

The Lives and Times of CAPTAIN BEEFHEAR



95p





I'm not
even here
I just stick around
for my friends
by
Langdon Winner

"Uh oh, the phone," Captain Beefheart mumbled as he placed his tarnished soprano saxophone in its case. "I have to answer the telephone." It was a very peculiar thing to say. The phone had not rung.

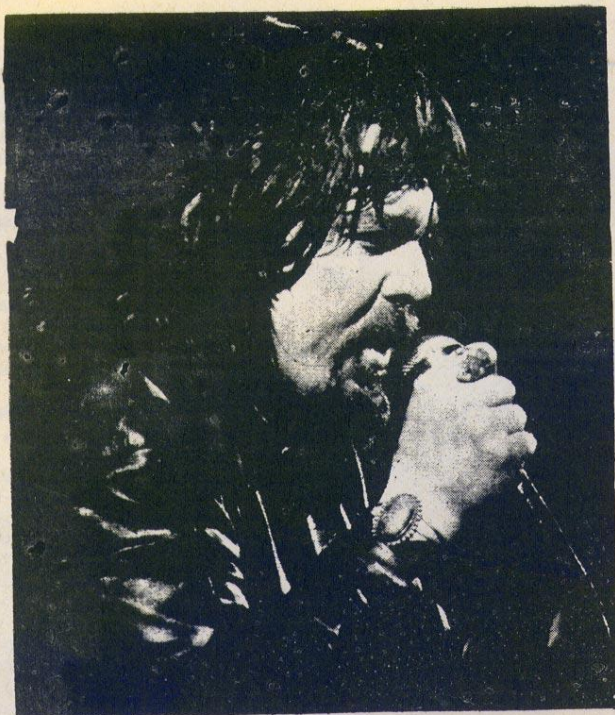
Beefheart walked quickly from his place by the upright piano across the dimly lit living room to the cushion where the telephone lay. He waited. After ten seconds of stony silence it finally rang. None of the half dozen or so persons in the room seemed at all astounded by what had just happened. In the world of Captain Beefheart, the extraordinary is the rule.

At age 29, Captain Beefheart, also known as Don Van Vliet, lives in seclusion and near poverty in a small house in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. Although it appeared on several occasions in the past that he would rise to brilliant stardom as a singer and bandleader, circumstances have always intervened to force him into oblivion. In his six years in the music business he has appeared in public no more than 25 times.

Since virtually no one has ever seen him play, stories about his life and art have taken on the character of legend, that is, of endless tall tales. People who saw him at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco three years ago will now tell you, "I heard that he's living in Death Valley somewhere" or "Didn't he just finally give up?" But there is considerably more to the man than the legend indicates.

The fact is that Don Van Vliet is alive, healthy and happy and putting together a new Magic Band to go on tour soon. As his recent album *Trout Mask Replica* testifies he is one of the most original and gifted creators of music in America today. If all goes well, the next six months should see the re-emergence of Captain Beefheart's erratic genius into the world and the acceptance of his work by the larger audience it has always deserved.

The crucial problem in Beefheart's career has been that few people have ever been able to accept him for what he is. His managers, musicians, fans and critics listen to his incredible voice, his amazing lyrics, his chaotic harp and soprano sax, and uniformly decide that Beefheart could be great if he would only (1) sing more clearly and softly (2) go commercial, (3) play blues songs that people could understand and dance to. "Don, you're potentially the greatest white blues singer of all time," his managers tell him, thinking that they're paying him a compliment. Record companies eagerly seek the Beefheart voice with its unprecedented four and one half octave range. They realize that the man can produce just about any sound he sets his mind to and that he interprets lyrics as well as any singer in the business. Urging him to abandon the Magic Band and to sing the blues with slick studio musicians, record producers have always been certain that Don Vliet was just a hype away from the big money.



But Beefheart stubbornly continues what he's doing and waits patiently for everyone else to come around. He has steadfastly refused to leave the Magic Band or to abandon the integrity of his art. "I realize," he says, "that somebody playing free music isn't as commercial as a hamburger stand. But is it because you can eat a hamburger and hold it in your hand and you can't do that with music? Is it too free to control?"

Beefheart's life as a musician began in the town of Lancaster nestled in the desert of Southern California. He had gone to high school there and became a friend of another notorious Lancasterian, Frank Zappa. In his late teens Don Van Vliet listened intently to two kinds of music — Mississippi Delta blues and the avant-garde jazz of John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor. Although he was attracted to music and played briefly with a rhythm and blues group called the Omens, he did not yet consider music his vocation. He enrolled at Antelope Valley Junior College in 1959 as an art major, but soon grew suspicious of books and dropped out. For a brief while he was employed as a commercial artist and as a manager of a chain of shoe stores. "I built that chain into a thriving, growing concern," he recalls. "Then as a kind of art statement I quit right in the middle of the Christmas rush leaving the whole thing in chaos."

In the early Sixties Don Van Vliet moved to Cucamonga to be with Frank Zappa who was composing music and producing motion pictures. It was at about this time that Van Vliet and Zappa hatched up the name Captain Beefheart. "But don't ask me why or how," Beefheart comments today. The two made plans to form a rock and roll band

called the Soots and to make a movie to be named *Captain Beefheart Meets The Grunt People*, but nothing ever came of either project. In time Zappa left for Los Angeles and formed the Mothers. Beefheart returned to Lancaster and gathered together a group of "desert musicians." In 1964 the Magic Band was ready to begin playing teen age dances in its home town.

The one stage appearance of the first Beefheart ensemble was bizarre to the point of frightening. All members of the Magic Band were dressed in black leather coats and pants with black high heel boots. The lead guitar player had a patch over one eye and long dangling arms that reached from his shoulders to half way below his knees. At a time when long hair was still a rarity, the Captain sported long dark locks down to his waist. It was simply outrageous.

The band was an immediate sensation in Lancaster and very soon its fame began to spread throughout Southern California. Beefheart's brand of abrasive blues-rock was truly a novelty to young listeners in 1964. Record companies interested in the new sound began to take notice. In mid 1964 Beefheart entered into the first of a long series of disastrous agreements with record producers.

His first release on A&M was a new version of "Diddy Wah Diddy" made popular by Bo Diddley. It featured his own style of frantic harp playing and an incredibly "low down" voice hitting notes at least a half octave lower than the lowest notes ever sung by any other rock performer. The record was a hit in Los Angeles and for a while it appeared that Beefheart was going to be a brilliant success in the music business.

But it was not to be. Beefheart recorded an album of new music and took

it to Jerry Moss of A&M (Alpert and Moss). Moss listened to the songs — "Electricity," "Zig Zag Wanderer," "Autumn's Child," etc. — and declared that they were all "too negative." He refused to release the album. Beefheart was crushed by this insensitivity and abruptly quit playing. A&M released the remaining single it had in the can. The words to "Frying Pan" now seemed strangely prophetic: "Go down town/You walk around/A man comes up, says he's gonna put you down/You try to succeed to fulfill your need/Then a car hits you and people watch you bleed/Out of the frying pan into the fire/Anything you say they's gonna call you a liar."

The record went nowhere and neither did Beefheart. For almost one year he lived in retirement back in Lancaster.

The second break in Beefheart's career arrived in 1965 when producer Bob Krasnow of Kama Sutra agreed to release the same material that A&M had rejected. Beefheart reassembled the Magic Band and returned to the studio to record the twelve cuts of *Safe As Milk* (Buddah BDS 5001), an album which is one of the forgotten classics of rock and roll history. Even though the album had been delayed for a year, it was still far ahead of its time. It featured the unmistakable Beefheart style of blues and bottleneck guitar, the first use in popular music of an electronic instrument called the therimen, and the first effective synthesis in America of rock and roll and Delta blues.

For the first time also, Beefheart was able to demonstrate the power and range of his voice. On one song, for example, Beefheart's vocal literally destroyed a \$1200 Telefunken microphone. Hank Cicalo, engineer for the sessions, reports that on the song "Electricity" Beefheart's voice simply wouldn't track at certain points. Although a number of microphones were employed, none of them could stand the Captain's wailing "EEEE-Lec-Tricc-itt-EEEEEEEE" on the last chorus. This, incidentally, can be heard on the record.

With an excellent album under his belt Beefheart felt confident enough to go on the road. In early 1966 he went on a tour of England and Europe where *Safe As Milk* had attracted considerable attention. When he returned to the States he played gigs at the Whiskey A-Go-Go in Los Angeles and the Family Dog in San Francisco. Well received in the burgeoning psychedelic rock scene, it seemed once again that Beefheart was on the verge of success. The Magic Band was scheduled to play a gig at the Fillmore and to appear at the Monterey Pop Festival, both of which could have been springboards to the top.

Then disaster struck. Beefheart's lead guitar player suddenly quit the band leaving a gap which could not be filled. The unusual nature of Beefheart's songs make it necessary for him to spend months teaching each new musician his music. The departure of the lead guitar destroyed Beefheart's chances in the San Francisco scene. The Monterey Pop Festival went on without him. Those who

attended it never knew what they had missed.

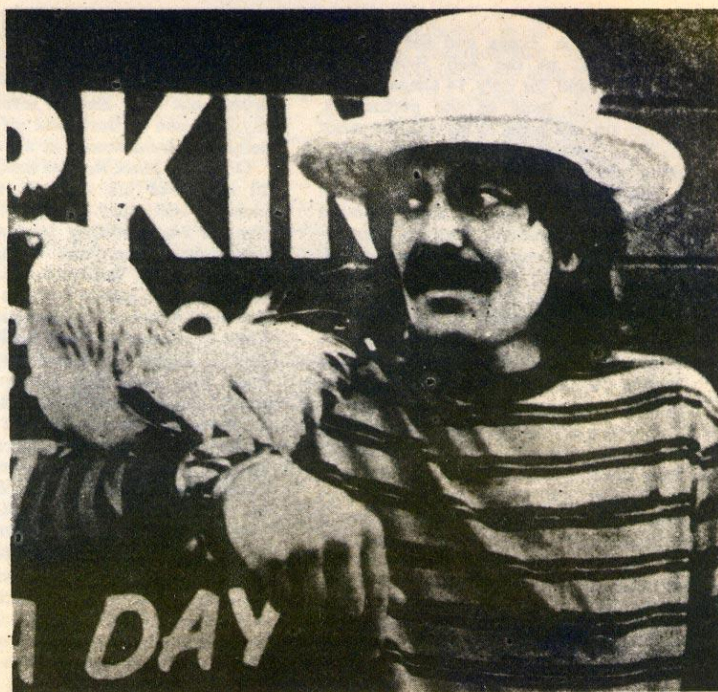
From this point in the story, events become even more chaotic and difficult to unravel. Beefheart returned to Los Angeles and tried to put together a new band and a new set of songs. His producer, Bob Krasnow, was to arrange the second Beefheart album on Buddah. According to sources in the Los Angeles record industry, Krasnow deliberately allowed the option on Beefheart's contract with Buddah to expire. When this happened he signed Beefheart to a personal contract and then sold the rights to Beefheart's next album to both Buddah Records and MGM. Tapes of the album were then made at two different studios, apparently at the expense of both companies. When the sessions were finished in the summer of 1968 Beefheart left for a second tour of Europe.

In Beefheart's absence Bob Krasnow released the album *Strictly Personal* under his own label, Blue Thumb, without Beefheart's approval. As lawsuits filled the air, Beefheart himself was left in bewilderment. The record had been electronically altered through a process called phasing which totally obliterated the sound which he had been striving to put down. "That's the reason that album is as bad as it is," he sighs when asked about the incident. "I don't think it was the group's fault. They really played their ass off—as much as they had to play off."

But despite the electronic and legalistic hanky panky surrounding its production, *Strictly Personal* is an excellent album. The guitars of the Magic Band mercilessly bend and stretch notes in a way that suggests that the world of music has wobbled clear off its axis. Beefheart's singing is again at full power. In songs like "Trust Us" and "Son of Mirror Man—Mere Man" it sounds as if all the joy and pain in the universe have found a single voice. Throughout the album the lyrics demonstrate Beefheart's ability to juxtapose delightful humor with frightening insights—"Well they rolled around the corner/Turned up seven come eleven/That's my lucky number, Lord/I feel like I'm in heaven."

The unfortunate fact about the second album was that few people were able to get into it. Apparently, the combination of Beefheart's musical progress and Krasnow's electronic idiocy made the album too much for most listeners to take. *Strictly Personal* sold poorly and did nothing to advance the band's popularity.

To this day there exists a strange love/hate relationship between Beefheart and Krasnow over the record. Krasnow claims that Beefheart still owes him \$113,000 and that as a result of Beefheart's disorganized way of handling money, he has been thrown in jail twice. Beefheart, on the other hand, usually cites Krasnow as a charlatan and pirate—the man most responsible for destroying his career. At other times, both men speak of each other with genuine respect, sympathy and affection. "I'd really like to have him back with me," Krasnow said recently. "He's actually a good



man," Beefheart will tell you.

Most of the Captain's relationships with those close to him are of this sort. Everybody's despicable villain one day, a marvelous hero the next.

The current focus of Beefheart's love/hate dialectic accounts for much of his current activity and inactivity. This time the prime protagonist is Frank Zappa.

Zappa has always had a great admiration for his old friend from Lancaster—an admiration often bordering on worship. Like so many of those around Beefheart, Zappa considers the man to be one of the few great geniuses of our time. When the smoke had cleared from the Blue Thumb snafu, Zappa came to Beefheart and told him that he would put out an album on his label, Straight Records. Whatever Beefheart wanted to do was O.K. and there would be no messing around with layers of electronic bullshit. The result was *Trout Mask Replica*, an album which this writer considers to be the most astounding and most important work of art ever to appear on a phonograph record.

When Beefheart learned of the opportunity to make an album totally without restrictions, he sat down at the piano and in eight and a half hours wrote all twenty-eight songs included on *Trout Mask*. When I asked him jokingly why it took that long, he replied, "Well, I'd never played the piano before and I had to figure out the fingering." With a stack of cassettes going full time, Don banged out "Frownland," "Dachau Blues," "Veterans' Day Poppy," and all of the others complete with words. When he is creating, this is exactly how Don works—fast and furious.

"I don't spend a lot of time thinking. It just comes through me. I don't know how else to explain it." In his box of cassettes there are probably dozens of

the things that happen on this totally amazing record.

For the first time in his career, Beefheart was entirely satisfied with his album. Zappa had made good his promise to give him the freedom he required and in fact issue the record in a pure and unaltered form. Nevertheless, the Beefheart/Zappa relationship is presently anything but an amicable one. Beefheart claims that Zappa is promoting *Trout Mask Replica* in a tasteless manner. He does not appreciate being placed on the Bizarre-Straight roster of freaks next to Alice Cooper and the GTO's. He constantly complains that Straight Records' promotion campaign is doing him more harm than good.

Straight Records on the other hand claims that Beefheart's problems are all of his own making. He refuses to go on tour and procrastinates about making a follow-up album. "What can we do?" a Straight P.R. man asked me. "Beefheart is a genius, but a very difficult man to work with. All we can do is try to be as reasonable as possible." Straight's brass recall that during the recording of the parts of *Trout Mask* which were done in Beefheart's home, Don Van Vliet asked for a tree surgeon to be in residence. The trees around the house, he believed, might become frightened of the noise and fall over. Straight refused to hire the tree surgeon, but later received a bill for \$250 for such services. After the sessions were over Beefheart had hired his own tree doctor to give the oaks and cedars in his yard a thorough medical check up—his way of thanking them for not falling down.

In another classic story of this sort, Herb Cohen of Straight recalls that one day he noticed that Beefheart had ordered 20 sets of sleigh bells for a recording session. Cohen pointed out that

even if Frank Zappa and the engineer were added to the bell ringing this would account for only 14 sleigh bells—one in each hand of the performers. "What are you going to do with the other six?" he asked. "We'll overdub them," Beefheart replied.

The fact of the matter seems to be that precisely the same qualities of mind which make Beefheart such an astounding poet and composer are those which make it difficult for him to relate to albums of *Trout Mask Replica* quality or better. The trouble is that once the compositions are down it takes him a long time to teach them to his musicians. In this case it took almost a year of rehearsal.

Trout Mask Replica is truly beyond comparison in the realm of contemporary music. While it has roots in avant-garde jazz and Delta blues, Beefheart has taken his music far beyond these influences. The distinctive glass finger guitar of Zoot Horn Rollo and steel appendage guitar of Antennae Jimmy Semens continues the style of guitar playing which he has been developing from the start. It is a strange cacophonous sound—fragmented, often irritating, but always natural, penetrating and true. Beefheart himself does not play the guitar,

but he does teach each and every note to his players. The same holds true for the drums. Don does not play the drums but has always loved unusual rhythms and writes some of the most delightful drum breaks in all of music.

On *Trout Mask Replica* Beefheart sings 20 or so of his different voices and blows a wild array of post-Ornette licks through his "breather apparatus"—soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone and musette. When Beefheart inhales before taking a horn solo, all of the oxygen in the room seems to vanish into his lungs. Then he closes his eyes, blows out and lets his fingers dance and leap over the keys. The sound that bursts forth is a perfect compliment to his singing—free, unrefined and full of humor.

Trout Mask is the perfect blend of the lyrics, spirit and conception that had been growing in Don Van Vliet's mind for a decade. Although it is a masterpiece, it will probably be many years before American audiences catch up to Frank Zappa or anyone else in the orthodox music business. Like many notable creative spirits, Beefheart's personality is not geared to the efficient use of time or resources. For this reason and for the reason that he has often been burned by the industry, Beefheart is very

suspicious of those who try to influence the direction his career takes. To see why he has such continual trouble adjusting to the practicalities of his vocation, it will do well for us to look briefly at the incredible story of Beefheart's life before he became a musician.

Don Van Vliet was born in 1941 in Glendale, California, to normal middle-class parents. He grew up without problems as any child would in Glendale—until the age of five. It was then that he decided that civilized American life was a gigantic fraud. Don noticed that this society had established a destructive tyranny over nature; over all the animals and plants of the Earth. He also became aware of the fact that America extended this tyranny over each man and that it was apparently out to include him in "the great take over." They wanted to teach him proper language, social rules, arithmetic and all of the other noxious techniques required to live in this country. Young Don suddenly rebelled and refused to go along.

Looking back on it now Beefheart recalls one day of enlightenment. "My mother, who I called 'Sue' rather than 'mother' because that was her real name, was walking me along a path to school—the first day of kindergarten. We came



to an intersection and she walked right out into the way of a speeding car. I reached up with both hands and pulled her out of the way. She could have killed us both. It was then that I thought to myself, 'And *she's* taking me to school.'"

So Don did not attend school, at least not regularly. Instead, he took up sculpting all the birds of the air, fish in the sea and animals on the land. Because he refused to come out for dinner, his parents were obliged to slide his meals under the bedroom door to him. It was Don's belief that he could re-establish ties to everything natural through the art of sculpture. Soon he was good enough at what he was doing to attract the attention of professional Los Angeles artists. One day during a visit to the Griffith Park Zoo he met and befriended Augustonio Rodriguez, the famous Portuguese sculptor. Together they did a weekly television show in which Don would sculpt the images of nature's art while Mr. Rodriguez looked on.

Understandably, Don's parents were concerned about the unusual inclinations of their son. When at age thirteen he won a scholarship to study art in Europe, they took strong steps to discourage him. "My parents told me all artists were queers," Beefheart recalls. "They moved me to the desert, first to Mojave and later to Lancaster."

But even though Don's life as a sculptor had ended, he never gave up the vision of art and nature that he had discovered early in life. Neither did he forsake the wonderfully unstructured consciousness with which he had been born. "I think that everyone's perfect when they're a baby and I just never grew up. I'm not saying that I'm perfect, because I did *grow up*. But I'm still a baby."

Beefheart still believes that in nature all creatures are equals. Man in his perversity forgets this and builds ridiculous hierarchies and artificial systems to set himself apart from his roots. "People are just too *far out*. Do you know what I mean? Too *far out*—far away from nature." He still sets out sugar for the ants, creatures that he considers most similar to man in their mode of life. "If you give them sugar," Beefheart contends, "they won't have to eat the poison."

In songs like "Wild Life," "My Human Gets Me Blues," and "Ant Man Bee" Beefheart presents with great subtlety the truths which students of ecology are just now beginning to recognize. "Now the bee takes his honey/Then he sets the flower free/But in God's garden only man 'n the ants/They won't let each other be." It is entirely possible that it is in this area that Beefheart will eventually attract a wide audience. If those who are delving into ecology would listen carefully to *Trout Mask Replica*, they could advance their understanding by leaps and bounds. Beefheart has *lived* these crucial lessons from his very first days.

Another definite carryover from Beefheart's unusual childhood can be seen

in the marvelous quality of his lyrics and poems. Since young Don Van Vliet decided that civilization was a trap, he refused to use civilized English in a linear, logical way and learned the entire language as a vast and amusing game. As a result, virtually everything that he says or writes turns out to be poetry. In a conversation with Beefheart the entire structure of verbal communication explodes. A barrage of puns, rhymes, illogicalities, absurd definitions, and unending word play fills the dialogue with a wonderful confusion.

"You can't make generalizations," he said to me during one such conversation.

"Why not?" I replied taking the bait.

"I wonder if anyone's ever made General I. Zation?" he continued, this time apparently talking about the sex life of some unknown military hero. "If all the *generals* came in here right now, I bet they'd bring those *IZATIONS* with them." Could he be talking about some secret weapon? There was no time to think about it, for in a flash Beefheart had gone on to a discussion of people who were "trying to put band-aids on *The Flaw*." *The Flaw*?

I have seen several occasions in which visitors to Beefheart's home have totally freaked because of this manner of talking. Not many people, after all, feel comfortable listening to the English language collapse before their very ears.

All of this wonderment, of course, comes through very clearly in Beefheart's lyrics. In "My Human Gets Me Blues," for example, the Captain sings, "I saw yuh dancin' in yer x-ray gingham dress/I knew you were under duress/I knew you under your dress." One way of getting into songs like this is to understand that Beefheart is primarily fascinated with the sounds of words and their many ambiguities rather than the explicit meaning of terms. He believes that all truth comes from playing rather than from planning. Playing is what children do, what lovers do, and what musicians and poets ought to do, if they could escape the chains of structure and see the light. In both his music and his lyrics Beefheart is constantly engaged in an ongoing process of play. Behind the onslaught of words stand certain insights that Beefheart wishes to communicate.

The secret is, however, that they can be communicated only after the listener surrenders his neurotic reliance on words and established forms. "I'm trying to create my own language," Beefheart observes "a language without any periods."

In his discouragement with the music business Beefheart has now turned much of his energy to writing as an outlet for his creative demon. The closets of his house are strewn with thousands upon thousands of poems and at least five unpublished novels. The song "Old Fart At Play" from *Trout Mask Replica* is a tiny excerpt from a long novel of the same name which Beefheart hopes to publish soon.

The formlessness and intensity of

Beefheart's music have often led people to conclude that he is merely another product of the drug culture. Sadly, much of the promotion material on him in past years has implied that he is the king of the drug heads and hip freaks. Nothing could be further from the truth. Don Van Vliet does not use drugs and does not allow members of the Magic Band to do so either. Like his friend Frank Zappa, Beefheart admonishes everyone to stay away from LSD, speed and marijuana. The reason for this is not only that he believes that drugs have harmful and irreversible effects, but also that each person has the power to get "there" all by himself.

In my conversation with the man, Beefheart would often smile broadly and tilt his head far back on his neck and say, "You know, I'm not even *here*." He just stick around for my friends." Moving his hand up and out from his temple and wiggling his fingers (the Beefheart "Far Out" sign) he would then say, "You're not even *here either*. You know that. Don't kid yourself. You just stick around for your friends too."

Like Socrates, Beefheart believes that everyone knows everything he needs to know already. What he tries to do is to make them realize this. Most people, he reports, fight it every inch of the way. They refuse to be free even when they see what it's like. "They just have too much at stake."

