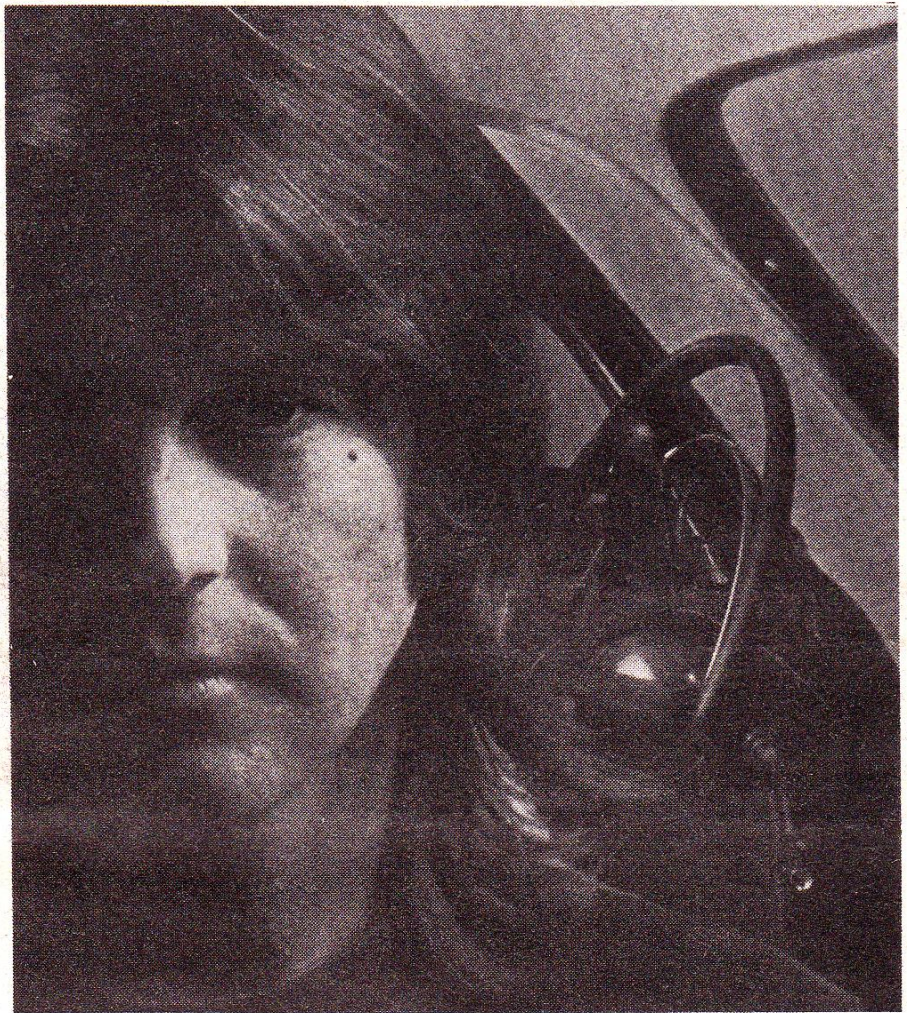
Poco

A. 'A GOOD FEELING TO KNOW' — Poco's fifth album released in late 1972. The album liner included a booklet of group photographs. **AU GO GO SINGERS** — Recorded one album for the Roulette label in 1964. The group included Stephen Stills and Richie Furay. **GREG ALLMAN** — once in line to be a member of the original Poco. **AMERICA** — Poco supported this country rock trio on a British tour during September 1975.

B. 'BLUE AND GRAY' — Title of Poco's 1981 American Civil War concept album. Sadly, it was not released in Britain. **BOENZEE CRYQUE** — seminal country rock group who hailed from the state of Colorado. Rusty Young and George Grantham were members of the band when it broke up in early 1968. **KIM BULLARD** — comes from Atlanta, Georgia, plays keyboards, and is the group's latest recruit. **BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD** — legendary L.A. band which barely survived two years, made three albums and suffered adversely from the ego trips of group members. Apathy finally led to the group's collapse. At various stages the 'Herd' included Stills, Furay, Neil Young and Jim Messina.