The absolutely boundless character of Beefheart's mind has taken him into investigations of extra-sensory perception, clairvoyance and even reincarnation. In addition to the ability to answer the phone before it rings, Beefheart is apparently able to foretell parts of the future. On all of my visits to his house in the San Fernando Valley, Beefheart told me that he knew in advance that I was coming. On one occasion he was able to prove it to me by showing that he'd put on "The Florsheim Shoe" and bright red socks which we'd joked about on my earlier visit. "I wore them just for you," he said holding out his foot. Beefheart also maintains that he has led previous lives. At present he believes that he is a reincarnation of a man named Van Vliet who was a friend of Rembrandt's. "Van Vliet was a tremendous painter who could never finish anything. Rembrandt used to write him letters saying, 'I'm pretty good, but if you ever got it together . . . wow!'"

In order to pursue the possibilities of this previous existence, the Captain has recently begun painting again. Like everything else he does, his paintings are simply astounding. During one of our conversations he went to a two foot tall stack of poster paper and pulled out one of his recent works. Holding it under his chin and peering over at me, Beefheart asked, "Well, what do you see?" I stared into the spots and blot of yellow, green and red and had to confess that the painting said nothing to me. With that Beefheart reached around and pointed to a small object in the middle of his masterpiece. "See the little finger with the decal ring?"

he asked. I looked carefully. Sure enough, there in the midst of the chaos—a little finger with a decal ring! "Is that what it's about?" "It sure is," he replied.

What, then, of the future of Captain Beefheart? What are the chances that he will leave his self-imposed house arrest and begin to spread his music and magic more widely into the world?

At present the Captain stands at a crucial turning point. On the face of it everything seems to be in his favor. His new Magic Band is probably the best he's ever had and may be one of the best in the country. He has recently added drummer Artie Trip, formerly of the Mothers of Invention, who provides exactly the right blend of rhythmic novelty and imagination to the group's sound. Zoot Horn Rollo and Rockette Morton, musicians that Beefheart taught from scratch, have reached musical maturity and are eager to get out before the public. Both of them are remarkably talented and love the music they play with an unwavering passion. The Captain himself is clearly at the peak of his creativity in terms of both composition and performance. His new songs in rehearsal—"Woe Is A Me Bop," "Alice in Blunderland," and others—are even better than the tunes on *Trout Mask Replica*. I have heard the new Magic Band play this music in the shelter of Beefheart's living room and, believe me, it's simply incredible.

Beyond this, Beefheart now has around him a group of associates that he should be able to trust. His new manager, Grant Gibbs, is both honest and thoroughly sensitive to the special needs and foibles of his artist. Previously an unbiased observer of Beefheart's career, Mr. Gibbs is now trying to untangle the web of contractual knots which the Magic Band had stumbled into over the years. Although Beefheart thinks otherwise, Straight Records is probably giving him

as good and forthright a deal as he'd find anywhere in the business. And there's no dearth of opportunities either. Beefheart is very much in demand both in the United States and in Europe. Offers for a tour of England and the Continent have come from five different agencies in recent weeks. He could also do well touring college campuses and jazz and pop festivals in America. All Don has to do is say yes.

At the point of decision, Captain Beefheart wavers erratically. He hires and fires musicians with great abandon and then says that the group is not yet ready. He also creates imaginary enemies in his mind and then spends his days trying to figure out ways to fight them off. During the writing of this article, for example, Van Vliet became convinced that I was public enemy number one. For days he brooded about the crimes that I was supposedly committing against him. What Beefheart cannot seem to understand is that he has nothing like the number of foes he thinks he has. There are literally dozens of people who would do anything to enable him to perform on stage again. All those who may have had evil designs on him have long since retired in frustration.

Fortunately, it appears that Beefheart is regaining the necessary confidence in himself and his surroundings. He has recently married a lovely girl named Jan who is a constant companion in the wild and delightful realm of Beefheartism imagination. He has also made tentative preparations for a tour and a new album. All of it hangs on choices that he will make in the next several weeks.

But who knows? Perhaps 1970 will be the year that we finally catch a glimpse of the man behind the Trout Mask. Maybe this will be the year that all of us can experience the amazing wisdom and humor that Captain Beefheart has in his grasp. Clearly though, it's strictly up to him.

ONE MAN SENTENCE

Inside the tub-ette on the small duplex tile shadow of my hand made a movie wolf head the dangling cigarette made a long fire tipped tube resembling a smoking fang which curled from his mouth to my mouth then slowly into the peeled back tiny mouths of the flaky enamel ceiling above my shaggy head a test of endurance metered by what with things changing this fast I drown the soggy creature through his wet butt out of the bath tub-ette trembling as it was a small room with a very large open window he bounced and disappeared off the sill into morning aching and yawning like a neglected tooth that took root in both night and day.

—Don Van Vliet

A COLLECTION OF BEEFHARTIAN WISDOM

"There are only forty people in the world and five of them are hamburgers."

"Everybody's colored or else you wouldn't be able to see them."

"God's doin' the jerk and it's the jerk's fault for lettin' him do it." (title of a poem)

"Think about the poor rhinoceros. He's in trouble because people think his horn's good for sex. They grind it up as a potion for sex. We're lucky they don't find out about our teeth." (The secret of our teeth, according to Beefheart, is that like elephants' tusks, they're made of ivory.)

"I don't want to sell my music. I'd like to give it away because where I got it, you didn't have to pay for it."

"Do you know what I mean?" (Asked at the end of every Beefheart sentence).

"Everybody drinks from the same pond."

On the Vietnam war: "It's getting pretty desperate when you have to shoot somebody with a bullet just to say 'hello.'"

"I'm not really here, I just stick around for my friends."

HEY GARLAND I DIG YER TWEED COAT

Hey garland I dig yer tweed coat . . . I'll trade you a dominoe this size . . . mothballs scented . . . the woman Silk nude tie . . . painting his chest . . . one celluloid stay, exposed thru his nibbled collar. Feet speckled the sidewalk . . . Faces gurgled thru windows . . . passing cars gum rubber streaks . . . Neon plants swim like green seaweed to a deep rhythm of blues . . . Red thyroid sunsets . . . Flame n' speckled Chemistry . . . pipes run off dark tubes . . . erase into marks that pour the dye of darkness . . . Crystal comes together as silent as ink . . . I don't think I could let it go, I got it at the Religious scene . . . teeth let go . . . Tobacco juice . . . An oiled balloon . . . Brown

eye in an egg whit . . . Black tar bubbles in stripes . . . A straw hat squeaked on the brim of a feather . . . Newsprint thumbed thru nicotine fingers . . . a dark olive was turned on . . . Its small pulp speaker, burst into a scream . . . one large tomatoe was immediately peeled akin red . . . It bled into a red "O" n' smacked behind accepted fangs . . . Quick eyebrows danced cutely above a mole . . . the front was smooth . . . It gradually gathered n' wrinkled at the holes . . . a dark wooden moustache deposited below above chinese red varnished lips . . . that dented slightly into the evening. "It's gotten quite cold I've decided I can't sell you my coat" . . . Honking the wind puffed into the clumps above the lattice rows n' out looked panatella . . . naked n' not ashamed . . . without no clothes

wiggle pig went snout first into a tree . . . the rubber turkey was gobbled up by night's dark rubber mouth . . . a white phosphorous raindrop dropped in the sky . . . Hot silhouettes in a convertible . . . gave this a applause . . . n' several white porcelain trays were rolled in by Bumble Bees . . . Their wings arranged with pictures out of the past n' the rainbow baboon gobbled fifteen fisheyes with each spoon . . . Pockets was caught at window level approaching the fractured glass dripping in light he spoke . . . I just looked at myself . . . N' from here t' there it ain't far enough . . . But from here t' here . . . It's too short . . . n' circles don't fly, they float Pena exclaimed, n' went on to say "Sun shore did shine this year . . . who'd ya look like underneath?"

—Don Van Vliet



VINTAGE BEEF

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART is one of the seminal figures in the American West Coast Pop-Naissance. When in London a few weeks ago Beefheart volunteered a few choice comments to **IT**. After you read what he says listen to his songs on the fantastic L.P. **SAFE AS MILK**, soon to be released by **Pye**.

WATER

BEEFHEART: You know what I can do? I can stay under water for four and a half minutes.

TRAVEL

BEEFHEART: Everybody's turning on to fucking backwards now. These people at this passport bureau — are absolutely backwards. They're the ones that are wrong; they're the ones that are out of reality — don't you think so? You get a passport to walk through a country, man; if you were walking you have to stop at all these places and after you do that it sort of gives you a negative thing.

NAMING OF NAMES

IT: Where d'you get the name from, how d'you come on it?

BEEFHEART: I was out in the desert five years ago and I was sitting in a car and we were all stoned. Frank Zappa and I and a bunch of other guys were there. Frank doesn't turn on at all . . . but anyway, I was just sitting there and I started laughing and I had thought of this name and I laid it on everybody in the car and Frank says "AH!" like you know that's great, we'll make a movie. So he said we'll make a movie and we'll call it — **Captain Beefheart Meets the Grunt People**. So we started work and we studied the script for a year and we wrote a thing and something happened and the movie fell through. It doesn't agree with the things I think now—changed so much in that length of time. It's a good movie though . . . tear on the dotted line, paste up rocketse . . . it was really going to be far out.

DRUGS

BEEFHEART: You know, a thing I've become aware of since I've been here—one good thing, they gave junk addicts —here possibilities—no violence happening in any of them like in New York . . . and now they're taking it away, abolishing it, that's really far out.

EDUCATION

BEEFHEART: University is a joke, college is a gigantic waste of time—you know what I mean? I think it's detrimental, I think you have to shake it off later before you can even do anything — as far as I'm concerned, I had three years at college and I know, I had to get rid of it — start talking the right way.



**1967
I.T.**

ROUGH TRADE FROM VENUS

PROLOGUE— A TRUE STORY

Mark, like most other 17 year old boys was going through the usual hassles which come with being young in the United States of America. There was the whole drag scene about going to school and then after that there was the grim prospect of being drafted and then after that... But Mark wasn't just another basically all-American boy; for a start he lived on Quartz Hill, a hill of solid quartz rock (a metamorphic rock of sedimentary origin, found most abundantly in the oldest geological strata (Euncyclopedia Britannica) which is kinda weird and exclusive, you gotta admit. And then, what wit h all the visions of violence and bloodletting summoned up from the fear of being drafted, Mark had really freaked out and vanished into a mental hospital. It was around this time that he got to listen to an album 'Safe as Milk' by Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band. Nothing had made that much sense to Mark before — sure he'd doodled around with a few things — dropped acid a couple of times, smoked a little 'pot' y'know — he even had a bass-guitar laying around the house which he couldn't be bothered to get into — but this album really got to him. He played it every morning and every night for almost two years until, one fine day, he went to see Captain Beefheart

playing live in L.A. It was at that point that it all clicked together somehow Mark's eyes connected with the mad Captain's right up there on stage 'just like snails' and a mystical alliance was formed. Beefheart befriended Mark as well as Mark's 19 year old acid-freak buddy and gave them a job in his new combo. The band, — Jeff St. Claire, perhaps better known as Antennae Jimmy Semens, John French — the mysterious Drumbo and the Mascara Snake — went into the Desert for eight months to practice a number of songs the Captain had worked out on a piano in 8 hours. They got hdd of an old acquaintance of Beefheart's, a businessman and leader of a '50s pachuco rock band, who had pretensions to being Stravinsky or Varese or something but who was also well-known for his nifty work behind the switches at the recording studio and, lo and behold, a double-album was conceived containing i narguably some of the weirdest music ever to be found on black plastic — 'Trout Mask Replica'.

BOZOED ON THE BUS A RAP WITH THE CAP

Well, friends, that was some three years ago, and there we all were on a coach travelling from Kensington to

Brighton for a Captain Beefheart concert. Some old friends had been lost along the way — Antennae Jimmy is living with his mother the Desert Psalms in a trailer situated somewhere in the Desert, the Mascara Snake is painting and Drumbo is still moving in mysterious ways, coming and going — but new friends have been added. Mark, — now re-named Rockette Morton, dapper in multi-coloured egg-shell designed shirt, purple trousers and an immaculate white slouch-hat was sitting beside the belly-dancer quietly reading 'The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich'. His hair was neatly cut while his moustache was waxed out to accommodate two spreading antennae on his upper lip. Just like Salvador Dali. No, not at all. That moustache shows a cat-fish influence. Rockette Morton doesn't even like Salvador Dali. This was stated in no uncertain terms by the plumpish man who looked rather like a cross between Orson Welles and a pixie and who was easily the centre of attraction

on the bus — Don Van Vliet, alias Captain Beefheart, painter, writer, absurdist and Dada to the Delta Blues tradition. Van Vliet always states things in no uncertain terms, he is absolutely convinced of his own rightness. But this is understandable, for, in his own words, he is an artist and a genius. Everyone on the bus knew that. Even those who hadn't before, after direct



ROCKETTE MORTON



THE CAPTAIN

ZOOT HORN ROLLO

confrontation with the charismatic Mr. Van Vliet, were at least temporary believers. And of course everyone in the band — Zoot Horn Rollo, seven feet tall and now with short hair, looking like an all-American boy from Saturn, Ed Marimba with the green moustache.

Winged Eel Fingerling who looked like he'd stepped right out of a particularly harrowing extract from the Bible — all matted hair and beard, and intensity, and Orejon; a fat jovial greasy trucker with a voice like a hyena — they all held Beefheart in a kind of awe. Meanwhile Beefheart waxed ecstatic about his band. 'Y' know, I'm totally happy with the band I've got. I tell you I'm proud to be playing with them. Rockette Morton. Have you seen him play bass? He's a killer. He claws the strings — uses all his fingers. Just wait 'till you hear him play — you won't believe it. And Zoot Horn Rollo — personally I believe that he is becoming the greatest guitar player alive. There is no end to his contribution as an innovator. His lines, man — his whole approach. There's no way you can turn that kind of flow off.' Beefheart treats the musicians in his band as equals in all respects. He stresses that he is not the leader — 'The only leader there is runs down the back of your leg' and that the band themselves are starting to write 'their own music. Winged Eel Fingerling, Marimba and Orejon were all musicians in Frank Zappa's band. Not any more though. But that's sort of a sore point and all will be revealed a little later on.

While the members of the Magic Band tend to keep very much to themselves (though perfectly sociable when approached for a rap), Van Vliet is more than gregarious. We talked for god knows how long touching on numerous topics. Don's old friend Ornette Coleman was constantly brought up in the conversation — 'I was with him just before I came here. He's top-notch, y'know, there's none better. But he's not a jazz musician, man — he's a painter. Most people are afraid to play with Ornette — a lot of people are afraid to go into the area of genius. They don't think they can take it 'cos they keep believing they have to measure things out. You can't measure genius. Measurements are just humourous to a genius. That's why someone like Cecil Taylor isn't a genius. Taylor just keeps measuring up that piano — what's the point in that? Now Robert Johnson and Son House are the real geniuses. They're the primitive painters.'

Beefheart's whole concept of the artist/genius is structured around the idea of the primitive. To him creating is the most natural function all forms are ultimately the same in the force of their expression. 'Talking about different art-forms is like counting rain-drops. There are rivers and streams and oceans, but it's all the same substance. Not that art

comes from one source — that's too pointed, too much investment in one thing, like Jesus on the cross. I see a cross-walk out here, which is a joke to me. Take an orange, right — if you pull it apart, it comes in segments. If you squeeze it, the juice just comes out.'

The names of John Coltrane and Charlie Parker are brought up in the conversation. Beefheart dismisses them thus —

'Listen, the fish is in complete control of the scale. When man tries to play scales like a fish has, forget it. The fish, the armadillo — they've got it all down. Ed Marimba is doing an album called, 'Armadillo Xylophone' — he's not going to even try and play the scales. First there's the cover of an armadillo and then there's the music. No-one plays ahead of the armadillo.'

Had he heard the album 'Songs of the Humpbacked Whale?'

'I don't use Scales when I play the horn, and I used to play that instrument feeling that certain things were communicating with me. Most people look up in the sky after that kind of experience but I don't, I look in the ocean. I just got hold of that record and now I've heard it, I know who it is. I mean, the largest living land mammal is the absent mind, but those whales are out there. Didn't you hear any whales or dolphins in my solo (a spontaneous piece called 'Spitball Scalped a baby' played at the Albert Hall gig)? I couldn't hear myself because I was playing but I felt sure they were out there.'

He, his wife and the whole band live in Eureka which is 69 miles from the Oregon border. 'The whales are right outside our window cleaning their barnades and singing.'

The conversation carries on with everyone present totally subservient to the eloquence of the Captain. Someone attempts to take him on in a word game but fails miserably. 'Let's not play marbles' says Beefheart good naturedly, carrying straight on into a wild rap about the bisexual capabilities of the hyena.

'The hyena — man, that creature is one of the most highly evolved on this planet. It can change it's sex at will. Did you know that? A male hyena can have babies. Isn't that amazing? Beefheart is very involved in the idea of breaking down basic sexual barriers (though he stresses that he and the Magic Band are all men with good healthy sexual appetites playing music for women). However when the name of Alice Cooper is mentioned in this context, he retorts —

'Sure, what Cooper and his band are doing sound good, but they're exploiting the concept. Throwing little chickens into the audience — I think that's despicable. If I saw Cooper again, I'd spank his arse. That band — they go into the woods

with their guns and kill animals. They're all sick.' One of the projects Beefheart has tentatively planned once he gets hold of some money ('The Spotlight Kid' is doing good business in the States, having broken through the top 100) is to help curb the killing of rare animals in Africa. He, and his ideas — like his views on politics (he has none) and pollution (a sincere 'I think it should be stopped right now' was all he could manage on that topic) — becomes vague. Another project he hopes to finance is the construction of 'a female building' in London, which goes underground. 'You won't have to have an air-raid to go into it, and it won't be scary. Maybe all the other buildings will fall into a hole where they belong. Then they can see all the mountains and oceans without all the male-blood in their head and the red-faced erection. Tut! Tut! People won't be afraid of the opposite sex.'

His current relationship with Warner-Reprise is an amicable one. He has total artistic control.

'If they don't let me do what I want, then I'll be on another label — You can be assured of that. Nobody tells me what to do.'

His next album — 'Brown Star' — though yet to be recorded, is completely worked out in Beefheart's head. It was written during an 8 hour car journey between Boston and Yale. Amongst the numbers to be featured are 'Big-Eyed Beans from Venus' (which says you don't have to go back into the past. All the past in the world doesn't go to make up a man of the present) and 'Happy Blue Pumpkin' written by Jan Van Vliet, Don's wife and constant companion. Now that the link between artist and record company has strengthened and become comparatively stable, Beefheart intends to release far more material. He writes an average forty to eighty pages of words a day and spends up to ten hours at a stretch working out tunes on the piano. 'I could release 20 albums a month, easily.'

The talk turned to rock music and the market he was now establishing himself in. Chuck Berry — 'one of the greatest poets ever — a true original', and Jimi Hendrix were rated as geniuses; The Rolling Stones didn't fare so well, Mick Jagger was dismissed contemptuously but Beefheart had some kind words to say for Brian Jones whom he had once met. 'He was a fine man — he seemed very interested in what I was doing. You know I've got the feeling that he wrote 'The Last Time' and 'Satisfaction'. I know those songs are credited to other people but...'

The Beatles are attacked vehemently except for McCartney who also met Beefheart — 'he was always the creative one in the band'. Lennon is not one of Van Vliet's favourites. 'I'll tell you one

thing, to this day I can't understand what happened. I personally sent a telegram to John Lennon when he was doing his campaign for peace and told him that Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band had some definite ideas about gaining peace without violence or blood-letting. And I didn't get an answer. Now I don't know what happened, but a telegram usually gets through, right? But how could he ignore someone like me on a topic as important as that? And believe me I have a few things to say about peace."

Lennon also thinks of himself as a genius. "So Lennon is an artist, now?" says Beefheart, laughing to himself. "I'll tell you one thing I didn't like -- the Beatles saying they were going to turn you on. I've never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. No man or woman can turn another person on. The minute you hit the air you're on. Like I said on "FLASH GORDON'S APE" -- "jump in the air and hit your eyes /try to go back and there wasn't none." The idea of trying to turn someone on, that's the biggest concession stand I've ever heard."

Maybe they meant well, someone suggests. You mean mint well. Mint as in money, in which case it's true. People who mint anything have bad breath.

"There has to be a change," he continues, flying off at a tangent. "How can things just stop? Like a cowboy stabbing his spurs into the prairie to stop the ball rolling; or putting a bird on a leash. Why not fly a kite so you won't have to fly a bird?"

The Captain didn't have much time for Bob Dylan, either. Bob Dylan? Oh, you mean Robert Zimmerman? He's no genius. Quote me any of his songs and I'd pick out the originals of his imagery. He steals his stuff from real geniuses like Robert Johnson

Beefheart wouldn't accept the proposition that maybe Dylan used the essence of the work of the old masters in order to create original statements himself.

Beefheart believes that basic communication is one of the greatest, if not the greatest art form. "Talking is more of an art form than music, in fact it's probably the best one. Music is just like a worm crawling over a razorblade -- no, a word crawling over a razorblade. That's it! What do you do as a writer? I guess you do what you can within the restrictions; the human mind, ear and eye. The next time an artist tells you that a writer does not make it just tell him that he should be doing soup cans like Warhol. I'm a writer myself -- I have two books coming out; one of them is called OLD FART AT PLAY -- that's a novel, and the other ones a book of poetry called SINGING INK. Listen, I want to get the tape of what we're saying here now. I want to sit back, and listen to the music we've been making."

Beefheart is planning on using some of the tapes of interviews he's made in this country for inclusion on "BROWN STAR".

THE KID GETS HEAVY

Finally, the conversation turned to his old buddy from El Monte, Frank Zappa. It was at this point that one got a taste of what it must be like to be one of those who has ever crossed Don Van Vliet in any way.

"Zappa is the most disgusting character I have ever encountered. EVER! You know, he claimed to have discovered me! This sham, this bum who is under the impression that he is an artist claimed that he discovered me!! I mean, people say that I discovered Zoot Horn Rollo which is crap; he found me and I found him. I didn't discover him or anything like that. He was on when I met him. It was just that he thought he was off. But Zappa! And the thing is he didn't have to be what he is, he just chose to be a shit. He's got a real burden -- nose-to-the-grindstone, red-faced erection. He should know better than that, being around musicians like Ed Marimba. He claimed that he produced "TROUT MASK REPLICAS" -- he was asleep at the switches, man! He's like a switchman with Parkinson's disease. Look what he did with Wild Man Fischer. He tried to exploit a man who was not a freak; the word 'freak' just doesn't exist as far as I'm concerned. I haven't seen any freaks -- I've seen people who say they're deformed. I do not know what deformed is, because I like art and form -- that's all beautiful. Do you know what Wild Man Fischer is doing now? Zappa drained him -- he prostituted that man's integrity. Herbie Cohen, Zappa's associate and manager, reminds me of a red marble in a can of lard, Zappa reminds me of a cataract. The only reason I played on "WILLY THE PIMP" was because I wanted to straighten Zappa out. I thought that if he came into contact with a real artist he might see the light, but he was too far gone by then. Listen man, you'd be degrading yourself as a writer by even mentioning his name in your article. Ask the boys in the band who used to work with him. Listen, Orejon started the Mothers, not Zappa. Did you know that? Even I didn't know that!"

Orejon, the bassist, alias Roy Estrada who stuck with the Mothers from FREAK-OUT to the UNCLE MEAT period, nodded his head. He started a band along with Ray Collins and Jimmy Carl Black called The Soul Kings until Zappa came along and took them over. Estrada, a killer bass-player, whose falsetto renderings of such classics as "Do

You Wanna Dance" and "In the Midnite Hour" could be heard at the back of the bus, is very bitter about the way Zappa treated him. Since he split with the Mothers, he's played with Little Feat (an excellent country -- rock band which also featured Lowell George (another ex-Mother)) and worked as a session man. He's recently joined the Band allowing Rockette Morton to play the guitar when the mood takes him. His old friend Ed Marimba, alias Art Tripp, looked kind of weird on the stage, his hair fixed in three ring-lets, green mustache, and, with a pince-nez around his neck. He spent six years studying at a university, carrying on with that tradition with that formal/classical chamber music that Zappa fooled around with in the later days of the original Mothers. Tripp now despises all that "formal crap" as he calls it and is totally committed to Beefheart's music. Ian Underwood (Zappa's key-board player) was in the band for a few weeks but he just couldn't make it. "He said the music gave him a headache", Tripp says contemptuously. He explained the reason why so many ex -- Mothers were playing with Beefheart

like this: "Well, all that stuff with Zappa was just hard work. This band is like total liberation - work does not come into it at all. We've been released." Winged Eel Fingerling, aka Elliot Ingber, is perhaps the most interesting of the ex-Mothers. He played guitar on the "FREAK OUT" album (he's the straight-looking guy with the crew-cut and roll-neck sweater as shown on the L.P. cover), and after his dalliance with Zappa his main claim to fame lies in the inclusion of the "Don't Bogart That Joint" track on the Easy Rider soundtrack, which Elliot wrote. He eventually joined Beefheart after "LICK MY DECALS OFF" had been released but soon split owing to his hatred of being on the road. Now he too is totally committed to Beefheart: "As long as there is a Magic Band, that's the place I want to be." He's the only member of the band who has anything good to say about Zappa - "I like and admire Frank very much - he's a fine guitarist but he seems very distant from everything going on around him." After politely answering questions, he mutters "Jiggers" and goes off to sit by himself again.

AFTER IT BLEW ITS STACKS

After a seemingly endless coach journey (the first coach had broken down half way between London and Brighton) we finally arrived at the Dome, a sort of mini-Albert Hall, filled to capacity, as all the Beefheart gigs have been. In the dressing room the Band get changed while Zoot Horn Rollo gets his spider-like fingers around the fret-board of his guitar, crafting almost impossible chords from the instrument, in preparation for the show. Beefheart disappears into the john, eventually emerging in his stage clothes - an incredible red silk suit over a black shirt, with a gold necklace in place of a tie. All this is topped off with a black cloak emblazoned with a weird embroidered design, and he looks every inch a rock and roll star, just like Little Richard. "Better, man, Richard was too little." The stage looks fine.

BOOGLARISING THE JOINT

It must be after the first three bars of WHEN IT BLOWS MY STACKS that you realise something truly astounding is going to be laid on you. Beefheart told me that they never do free gigs because they need money to buy good food in order to play good music. All I can say is that Beefheart and company are no vegetarians, they're cannibals. Their music comes right out and it eats up the audience. The guitars slip and slide with a vengeance, slicing the music up into magnificent splinters, while Beefheart howls like some crowned shaman going werewolf. The band never seem quite human, more like spirits suckled from birth by one of those strange, treacherous figures that appear in Doctor John's more inspired ramblings, or which found a place on Bo Diddley's creepy "WHO DO YOU LOVE" saga. Make no mistake, Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band ain't just another black magic hype for the kids to lap up; they are the real voodoo, the acorn gospel in the grand tradition of the old Delta music vision of the Twilight Zone. The demons that drove

Robert Johnson to his grave at the tender age of 21 are working in harness with Beefheart, transforming his music into some weird, bastard offspring of the music of spheres.

The numbers the band do come from TROUT MASK, DECALS and SPOTLIGHT KID exclusively and the live sound that they get makes most of their studio efforts look sick in comparison. The Magic Band at full-strength on such numbers as CLICK CLACK, BOOGLARISE, and MY HUMAN GETS ME BLUES are quite unique; Beefheart sums it all up - their playing is so together that "they look as if they're untogether, if you know what I mean". The music is both jagged and flowing and when, for an encore, the Captain produced his alto-sax and proceeded to assault the PA with his highly unconventional style of playing it was all literally, too much, for some of the kids in the audience - although I would imagine that the whales coasting off Brighton beach appreciated the communication from a fellow spirit.

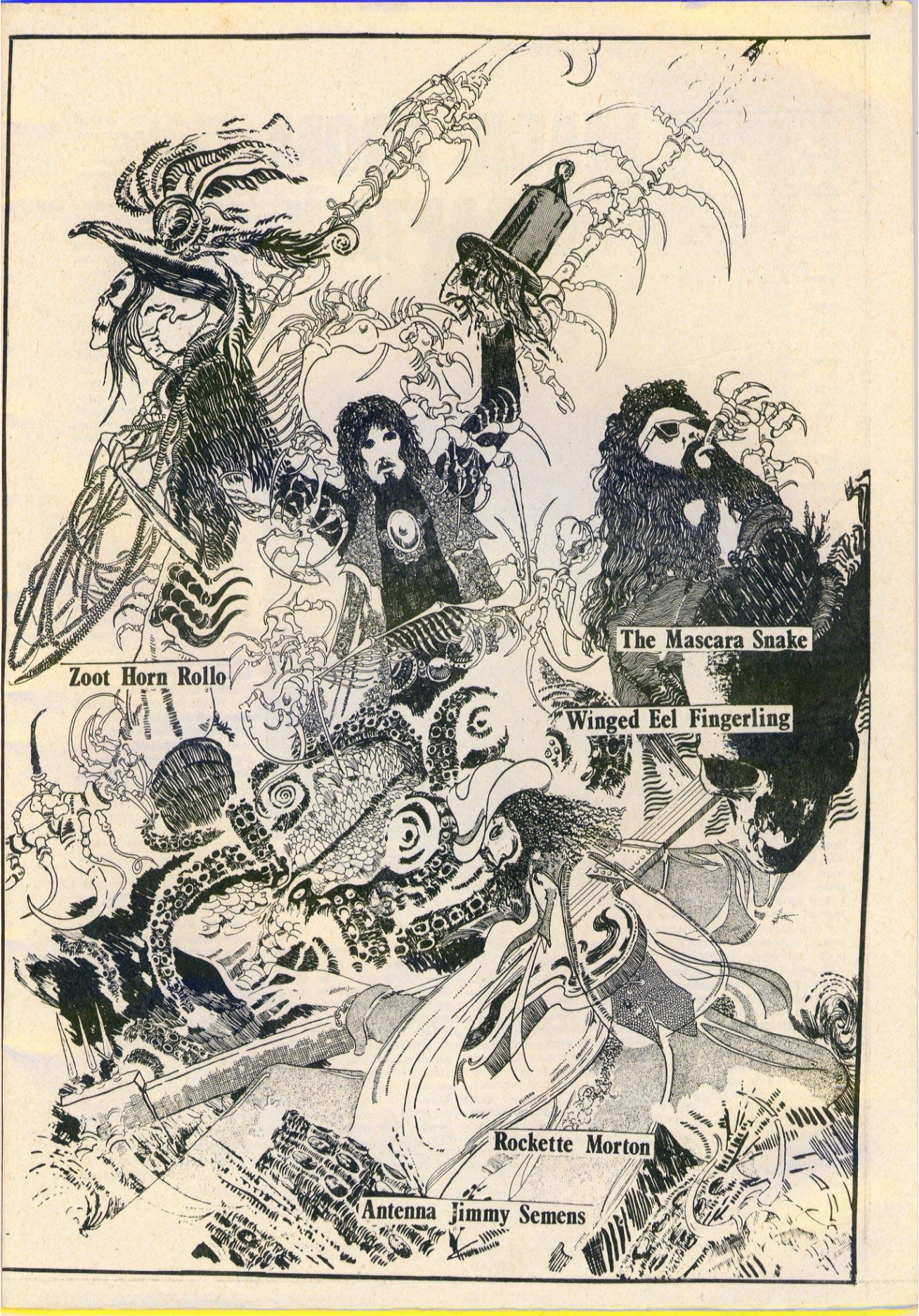
The scene backstage after the show is hectic. Bad vibes are present in the form of some acid-heads who keep annoying Beefheart with their inane jive. Beefheart is vehemently opposed to drugs of any kind - hard drugs he considers poison and psychedelics as just "an extension of Disneyland." And has actually spoken out against them on stage. But the fact remains that his music appeals to a young drugorientated audience. While he recognises that the majority of his followers are young (16 year-old kids in the States make up the bulk of his afficianados - he steadfastly refuses to believe that they are heavily into drugs).

"I'm appreciated by those people who realise how pointless the drug experience is." It is also sad that most Beefheart addicts have never heard of Albert Ayler or Son House, or even Don's old friend, Ornette Colman; for them, his appeal is that of a charismatic crazy-man spouting inspired gibberish. There is a good deal of humour and insanity in his work, which he recognises, but he is most concerned that the ideas which he puts across and the music that the band produces should ultimately be taken seriously as great art.

He contends that within the bizarre structure of his art there lie some incredibly advanced ideas. Whether or not the rock and roll population of Planet Earth ever pick up on them remains to be seen, but the Captain and his Magic Band ain't worrying.

Elliot Ingber (aka Winged Eel Fingerling of The Magic Band), went a little weird in the studio. It's said that Ingber started talking to his amplifiers during the recordings of a track called "Rumble". After 85 takes it was concluded that ol' Elliot was definitely out to lunch.

Nevertheless, George cites Ingber as an important influence on his own musical education, and claims that he's possibly one of the finest white blues guitarists he's ever heard. He recalls a jam session in 1967, after Monterey, at Peter Tork's house. There was Stephen Stills, Buddy Miles, Tork, and Lowell, Jimi Hendrix and Ingber. When Ingber started to play, Hendrix was stunned into total admiration.



Zoot Horn Rollo

The Mascara Snake

Winged Eel Fingerling

Rockette Morton

Antenna Jimmy Semens

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART
Two Originals (Lick My
Decals Off, Baby / The
Spotlight Kid)
(Reprise).

IF INCOMPREHENSIBILITY — not of essence, but of achievement, of how rather than what — has anything to do with it, then "Lick My Decals Off Baby" may well be the greatest rock record ever made.

I really don't think any other team of musicians can ever have achieved remotely the same empathy — Magic — as this band. Their collective music is on a level elsewhere only achieved by individuals such as Jimi Hendrix.

"Decals" was Beefheart's 1970 follow-up to "Trout Mask Replica", almost certainly with the same personnel, and if anything it may even outshine that historic record.

It's not music these guys played. What they played was impossible to play: the music that squirms round your head as you roll over at 6.30 am, the music of ants and zanies and Kafka and the Cetians aboard IGP972.

"Decals" is not human music — or at least, not of the human conscious — and to my knowledge it's the only rock record and, I'm willing to bet, the only record of any kind featuring people rather than computers and stuff of which that can be said with certainty. Frightening.

The story, in case you're not familiar with it, was that after the underrated "Strictly Personal" album, up to when the Captain had always tended to play with musicians, he decided that the only people who could play like he wanted must primarily be *non*musicians. Musicians were too bound up with what they had learned.

Accordingly, he gathered around him a core of artists, poets, and freaks and, like a wolf pack bringing up human babies to live and think as wolves, he took these guys to a house in the desert, virtually imprisoned them there, and taught them from scratch.

"Decals" is thus the music of musical aliens, beings whose thought patterns maybe don't incorporate such basics as conventional E chords, 12-bar blues and "White Christmas". To a normal listener, what they play therefore makes no sense whatsoever.

MAGIC FROM THE CAPTAIN



**A squid, eating dough, in a polyethelene bag,
is fast and bulbous , Got me?
Cap.Beefheart.**

Yet this does not mean to say that it is nonsense, or that

The Magic Band played within discernible, awesomely disciplined musical structures — except such structures never existed before — and with a sense of rhythm that, again, was at once collectively disciplined yet quite outside the realms of previous possibility.

Either this combination of five/six people who all shared a seemingly unique approach to music was a complete fluke, or some kind of superconscious

manipulation — presumably at the hands of Don Van Vliet — was taking place, the whole band acting merely as instruments for one man's telepathic control.

The "Decals" band, like that of "Trout Mask" was Antennae Jimmy Semens (who is actually reckoned to have played on "Safe As Milk") and Zoot Horn Rollo on guitars, Rockette Morton on bass and Drumbo on drums, plus the Mascara Snake (Beefheart's cousin, if I remember rightly) supposedly on bass clarinet.

Morton and Rollo, as Mark Boston and Bill Harkleroad, now form the nucleus of Mallard, whose debut album's much better than it's cracked up to be.

On "Trout Mask" this group slogged its way through four sides of ever-contorting riffs, evolving a grey, scuffling sound like furry dinosaurs scurrying through the subconscious, while Beefheart flexed his impossible tonsils largely at random.

What makes "Decals" even better for me is that Van Vliet is now part of his magic band, and the vocals, while less "inspirational", are more responsive to what's going on. "Trout Mask" was music; "Decals" is songs. A trite distinction, and only largely true, but therein lies the essential difference.

"The Spotlight Kid" (1971) is more accessible and, while still an amazing piece of music-making, is not for me such an achievement as the previous two: with practice, flesh and blood could play this.

Still, there are moments of great beauty / excitement and brilliance, and it's certain to get played more. But it was the first small step on the road to the painfully everyday "Unconditionally Guaranteed".

Eliot Ingber, aka Winged Eel Fingerling, had replaced Jimmy Semens on guitar — and, if I remember rightly, was still there in that Magic Band that tried so valiantly to recapture past glories in London last autumn — and Ed Marimba (Artie Tripp) was in on marimbas, always an important leavening instrument as it chimed into the Magic Band's cobwebbed mix. The Snake had split.

Both new recruits were ex-Mothers and, though they cut some fantastic records together, it was never such a single-minded machine again. Ingber even took solos, fer chrissake . . .

My apologies for not divulging more of what *actually* comes out of the *speakers* when you play 'em and for not saying more about Beefheart's words and voice: remind me to blag a ten-page feature sometime. Suffice to say that if rock has ever produced works of genius, these are two of them — lazily packaged, to say the least, but at £3.99 for a ticket to a *real* magical mystery tour it's unwise to complain.

Phil McNeill.

REVIEW

LICK MY DECALS OFF, BABY.

Straight 1063

INSIDE Captain Beefheart is a corny old ballad-singing crooner, aching to sing those same old songs of sorrow and devotion. But he knows that kind of stuff doesn't have any effect any more. Once people used to feel their hearts turn when Sinatra sang, but now they just let his voice wash over them; any effects he might have are just conditioned responses.

And the same process has drained most other styles of their effectiveness, too; it gets increasingly hard to establish a distinctive identity while using an existing style.

So, using a technique already familiar in film-making (Andy Warhol, jazz (Albert Ayler), and painting (Francis Bacon), Captain Beefheart has chosen to reach us through ugliness. He knows that most of us will turn him off, but hopes that the few who stay to listen will get more from him than do the millions who listen to (but don't hear, maybe?) those big bold stars.

It is possible that after a few years of intensive listening, Captain Beefheart becomes a pleasure to listen to; a few months of intermittent play have not yet enabled me to ignore the harsh voice, but they have dispelled previous doubts that he was a clever phoney, and not very original white blues imitator, which had been the glib impression taken from casual listening to a few previous tracks. There is, behind that voice, a warm and lonely man, and some of the songs have a strange charm, similar to that generated by clumsy but well-meaning comedians in silent comedy films.

Maybe the most representative track on the record is a two-line chant called 'Woe-Is-Uh-Me-Bop', which rests all its effect on the curious images conjured by Beefheart's strange voice; is this how a grizzly bear would sing the blues? There's a 'Peggy Sue' sort of double rhythm on the album's title track, two tracks are apparently straightforward acoustic guitar show-pieces; on a couple of others the drummer seems to have been shut in a room where he couldn't hear what anybody else was doing, and several times there's an innocence and petulance that suggests a little boy aged three or four trying to describe what he sees and feels in a not very articulate way.

CHARLIE GILLET.



First, the enormously tall, thin figure of Zoot Horn Rollo strides out, plugs in stage-right, and kicks straight off with a jumping, jittering slide-guitar figure. Soon he's joined by Rockette Morton who sets up on the far left with a double-necked lead/bass affair and forthwith hurls himself into the crazy dancing which he keeps up for the duration of the set without ever missing a note or running out of breath.

Soon the rest of the stage is filling up: Alex St. Clair, short-haired and fresh from gigging with a Los Angeles lounge band, calmly fits a capo on his guitar-neck and takes up a safe position to the left and rear of the wildly cap-

ering Morton, while a monocolored and manically-smiling Ed Marimba assumes his seat behind the transparent drum-kit and commences to lash unorthodox patterns on his tom-toms and hammer an ill-fated hi-hat. Roy Estrada falls in behind Zoot Horn and takes over the bass-line from Morton who, by now hopping dementedly on one foot, switches to second lead without even looking round.

And, finally, the portly, authoritative figure of Don Van Vliet strolls onstage to roars of welcome from a transfixed audience and, after a brief self-introductory blast of harp, proceeds to let us have it from all seven octaves.

Captain Beefheart by Tim Souster

The Listener 28 June 1973

Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band have for years produced the heaviest and most relentless beat in rock music, but such is Beefheart's command of rhythmic archetypes that every grinding riff retains its intensity to the bitter end. Beefheart makes no bones about his music staying close to the ground. He has always played dirty and won. But one should not mistake the elemental quality of his style for crudity. The rickety rhythmic counterpoint of a typical Beefheart number distorts or rather dislocates the musical model on which it preys (Afro-rock, Bo Diddley, Soul) with such subtlety that, while the archetype is always strongly in evidence, each piece is unmistakable Beefheart.

Clear Spot (Reprise K54007, £2.45) reinforces my conviction that Beefheart is the most original creator in rock music

today. The music of *Clear Spot* seems at once tougher and mellowed than that of his two previous albums. Perhaps because the Magic Band are now such complete masters of Beefheart's musical intentions, he is able to rely on simpler, stronger gestures in his songs. His emotional range has also increased. Two songs about loneliness, 'Too Much Time' and 'My head is my only house unless it rains', are done with a poignancy—realised by means of a new kind of vocal delivery—quite lacking in all his previous records, which have been consistently black, mocking, ghoulish and cynical. Ghouliness is represented fully on *Clear Spot* too, and, as has often been the case in the past, gives rise to some of the most hair-raising music. My favourite track is 'Big-Eyed Beans from Venus' ('don't let anything come between us'). At one point here, Beefheart exhorts his lead-guitarist: 'Mr Zoot Horn Rollo, hit that long lunar note and let it float.' The single fed-back bass note and open-fifth chord above it swell at the captain's command and, for a minute, even Beefheart's drums are still. The music duly lifts off.

BEEFHEART/ RAINBOW

SAY, BY SOME freak of nature, that one'd never heard a rock 'n' roll record — or, for that matter, wasn't even aware of the existence of the music. Then, without prior warning, was suddenly confronted with rock in the form of Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band. I'm quite certain that the listener would be immediately (and willingly) seduced in very much the same manner as the first generation was when initially exposed to the original rumblings of Presley, Little Richard and Chuck Berry.

In this sacrilegious era of mass plagiarism, contrived rip-offs and pseudo sensational-

ism, Beefheart and Band are just about everything one dared to hope for in a 70's rock outfit: plus a couple of hidden extras yer didn't bargain for.

Despite having to contend with an audience that for some mysterious reason displayed far too much old-fashioned British reserve, Beefheart, last Tuesday, managed to rock the Rainbow Gymnasium with some of the finest original music to be enjoyed on this or any other planet.

In what can only be described as outrageous syncopation, drummer Ed Marimba thrashes everything in sight, while mad-cap idiot dancer Rocket Morton and the gloriously greasy Roy Estrada pile on a heavy bass beat over which dapper Alex St. Clair

and raunchy Zoot Horn Rollo indulge in some truly dynamic bottleneckin'. Even before the good Captain steps up to the microphone and lassoes the listener with his leather larynx, this electric metallic patchwork is more than satisfying.

Be it "Mirror Man", "Low Yo-Yo Stuff", "Nowadays A Woman Has To Hit On A Man", "Electricity" or "Big Eyed Beans From Venus", the intensity of both individual and collective performance is truly remarkable. Its not very often that one has the opportunity to witness such a level of creativity. Indeed, the aura was reminiscent of first laying both eyes and ears on the Rolling Stones. And that's why, on Tuesday, I fell for the leader of the pack.

ROY CARR

virgin • • • • •

Beefheart feels extremely dismissive about the Virgin outfit these days.

"All I can say is that I'm bored. They're so old-fashioned. I've seen better jokes in bubble-gum wrappers. Corn, pure corn. Comparing this young sprout (Mike Oldfield) to Stravinsky. 'Tubular Balls' or whatever the name is. That's disgusting! I left the table."

Well, errumm. He certainly has a forceful way with words. Before we continue these proings into the murky depths of the Van Vliet family and proclivities, let's have another quick taste of the new and

already rare 'Bongo Fury'. The album features, apart from a lot of Beefheart vocals, two Beefheart numbers, 'Sam With The Showing Scalp Flat Top' and 'The Man With The Woman Head'. The latter opens with the lines: 'The man with the woman head/Polynesian wallpaper made the face stand out/A mixture of oriental and early vaudeville jazz pooter. . . .'

'Sam With The Showing Scalp Flat Top' has typically dense, poetic Beefheart lyrics, which Don explained to me painstakingly. He was most distressed at the reactions of a colleague on A N Other music weekly to the songs.

"It's not that bad damn poetry, and they didn't even know it was poetry. Did you read the ***!?" he thought I was just hollering things. Although he was cute, a nice guy, but he really didn't understand. And they have so much poetry background here, for godsake. I mean It's too bad he didn't realise that was poetry. I don't know what he thought it was."

'Sam' is about growing up in the city music, pictures and the maimed war veterans on the American (and come to that, British) sidewalks: "Up uh wrot iron fire escape rolled out uh tiny wood platform/with hard dark

rubber wheels/rolls squeaked rolls squeaked/Sam with the shining scalp flat top/particular about the point it made/Sam was uh basket case/a hard dark ivory cup held saleable everyday pencils. . . ."

Don put it thus: "This fellow is obviously a war victim, he's deformed by the war and he's a basket case, y'see. You've seen those people selling pencils. I thought it was time that that was brought out. Although it has been before (e.g. in 'Johnny Got His Gun' and 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home') but not as much as it should be."

BEEFHEART'S BOOGIE

By Andrew Weiner

Pictures by Byron and Bob Mazzur

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Creem Magazine.

WHAT DOES one say to a man who, at the age of three, used to talk with lions inside their cages? How does one cope with a greeting — 'Haven't I met you somewhere before?' 'No, I don't think so, actually.' 'Weren't you at my concert last night? Weren't you sitting up there (he points) in a group of seven in a box. That's where I've seen you.'

It's all very easy when one is talking to Captain Beefheart. My journalist's paranoia which had been fed on extravagant media stories of the freakiness of the Captain very quickly disappeared. We settled down to the most relaxed conversation I've had with a rock star, and the ever-civil Beefheart (Don Van Vliet, if you prefer) proved that his effervescent imagination was not limited to his music or to his *bon mots* but extended to his everyday dealings with other people. 'I should have met you the first day I came into town', he exclaimed, and invited me, whom he insisted on calling a writer ('I feel most



comfortable in the company of writers. We're not having an interview. This goes deeper than that. And I'm not performing. Frankly I prefer this to being on stage') to join him and his coach on a trip to a concert in Brighton the following day.

He sat in a chair in his publicist's office, and as the sun played through the window, it lit him up as one of his Dutch ancestors might have appeared in a painting by Rembrandt. His quiet and beautiful young wife sat opposite on a sofa reading *Madame Bovary*. Occasionally, Beefheart, who himself claims never to have read a book, would bring her into the conversation. The rest of the time he talked in his quietly authoritative and all-embracing manner, sometimes, as in his act, incorporating a piece of show business or stylised excess into his rap (such as his opening comment recorded above), often taking himself and his responsibilities very seriously, but never, as far as I was concerned, ego-tripping too violently or laying it on too heavily for my comfort.