COWBOYS AND ENGLISH MEN

C. COLTON, California — Jim grew up there. **STEVE CROPPER** — The 'From The Inside' album was produced by him. **CANTAMOS** — The last studio album for Epic, released in late 1974, it was Poco's eighth. The literal translation of the title was 'We Sing'. **PAUL COTTON** — joined Poco in November 1970, replacing Messina. He is still a member of the band. Born in Alabama, Paul was raised in Illinois. **PETE CETERA** — Bass player for jazz-rock group Chicago, he was taught to play pedal steel guitar by Rusty. Cetera suggested that his friend, Paul Cotton, would be a suitable replacement for Messina. **'CRAZY LOVE'** — written by Rusty this song became Poco's



Randy Meisner

first American top 20 single in early 1979. **CONTENDERS** — early sixties Sacramento surf group which included Tim Schmit. **'COWBOYS AND ENGLISHMEN'** — the groups sixteenth album, which has just been released Stateside. The next item will probably explain the title. **STEVE CHAPMAN** — expatriot British drummer, he became a member of Poco during 1978, first appearing on the 'Legend' album. **CADO BELLE** — Scottish group who supported Poco on their third British tour in late 1976. **'CRAZY EYES'** — song written by Richie about Gram Parsons, it was also the title of Poco's sixth album which was released in 1973. **CORDELL, OKLAHOMA** — George Grantham's birthplace.

D. DENVER, COLORADO — Rusty was raised there and completed a business studies course at the State University. **'DELIVERIN'** — Poco's third

album, it was released in 1970 and had been recorded 'live' during concerts at the Boston Music Hall and New York's Felt Forum. **DAYTON, OHIO** — Richie's birthplace. **DYNAMICS** — early sixties band from Nebraska which included Randy Meisner. **DIRT BAND** — successor to do the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Al Garth joined the group in 1978, in time for 'The Dirt Band' album. **'DUET'** — title of the second Illinois Speed Press album. By the time it was recorded, the group consisted only of Kal David and Paul Cotton.

FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS

E. EAGLES — R.I.P. All their bass players have been members of Poco.

F. MIKE FLICKER — producer of Poco's last three albums.

FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS — Rusty was invited to audition for the original Burritos, but didn't attend the session. Sneaky Pete Kleinow got the gig (see 'Suite Steel'). **'FROM THE INSIDE'** — Released in late 1971 this was the title of Poco's fourth album. **PETE FRAME** — rock genealogist extraordinaire, his 1979 'Book of Rock Family Trees' published by Omnibus Press is an absolute must for music fans, and includes a Poco family tree. (This is an intentional commercial). **RICHELIE FURAY** — a founding member of Buffalo Springfield and Poco, he quit the latter group in the Autumn of 1973, possibly at David Geffen's behest. Formed supergroup with J. D. Souther and ex-Byrd Chris Hillman, and they recorded two forgettable albums for Asylum. Furay later founded and took his own band on the road, recorded two solo albums, also for Asylum, and then 'got religion'. His first solo album, 'I've got a reason' was recently reissued by the religious label Myrrh Records.

HEAD OVER HEELS

G. JIM GUERCIO manager of Chicago and Illinois Speed Press. **GEORGE GRANTHAM**, Poco's first drummer, started 'bashing the skins' when 13 years old, and was featured on the group's first dozen albums. **DAVID GEFEN** along with partner Elliot Roberts, he managed Poco in the early Seventies. **AL GARTH** spent four and a half years with Loggins and Messina, but only lasted nine months as a member of Poco. Came to Britain with Poco for their third tour in 1976. **GLAD** Tim's next band, after the Contenders. They made one album for ABC in 1970. **GALLAGHER AND LYLE** supported Poco on their British debut, February 1972.