A number of friends who saw him in concert over here disagree with me on this point. One found him oppressive and boring, another arrogant and patronising to his audience. That last view, I suppose, I can understand. There is no false modesty about the Captain ('I am a super-star, only the record companies won't allow me to be so.') But such an opinion shows a lack of understanding of Beefheart's humour, viz. leaving the stage after playing a short set, crowd shouts and thumps for more, Beefheart comes back alone onto stage and whistles the theme 'More' and goes off, crowd shouts and thumps some more, Beefheart comes back with the band and plays for 40 minutes more; and his desire to involve his audience in a far-out musical and poetic world which he projects in his concerts through a very personal and original rock 'n' roll, not through easy drug-induced imagery and technique.

Dope is a natural topic of conversation to turn to with Beefheart, since his second album — *Strictly Personal* — came on so strong as an acid album — lots of heavy phasing, song titles like 'I Feel Like Ah-Said', packaging which referred pointedly to the 5000 mg. persona of the Captain.



It is a subject on which Beefheart has some interesting views.

He says that he himself has not smoked for some 10 years. 'And as far as lysergic acid is concerned, I don't like to say things like this because of the habit that people have of trying to make me over into a little capsule somewhere, but, yes, I did have lysergic acid slipped on me ten years ago in Honolulu. I don't want to lie about it. And I thought that I had a horrible temperature and that I was really ill. It really didn't feel like real to me. It was corny, man. Really like a cheap movie, like one of those American movies where all of a sudden the woman feels faint and the walls go wooor, wooor, wooor. But I'm a painter, so I've got better imagery than that.

'It's a dead scene, man. I think it's over for that stuff and I wish it had never begun. It's like a Disneyland trip. You know, all of a sudden great painters like Van Gogh are old hat. A fellow that painted the sun, dared to jump into the sun and out of it and

paint it. I'm not going to sample every tablet on the table just because it might make me paint my stroke better. It might make me have a stroke. Maybe some people who think they're getting high are having strokes repeatedly.'

He explains *Strictly Personal* away as something outside his control. He had mixed the album before he went away to England. When he came back, his cousin, the Mascara Snake, played it to him and he found that the record company had completely remixed it, supposedly to make it sound similar music to the effects of on lysergic acid, and also to hit a specific market that then existed. Beefheart was furious. And then all of a sudden *Safe as Milk* (his previous album) — now what I meant was milk wasn't safe any longer; it had Strontium 90 in it. But it was interpreted as lysergic. All of a sudden everybody said, Oh yea man, really. Cool cat. I have never tried to be a hip cat.

'The idea of being called a genius because somebody thought me a really heavy tablet is kind of horny. It doesn't put me off. But it makes me worry about people that do that. That's really scary. The idea of somebody going like that and all of a sudden my whole being is put into a capsule and thrown over and put under a set category. You know, while you're watching TV you can be booglarised. Your chair can be taken from underneath you. Isn't that terrifying, catatonic? But I can enjoy a good TV programme — well, maybe I can't do it successfully — but I've got enough of the explorer in me to try to do it even if it radiates me. But if your chair is stolen from underneath you, the high point of the programme falls down, and you fall down and break your tail bone. That's usually what happens to people who take too much drugs and all of a sudden they say they don't have any imagination and that that pill is their imagination. That's absurd, man. Too much vested interest in any one point is varying degrees of disconnection which is insanity.'

Of course, *Strictly Personal* is not Beefheart's only album, although it played in a considerable part in establishing him as a star, albeit on false pretences. The Captain still hopes to put it out as he intended it to be.

'There are a lot of diamonds in the mud. I think it is important to show them.' Before it there was *Safe as Milk* which Beefheart spent two years hawking around the record companies before it was finally signed up and released. In the meantime he put out a number of single records — 'Who Do You Think You're Fooling' ('about the government, using the Statue of Liberty as a symbol'), 'Out Of The Frying Pan Into The Fire' ('about the lesser of two evils'), 'Diddy Wah Diddy' ('the old Bo Diddley number') and 'Moon Child' ('about the lighter and darker side of the light, I guess.')

Beefheart reckons, quite rightly, that if he had continued playing this kind of music, he would have been a super-star much quicker than he was. We had been talking about his painting. Ornette Coleman — he's a good painter. Have you heard his *Sci-Fi* album? Nice, real nice. Writing, music, painting — they're all painting to me'. (I told this to a painter friend of mine, and she said, 'Funny, they're all music to me.')

'As far as my painting is concerned, I just did it as it took me. That's why I sometimes appear to be late in being a hit. Far be it from me to force my way up into whatever the hell it is. Sorry, I wasn't quite with you there. 'Well, I have the mental facilities to have been a super star a long time ago. You know that as well as I do. *Safe as*

Milk. If I'd wanted to push it after that, if I'd done a record just about like it. But I won't do that. I mean, that is sick, in my opinion. That just breaks off all art. It makes another footpath leading to a Coca Cola. That's a little too sexy for me.' Say that again. 'Think about it. Isn't it a little too sexy to keep an erection all the time?'

'But I am a super star. As a matter of fact I'm writing an album called *Brown Star*. I have it done now, and it'll be the next one out. It's not avoiding being a super star that I saw *Brown Star*. At the end of the poetry or whatever you call it, it says, 'You ask a child if he's seen a brown star around, And he'll laugh and jump up and down and say, I found a brown star right on the ground.' I think we're living on a brown star. I think this planet is as bright as Ceres. But I think it is the other side of the fence the grass is greener element that is ruining this paradise. And even with people. They say, Boy, wouldn't I like to be like him, and he says, Boy, wouldn't I like to be like him. When everybody's perfect anyway, as long as they don't try to cut off all these blood flows and things which go to make the brain do what it does. You know, like all those weird postures that people adopt. Do you know what I mean?

'That kind of thing is very hard to deal with. I've been a victim of it

myself. I got extremely fat. But I got fat as an experiment to find out what people think at that weight. I mean, you have to know before you can say anything about it. But I don't think it's worth getting into the bullshit to find out what the bull ate when it comes to poison — hard drugs, narcotics and things like that.'

So Beefheart did not consciously push for superstardom those four or five years ago. He took things easy (or difficult, one might almost say), and produced a double album of the music he wanted to play on *Trout Mask Replica*. Again there were great hassles getting the record to be released. But now things were beginning to go his way at last. He managed to withdraw himself from his association with Frank Zappa, at which name he still grimaces horribly. 'He couldn't face you man to man. He could never talk to you like I am doing. He would crawl out of the room.'

He started to find the musicians that he wanted and they all moved into different houses on his 110 acre rented estate at Eureka on the California-Oregon border. ('One of the hits of the world' — Captain Beefheart.) 'This group — the way it is — has been together three days before we came here. So this group has a long life ahead of it. This group will eventually be around each other the real way. will be able to do free music



telepathically. I'm not looking for a flash in the pan. You see, it's taken me five years to get this group together. They're men and they're honest and I can appreciate that. I think it's important that children and older people see a group like that. I'm not saying that I want to be a baby sitter because I'm an artist, because artists, writers, painters and musicians usually become baby-sitters in a society like this, in a society as turbulent as — as it isn't. Because it isn't that turbulent. It's just become too intellectual. I think that there should be some faster moves going on. Like moves to stop people poaching on all those beautiful animals in Africa. What if your child, if you ever have one, grows up and has to intellectualise a giraffe?

At the moment Beefheart writes the music for every instrument in his band there is nothing in the act that is not scripted beforehand, except for his own particular screeching horn solo. 'That's the dolphins speaking through me, man. Like I speak through them. Like all my act is a reflection of everybody I ever met. I got it from them. That's why I like to play big concerts. I don't want to shove anybody out because I got it from them. My thing is open-ended. If they praise me, they're only praising themselves.'

I asked him why he didn't play any of the music on his first two albums at the Albert Hall. 'Well, I don't mind playing it, because I did it then. But there is no way to go back. That cuts off now, and a lot of butterflies end up like Jesus pinned to a wall in a collection. And I don't think it's fair to emulate something that doesn't have blood. Far be it from me to bring up that old blood. I did do Abba Zabba, and I thought that sounded way better than it did before, because now I have musicians who are men and much nicer men.'

He certainly doesn't have much respect for antiquity, in spite of his eulogy of Van Gogh. Later, on the bus down to Brighton, I showed him some colour pictures of Tutankhamun from a paper I was reading. 'What, you like them?' he exclaimed. 'Man, you must be hard up. You must be really hard up to like that when there is so much that is better around today.'

He really doesn't like that needling lock-you-up-in-a-museum-case mentality, and this, in a way, carries over to his ideas about the dangers and restrictiveness of concert halls. 'It's very difficult to go to a concert for somebody in an audience. I think they should stand up and get into it with the musicians. I don't think that people should want someone to sit there like that.' Are you playing any dance-halls, or something like that then? Well, I don't know. But then again, the way it's set up and everything, if there weren't seats and that amount of organisation in it, where somebody sits down, they might tear each other apart. You know, just accidentally, because of being that out of the form. Not many people can escape out of the form successfully without backtracking themselves. What they have to do is let the form come out in everything they do until it doesn't come out any more, then they're there. School sets that up. Then what happens if somebody needs to have oxygen or the ambulance? That's why you've got to have organisation. But it's whether a guy is nice that organises something.'

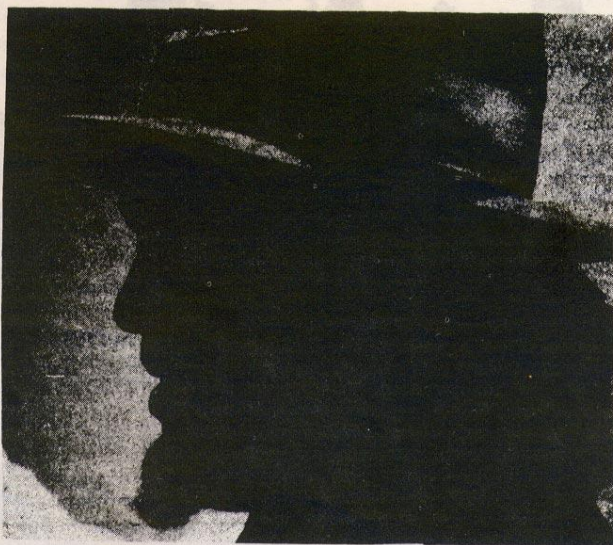
Again he said that, just as I was leaving, just as we had finished discussing the Beatles and he had put down Lennon and commended McCartney for playing his free concerts without any fuss, 'It's whether a person is nice that matters. That's all that matters.'

Just to prove it, a little Beefheart saga to end. When I went down to Brighton I was amazed to meet a friend of mine, Gina, and her father behind the stage. Her father is a personable English gent of the best sort. He had just come from Goodwood where he had been advising on some improvements to the Earl of March's estate. Apparently they had been to Wheeler's, the fish restaurant, the previous night there they had been wedged between Beefheart and his wife and a French couple who knew the Captain. Beefheart handed the French people a pad on which he had been drawing some pictures. They handed it back through Gina and Mr Cresswell, who pipes up, 'On a sketching holiday, are you?'

'No,' says Beefheart, with his usual lack of modesty, 'I'm Captain Beefheart.'

They talk for a while and the Captain invites them to his concert in Brighton the next day. Mr Cresswell watches politely from the wings and Gina really gets into it. After the concert Beefheart comes up to him and takes him aside for a few words which are, as I later learn, 'There's no business like show business.' Far out, Captain.

Still, there is literally no music and show around today that can quite come up to Beefheart and the Magic Band. I believe that.



Zappa and the Captain Cook

BY STEVE WEITZMAN

PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY—Captain Beefheart, rock's sometime genius, had just finished a show with Frank Zappa, with whom he's touring after the end of their longtime feud. Slumped backstage at the Capitol Theater, he scratched his shaggy head and slowly related the latest bizarre turn in his odd life.

"I said some silly things," Beefheart noted, "because I'm a spoiled brat and I don't understand business to the degree that Frank does. I probably felt neglected. I'll admit it . . . and I told him so. I said, 'I'm sorry Frank and I don't mean that for an excuse.' We shook hands and that was that."

Zappa and Beefheart's relationship goes back 20 years, to when they attended junior high school together in Lancaster, California. "I was there when he picked up his first guitar," Beefheart recalled. "It was a funny little brown thing with hardly any strings, but it sure sounded good to me." The two tried unsuccessfully in 1964 to form a group called the Soots, and then went their separate ways—Zappa to form the Mothers, Beefheart to search for his Magic Band.

The problems began in 1969 when Beefheart did *Trout Mask Replica* for Zappa's Straight Records. "I did *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* right after *Trout Mask*. The group wanted to be commercial and since they were so nice about doing those two I thought I owed them a moral obligation and I stayed. But I should have gotten rid of them then."

Beefheart added that his last two albums, *Unconditionally Guaranteed* and *Bluejeans and Moonbeams* were "horrible and vulgar," and that he'd "headed for the redwoods to paint and write" as soon as he'd fulfilled his obligation to Mercury.

But other stories have Beefheart accusing Zappa of poor production on *Trout Mask* and interfering with its creativity. In 1972, Beefheart told the



New Musical Express: "Zappa is an oaf. All he wanted to do was make me into a horrible freak . . . Zappa made me look out of the question, and the kids out there on the streets started to take dope because they thought that was the only way they could possibly get into my music. It was disgusting and totally degrading that Zappa should do this to me."

Evidently, Beefheart had second thoughts in the woods, and he called Zappa to praise *Apostrophe* and "just to say hello."

"He apologized for all the garbaggio

and asked for a job," Zappa said. "The Captain repented. He had been real confused."

Beefheart auditioned just before Halloween, Zappa continued. "He flunked. See, he had a problem with rhythm, and we were very rhythm oriented. Things have to happen on the beat. I had him come up on the bandstand at our rehearsal hall and try to sing 'Willie the Pimp' and he couldn't get through it. I figured if he couldn't get through that, I didn't stand much of a chance in teaching him the other stuff."

Zappa and Beefheart tried again this spring. "Although he still has trouble remembering words and making things happen on the beat," Zappa said, "he's better. Just before the tour, I tried him again and he squeaked by."

Beefheart's major contribution to the present Zappa show involves growling the lead vocals on "Poofster's Froth, Wyoming" (which Zappa wrote for him), "Orange Claw Hammer" (from *Trout Mask*) and "Willie the Pimp," the show stopper. Remembering the lyrics had apparently been a problem for Beefheart—he keeps them written down on a stand located at his feet on stage. Zappa is interested in getting Beefheart "to relax to the point where he can improvise words. He can do really funny stuff when he's sitting around in a room. But he hasn't really gotten comfortable enough yet."

At this point, Zappa plans to remix and reissue *Trout Mask*, which Beefheart still describes as "my favorite." Beefheart said he's "had an extreme amount of fun on this tour. They move awfully fast. I've never traveled this fast. With the Magic Band—turtles all the way down."

"Frank is probably the most creative person on this planet. He writes things for instruments that haven't even been invented." Beefheart paused for a moment and then resumed. "He's another Harry Partch," he said, referring to the avant-garde composer, "only he hasn't dried up yet. Get it?"

"THE LIVES AND TIMES OF CAPTAIN BEEFHEART" is a non-profit-making fan publication conceived and edited by John Muir. It is a labour of love, limited to a print-run of 1000 only. All articles, interviews etc. have been credited where known. Special thanks to the contributors: illustrations by David Britton, Bob Jenkins and John Mottershead. Cover lettering by Jim Cawthorn, Discography by John McGuinness, extra material by Robert Holland.

lick my decals off, baby

LICK MY DECALS OFF, BABY

Rather than I wanna hold your hand,
I wanna swallow you whole
'n I wanna lick you everywhere it's pink
'n everywhere you think
Whole kit 'n kaboodle 'n the kitchen sink
Heaven's sexy as hell
Life is integrated,
Goes together so well
'n so on
Well, I'm gonna go on 'n do my washing
Well, now you may think I'm crazy but I want you to
Lick my decals off baby
'n I don't want you to be lazy
'cause it's drivin' me crazy
'n this song ain't no sing-song
It's all about the birds 'n the bees
'n where it all went wrong
'n where it all belongs
'n the earth all go down on their knees
Lookin' for ah little ease
She stuck out her tongue 'n the fun begun
She stuck out her tongue 'n the fun begun
She stuck it out at me, 'n I just thumbed my nose
'n went on washing my clothes

THE BUGGY BOOGIE WOOGIE

Oh that buggy boogie woogie sweeps me off my feet
What this world needs is a good retreat
What this world needs is a good two dollar room
'n a good two dollar broom
One day I was sweepin' down by the wall
I bumped a mama spider 'n the babies begin t' fall
Off o' my broom
Now I've gotta keep sweepin' 'n sweepin'
'fore they fill the room
Now that buggy boogie woogie sweeps me off my feet
I gotta keep sweepin' 'n sweepin'
Seems like I could keep on sweepin' 'n sweepin'
'n there's still too many feet
What this world needs is a good two dollar broom
'n a good two dollar room
What this world needs is a good two dollar room
'n a good two dollar broom
Seems like I could keep on sweepin' 'n sweepin'
'n there's still too many feet
Well the way I must be sweepin'
Must be with too many feet
Ah, 'n I'll still keep sweepin' 'n sweepin'
'n there's still too many feet

YOU SHOULD KNOW BY THE KINDNESS OF UH DOG THE WAY UH HUMAN SHOULD BE

You should know by the kindness of uh dog
The way uh human should be
You should feel the wet wood heart of the tree
Wood sap pop like uh frog's eye
Open t' the fly 'n the blood of the river
When it ripples 'n clicks like uh waterbell
'n the elephant in his beautiful grey leather suit
Though he's wrinkled he looks smart as hell
'n the turtle's eyes carry bags very well
'n the snake's in shape
He rattles like uh baby 'n wears his diamonds
Better than uh fine ladies finger
'n his fangs are no more dangerous
Than her slow aristocratic poison
And he plays his games on uh grass bed
'n uh monkey never had uh guilty masturbation
'n uh monkey wouldn't shit on another's creation
And the fatman cries thru-out all creation
'cause he's got uh cold
'n the icebear dives thru blue zero for uh frozen fish
'n the eskimo wears his hide 'n chews his heart
'n the beautiful grey whale oils some bitches lighter
Someday I'll have money 'n I can frame myself
What uh picture I'll be choppin' down uh tree
SPACE-AGE COUPLE

Space-age couple
Why don't you flex your magic muscle?
Space-age couple
Why do you hex your magic muscle?
Space-age couple
Why do you hustle 'n bustle?
Why don't you drop your cool tom-foolery
'n shed your nasty jewelry?
Cultivate the grounds
They're the only ones around.
Space-age couple
Why don't you flex your magic muscle?
Hold a drinkin' glass up t' your eye after you've
Scooped up a little of the sky
'n it ain't blue no more.
What's on the leaves ain't dew no more.
Space-age couple
Why don't you jus' do that?
Why don't you jus' do that?
WOE-IS-A-ME-BOP
Woe-is-a-me-bop
Om-drop-a-re-bop-om
Everybody's doin' it
Please don't let them ruin it om

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE BLUES (OR THE BIG DIG)

Come on down t' the big dig
Come on down t' the big dig
Come on t' the big dig
Singin' the Smithsonian Institute blues
Singin' the Smithsonian Institute blues
The way it's goin' La Brea tar pits
I know you just can't lose
The new dinosaur is walkin' in the old one's shoes
Come on down t' the big dig
Can't get around the big dig
This may be premature but if I'm wrong
You can just say it's the first time I was happy t' be
confused
Singin' the Smithsonian Institute blues
All you new dinosaurs
Now it's up t' you t' choose
'fore your feet hit the tar, you better kick off them old
shoes

'n forget about that big dig
Now you see it 'n it's up t' you t' choose
It sure looks funny for a new dinosaur
T' be in an old dinosaur's shoes
Dina Shore's shoes
Dinosaur shoes
C'mon down to the big dig
You can't get around the big dig
C'mon to the big dig
Ya can't get around the big dig
Singin' the Smithsonian Institute blues

DOCTOR DARK

Mama, mama, here come Doctor Dark
Horse clippin', clappin' 'n his ol' hooves makin' sparks
Black leather lady Lord carried her bags
The hell horn, hell horn, hell horn
Horn rim crimped
Glasses look out on the pale hell bent
Moon milk run
O' lady go home
Lord they done cookin' done
Black lady
Black leather lady
Done had a white, white, white poor son
Mama, mama, here come Doctor Dark
Horse clippin', clappin' 'n his ol' hooves makin' sparks
Gotta git me who I want to
God, Lord knows I've got to oh see that Doctor Dark
Mama, mama, here come Doctor Dark
Horse clippin', clappin' 'n his ol' hooves makin' sparks
Shed a tear on the meadow lark 'n like
Tear t' drink
T' brush away
'n tear apart 'n black 'n white 'n like
Tear t' drink t' brush away
'n tear apart 'n black 'n white 'n like
The moon a pail of milk spilled down black in the night
Little girl lost a tear
'n her kite
T' the night 'n like 'n light
God, Lord knows I've got to oh see that Doctor Dark



BELLERIN' PLAIN

Parapliers the willow dipped
Rolled roots gnarled like rakers
This hollow hole don't hold no jokers er' fakers
Don't fall by no jokers or fakers
Puller down to the stirrin' hay acres
Parapliers pinches uh levy 'n pulled way thru the toe
Foothills, locomotives walked 'n sugar beets rolled
Down the tracks
Sunbum bounce soot off the black smokestacks
Parapliers pinched up slow down the sky
Blue 'o' poured the engineer's voice
Whistlin' down low 'n piped like clacks
By the ol' scarecrow
n pots 'n pans burn the fireman's hands till the
Kettle leaped fire 'round the belly 'o'
The bayou boy bums with sunken gums
n pits his strength to the 7th sons down
Parapliers rumbled like uh straight iron gun
Like uh red hot iron thru the egg white 'o'
Sunnyland drum, horn blow
Sun like uh bubble pop yellow, down she go
Muh cowcatcher whistled like uh steel flash scream
Hose sucked out for water 'n the wheeldriver
Sparkled like an Indian flint
'n the fireman 'n the brakeman bent 'n waved his long
red underwear arm
All aboard
The lantern flared 'n the caboose waved uh green gone on

PETRIFIED FOREST

Human bark
Beautyless hide from beauty
Bow your eyes 'n heads to the duty of the dead's
Suck the ground
Breathe life into the dead dinosaurs
Let the past demons rear up 'n belch fire in the air of now
The rug's wearing out that we walk on
Soon it will fray 'n we'll drop
Dead into yesterday
Must the breathing pay for those who breathe in 'n don't
Breathe out
There'd be no gain, brothers, if no one would play
'n as for your games count me 'n all that can see,
Breathe in 'n out hungry today 'n eat hearty tomorrow
Or eat away 'n be eaten some day
No seed shall sow in salt water
If the dinosaur cries with blood in his eyes
In the dinosaur cries with blood in his eyes
'n eats our babies for our lies
Belches fire in our skies
Maybe I'll die but he'll be rumblin' through
Your petrified forest

Andante; odeecology



(UNTITLED)

The first scene was the bathtub ring
And then out through the window
Zoom . . .
A little boy cutting out paper dolls singing ring around
The rosey a rose jumped over a pansy into a mud puddle
With the sun in it
Pan . . .
To the bathroom, the wall paper decorated with Christmas
Ornament stars repugantly cheery to the degree of
Nostalgic depression
A woman begins to disrobe
Zoom . . .
In to the unkempt shabby underarm and large perspiration
Tears on the enormous lit up breasts one dark 'n one light
Light nearest the window, dark nearest the basin above a
Inadequate light fixture below the latter breast
Pan . . .
The tub ring
Zoom . . .
To the ring on the finger obvious zen intent one ornament
Began to move unnoticed by the near nude woman who
Now nude 'n situated in the tub cringed at the ring
Added hot water relaxed at this mixture pleased, splashed,
Picked, sneezed, winked, wheezed, flatulated, bubbles
popped
The tub returned to normal
The star began to silently rotate much like the lid of
A large mouth jar
Jerky 'n very human being removed from this of course
And entirely on its own
This obviously an example of its picturesque physical
Appearance, attitude and formation
Alright then
The star recovered after the autopsy upon close
analysis
Tipped the scales at 10,000 lbs. and was matched with
A metal very much like lead as we know it here
Recovered on a mission that successfully returned from
Venus in the late fall of 1975
The star had dropped 'n lodged just under the woman's
armpit
Only one point was visible

I WANNA FIND A WOMAN THAT'LL HOLD MY BIG TOE TILL I HAVE TO GO

I wanna find a woman who'll hold my big toe till I
have to go
I wanna find a blue swirl plastic ocarina
About five miles long
And play with them sweet potatoes all night long
'cause them yams have all them eyes that yawn
'n yearn down yonder below the ground
'n their golden hair is ah dirty brown
I wanna find me a woman that'll hold my big toe till I go
I wanna hold me a woman that'll find my big toe
Till I have to go
'n sow my last sweet potato

THE CLOUDS ARE FULL OF WINE (NOT WHISKEY OR RYE)

The clouds are full of wine
Not whiskey or rye
'n the sky is full of bluebrains,
Bluejays, mermaids
Bluebrains, bluejays, bluebirds, mermaids
Bluejays, bluebirds, rainbows
'n the night is full of rhinestones,
Pinecones, telephones
'n the sky is full of rhinestones, pinecones, telephones
Wolfhowls, milkcows
Shadows to some hows
'n the clouds are full of wine
Not whiskey or rye
'n the sky is full of bluebrains,
Baboons, rhinos, fools 'n buffoons
'n my eyes are full of bloodbones,
Snowcones, serenaders 'n sen-n-ñ-oritas
'n so on . . .
Melodies that go on, go on, go on,
Go on, go on, go on, go on,
Go off, go off, go off, go off

I LOVE YOU, YOU BIG DUMMY

Love has no body
I love you, you big dummy
No body has love
No body has love
Breathe deep
Breathe high
Breathe life
Don't breathe ah lie
I love you, you big dummy

FLASH GORDON'S APE

You jumped when the air hit your eyes
You wanted t' go back but there wadn't none
Now you been goin' back for so long
That you think there is one
It makes me laugh to hear you say how far you've come
When you barely know how to use your thumb
So you know how t' count t' one
You messed in the sky picked a banana an' threw it
At the sun
You saw a flash in the water now there ain't one
You brought back somethin' that wasn't there
You brought back somethin' that wasn't fair
Pull back the adhesive tape
You're in ah scrape
Take to your trees
There's no escape
The leaves are gettin' faker everyday
Flash Gordon's ape
Your too day



FRANK ZAPPA

& THE MOTHERS

'Frank Zappa And The Mothers'. Babylon Books 95p

FROM THE team that brought you 'The Life And Times Of Captain Beefheart' comes this collection of stories, cuttings, album and concert reviews of Frank Zappa which are arranged chronologically to provide a biography of one of the most extraordinary figures to have earned his living playing rock'n'roll.

And a weird and wonderful tale it is too, from the vice squad raiding his film studio in the mid-Sixties right through to his court battle in England with the proprietors of the Royal Albert Hall who banned his presentation of '200 Motels' in 1971 (he lost the case).

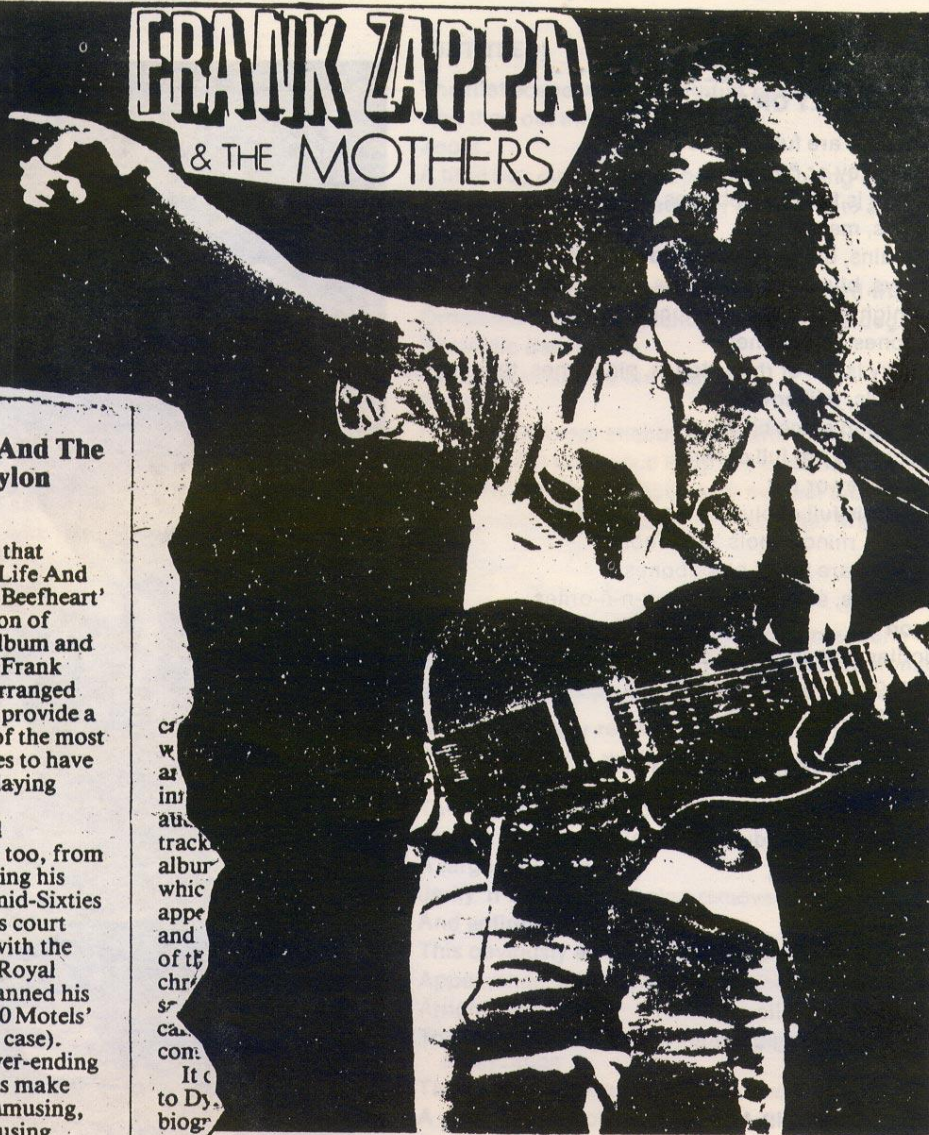
In between a never-ending succession of bands make records and tour: amusing, annoying and bemusing critics on both sides of the Atlantic. And if you think the New Wave outrageous you should try reading about some of Zappa's antics 10 or more years ago. About the only constant factor is his complete unpredictability and you can have a good deal of fun watching the critics trying to keep up with it. Without a rudimentary knowledge of Zappa on record this book is probably hopelessly confusing but there's a discography at the end (official recording only) to set you off. And even hardened Zappa buffs will probably find something they didn't know somewhere in the pages.

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SOUNDS

THE LIVES & TIMES OF FRANK ZAPPA & THE MOTHERS

Sixty-four pages of pics and fax on the man himself. Now including the complete BOOTLEGS discography. For those who bought the first edition the discography sheet is available for a S.A.E. The magazine costs 95p+15p postage from the editorial address: BABYLON BOOKS 18, DEERPARK ROAD, WHALLEY RANGE MANCHESTER M16 8FR, ANGLETERRE.



TROUT MASK REPLICA

SIDE 1

FROWNLAND

My smile is stuck
 I cannot go back t' yer Frownland
 The sky 'n the sun 'n the moon
 'n all my eye can see
 I cannot go back t' yer land of gloom
 Where black jagged shadows
 Remind me of the comin' of yer doom
 I want my own land
 Take my hand 'n come with me
 It's not too late for you
 It's not too late for me
 To find my homeland
 Where uh man can stand by another m n
 Without 'n ego flyin'
 'n no one dyin' by an earthly hand
 Let the devils burn 'n the beggars learn
 'n the little girls that live in those
 Old worlds
 Take my kind hand
 My smile is stuck
 I cannot go back to yer Frownland
 I cannot go back to yer Frownland

THE DUST BLOWS FORWARD 'N THE DUST BLOWS BACK

There's ole Gray with 'er dovewinged hat
 There's ole Green with her sewing machine
 Where's the bobbin at?
 Tote'n old grain in uh printd sack
 The dust blows forward 'n the dust blows back
 And the wind blows black thru the sky
 And the smokestack blows up in suns eye
 What am I gonna die?
 Uh white flake riverboat just flew by
 Bubbles popped big
 'n uh lipstick Kleenex hug on uh pointed forked twig
 Reminds me of the bobby girls
 Never was my hobby girls
 Piano full uh worms and uh pole fishin'
 Cork bobbin' like uh hot red bulb
 'n uh bluejay squeaks
 His beak open an inch above uh creek
 Gone fishin' for uh week
 Well I put down my brush
 'n I took of my pants 'n felt free
 The breeze blowin' up me 'n up the canyon
 Far as I could see
 It's night now 'n the moon looks like uh dandelion
 It's black now 'n the blackbirds feedin' on rice
 'n his red wings look like diamonds 'n lice
 I could hear the mice toes scamperin'
 Gophers rumblin' in pile crater rock hole
 One red bean stuck in the bottom of uh tin bowl
 Hot coffee from uh krimpt up can
 Me 'n my girl named Bimbo Limbo Spam

ELLA GURU

Here she comes walkin'
 Lookin' like uh zoo
 Hello Moon Hello Moon
 Hi Ella high Ella Guru
 She knows all the colours that nature do
 High Ella high Ella Guru
 High yella high red high blue she blew
 High Ella high Ella Guru
 She do what she mean
 She do what she do
 Got sumptin' fo' me sumptin' fo' you
 She sho' sumptin'
 She's young too
 Ella Guru Ella Guru
 Ella Guru Ella Guru
 Ha ha right right
 Just dig it

That's right "The Mascara Snake"
 Fast 'n bulbous
 Tight also
 Ella Guru Ella Guru
 Ella Guru Ella Guru
 High Ella high Ella Guru
 Ella Guru

DACHAU BLUES

Dachau blues those poor jews
 Dachau blues those poor jews
 Down in Dachau blues down in Dachau blues
 Still cryin' 'bout the burnin' back in world war two's
 One mad man one six million lose
 Down in Dachau blues down in Dachau blues
 Dachau blues Dachau blues those poor jews
 The world can't forget that misery
 'n the young ones now beggin' the old ones
 please t' stop bein' madmen
 'Fore they have t' tell their children
 'bout the burnin' back in world war three's
 War One was balls 'n powder 'n blood 'n snow
 War Two rained death 'n showers 'n skeletons
 Danced 'n screamin' 'n dyin' in the ovens
 Cough 'n smoke 'n dyin' by the dozens
 Down in Dachau blues
 Down in Dachau blues
 Three little children with doves on their shoulders
 Their eyes rolled back in ecstasy cryin'
 Please old man stop this misery
 They're countin' out the devil
 With two fingers on their hands
 Beggin' the lord don't let the third one land
 On World War Three
 On World War Three

MOONLIGHT ON VERMONT

Moonlight on Vermont affected everybody
 Evan Mrs. Wooten well as little Nitty
 Even lifebuoy floatin'
 With his lil' pistol showin'
 With his lil' pistol Totin'
 Well that goes t' show you what uh moon can do
 No more bridge from Tuesday t' Friday
 Everybody's gone high society
 Hope lost his head 'n got off on alligators
 Somebody's leavin' peanuts on the curbins
 For uh white elephant escaped from zoo with love
 Goes t' show what uh moon can do
 Moonlight on Vermont
 Well it did it for Lifebuoy
 And it did it to you
 'n it did it t' zoo
 And it can do it for me
 And it can do it for you
 Moonlight on Vermont
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 Don't gimme no affliction
 Dat ole time religion is good enough f' me
 An' it's good enough for you
 Well come out t' show dem
 Come out t' show them
 Come out t' show them
 Come out t' show them
 Come out t' show them
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 It's good enough for me
 Without yer new affliction
 Don't need yer new restrictions
 Gimme dat ole time religion
 It's good enough for me
 Moonlight on Vermont

TROUT MASK

SIDE 2

PACHUCO CADAVER

When she wears her bolero then she begins t' dance
 All the pachucos start withold'n hands
 When she drives her Chevy Sissy's don't dare t' glance
 Yellow jackets 'n red debbils bussin' round 'er hair hive me
 She wears her past like uh present
 Take her fancy in the past
 Her sedan skims along the floorboard
 Her two pipes pied hummin' carbon cum
 Got her wheel out of uh B-29 bomber brodey knob amber
 Spanish fringe 'n talcum tassles FOREVER AMBER
 She looks like an old squaw indian
 She's 99 she won't go down
 Avacado green 'n alfalfa yellow adorn her t' the ground
 Tattooes 'n tarnished utensies un snow white bag full o' tunes
 Drives a cartune around brooma seltzer blue umbrella
 Keeps her up off the ground
 Round red sombreros rap 'er high tap
 horsey shoes
 When she unfolds her umbrella pachucos
 got the blues
 Her lovin' makes me so happy
 If I smiled I'd crack m' chin
 Her eyes so peaceful thinks it's heaven she been
 Her skin is smooth as the daisies
 In the center where the sun shines in
 Smiles as sweet as honey
 Her teeth clean as the combs where bees go in
 When she walks flowers surround her
 Let their nectar come in to the air around her
 She loves her love sticks out like stars
 Her lowin' sticks out like stars

BILLS CORPSE

Quietly the rain played down on last of the ashes
 Quietly the light played down on her lashes
 She smiled 'n twisted she smiled 'n twisted
 Hideously looking back at what once was beautiful
 Playing naturally magically
 O her ragged hair was shinin' red white 'n blue
 All 'n all the children screamin'
 Why surely madam you must be dreaming
 You couldn't have done this if you knew what
 you were doin'
 Well the gold fish 'n the bowl lay upside down

Full in the sky 'n the plains were bleached white
 with skeletons
 Various species grouped together according
 To their past beliefs
 The only way they all got together was
 Not in love but shameful grief
 It's not the way I'd like it t' get together
 That's not the kind uh thoughts I'd like t' keep
 The rain played lightly down down on the formaheap
 O lady look up in time O lady look out of love
 'n you should have us all
 O you should have us fall

SWEET SWEET BULBS

Sweet sweet sweet sweet bulbs grow in m' latest garden
 Warm warm warm warm warm sun fingers wave
 In m' latest garden
 Flowers dance their faces brave
 Come talk freely in the garden of m' lady
 Her hominy smile her hominy snatch
 Only uh crow would peck
 'n uh chicken would scratch
 Her lips turned up t' kiss
 I see yuh Phoebe baby in yer bonnet
 With the sunset written on it
 'n the shadow of uh tree
 Curled around her knee in color
 'n just behind yuh was the sea of negativity
 Tinklin' like mercury in the wind
 Her feet kept by the ground her toes bare brown
 Her carriage she'd abandoned like uh hand-me-down
 She walked back into nature uh queen uncrowned
 She had just recognised herself
 To be an heir to th' throne
 Her garden gate swings lightly without weight
 Open t' most anyone that needs uh little freedom
 For God's sake
 O come as many as you can
 In dark or light you're free t' grow as flowers
 Share her throne 'n use her toothbrush
 'n spend some interesting hours

NEON MEATE DREAM OF AN OCTAFISH

Lucid tenacles test n' sleaved
 'n joined 'n jointed jade pointed
 Diamond back patterns
 Neon meate dream of a octafish

Artifact on rose petals
 'n flesh petals 'n pots
 Fack 'n feast 'n tubes tubs bulbs
 In jest incest injest injust in feast incest
 'n specks 'n speckled speckled
 Speckled speculation
 Fedlocks waddlin' feast
 Archaic faces frenzy
 Ceramic fists artificial deceased
 'n cists rancid buds burst
 Dank drum 'n dung dust
 Meate rose 'n hairs
 meaty dream wet meate
 Limp damp rows
 Peeled 'n felt fields 'n belts
 Impaled on 'n daeman
 Mucus mules
 Twat trot tra la tra la
 Tra la tra la tra la
 Whale bone fields 'n belts
 Whale bone farmhouse
 Cavorts girdled 'n latters uh lite
 Cavorts girdled 'n latters uh lite
 Uh dipped amidst
 Squirmin' serum 'n semen 'n syrup 'n semen
 'n serum
 Stirruped in syrup
 Neon meate dream of a octafish

CHINA PIG

I don't wanna kill my china pig
 No I don't
 Uh man's gotta live
 Uh man's gotta eat
 Uh man's gotta have shoes t' walk out
 On the street
 I don't wanna kill my china pig
 Ell he was uh baby I want yuh t' see
 I don't wanna kill my china pig
 Well I used t' go t' school
 With uh little red box
 'n I used t' have my pig go with me
 We walked for blocks
 I don't wanna kill my china pig
 His tail curled five times in uh circle
 Round
 It's glazed
 He's got uh slot in his back flowers grow
 My china pig be uh quite uh show
 I don't wanna kill my china pig
 Woe no
 My china pig
 I got him by the snout
 'n I takes him by the cuff
 'n I whipped out m' fork
 'n I poked at um
 Three hairs laid out on m' floor
 I remember my china pig
 I fed the neighbourhood
 It was a big neighbourhood
 Uh lot uh people liked my pig
 One little girl used t' put her fingers
 in his snout
 I put uh fork in his back
 I didn't wanna kill my china pig

Owing to the condition of the players
 and the environment of the recording
 certain portions are inaudible, thus
 we can only guess at their real meaning.

MY HUMAN GRTS ME BLUPS

I saw yuh baby in yer X-ray gingham dress
 I knew you were under duress
 I knew you under yer dress
 Just keep comin' Jesus
 Yer the best dressed
 You look dandy in the sky but you don't scare me
 Cause I got you here in my eye
 In this lifetime you got 'mhumangetsmeblues
 With yer jaw hangin' slack 'n yer hairs curlin'
 Like an ole navy fork stickin in the sunset
 The way you were dancin' I knew you'd never
 come back
 You were straining t' keep yer
 Old black cracked patent shoes
 In this lifetime you got 'mhumangetsmeblues
 Well the way you'd been ole lady
 I could see the fear in yer windows
 Under yer furry crawlin' brow
 Uh silver bow rings up in inches
 You were afraid you'd be the devils red wife
 But it's alright God dug yer dance
 'n would have you young 'n in his harem
 Dress you the way he wants cause had uh dog
 Cause everybody made him uh boy
 'n God didn't think t' ask his preference
 You can bring yrr dress 'n yer favourite dog
 'n yer husbands cane
 'n yer old spotted hog
 Cause in this lifetime
 You've got 'mhumangetsmeblues



TROUT MASK

STYLING: [illegible]
HAIR: [illegible]
MAKEUP: [illegible]

Elk
Rain
Rain
Rain
Rain
Rain



© [illegible] 1998



Rockette Morton



THE PHOTOGRAPH OF BEEFHEART ON THE CENTRE SPREAD IS NOW AVAILABLE AS A LARGE, COLOUR LIMITED EDITION SILK SCREENED POSTER. IT HAS BEEN HAND PRODUCED BY "MASKS", AND THE PRICE WHILE STOCKS LAST IS £1 PLUS 30p POSTAGE, FROM MASKS, 18 DEERPARK ROAD, WHALLEY RANGE, MANCHESTER, I6, ENGLAND.

TROUT MASK REPLICA

SIDE 3

PENA

Pena
Her little head clinkin'
Like uh barrel of red velvet balls
Full past noise
Treats filled her eyes
Turning them yellow like enamel coated tacks
Soft like butter hard not t' pour
Out enjoying the sun while sitting on
Uh turned on waffle iron
Smoke billowing up from between her legs
Made me vomit beautifully
'n crush uh chandelier
Fall on my stomach 'n view her
From uh thousand happened facets
Liquid red salt ran over crystals
I later band-aided the area
Sighed
Oh well it was worth it
Pena pleased but sore from sitting
Chose t' stab 'er toe
'n view the white pulps horribly large
In their red pockets
"I'm tired of playing baby" she explained
'n out of uh blue felt box let escape
One yellow butterfly the same size
Its droppings were tiny green
phosphorous worms
That moved in tuck 'n rolls that clacked
'n whispered in their confinement
Three little burnt scotch taped windows
Several yards away
Mouths open t' tongues that vibrated
'n lost saliva
Pena exclaimed, "That's the raspberries."

WELL

Light floats down day river on uh red raft o' blood
Night blacks out d' heavens like uh big black shiny bug
It's hard soft shell shinin' white in one spot well
It's a hard place that I'm livin' but I'm doin' well well
The white ice horse melted like uh spot uh silver well
It's mind went last then disappeared the tail
My life ran thru my veins
Whistlen' hollow well
I froze in solid motion well well
I heard the ocean swarmin' body well well
I heard the beetle clickin' well
I sensed the thickest silence scream
Then I begin t' dream
My mind cracked like custard
Ran red until it sealed
Turn t' wooden 'n rolled like uh wheel well well
Thick black felt birds uh flyin'
With capes of solid chrome
'n beaks of solid bone
'n bleach the air around them
White 'n cold well well
Till it's shown in pain
The hollow cane clicked like ever after
It's shadow vanished shinin' silence
Well well

WHEN BIG JOAN SETS UP

Hoy hoy
When Big Joan comes out
Her arms are too small
Her head like uh ball
She tied off her horse
'n galloped off into the moonbeams
She pulled up her blouse
'n compared her navel to the moon
I dig my life for a while
When Big Joan sets up
Her hands are too small
She's too fat t' go out in the daylight
So she rolls around all night
I'm just sorta thread
With uh drooped body
I'll set up with uh Big Joan
I'm too fat t' go out
in the daylight

I'll stay up all night
I won't droop if you
Won't talk about your
Hands bein' too small
You know something's happenin'
Or you wouldn't of come out like yuh did
She ain't built for goin' naked
So she can't wear any new clothes
Or go t' the beach
They laugh at her body
Cause her hands are too small
When Big Joan sits up her hands are too small
She's outa reach
Uh turquoise scarf 'n uh sleeve
Rolled up over uh Merc Montclair
I'll sit up with yuh Big Joan
I'm too fat t' go out in the daytime
I'll stay up all night
If yuh promise not t' talk
About yer hands bein' too small
Hoy hoy is she uh boy?