H. 'HEAD OVER HEELS' Poco's first album for ABC, and their ninth in total. **EMMYLOU HARRIS** her current album is titled after Rusty's composition, 'Rose of Cimarron'. **CHARLIE HARRISON**, Tim's replacement on bass. Charlie another Englishman, was previously a Roger McGuinn Thunderbyrd, and had also played with Steve Chapman in the Leo Sayer and Al Stewart bands. **MARK HENRY**

HARMAN co-produced a series of four albums with Poco commencing with the posthumously released, 'Live' album on Epic. **HARLINGEN, TEXAS** Jim's birthplace.

I. 'INDIAN SUMMER' released in mid-1977 this made a dozen album releases for the group. It was the last album Tim and George worked on. **ILLINOIS SPEED PRESS** — Chicago group

UNDER THE GUN

which evolved from a line of earlier Illinois groups and included Paul Cotton. They recorded two albums for CBS (not released in UK) and then disbanded.

J. KATHY JOHNSON — supplied lyrics for 'Foreword' the appropriately titled opening track on the first Poco album. **JESTERS** — yet another surf band, pre-Springfield which featured Jim Messina.

K. WALT KELLY — creator of the syndicated cartoon POGO. He took out an injunction against the group, preventing them from using the name. A small adjustment of the name and POCO was born. **'KIND WOMAN'** — Richie's song was included on the last Springfield album and then recorded 'live' for Poco's 'Deliverin' album.

L. LONG BEACH — Rusty's birth place. **'LEGEND'** — They reckon thirteen is an unlucky number. Released in late 1978, the 13th album made the American Top 20, and brought the group its first gold album. **LOGGINS AND MESSINA** — Jim left Poco with the intention of becoming an album producer. While helping to record Kenny Loggins' first solo album, they decided to form a band. **'LIVE'** album released by CBS in early 1976, after the band had been with ABC Records for over a year.

M. MONKS—early sixties folk group from Ohio which included Richie. **JIM MASON** — co-producer of Poco's fifth album. **RANDY MEISNER** — the kid from Nebraska. Helped record half Poco's first album and then departed. Eventually joined the Eagles; left them after six years and has subsequently recorded two solo albums, one each for Asylum and Epic. **JIM MESSINA** the Springfield's last bass player; he and Richie decided to form Poco after the former bands demise. Jim produced the last 'Herd' album, and Poco's first three, leaving the group in late 1970.

N. NEW BREED — Tim's band, Glad, also worked under this name. **RICK NELSON** — fifties teen heart throb who became a country rocker in the seventies. Randy joined Rick's Stone Canyon Band after leaving Poco, and prior to the formation of the Eagles.

O. RICHARD SANFORD ORSHOFF — 'Legend' was the only album he produced. Is there a moral there? **PETER O'BRIEN** — country rocker de-luxe, he supplied the biography for Poco's 1976 British tour programme.

P. BILLY PRESTON — also on the bill at Poco's British debut.

POGO — the name by which the first group was first known. 'POCO' — title of the groups second album. **GRAM PARSONS** — His composition 'Brass Buttons' was included on the 'Crazy Eyes' album. At one stage there was a suggestion that he would be in the group's first line-up **THE POOR** — Randy was with the Colorado based group prior to joining Poco. 'PICKIN' UP THE PIECES' — considering the unceremonious way in which the 'Herd' fell apart, then it was only natural that Jim and Richie should look back, while progressing forward.

Q. QUAVERS — Poco use them. (Well, what did you expect?)

R. 'ROSE OF CIMARRON' — Released in Britain prior to their third visit. **JACK RICHARDSON** — commencing with the co-production 'A Good Feelin' To Know' he eventually completed three albums for Poco. **RAINBOW** — scene of Poco's first British dates on 25/26th February 1972. **RECORD PLANT** — Los Angeles studio where the 'Head Over Heels' album was recorded.

S. 'SUITE STEEL' — The pedal steel guitar album issued by Elektra in 1970. Five guitarists were featured, including Rusty and Sneaky Pete. The album features them dueting on the 'Sunshine Of Your Love,' although the tracks were laid down independently.