FALLIN' DITCH

When I get lonesome the wind begin t' moan
When I trip fallin' ditch
Somebody wanna throw the dirt right down
When I feel like dyin' the sun come out
'n stole m' fear 'n gone
Who's afraid of the spitbit with the bluesferbones
Who's afraid of that fallin' ditch
Fallin' ditch ain't gonna get my bones
How's that for the spirit
How's that for the things
Ain't my fault that the things gone wrong
When I'm smilin' my face wrinkles up real warm
When um frownin' things just turn t' stone
Fallin' ditch ain't gonna get my bones
When I get lonesome the wind begin t' moan
Fallin' ditch ain't gonna get my bones

SUGAR 'N SPIKES

'n sugar 'n spikes 'n neon nights
Walk 'n lights 'i chains coughin' smoke whoopin' hope
Cardinal sky rush by falls bark in dark
Fall back in dark
Pies steam stale shoes move broom 'n pale
Moon in uh dime store sale
Sugar 'n spikes 'n everything nice 'n everything nice 'n crazy
That's what little worlds are made of lady
I'm paid up in home in m' new Friday's house
There's no H on my faucet there's no bed for m' mouse
My punch 'n grow mind in diamond back time
Now it's king for uh day with my lady look fine
Got m' peak up hat 'n my caramel mask
Tremelo car speidel wrist round m' honey
Goin' to see the navy blue Vicar
Paul Peter 'n misses wray flicker

ANT MAN BEE

White ants runnin'
Black ants crawlin'
Yella ants dreamin'
Brown ants longin'
All those people longin' to be free
Uhuru ant man bee uhuru ant man bee
All the ants in God's garden they can't get along
War still runnin' on
It's that one lump uh sugar
That they won't leave each other 'lone
Why do yuh have t' do this
You've got t' let us free
Why do yuh have t' do this
You've got t' set us free
Why do yuh have t' do this
You've got t' set us free
Why do yuh have t' do this
You've got t' set us free
Uhuru ant man bee uhuru ant man bee
Now the bee takes his honey Then he sets the flower free
But in God's garden only
Man 'n the ants
They won't set each other be

TROUT MASK REPLICA

SIDE 4

ORANGE CLAW HAMMER

Uh thick clow caught uh piper cubs tail
The match struck blue on uh railroad rail
The old puff horse was just pullin' thru
'n uh man wore a peg-leg forever
I'm on the bum where the hoboes run
The air breaks with filthy chatter
Uh I don't care there's no place there
I don't think it matters
My skin's blazing thru
'n my clothes in tatters
'n the railroad looks
Like uh "Y" up the hill of ladders
One shoe fell on the gravel
One stick poked down
Grey of age fell down on uh pair offears
An eagle shined thru my hole watch pocket
Uh gingam girl uh baby girl
Passed me by in tears
Uh jack rabbit raised his folded ears
Uh beautiful sagebrush jack rabbit
'n an oriole sang like an orange
His breast full uh worms
'n his tail clawed the evenin' like uh hammer
His wings took t' air like uh bomber
'n my rain can caught me uh cup uh water
When I got into town
Odd jobs man ah! yer horse I'll fodder
'n the round house man.
I once was yer father
Uh little up the road uh wooden
Candy stripe barber pole
'n above it read uh sign
"painless parker"
Licorice twisted around under uh fly
'n uh youngster cocked 'er eye
God before me if I'm not crazy
Is my daughter
Come little one with yer little
ole dimpled fingers
Gimme one an'll buy yuh uh cherry phosphate
Take you down t' the foam'n brine 'n water
'n show you the wooden tits
On the Goddess with the pole out full sail
That tempted away yer peg-legged father
I was shagbayed by uh high hat beaver mustache man
'n his pirate friend
I woke up in vomit 'n beer in a banana bin
'n uh soft lassa with brown aki
Bore me seven babies with snappin' black eyes
'n beautiful ebony skin
'n here it is I'm with you my daughter
Thirty years away can make a seamans eyes
Uh round house man's eyes flow out of water
WILD LIFE

Wild life along with my wife
I'm goin' up on the mountain fo' the rest uh m' life
'fore they take m' life
'fore they take m' wild life
'fore they take m' wife
They got m' mother's father
'n run down all my kin
Folks I know I'm next
Wild life along with m' wife
I'm goin' up on the mountain fo' the rest uh m' life
'fore they take m' wild life
'fore they take m' wife
'fore they take m' wife
Wild life wild life wild life
Wild life wild life wild life
I'm goin' up on the mountain along with m' wife
Find me uh cave 'n talk them bears
In t' takin' me in
Wild life along with m' wife
Wild life
It's uh man's best friend
Wild life along with m' wife
I'm goin' up on the mountain fo' the rest uh m' life
'fore they take m' life 'fore they take m' wild life
'fore they take m' wife
'fore they take m' wife
Wild life wild life
Wild life wild life
I'm goin' up on uh mountain.
Find me uh cave 'n talk the bears
In tuh' takin' me in
Wild life is uh mans best friend
Wild life
Wild life

SHE'S TOO MUCH FOR MY MIRROR

She's too much for my mirror
She almost make me lose it
The way she abused it make me never wanna use it
Well mend yer heart 'n mind yer soul

Ole Chicago she's a woman thata
Make uh young man uh bum
She howls like the wind
Make m' heart grow cold
Make me long for that little red fum!

She makes things fly 'n she makes things roll
She got me way over here 'n I'm hungry 'n cold
I remember m' mother told me I oughta be choosy
That was way back when I thought she was m' friend
Now I find out she's uh floosey

I remember the butterflies 'n the sweet smell uh' corn
'n the bubblin' fish in that lil' pond
Oooh! Louise!
How I long for you she's too much for my mirror
That little floosey oh how I fear her
Oooh! Louise!

OLD FART AT PLAY

Pappy with the khaki sweatband
Bowed goat pottbellied barnyard
The old fart was smart
The old fart was smart
The old gold cloth madonna
Dancin' t' the fiddle n' saw
He ran down behind the knoll
'n slipped on his wooden fishhead
The mouth worked 'n snapped all the bees

Back t' the flatulov
Mamma was flutienta lard
With her red enamel rollin' pen
When the fishhead broke the window
Rubber eye erect 'n precisely detailed
Airholes from which breath should come
is now closely fit
With the chatter of the old fart inside

An assortment of observations took place
Mommies licked 'er lips like uh cat
Pecked the ground like uh rooster
Pivoted like uh duck
Her stockings down caught dust 'n doughballs
She cracked 'er mouth glazed caught one eyelash
Rubbed 'er hands on her gorgeous gingam
Her hand grasped sticky metal intricate lathwork
Open t' the room uh smell cold mixed with bologn
Rubber bands crumpled wax paper bonnets
Fat goose legs 'n special jellies
Ignited by the warmth of the room
The old fart smelled this thru his important
breather holes
Cleverly he dialed from within from the outside
we observed
That the nose of the wooden mask
Where the holes had just been uh moment ago
Was now smooth amazingly blended camouflaged 'in
With the very intricate rainbow trout replica

The old fart inside was now breathing freely
From his perfume bottle atomizer air bulb
Invention
His excited eyes from within the dark interior
glazed
Watered in appreciation of his thoughtful preparation
THE BLDOP

Master master
This is recorded thru uh flies ear
'n you have t' have uh flies eye t' see it
It's the thing that's gonna make Captain Beefheart
And his magic band fat
Frank it's the big hit
It's the blimp Frank
It's the blimp

When I see you floating down the gutter
I'll give you uh bottle 'uh wine
Put me on the white hook
Back in the fat rack
Shad rack ee shack
The sumptin' hoop the sumptin' hoop
The blimp the blimp

The drazy hoops the drazy hoops

They're camp they're camp
Tita tits the blimp the blimp
The mother ship the mother ship
The brothers hid under their hood
From the blimp the blimp
Children stop yer narsin' unless yer renderin' fun
The mother ship the mother ship
The mother ship's the one
The blimp the blimp
The tapes uh trip it's uh trailin' tail
It's traipse'n along behind the blimp the blimp
The nose has uh crimp
The nose is limp the blimp
It blows the air the snoot isn't fair
Look up in the sky there's a dirigible there
The drazy hoops whir
You can see them just as they were
All the people stir
'n the girls knees trembles
'n run 'n wave their hands
'n run their hands over the blimp the blimp
STEAL SOFTLY THRU SNOW

The black paper between a mirror breaks my heart
The moon frayed thru dark velvet lightly apart
Steal softly thru sunshine
Steal softly thru snow
The wild goose flies from winter
Breaks my heart that I can't go
Energy flies thru a field
'n the sun softly melts a nothing wheel
Steal softly thru sunshine
Steal softly thru snow
The black paper between a mirror breaks my
heart that I can't go
The swan their feathers don't grow
They're spun
They live two hundred years of love
They're one
Breaks my heart to see them cross the sun
Grain grows rainbows up straw hill
Breaks my heart to see the highways cross
the hills
Man's lived a million years 'n still he kills
The black paper between a mirror
Breaks my heart that I can't go
Steal softly thru sunshine
Steal softly thru snow
HOB0 CHANG BA

Strawwood claw rattlin' m' jaw
I can't call it usin'
It's just somethin' soothin'
Feather times uh feather
Mornin' time t' thaw
Hobo chang ba
Hobo chang ba
Standin' still is losin'
Feather times uh feather
Mornin' time t' thaw
Strawwood claw rattlin' m' jaw
Hobo d'ang ba
Hobo chang ba
Hobo chang ba'0
Hobo chang ba'0
Stand t' gain m' ground
Lay t' rest the law
The ocean is m' mother
'n the freight train is m' paw
Hobo chang ba hobo chang ba'0
The rails I ride 'r rustin'
The new sunrise m' trustin'
The rails I ride 'r rustin'
The new sunrise m' trustin'
Strawwood claw rattlin' m' jaw
Hobo chang ba ooh Hobo chang ba Hobo

VETERANS DAY POPPY

I cry but I can't buy
Your Veteran's Day poppy
It don't get me high
It can only make me cry
It can never grow another
Son like the one who warmed me my days
After rain and warmed my breath
My life's blood
Scrammin' empty she cries
It don't get me high
It can only make me cry
Your Veteran's Day poppy

British Underground

Adults
only!

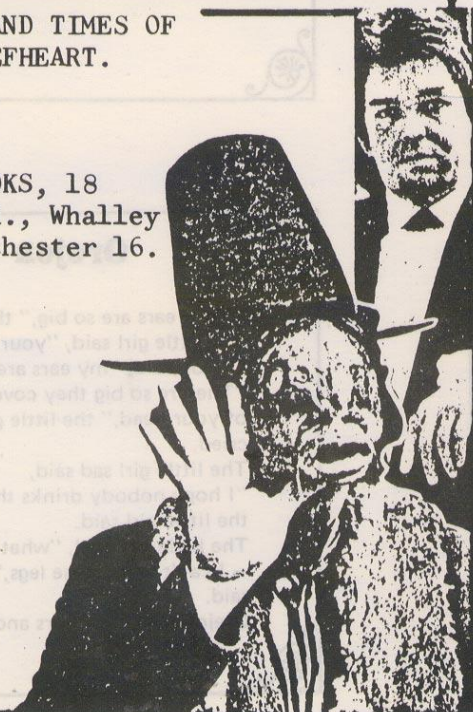


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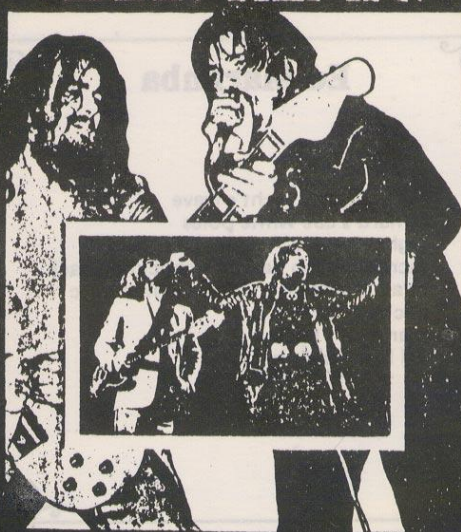
EDITORIAL ADDRESS:

**BABYLON BOOKS,
18 DEERPARK ROAD,
WHALLEY RANGE,
MANCHESTER,
M16 8FR,
ENGLAND.**

**Published by Robert Holland,
edited/lay-out by The Muir.**

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BEEFHEART



Rockette Morton

The head catatonic from the
roller rink
rank 'n rambunctious are employed
in this pleasant pussy
his crabby whiskers above his
feet-in glass house sleepers
drinks yellow milk from cocker-
spaniel still life number paintings
just another nose in this fine
leather coat cat howling on
green gravel tar paper
the whole world is his walk.

Zoot Horn Rollo

A triangle fed on a wool table
and the velvet home of seven
closets shewed zeas
mended 'n moved junk 'n caught
fur combs over hair caravans,
carnivals klans 'n cracked a clay
crimped horn on calico cloister.

Winged Eel Fingerling

No B.O. for this boy
it's like a winged eel fingerling
crawling thru lime jello
it's like a chrome black eyebrow
rolled out real long
a paper brow magnifying glass
fried brown, edge scorched, yoked
like a squeak from a speaker
behind forehead of the time,
licorice schtick open tube of
valuable JuJuBees.

Ed Marimba

Marlin's trot yacht's wave
billiard's cue white polas
night ribs day
sacroiliacs jab heaven's chuckling back
relax armadillo xylophone in zodiac 'n
back
marimba's back
Ed Marimba's back.

Oregon

"Your ears are so big," the little girl said,
The little girl said, "your ears are so big,"
Oregon said, "my ears aren't that big."
"They're so big they cover the whole side
of your head," the little girl said, Oregon
cried.
The little girl sad said,
"I hope nobody drinks that cup of thread,"
the little girl said.
The little girl said, "what legs will I wear
— I can't wear these legs," the little girl
said.
Oregon said, "my ears and your legs."

The lights in the studio brightened as Barry Richards, WDCA-TV's terribly hip television personality, swept onto the platform surrounded by the inevitable cloud of leather fringe. As the cameras rolled forward and the red light clicked "on," the Captain and The Magic Band stood stiff and at attention. Richards caressed the microphone, smiled and with a marvelous Top-40 DJ guttural push said, "Well, you'll never guess who we've got on 'Turn On' today. It's Caayaaapt! . . ."

Beefheart suddenly jumped forward at the master of ceremonies and tickled him in the ribs. Richards dissolved into giggles and quickly tried to regain the composure he'd lost from the sudden sneak attack on his well-varnished cool. When the propriety of grooviness returned, Richards asked the Captain to introduce the group and left them to play what turned out to be a rare treat for any television audience—40 minutes of uninterrupted Beefheartian music and associated antics.

Uncompromising to the medium or its audience, the group moved into its wild-est material. Ed Marimba peered around the room with his silver opera glasses and fired at the cameras with his Mattel special sparkler ray gun. Drumbo then joined Ed in a frantic drum duo, pounding his Gone Bops Congas. Zoot Horn Rollo and Rockette Morton advanced long and intricate solos on guitar and bass, performing like Segovias on the Ed Sullivan Show. Meanwhile, Winged Eel Fingerling brooded in the background, almost unnoticed.

The Captain, as usual, blew his shiny new alto full blast, directly into the microphone. Offering no mercy to the station's equipment he sang "Woe-Is-A-Me-Bop" and "When Big Joan Sets Up" at their highest operating levels. Occasionally he would step back to give the hand and toe investment or lift his pants cuff to reveal the significant fact that his shoes contained feet but no stockings. At the conclusion of the set Beefheart removed his right hand from the saxophone he was blowing and thumbed his nose contemptuously at the audience. "They really love that," he said later.

The TV program in Washington DC was merely one moment in an unprecedented historical occurrence—Captain Beefheart's tour of America. In his six years in the music business, Don Van Vliet had almost never left the quiet confines of his San Fernando Valley living room. He had become legendary among musicians and fans as the genius that no one had ever heard perform. The number of live gigs in his career stood at about thirty-five and on only one occasion had he played east of the Rocky Mountains. Now, with the help of a subsidy and a hefty organizational push from Warner Brothers Records, Captain Beefheart and The Magic Band, plus Ry Cooder and a back-up group, were on the road at last.

When Beefheart began his trek in mid-January, in Detroit, the tour was shrouded in an atmosphere of intense doubt and anticipation. People in the music industry asked themselves, "Will this man

In Search of America

Captain Beefheart and the Smithsonian Institute Blues

by Langdon Winner

actually perform?" Side bets were taken on just how much of the six weeks' agenda the motley group of travelers would actually complete. The odds were 10 to 1 against finishing.

In the previous six months Beefheart had played a number of jobs, but had cancelled out of an important concert in Berkeley and a weekend at the Fillmore West. In both cases Van Vliet staunchly maintained that he had been misled. He said the Berkeley promoters billed him as a freak show and Bill Graham offered him an amount too small even to pay the expenses. "I've been cheated and misrepresented too often to do it again," Beefheart complained. "It's just too old fashioned."

This time, however, the Captain and his men were anxious to play. The long-heralded re-emergence of The Magic Band came off exactly as scheduled. Following a strenuous trail of one-nighters, the Warner Brothers tour played for enthusiastic crowds in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, New Orleans, Atlanta, Des Moines and other cities in the East, South and Midwest. The tour drew 2,000 delighted fans at Boston University while 700 more waited outside in the snow. In Pittsburgh the bands did two performances apiece for sell-out crowds at super-sophisticated Carnegie-Mellon Institute. Through most of the tour, Beefheart attracted capacity or near capacity audiences.

To the surprise of practically everyone, both the Beefheart and Cooder organizations seemed to thrive on the experience of travel and hard work. The members of the unlikely caravan became increasingly weary of the bad sound systems, tedious bus rides, ghastly restaurant food and antiseptic motel rooms, but it never showed in their music. The level of excitement rose steadily with every performance, as if each whistle stop could add something to their collective whistle.

As the tour moved farther and farther along the map of America, it became apparent that The Magic Band's special brand of sorcery was actually working. During the second performance at Carnegie-Mellon, a young man in the audience inflated a 100-foot long balloon which was then passed from hand to hand like a gigantic communal phallus. Everywhere Beefheart went his fans ap-

proached him with peculiar little gifts they had made—a black velvet warlock's redingote with white fur cuffs, an intricate "nativity scene" for his dining table, and large assortments of ray guns and robots.

But Captain Beefheart is not for everybody. As the Warners excursion made its way from town to town it soon became evident that The Magic Band's extraordinary aura was dividing concert listeners into two distinctive groups. On the one hand there were the specifically Beefheart oriented crowds who had obviously heard the band's albums, knew the songs and were absolutely committed to enjoying the show. Tenacious devils, nothing could have swayed them from their goal. On the other hand, most of the performances also drew a large number of persons from what might be called the Grand Funk audience—young listeners who are primarily interested in hearing rock and roll. "Ten Years After was here last month and, boy, did we all dig it." Most of the people in this category had never heard Beefheart's music and had probably come in response to the massive advertising campaign launched in each city. In most cases they were either angered or simply baffled by the sights and sounds they experienced.

Philadelphia's a good example. Several weeks earlier a petition had been posted in a local music shop: "We the undersigned demand to see Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band at the Main Point as soon as possible," followed by 84 signatures. Ignoring the fact that the performance would barely cover the daily expenses, the Warner Brothers' staff scheduled a gig for the Main Point, a tiny but very friendly folk music club near Bryn Mawr College.

Both bands had been confined to chilly Greyhound buses and over-heated motels for several days and were nearing the point of exhaustion. When they arrived at the club they discovered that, as usual, the house sound system emitted little more than screeches, squeaks and squeals. Five thousand years of Western Civilization and you can't find a P.A. system that works worth beans. But the audience was ready and so were the musicians.

Ry Cooder began the evening with a set of blues and bottleneck tunes from his new album. Reaching back to the music of the great blues masters—Sleepy John Estes, Blind Willie Johnson, Leadbelly, and others—Cooder plays a very pleasant and technically impeccable style of guitar and mandolin. Throughout the tour he was plagued by the fact that his back-up band could never get the feeling he wanted. The musicians—Jeff Kaplan (bass), Steve Ferguson (piano) and John Craviotto (drums)—were competent enough, but had been picked up at the last minute. They wanted desperately to play Cooder's music as he wanted it, but could never quite comprehend the vague instructions the leader issued to them. In Philadelphia, as in most places, the group performed adequately and the crowd seemed to enjoy it. Cooder received enough applause to merit the traditional encore.

When the Magic Band took the stage, the small room crackled with electricity. The Captain's visit was apparently a social event of no small magnitude. The Bryn Mawr "Trout Mask Replica" contingent was present in force and completely a-titter.

The band began its set with a long version of "Alice In Blunderland," one of the few true rockers in its repertoire. Ed Marimba states the dainty opening theme on marimba: the beautiful Alice is seen stumbling across a meadow filled with pingpong balls, tripping over her delicately tailored sharkskin brocade skirts. Zoot Horn Rollo then steps from behind an amplifier stroking his Telecaster with his steel finger. As Drumbo puts the rhythmic structures firmly in place, Rockette Morton joins the ensemble to see if a new bass theme might save Alice from the hovering bungle syndrome. There is a brief intermission as Rockette humbly declines an award from Arthur Murray for accomplishment in mambo dancing. At this point Captain Beefheart, dressed in an inexpensive but suitably immodest bright red smoking jacket, walks through the audience and joins his boys on the small platform. With Alice's theme pounding in the background, he proceeds to singlehandedly revive the bebop tradition. Leaning into his saxophone and exhaling every molecule of air in his lungs, Beefheart begins to sound like every good note ever played at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

The Philadelphia audience was exactly where it wanted to be—in a trance. The Magic Band blew its way through the buzzing and feedback of the P.A. to one of its best sets ever—"Japan In A Dishpan," "Abba Zaba," "Gimme Dat Harp Boy"—all of them executed to perfection. Beefheart was so happy with the music that he burst into an *a cappella* version of the old blues standard, "Black Snake Blues," and let his voice slide freely up and down along its four and a half octave range.

At the end of the session the crowd rose to its feet and began the familiar chant, "More! More! More!" What, after all, could be a finer compliment than to offer the band an encore?

But Beefheart doesn't indulge in showstoppers or rave-up and couldn't care less about encores. "How could we ever top that?" he sighed as he nonchalantly packed his Eb Selmer into its fur-lined leather case.

The *hoi polloi* continued the uproar. "More! More! More!" When Van Vliet noticed that the small tumult was not going to subside, he walked to the microphone, frowned and with apparent displeasure said, "Well, alright, if that's what you want."

The audience fell into a deep hush as Beefheart began to whistle his encore. The tune sounded strangely familiar. Then, almost in a single voice, the people in the room burst into laughter as they recognized that Beefheart was actually following their request to the letter. The song coming from his lips was that maudlin ditty from the Sputnik era—"More."

The non-Beefheartian crowds were, if anything, even more interesting to observe than those who came with their wool already dyed. In Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, I sensed the fact that the Grand Funk listeners had shown up in great numbers. "This Beefheart guy's supposed to be really gross," one of them announced to me as he took his seat. I decided to station myself strategically at the rear of the auditorium near the sign marked "EXIT," thinking that this would be the place to catch a representative sample of those who were less than thrilled with the Captain's music. After about two minutes of the act, sure enough, dozens of people started pouring toward the exit.

They were determined to leave. The first few to pass by were obviously stoned and had nothing to say for the press beyond, "Man, just let me out of here." The more coherent evacuees stated politely that they preferred hard rock and could not understand what the Captain was doing. "I would have liked it even better if he'd had a funky organ." one of them told me.

Captain Beefheart and His Funky Organ? Forget it.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume that Grand Funk audiences did not like Captain Beefheart or could not understand what he was about. For about 1/10 to 1/4 of the audience had left, the rest always decided to stick it out and try to enjoy the music. On such occasions Beefheart, Rollo, Morton, Drumbo and Marimba were able to score their greatest triumphs.

The remaining crowd would start by digging The Magic Band's distinctive high jinks—Ed Marimba and Drumbo playing pat-a-cake in the middle of their drum duo and so forth. Then the people noticed a disturbing fact—these fellows really *mean* that crazy stuff they're playing. From that point on the real education in music began. The Magic Band would move through its bag of tricks into higher and higher realms of musical investigation. The crowd would sit frozen like little aborigine tribesmen at their first demonstration of an electric light bulb. When it was all over and the band was about to leave the stage, Captain Beefheart would step forward to deliver the final blow, a poem—"Little Golden Birdies." Using his most sepulchral tones to heighten the comic effect and gesturing like some over-done 19th Century political orator, he would conclude:

*Those little golden birdies, look at them
The mystic Egypt tozzle dangling down
Old sleeper man; Sssh! Don't wake him.
Up wand hand broom star was uh Obie man
Revered throughout the Boneknob Land
His magic black purse slit open let go flocks of them
Sssh! Sookie Singabus!
Snorred like a red merry-go-round horse*

*An acid gold bar swirled up and down, up and down
In back of the singabus
And the pantaloons duck white
goose-necked quacked:
WEBCOR! WEBCOR!*

The audience would continue to sit in confused silence. This is the grand climax? "Webcor, Webcor"? After a minute or so, they would rise to their feet and applaud.

If one element held the tour together, it was the Magic Band's unwavering dedication to the opportunity Warners had handed them: Beefheart, Rollo, Morton, Marimba, Drumbo and their manager, Grant Gibbs, were determined that this time everything would go right. In contrast to its reputation as a group of incorrigible prima donnas, The Magic Band on tour was positively unflappable.

A crucial test of this determination arose exactly two weeks into the tour. Guitarist Winged Eel Fingerling, the sixth member of the group, decided that he could no longer continue playing The Magic Band's music. Winged Eel had long felt ill at ease in the ensemble and his bleak moods had begun to affect the sound of the whole group. He was also upset that the tour gave him little opportunity to find the organic foods he usually ate. In Wilkes Barre, just after the concert, Winged Eel announced that he wanted to go back to Los Angeles and begin playing rock and roll again.

In an intense all-night discussion, Fingerling and The Magic Band talked about the circumstances of his departure. The motel room gradually filled with cigarette smoke and sadness as Beefheart asked that the members of the group say exactly what was on their minds. "We don't want any of this to drag us down on the rest of the tour," he said with a downward swoop of his arm.

Drumbo sat quietly in one corner of the room, staring at the floor, and said very little. Ed Marimba, a veteran of such conflicts in other groups, pointed out that Winged Eel was a fine blues and rock guitarist, probably the best around, but if he did not feel at home with the music, then it would be best for everyone if he tried something else.

Most depressed of all were Rockette Morton and Zoot Horn Rollo. They had spent many long hours teaching Winged Eel the songs and had tried to reach through the guitarist's indelible coolness to make him a friend. Their remarks indicated a sense of deep personal loss at realizing that Fingerling ultimately did not want to play with them.

The parting was amicable but very, definite. With the number of players reduced to five, the band's on-stage performance improved noticeably. On the morning that Winged Eel flew back to Los Angeles, Beefheart observed, "This has happened to me many times before. After six years in the music business I'm beginning to wonder if it's possible to have two guitarists in the same group."

As Winged Eel Fingerling boarded the bus which would take him to the airport, the Warner Brothers film crew caught him mumbling to himself, "I can be as weird as anyone wants me to be."



fucking weirdos . . . fucking wierdos."

The Fingerling incident was the only significant flaw in an otherwise cheerful expedition. The Magic Band was clearly elated to leave the isolation chamber of Los Angeles and "to get out and meet the people." At every bus stop, motel and airline terminal the band would always talk to curious bystanders. Rockette Morton would proudly explain that this was the group all America had been waiting for and pass out copies of *Lick My Decals off, Baby* to gray-haired ladies whose last album purchase was probably *Glen Miller: The Golden Years*. The spirit of the whole affair was expressed in Ed Marimba's title for a yet unwritten song—"Play a Big Chord and Run Out and Listen to It." The Magic Band had been lurking in oblivion too long. It now wanted to check out America to see who was really digging it.

Most delighted of all was Beefheart himself. After each performance he would saunter into the crowd and talk endlessly to anyone who seemed interested. Most of those who came forward were young fans who wanted to learn the secrets behind his music. "How long do you practice your horn every day?" they would ask.

"I never practice at all," he would respond with an impish look in his eye. "Every time I play my horn I discover new things in there. If I practiced, they wouldn't be new anymore, would they?"

Without exception the next question to come up would concern the use of

drugs. "I've heard that no one in this group uses dope at all. Is that true?"

Beefheart would suddenly wax very serious. "No, we don't use that stuff. Our music comes from merely breathing in and breathing out, do you know what I mean? You aren't using it anymore are you? God, you don't need it. It's just another trap. Don't kid yourself. You're not as hung up as you'd like to think you are. They're too many people these days who wear their afflictions like a badge. Their little marry wanna speed afflictions." The Captain would sigh and make a badge sign with his thumb and forefinger. "It's just too corny."

In some areas of the country the drug question seemed less important than another major scourge—the Vietnam War. In Alexandria, Virginia, Beefheart encountered Jerry and Ron, two young Green Berets who had just returned from Vietnam. It soon became apparent that the men adequately represented the spirit of the "New U.S. Army," namely, "Get the Hell out!"

As the Captain nodded his high hat in agreement, Jerry and Ron told him, "Everybody's trying to weasel a way home now. They realize that it's all a joke." They went on to say that they had spent the weekend trying to drown their memories of "Nam" in three fifths of booze. "Yes," said the Captain sympathetically, "I suppose you'll need that much just to forget," and handed them a freshly autographed copy of his album. "Maybe this will help too."

Beefheart's talents as a conversationalist and raconteur were particularly evident in his meetings with the press. Availing himself to any and all requests for interviews, Beefheart talked to reporters whenever and wherever they wanted. It was here that a number of incredible misunderstandings arose. Possibly because of the requirements of their trade, media representatives are amazingly literal. They ask questions in straight lines and struggle tirelessly to keep the lines in order. Beefheart, on the other hand, speaks in an inventive conversational style which delights in bending all lines and squares into broad, sweeping circles. He holds that this is the best way to reveal the truth without at the same time torturing beauty. In New York City the Beefheartian way of using language succeeded in baffling members of both the establishment and underground media.

The first incident took place at radio station WOR, a middle-of-the-road talk and music operation in the middle of Manhattan. Beefheart was scheduled to give an interview concerning his visit to the East Coast. He was greeted by the announcer in charge, John Wingate, a lanky middle-aged gentleman with an affected English accent who quoted frequently from Beaudelaire and Moliere and whose appearance shouted "tweed."

"Now, whatever you do," Wingate cautioned, "stay away from the word 'fuck.' It takes us at least six weeks to get out from under the load of paper work when that gets by. The F.C.C., you know."

"I see what you mean," replied Beefheart sternly. "Add to that a man and a woman ashamed and you've got a war for eternity."

Wingate seemed not to have heard the response. He went about adjusting the microphones and quoted further from Beaudelaire. "How shall we introduce you?" he chuckled. "Here's Captain Beefheart, the well-known lesbian? Heh, heh, heh."

Beefheart grimaced and looked to the corner of the room where his wife, Jan, was sitting. "Ah, do that and I'll need eight or ten cockatoos with little rhinestone necklaces."

Once again Wingate's nervous system simply failed to process the message he had just received. The microphones were ready now and he had decided on the interview slant: "Here's one of the men who lead our youth, bringing about the revolution in today's changing life styles." The idea limped across the floor onto his notepad, leaving a trail of bloodstains on the carpet.

"Rolling," gestured the engineer in the control booth.

"Today we have in our studio Captain Beefheart whose famous orchestra is on tour of the East Coast. Would you tell us, Captain, what kind of music it is that your perform?"

There was a long silence, just long enough to be embarrassing.

"Well, basically it's music without a lullabye."

Wingate winced and quickly asked if he'd care to be more specific for the benefit of the listening audience at home.

This time the pause was even longer and more embarrassing.

"I suppose it's music to de-materialize the catatonia," Beefheart answered finally.

Sensing the fact that the interview was about to fall on its face, Wingate tried other lines of questioning. "What do you think of John Lennon? Do you think that music has anything to do with the sexual revolution happening in our society?"

The Captain's answers continued to be brief and completely unsuited to the glib WOR format. At last Wingate jumped up from his seat, waved his arms frantically at the engineer and paced into the control room.

"This man seems to be talking elliptically," he scoffed. "It's interesting to me personally, of course, but it won't hold the attention of middle America. Chuck Berry didn't offer us such problems when he came by."

After some hasty consultation with Van Vliet's entourage, it was finally decided that one of the Captain's friends should join the interview as a kind of stabilizing agent. With that minor adjustment, the conversation proceeded nicely. Each time Beefheart would utter a particularly different metaphorical construction, the WOR announcer was able to turn to a straight man and ask him the

question. Wingate admitted afterwards that he'd had a good time and thanked Beefheart for dropping in.

On the following day a similar kind of befuddlement took place during Beefheart's six-hour-long press conference with the underground press. As the reporters from Rock, Changes, Zygote and several FM stations fired questions at him, Beefheart sat back in an easy chair peering at the journalists through his World War II British field officer's sunglasses. He was in excellent humor and his language showed it. The words flew forth in a steady stream of paradoxes, conundrums, comic images, non sequiturs and romps through what had once been solid linguistic structures. Warm gusts from the Captain's lungs thawed hundreds of long-frozen metaphors and enabled them to dance gaily about the room.

Most of the people at the conference enjoyed the display and even managed to join in. There was one fellow, however, a young scraggly-haired reporter from Changes, who just couldn't handle it.

"I've heard that you have remarkable powers of ESP," he began with a serious note in his voice. "Have you ever thought of having someone measure what you can do?"

Beefheart grinned and replied, "Well, no. I'm really not interested in knowing the length of my wee-wee."

The young reporter was taken aback by Van Vliet's answer and quickly rephrased the question. Beefheart, however, could find nothing but fun in the suggestion that he submit his mind to some para-psychological testing procedure.

"Maybe I ought to offer myself to Car and Driver? I could accompany them with a unicycle and they could run all the tests they like."

Despite this setback, the man from Changes continued with his list of carefully prepared questions. What do you think about musical structure? What were the major influences in your musical education? Do you think that your music has any relationship to 'The Revolution'?

It was difficult to believe that at this late date anyone would bother with such antique matters.

Captain Beefheart, bearing the burden politely, answered as best he could. "I think musical structure is really a laugh. It's like having a kite in one hand and a balloon in the other." He stood up and with arms spread wide illustrated the kite and balloon concept. "Frankly, I don't think you need all of those sand bags to keep your river in place."

The Changes correspondent was anything but pleased with responses of this sort. "On the one hand you say you don't believe in musical structure, but on the other hand..."

"—I have a manicure!" interjected the Captain. The room filled with laughter.

At this point the interviewer began to break down. "I keep trying to get straight answers out of you," he whined, "but you won't give me any. I guess I'm just wasting your time. I don't know why you're being so hostile to me."



Beefheart sat forward and stared at the young man in stunned amazement. He'd been having fun not at the interviewer's expense, but at the expense of the English language. He believes, you see, that language is a kind of bank account from which anyone, on their own terms, can make unlimited withdrawals—"As the duck says, 'Bill me later.'"

"You keep asking me to hit you," Beefheart groaned, "but I'm not going to do it."

"Don't worry, I'm not going to get upset," the reporter replied. Then, as if to ease the tension, Beefheart suddenly took off one of his shoes and held it in the air.

"Do you think you could take this bubble gum off my shoe?"

"I really don't want to. It might give me allergies."

"That's a rash statement," the Captain mumbled.

In a valiant last effort to get some straight answers for his straight questions, the Changes reporter asked, "What I want to know is this. If you don't read books and don't listen to records, where do you get your input from?"

"G.E.," Van Vliet answered, lighting a cigarette. "What I wonder is how you pull the plug."

With that the young journalist started packing away his cassette recorder. "You haven't given me a single thing I can use," he said sadly. He simply could not comprehend that the man he'd been interviewing almost never gives his listeners anything they can "use." Captain Beefheart believes that human beings inevitably end up using everything that can be "used" as weapons against themselves. Whenever possible, the poor creatures will cling desperately to the structures those in authority hand them—structures of melody, rhythm, speech, thought and social behavior. They then use these structures ruthlessly to restrict everything they might possibly see, feel or do. "The heartbeat, the clock—tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock"—that steady, repetitive rock and roll beat, it's all the same. A crutch job. People ought to stop hanging onto those things and loosen up."

It is for reasons of this sort that Beefheart sets himself apart from other musicians. He holds that, unlike the music of the Beatles and Rolling Stones, his work could never be used as a source for a new authority or ideology. When you go to his albums looking for "the truth," all you find are some colorful pictures and fascinating riddles. Beefheart is a clever trickster. At first the traditional structures appear to be firmly in place. But on closer inspection you discover that the Captain has offered you a three-legged chair. Either you stand on your own or you fall over.

How people and other "things" are "used" in the music business is a subject on which both Captain Beefheart and Ry Cooder are expert. Both men have been taken advantage of so often by so many people they've lost count. There was a time, in fact, when Cooder and Van Vliet played together in a group that ran aground on the reefs of commer-

cial exploitation. During a long bus ride from Cocoa Beach, Florida, to Fort Lauderdale, I asked Ry to discuss the unfortunate circumstances.

"Beefheart has always told me," I said, "that you quit The Magic Band in 1967 and ruined his chance to play the Monterey Pop Festival."

"He's right on that point," said Ry, "but you have to keep the full context in mind. Bob Krasnow was pushing the group to perform before it was ready. No one could play those incredible songs Don had written for *Safe As Milk*. At the Mt. Tamalpais music festival we played three songs and, believe me, it wasn't going very well. In the middle of "Electricity" Beefheart walked off the stage and fell flat on his face into the grass. I told Krasnow, 'This is ridiculous,' and quit right then. He said, 'What's the matter, don't you want to be an underground hero?' Krasnow thought the group would be worth millions and wanted to start making it right then and there."

Certainly a new feeling of freedom from misuse must have contributed to Beefheart's exuberance on the trip. For after years of management and promotion by small-time con men, the Captain was now the favorite child of large-scale corporate capitalism. Before we continue with the tour itself, it might be interesting to detour briefly through the strange realm of financial and organizational power.

Under normal conditions an artist will schedule a concert or tour through a booking agency. In this case the agency had nothing to do with it. Beefheart's nominal representative, Chartwell Artists Ltd., was busy handling the hype for the Ali-Frazier Heavyweight Championship Fight and had no time to waste hustling gigs for a relatively obscure artist. Although Beefheart certainly had a following large enough to warrant a national tour, the jobs were just not coming in.

One day last fall, Beefheart visited Warner Bros. Records and spoke to Merchandising Director Hal Halverstadt. "I want to start playing for the people," he announced. "Why don't you put me on tour?"

By the traditional rules of the game, Halverstadt should have nothing to do with organizing tours. His work primarily involves the packaging of Warners/Reprise "products" for quick market sale—album design, promo literature, advertising, and so on. But in this instance Halverstadt thought to himself, "Hell, why not?" and approached Warner executives Stan Cornyn and Mo Ostin with the idea.

Shortly thereafter the company hired Carl Scott, former manager of the Beau Brummels and Harpers Bizarre, to begin booking a Captain Beefheart tour. Scott had long believed record companies should get into the booking business to introduce new artists to the public. He started phoning concert promoters around the country. The deal he offered was a good one. Warner Bros. would absorb most of the risk in the Beefheart venture. It would ask a reasonable sum for

the Beefheart/Cooder package and waive the minimum guarantee if necessary. It would also spend large amounts of money on local promotion, namely radio spots for each concert.

The response to Scott's inquiry was good. If Warners was willing to take some of the responsibility, local promoters were more than willing to do their part. In the present business ethos of rock and roll, it is common practice for groups to ask such exorbitant amounts for concerts that promoters are driven out of business. The Warners package was one way of escaping this financial bind.

From the artists' standpoint the deal also was a fortuitous one. Their expenses were guaranteed, plus a standard per concert salary. For Beefheart and The Magic Band this amounted to \$1000 for every gig. The most important part of the bargain, however, was the exposure they would gain from playing in twenty or so major cities in the United States. It was hoped that in subsequent months, both Beefheart and Cooder could return to places they had played and ask for larger halls and a better price.

From a purely selfish point of view the company's logic was simple. Public appearances create a new kind of appeal for any performer—exactly the kind of appeal that makes people buy records.

For this reason, Warner Brothers was actually willing to take a loss—possibly as much as \$20,000—in order to give Beefheart and Cooder some first rate promotion. As the tour progressed across the continent, receiving rave reviews everywhere, Cornyn, Halverstadt and Ostin waited for the *real* reviews to come in. Would the record stores and distributors begin ordering more "product"?

And there were others waiting, those who really made it all possible, the men behind the growing financial empire of Kinney National Service, Inc.—the vast conglomerate holding company which among other ventures owns Warners/Reprise.

The story of the Kinney corporation can be found in its "Annual Report" for 1970. It describes the various activities included in Kinney's yearly half billion dollar enterprise: parking lots (how the company got its start), real estate, janitorial services, pest control, construction, industrial painting, Garden State National Bank, and a chain of funeral parlors.

By far the largest section of the report, however, describes what Kinney calls its "Leisure Time Group," its holdings in motion pictures, television, records, music publishing, product licensing, magazine publishing and distribution.





"As the new decade begins," the report proclaims, "there is a tremendous surge in leisure time activities in response to a demand to entertain all age groups. This was brought about by a shortened work week, a growing affluence and a burgeoning of a new youth generation whose impact upon traditional culture has been described as 'Youthquake'." Although Kinney is primarily interested in the new youth market, the brochure adds confidently, "Millions of our 'over 30' citizens have also found adventure and freshening of spirit in the 'Now' types of leisure time enjoyment."

And what, exactly, are the "Now" types of leisure time enjoyment which helped Kinney earn \$33.9 million in profits last year? Well for a start, chances are 50-50 the magazine you now hold came to you from a Kinney-owned distributor, Independent News Company. Beyond that, Kinney now owns such familiar firms as Elektra Records, Atlantic Records and, of course, Warners/Reprise. Again quoting from the report, "Woodstock [another Kinney-owned product] proved what most young people already knew and had tried to explain to their parents—that contemporary music is more than entertainment, it is a way of life and a way of looking at the world."

"Your company is actively involved with music in all its forms. Our Warner Bros., Atlantic and Elektra record companies have participated in this rapidly growing and highly competitive field. The most important asset of our record business is its remarkable management team, including Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegün, Jac Holzman, Mo Ostin, Joe Smith and Gerry [sic] Wexler."

The report then lists its assets in the field of rock and roll: Led Zeppelin, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Eric Clapton, the Doors, Iron Butterfly, the Grateful Dead, etc. Hot property without a doubt, definitely a must for the wise investor's portfolio.

There are perfectly good reasons why a large corporate organization involved in the entertainment business might want to usurp the functions formerly held by agencies, managers and promoters. The general principle at work here was stated by Seymour Melman in his book, *Pentagon Capitalism*: "When confronted with an array of different ways to solve a particular problem, members of a managerial team are impelled . . . to select those options that will maintain and extend the decision power of the managerial group."

At the very moment Captain Beefheart was happily visiting Brooks Brothers in search of someone to block his Mad Hatter's hat, a few key executives from Elektra and Warners were perched in an elegant luncheon room high above the streets of New York, plotting another exercise in real monopoly. In conjunction with Atlantic, the two companies are setting up a new nationwide distribution network for their records and junking their old distributors.

"We want to end the power of our distribution people to say 'No' to our requests," explained Stan Cornyn as he munched on a brussels sprout.

Turning to other matters, Cornyn observed there was a significant difference between the corporate mentality on the West and East coasts. "In the Burbank office I can't seem to find anybody with real drive," he complained. The Elektra executives happily chimed in, chirping yes, their people in New York had "drive" and sure as hell took care of business. Did Cornyn and the others actually mean their people should be "driven men"?

Meanwhile, back in the swamps of Florida, the bus pulled off the highway and stopped at an orange stand. Everyone disembarked and began looking at the various items for sale. Ry purchased some pineapple wine that everyone agreed tasted like liniment. Drumbo found a mechanical alligator and a pair of plastic noise-maker hammers which he decided to add to his act. Beefheart spent \$60 on an alligator handbag for Jan. When someone mentioned to him that it is now illegal to sell alligator skins he said, "I think it's better for me to have one of these than one of those other people, don't you?"

The stop along the road in Florida was one of the few times the people on the tour actually got to see the countryside. In most places the weather was too cold or the time too limited for any sight-seeing. Instead, everyone had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the monotonous architectural lines of three dozen Holiday Inns.

In those parts of the American landscape that Beefheart did manage to see, however, there was one predominant and disturbing theme. Everything seemed to be closing down. In virtually every city he visited, Beefheart discovered that the local rock club had just gone broke. In Cleveland, for example, Beefheart and Cooder played the last concert ever at Ludlow's Garage. Warner Bros. agreed to pay some of Ludlow's overdue bills if the hall would stay open long enough to give the tour a place to perform. It was very sad.

But in no city was economic recession more evident than in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Here the tour discovered a whole town gone broke and now up for sale. The local promoter of the Beefheart concert told Van Vliet the town's story after the gig.

A few years back Cocoa Beach was a veritable space age boom town. It was the bustling center of the U.S. Apollo Space Program in Florida—the town that housed the astronauts, scientists, and tech-

nicians for the Cape Kennedy moonshots. Thousands of homes, office buildings, factories and stores were built on the Florida sands to support the multi-billion dollar project. Money flowed like iced Kool Aid into the coffers of local businessmen and the future seemed to hold the promise of many years of continued prosperity.

Then the bottom dropped out. With the moon's surface successfully violated by Armstrong and his fellow astrogroupies, the N.A.S.A. payroll suddenly evaporated. Thousands of men on "the aerospace team" were thrown out of work and headed north. The Boeing plant closed. Litton Industries locked its building and left town. Motels folded. Forty-thousand-dollar beach-front homes were left to sell for \$100 down and easy monthly payments. Cocoa Beach was left as a kind of upper middle class ghost town, a victim of "future shock" if there ever was one.

In recent months two kinds of hermit crabs have appeared on the beach to battle for the shell the Apollo Program left behind. A large contingent of young people has begun a migration to the town, taking advantage of the low rents on beautiful beach property. A new health food restaurant has opened. The length of hair seen on the streets has gotten progressively longer.

At the same time, the notorious right-wing fundamentalist preacher Rev. Carl McIntire has moved into the area, vowing to clean things up and set the town to God's work. McIntire was the gentleman who sponsored the pro-Vietnam war rally (featuring Vice President Ky of South Vietnam) in Washington DC last year. The college he runs, Shelton College, was recently kicked out of New Jersey for being academically disreputable. McIntire now plans to move all of his operations, including the college and a retirement village, to Cocoa Beach. Spending millions of dollars, he's buying up every vacant building in sight.

The two new communities—hip and fundamentalist—are clearly on a collision course. For instance, the Beefheart/Cooder concert was originally scheduled to play the ballroom at the Cape Kennedy Hilton Hotel. But McIntire had just purchased the building for his crusade. The Reverend's staff canceled the concert for fear there would actually be "dancing" in their ballroom.

At present McIntire is trying to put a clamp on the Cocoa Beach bars in order to stop the town's already dwindling traffic in booze and broads. As the concert promoter told Van Vliet, "You know, it's getting harder and harder to do honest vice in this neck of the woods."

The journey was winding up now. There was a swing through Texas and Arizona to come; but for Beefheart the big attraction was Washington, for it was here that he had an opportunity to realize a lifelong dream—a visit to the Smithsonian Institution.

As the bus drove into the nation's capital I pointed up Pennsylvania Avenue past the dime stores and smut shops to the building at the end of the street. "That's the White House," I said.

"Who lives there?" Beefheart inquired. "President Nixon," I explained.

"God, I didn't know we were going to play the town where Nixon lives. Do you think he knows we're coming?" Beefheart leaned forward and poked the sleeping Grant Gibbs. "Grant, the President lives here. Do you think they'll shut us down because we're revolutionaries or something like that? Do you suppose the cops will come out to the concert? Maybe we shouldn't play here." Gibbs assured him the band had no reputation as bomb-throwing terrorists.

"That Nixon's a little Chiclet of determination," Beefheart continued. "I'm surprised he took the job. I thought he was a lot smarter than that."

It turned out that the authorities had known that Beefheart was coming and had indeed raised a fuss. The concert was to have taken place at Greenbelt Armory in Maryland, but after some gate-crashing trouble at a rock and roll program the week before the 5th Regiment, US Army, sent out a memorandum banning Captain Beefheart and all similar outfits from setting foot on military property. At the last minute the concert was scheduled for a movie theater in Alexandria, Virginia. It went very well.