'SEVEN' — Released in 1974, this was the first of six albums recorded by the groups most stable line-up. **SCOTTSBLUFF, NEBRASKA** — Randy's birthplace. **SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA** — Tim's birthplace. **SOUTHER, HILLMAN, FURAY** — Musically a super flop (see Richie Furay). **SOUL SURVIVORS** — Randy was a member of this group after the Dynamics broke up. **TIMOTHY BRUCE SCHMIT** — Replaced the departing Randy, Tim stayed with Poco for seven years and was featured on eleven albums, before he joined the Eagles after Randy's departure from that group.

T. TROUBADOUR — Los Angeles club where Poco made their first public appearance in November 1968. **TIM TOM AND RON** — Sacramento folk trio which was Tim's first group. Tom Phillips and Ron Flogel were also members of Tim's later pre-Poco groups, and they subsequently formed the backbone of Redwing. **TOPANGA CANYON** — the five original members rehearsed there.

U. 'UNDER THE GUN' — Poco's hard rock album, and a weak follow up to the 'Legend' album. **UKIAH** — Al spent his teenage years there, and joined local rock 'n' roll band The Dell Ryes when he was 15. **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY** — Al spent five years there eventually qualifying with a music degree.

V. 'VERY BEST OF POCO' — a double album of tracks from the groups first eight albums, it was released in the Autumn of 1975. **VILLAGE RECORDERS** . Los Angeles studio where the group have recorded a number of albums.

RUSTY YOUNG

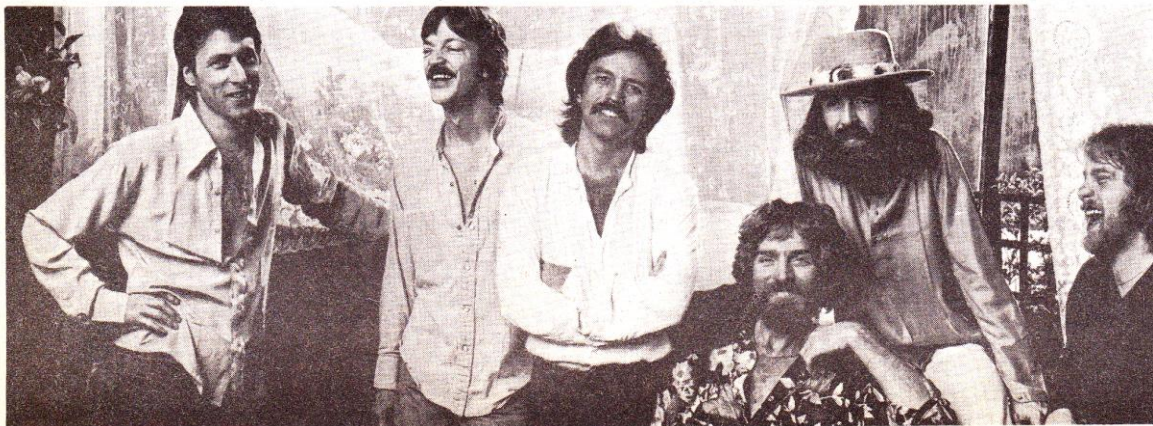
W. ERIC WEINBURG — although Terry Melcher was credited with producing the 'Glad' album, this Norwegian studio engineer actually recorded the group.

X. XI — the number of musicians who have been members of Poco.

Y. RUSTY YOUNG — longest serving member of the group, he took up the pedal steel guitar when he was 14, and worked as a session musician in L.A. after moving there from Colorado in the mid-sixties. Supplied steel on the 'Kind Woman' track on the last Springfield album, thereby launching his association with Messrs Furay and Messina.

Z. ZIG ZAG — This magazine, which was Peter Frame's brainchild, was an early champion of the group ●

ARTHUR WOOD



The Dirt Band

COWBOYS and ENGLISHMEN

Poco. Sea of Heartbreak / No Relief in Sight / There goes my heart / Ashes / Feudin' / Cajun Moon / Ribbon of Darkness / If you could read my mind / While you're on your way / The price of love (MCA 5288 Import).

Over the years, Poco have depended on songs composed by the various band members. You could probably count the number of non-band compositions from their previous fifteen albums on two hands.

Album sixteen marks a radical departure however, as Rusty Young's 'Ashes/Feudin' segue is the only band composition here — and even then, the latter part is an instrumental.

Mick Flicker has been retained as the group's producer. His first production was the 'Under the Gun' album in 1980, which had more rock about it, than country. It is only about eight months since Poco's 'Blue and Gray' Civil war concept album appeared, and I suppose that recording could safely be classified under the country-rock umbrella.

'Cowboys and Englishmen' a reference to the three Americans and two British ex-patriots currently in the

band, is however a different kettle of fish altogether. It opens with Don Gibson's 1961 hit, 'Sea of Heartbreak' and closes with the Everly Brothers British No. 2 from 1965, 'The Price of Love' and locked between those two numbers is the purest country (rock) album the group has recorded in years.

To be honest, I wasn't convinced by the strength of the songs on the album to begin with, but its overall validity is increasing each time I play it. There is no doubt that the album will raise a few hackles among long standing Poco fans; an open mind helps.

I don't for one moment imagine that Paul Cotton and Rusty have dried up as songwriters. I think the use of material by other writers was an intentional deviation.

Standout tracks are Rusty's pair of songs, (the first ... being reminiscent of Gram Parson's 'Las Vegas' and his own, 'Company's comin'), plus J. J. Cale's soulful, 'Cajun Moon' and the Everly's 'Price of Love'. The latter track would make an excellent single. ●

ARTHUR WOOD



The 'old' Poco

'BLACK ON BLACK'

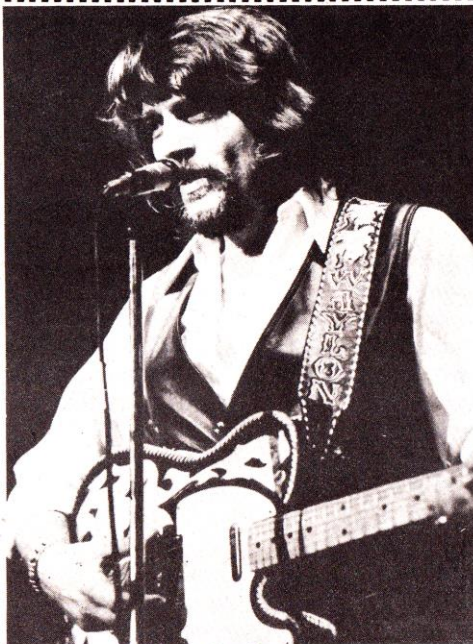
WAYLON JENNINGS

Women Do Know How To Carry On / Honky Tonk Blues / Just To Satisfy You / We Made It As Lovers (We Just Couldn't Make It As Friends) / Shine / Folsom Prison Blues / Gonna Write A Letter / May I Borrow Some Sugar From You / Song For The Life / Get Naked With Me (RCA Victor, AHL 1-4247 Import).

It really is an indication that you've arrived, when you can get away with putting out an album that has only your Christian name on the cover. Of course the presence of Waylon's eagle logo embossed in silver on a black background should also indicate to the potential buyer who the album is by.

Nonetheless, 'Black on Black' is another in a long string of albums which should help to continue and strengthen his chart career.

The ten tracks are a mixture of Jennings' own compositions, plus others by Chips Moman, (The album producer), Bobby Emmons and Johnny Cash, (guess which song). Even the younger generation get a look in, with Rodney Crowell's, 'Song For Life' and 'Gonna



Waylon Jennings.

Write A Letter' by Britain's own Paul Kennerley.

A number of songs have already appeared on the American Country Singles Chart, including 'Waylon's' own, 'Shine' plus the duet 'Just To Satisfy You' with that other

country legend, Willie Nelson. Personally, my favourite track was, 'May I Borrow Some Sugar From You' — boy, does that song have real depth of human feeling. An excellent album. ●

ARTHUR WOOD