Next afternoon Van Vliet, his wife and a few friends took a swanky black limousine to the Smithsonian. The car drove past the Pentagon. Beefheart looked but said nothing. It continued over a bridge spanning the Potomac. "Look at that," he exclaimed. "The poor river's so polluted that it can't even freeze in the winter. This morning I threw a dollar across the Potomac and lost 90c."

The limousine drove along the boulevards past the Lincoln Memorial, the State Department, past the Washington Memorial, and long rows of Government office buildings. "Boy, what a world they've built. It's disgusting. I've got a better one up here," said the Captain pointing to his head.

"Singing the Smithsonian Institute Blues / The new dinosaur is walkin' in the old one's shoes . . . All you new dinosaurs, now it's up to you t' choose / 'Fore your feet hit the tar, you better kick off them old shoes." In Van Vliet's eyes the Smithsonian is truly America's national shrine. Here amid the collection of stuffed animals, dinosaur bones and plastic whales, one can find a vision of the land's lost purpose and a frightening prophecy for the future.

The first thing to catch Beefheart's attention was the stuffed 13-foot-tall African elephant standing in the high-domed foyer. "Look at that beautiful thing," he exclaimed to his wife. "No sculptor will ever touch those lines. When I was a boy I tried to do things like that, but I gave up because Nature's done it so well."

He went on to point out the various ways in which the taxidermists who'd worked on the elephant had "blown it." The beast's posture wasn't right and his feet were in the wrong place. Van Vliet seemed particularly upset by the fact that the elephant was dusty and had cobwebs hanging from its trunk. "You see that? No one cares anymore."

The next item to catch his eye was the exhibit of American birds. He paused for long periods in front of each eagle, thrasher, sparrow and grouse and praised their plumage to the skies. "Look at those colorful designs! Man will never top that. Never. It's absurd to even try." He also was fascinated by the written descriptions of the various birds and became convinced that they'd been written by some major, unknown poet.

"Listen to this," he said and began reciting in his "Little Golden Birdies" voice: "'Mandarin duck, head laid back, crest ruffled almost touching the erect fan-shaped feathers rising from the head.' That makes it."

At the next exhibit, "Extinct Birds," Van Vliet began to get angry. Dozens of feathered creatures were displayed in what had once been their native habitats. A sign next to each glass case told when the last specimen had been seen alive. "I can't believe it," sighed Beefheart peering in at the stuffed carrier pigeons. "Look at that. It's paradise. Man had paradise and he blew it."

He repeated this idea several times and was reminded of the main purpose of his visit. "We might as well go see how we're going to end up," he groaned and headed toward the dinosaur fossils.

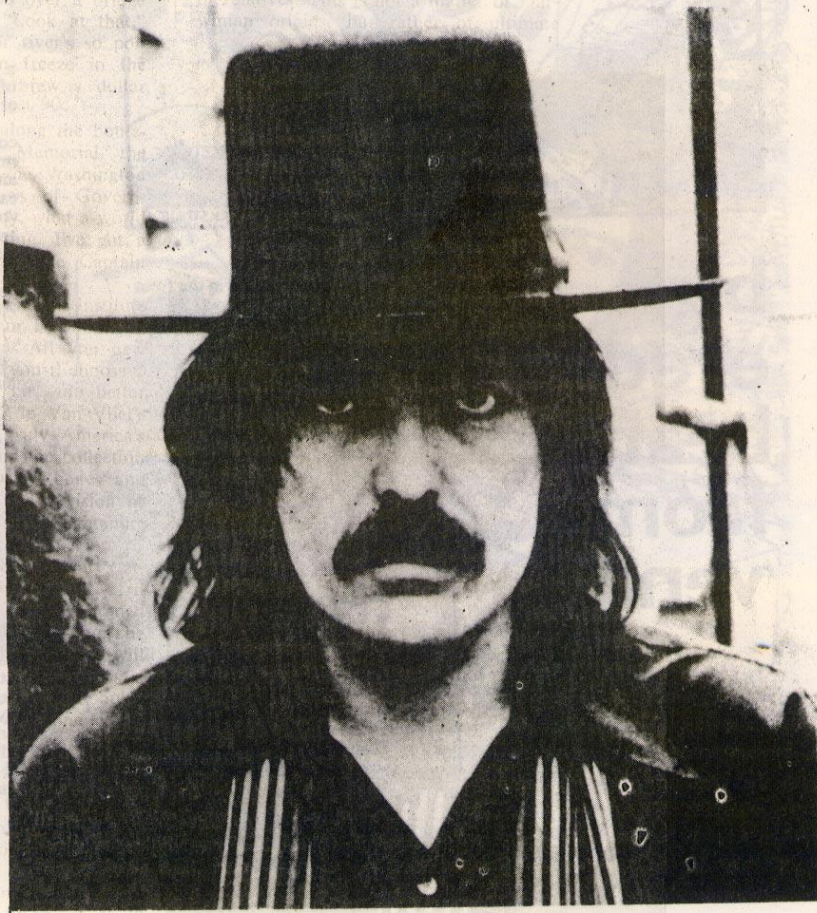
As Beefheart's recent recordings make clear, the Captain believes that dinosaurs and human beings are the closest of relatives. This is not a matter of Darwinian origins, but rather of ultimate

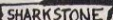
ecological destination. Man now operates his own artificial dinosaur-technological civilization—using the blood of the monsters of old, namely, petroleum. But in the end, homo sapiens will share the fate of the giant lizards. "Let the past demons rear up 'n belch fire in the air of now / The rug's wearing out that we walk on / Soon it will fray 'n we'll drop dead into yesterday . . . No flower shall grow where oil shall flow / No seed shall sow in salt water. . ."

As he walked into the chamber which held the dinosaur skeletons, Beefheart grew noticeably uneasy. "I'm not sure how much of this I can take." With Jan at his side, he ambled past the display of pterodactyls, tyrannosaurs and giant sloths and looked at each one as if he'd just run into an old friend. At the end of the exhibit he walked over to a sign which said: "Press the button to see the wonder animal that has survived vast environmental changes for thousands of years."

He pushed the button. A tiny trapdoor swung open to reveal a mirror.

Beefheart was very impressed. Later he told his friends, "They've got a great exhibit at the Smithsonian. You press a button and a little sign pops up that says: 'Here's the animal that stayed up on the mountain and killed everything because the other animals didn't want to fight.'"



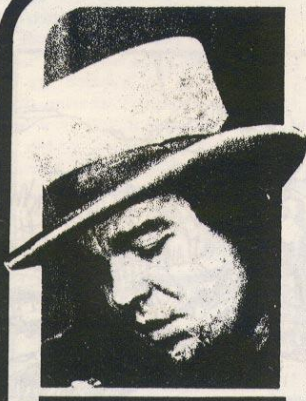


CAPTAIN Beefheart, looking formidably rough after a recent stint as a lumberjack and member of the last Mothers tour, rumbled on stage an hour later.

In the middle of "Abba Zabba" a hoo-hah developed when a dazed-looking fellow lurched at the barrier to be clouted on the head by a security man. People pointed angrily at the action, but Beefheart appeared oblivious to the upset.

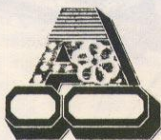
The most puzzling aspect of Captain Beefheart is how he can convey such electric tension and let his ravaged voice out at constant full power while maintaining his cool, but he bayed his way through the number still looking extremely self-contained in the centre of the lunacy, hurried off and left immediately.





Compiled
by
King
Leer

"I think that if everybody cut out all cleverness there would be no anxiety."
Beefheart



"A" is for **AMBITION**:

"I wish you'd put a rhinestone chain on my neck and lead me up and down the street"
and for **AUTO** too:

"I have a Hudson at home... a Hudson Hornet 50. I dig that car, I never drive it... I have an ivy display growing in it back home. It's like a barbecue brass type of color... a futuristic '58 barbecue color. I have a faded red '65 Volvo with a big bump in the back... bulbous, that my wife wrecked before we got married. It looks like it's smiling to itself."



"B" is for **BEEFHEART**, of course:

"I'm not a poet. I'm a situation comic."
and for **BREATHER APPARATUS**: that is, his soprano sax, tenor sax and murette.



"C" is for **CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**:

"Don't give yourself capital punishment, there's no money in it."
for **CLOSE CONTROL**:

"When I say close control I mean that we love each other." (referring to the Magic Band)
and for his **CREDO**:

"I don't believe in straight lines either, or any lines. I believe in circles... I have to believe that way or I'd fall apart."



"D" is for **DIAMONDS**:

"I've seen some of the most beautiful diamonds on a woman's face after she's perspired and danced."
as well as for **DOPE**:

(1) Ever used? "Well of course, I'm an artist. When I didn't realize that I didn't need to be an artist I indulged in a few things just to satisfy myself, you see, which was a selfish thing. But I will go on record, as they say, I'm sure there is a record, I'll go on record as saying I don't think it helped me. Matter of fact, I used it for a while as an excuse to hide behind to not emulate what I really wanted to do."

(2) Did it do harm? "No because I think the mind is something that's more vast than that. Do you mean, do I think I'm an acid-casualty or something like they talk about, I think not. Because Zoot Horn Rollo, in the group, I mean I have his permission to talk freely about this, had lysergic acid two hundred and fifty times before he met me. And he was curled up in a ball, like a clam. And any time anybody'd say anything artistic to him or anything, he would... I think he was afraid. You see man, when you're a clam, you throw a piece of sand in the clam, you get a pearl; you throw a piece of sand in a man, you get an ulcer. He had ulcers and... finally... after two years living in the same house... finally he was able to start emulating himself again. So he's fine now, you heard him play. He doesn't sound like a casualty. I think he's an example, if you will... and there needn't be except that people tend to think of things by the way things have gone... if anybody would like to think of him as an example of somebody who had that amount of hallucinogenics, I think that he's doing real well. But I don't look at him to be anything abnormal or unnormal, I just look at him as another human being."

(3) Can drugs benefit anyone as a short cut to mind expansion? "I think not, 'cause the mind's already there..."



"E" is for **EGALITARIANISM**:

"You notice that I use... if you want to call it that... you notice that my musicians are on an equal basis with me."

"Everybody drinks from the same pond."

"Everybody's colored or else you wouldn't be able to see them."

and **E.S.P.**:

"I think that everybody who has a circle has E.S.P. and I think they have it anyway whether they like it or not."

"I think almost everybody has it but I think the telephones and televisions and things like that have made people lose their ability to use the imagination. As I said before, I don't believe in insanity I believe in varying degrees of disconnection, and I don't believe the telephone company is the kind of network I would try to emulate for my mind."



"F" is for **FILLMORE**:

"I don't feel I need any help, you follow me?"

"I don't wish to be told that I needed any help to make it, you see, because I've already made it... we all made it the minute we got out of our mothers."
and for **FILM**:

Leer: How do you relate to film?

Beefheart: Very Kodak.

On being a film-maker: "I see it as a role that I want to roll and if it rolls and it doesn't stop, it pleases me."

"I've already made a movie and I'm making another one. I'm making a movie right now, on this tour."

"I think every film is a promotional film. Really, don't you? I don't think people do films not to promote themselves."

On making a movie with Zappa: "Never!" "That was a rumor that Frank Zappa used to connect Captain Beefheart to Frank Zappa and then when he got me connected to him on that label he got scared and wretched the deal." (see also ZAPPA)



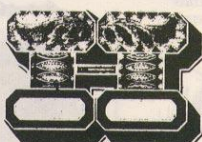
"G" stands for **GOD'S GOLF BALL** (Beefheart's new record company):

"It bounces higher than the Washington Monument."

"We're having a group called the Twenty-Fifth Century Quaker that's going to record on it. We have a group called Rattlesnakes and Eggs, from the desert... a seven piece group. We'll also have a film on it."

as well as for **GOLD**:

"I like beads better than money..."



"H" is for his **HAT**:

"I wear this hat on stage on my head because when I'm on stage like that and I wear this hat I can gather all that music on the brim, like this, and it keeps coming around and around. Mainly because I'm more of a person that likes acoustic things and I get more of an acoustic sound. See, I don't get quite so... I don't get quite as much of an electric sound when it hits here and goes around."

"This is a Mad Hatter's hat... I mean, one that was made with mercury."

"I didn't make it, but it was given to me by a Mad Hatter that had been cured."

as well as for **HOPE**:

"I just figure if I'm breathing in and out I'm doing all I can and if I'm doing all I can, it's all I can do."



"I" is for **IDENTITY**:

Referring to the Magic Band: "They're not interested, you see, in having their surnames because of the fact that it's attached to all of those myths their folks tried to keep them in... which is one of the things I think we have to do is get away from that Family Tree. You know? Then we can be friends with our folks rather than having a feeling that they're a burden." and **INSANITY**:

"I don't believe in insanity, I believe in varying degrees of disconnection."



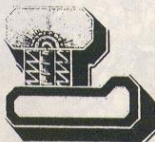
"J" is for **JEFFERSON AIRPLANE**:

"I never met them... but I'm not too fond of their calling card, I don't care for their music. It's... uh... too lullaby like."

"I see other things, you see?"



"K" is for **KITE**: — see PANACEA.



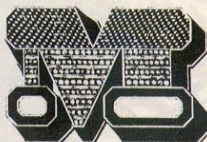
"L" is for the **LEGENDARY RECLUSE**:

"It's just that nobody came over to see me before. My name's in the phone book and... I've been waiting for Frank Zappa to come over and see me."

"L" is also for **LICK MY DECALS OFF, BABY**:

"A far-out fine record!"

King Leer



"M" is for **MAKING IT** (see also **FILLMORE**):

"I'm not interested in ruling or being the rules."

"I'm trying to move art into their neighborhood, let's put it that way"
and for **MAN**:

"I think that man has the most highly developed intelligence. I think men get so intelligent that they're stupid."

"Man can spread mayonnaise."

"I think that man shouldn't give up his ability to reason, 'cause once he gives up his ability to reason he's an animal that's missing part of his brain."

"I think that man is a child that can't accept his natural functions."

and MELLOW:

"I don't think that mellow can be put in categories."

"The word mellow has been designated to mean yellow, my music untails more colors than yellow."

"If I really want to do an anachronism I always use a sea-foam green."

for MISUNDERSTANDING:

"If you know the history of Captain Beefheart, you know it's been one of tremendous misunderstanding."

Grant Gibbs,
Beefheart's
personal manager.

"You Should Know By the Kindness of Uh Dog the Way Uh Human Should Be."

Beefheart
and MUSICAL STRUCTURE:

"Musical structure is really a laugh, only it's a very bitter laugh. Bitter: pleasantly, like an olive, but maybe like a martini."

"I plan, on a tape. I don't ever edit."

"I don't think it out, it just comes out."



"N" is for NATURE:

"The more you disconnect yourself from nature the more insane you are."

"The bee takes the honey, then he sets the flower free. Man takes the honey and gets stuck in it... either that or he refines the rice to such a degree that it looks clean."

"There's more than one chord and it's made up of a lot of drops of water. Then it turns into beads, then the beads explode and make rhinestone chains."

and NEW YORK:

"I haven't had any trouble. Nobody's brushed off my shoulders or anything with whisk brooms since I've been here."



"O" is for ORNETTE COLEMAN:

"The greatest."



"P" is for his PANACEA:

"I have an explanation: if everybody would get a balloon in one hand and a kite in the other. Blow up the balloon

and go fly a kite. I think that would ease their worries."

Leer: Do you really think so?

Beefheart: No because after they did it and they let the air out of the balloon and breathed a little bit and felt the kite and the wind blowing it they'd just... they'd probably think, *Well Edison... what was his name, Edison? ... Well, Edison did this so it's already done.*

for PHYSIQUE:

"I'm pretty padded myself."

and POLITICS:

On the revolution: "I think it's old hat... I don't think there's one, that's why I don't think there's a revolution, because I don't think there's one, see what I mean?"

"I've got to buy shoes, a man's got to eat."



"Q" is for QUANTUM:

"I guess I don't believe in three square meals."

and for QUARREL:

"I've had records used against me and I have had my art used against me by foolish people."

"For example?"

"Well, they're their own examples."



"R" stands for RADICALS:

"They remind me of a rabbit's foot on a key chain."

for the REVOLUTIONARY CINEMA:

"Oh, that's wonderful. You mean, before their cameras weren't turning?"

"That's cute."

and READING:

"I don't read."

not to mention ROLLING STONE:

"The one that gathered the moss?"



"S" is for SAFE AS MILK:

"Anything that sounds this good five years later is a triumph."

King Leer

and STRICTLY PERSONAL, and SELF:

"A lot of people say I'm just moving my fingers which is an accurate description of what I'm really doing."

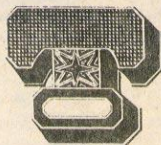
"I'm just not as serious as the rest of these people."

also SWINE:

"Beautiful sight to behold. They're very smart, they really have E.S.P..."

and the SWITCHMAN-SELF:

"I'm not interested in stopping any light. A lot of people play switchman. I did a composition called, 'Switchman with Parkinson's Disease,' it'll be on the next album which I think you'll enjoy."



"T" for TEST-RESULTS:

"I tell you what I'm gonna do to clear this all up. I'm gonna offer myself to *CAR AND DRIVER* and let them run a test on me, you know, and I'll run out with a unicycle... with a small baby wheel on the back of my fanny, and I'll run down the street and I'll let them go through all of their Goodyears and Voits."

and TROUT MASK REPLICA:

"I conceived *Trout Mask Replica* in eight and one half hours, and we didn't have much more than that to record it in. The group did the tracks in four hours and I put the voice on in four and one half."

for TIME:

"There's two balls... there's two balls up there and they have absolutely nothing to do with my coming or going. I'm talking about the sun and the moon... Put them together and you've got the daytime, put them apart and you've got the nighttime, but it's still the same, ask an eskimo."

and TRAINING:

"There are people who are trained and are willing to forget it and not do an animal act such as Clyde Beatty."



"U" is for UNGANOS:

"Should it be called the Periscope instead of Ungano's?"

"I don't have a thing for small clubs, nor do I have a thing for big clubs. I don't care that much about wee-wee."



"V" is for VALUES:

"You see, I've seen man's heart in a large filing cabinet. You know, like building. I've seen the smile of a Buick Riviera, I've seen the hand on the wheel of plastic rather than the wheel of life. And all of that's fine provided they don't overdo it. They seem to want to graduate, they keep graduating, you see? They graduate in the areas that seem to be so solitary instead of the kind areas. Like dolphins graduating across the horizon, into the sun. Man graduates his school of thought with no sand and no air and water in it. He mixes... I think that more children should play with mud-pies. That's out now, you see? They play with plastic shovels, with gloves, the latest ray-gun and space ensemble. And toy tanks and things like that, war toys. Things that take life rather than give it. Carving is out... it's hard to find a hand carved thing, and even if you can find it it's so totally expensive that it's easier to go get a plastic copy of it."

and VAN VLIET, Beefheart's previous incarnation:

"Van Vliet was a tremendous painter who could never finish anything."



"W" for WARNER BROTHERS:

"I think if you have a marriage and the children are getting hurt by it you should separate, but I'm enjoying this marriage right now. I don't have any plans for leaving."

WEAPONS:

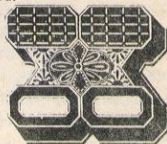
"The gun is an orgasm that stops the cycle: The penis is an orgasm that, if the circumstances are right, continues the cycle. I prefer that to violence. I prefer, not the gun, I prefer things that complete the cycle."

the WHEEL:

"I use the wheel... I deal with the wheel."

as well as the WORLD:

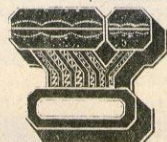
"Well, the world is a record and... the music that's out now in the world... you see, the world is a record."



"X" is for BEEFHEART'S T.V. COMMERCIAL, RATED 'X':

"Metromedia refuses to air Captain Beefheart T.V. Commercial - charges album title 'obscene'."

Warner Records
press release



"Y" is for YELLOW - see MELLOW



"Z" is for ZOOT HORN ROLLO - see DOPE

"Z" is also for ZAPPA:

"I can't understand, it seems that all Frank Zappa wanted to do was make anal noises which is one way of saying that everything you eat comes back, you see? He likes to work and I like to play, so we had to separate. The thing that I'm saying is that he seems to have been caught up in the fact that he didn't have musical training, seemed to worry him, that he hadn't had this musical training."

"I don't know why he wanted to keep my group... our group, in check behind him. I don't understand that, a person says they want to create and do new things and then they hold back the group that I'm in, which obviously couldn't be held back. But only in the business, contractually, to try to hamper our movement."

and also for ZEN:

Q: Are you into zen?

Beefheart: I don't think anybody is.

Q: Would you like to be?

Beefheart: No, I prefer an overcoat.

reprinted from Changes

IT'S THE BLIMP. IT'S THE BLIMP

by MILES

Gail Zappa picked up Frank (her husband) and me at TT&G Studios at Sunset and Highland. As the Buick Riviera sped silently up the twisting canyons of Laurel Canyon Boulevard, headlights illuminating palms and semi-tropical vegetation, Gail said, "Don freaked out today and burned all his manuscripts and books. He was over at the house earlier and seemed very depressed about not having a band and everything." All Frank could reply was "Oh brother!"

Later it was found that copies had been made, so the 40 books of poems and songs and drawings were still in existence, only the originals were gone.

A few days later I met Don Vliet myself when he came over to the Zappa household. Captain Beefheart is a big man, a prickly presence, a warm humanity, a large smiling hedgehog, a friendly Dickensian uncle, eyes that sparkle and dart - quick as humming birds - seeing everything, missing no details at all. His grey top hat and overcoat a little incongruous in the warm Southern Californian night. A man just too creative, too human for the 20th century, so interested in people that he surprises them; ending each sentence with "You understand?" and waiting for the affirmative before continuing. A person you know instinctively you can trust.

His first album he wasn't too pleased with and his second he was screwed over; his producer taking the tapes, mixing them himself without Don knowing, forming a record company - Blue Thumb - and releasing it. Don didn't approve the mix or receive any money. Eventually he found a lawyer, ... they would settle out of court, Don would drop the case for 35 thousand dollars, the producer agreed. So Don dropped the case, then the cheque bounced. Don feels strongly about the evils of the record industry. He returned to his old friend - Frank Zappa - who he knew would give him complete artistic freedom and no hustling on the financial side. 'Trout Mask Replica' is exactly as Don wanted it. Few artists can say that.

"Come outside and we'll talk", so we went at 4 a.m. out into Frank's garden. George the alsatian was still sniffing round and a phone was ringing up by the pool, and there were people up by the changing rooms beyond the trees. "I'm a big cat, I know that; but I'm gentle, I couldn't hurt a fly." It's the American way; because you're big, you must fight and be one of the boys. The American way; because you're a freak and wear weird clothes and a beard, the police want to stop you and push you around. The old white Jaguar Don used to have had its seats all slashed to pieces by the LA police looking for the drugs which they didn't find. No compensation.

"Why do you want to leave Hollywood?"

Don: "Because the police in Britain don't wear guns - you don't realise how important that is. People are treated as people. Life is respected. People are good to me there."

"You won't miss the sun?"

"I hate the sun. Look at me! I never go out in it." It's true... the inventor of fast and bulbous jelly is as pallid white as I am, and after all those years in Southern California. "I've got to get back to Britain, I must live there... I just want to live quietly... why-should I ever want to come back here?....?"

Don recorded a large part of 'Trout Mask Replica' at home and only a few studio sessions were needed. The group layed down backing-tracks for Don to sing over, but Don refused to wear headphones. Naturally the tracks couldn't be played in the studio for him to hear because they would have got onto his vocal track and made mixing impossible. So they played the backing tracks in the control room and Don would stand in the studio and listen to the faint leakage through the sound proof glass. Of course, as soon as he opened his mouth, he couldn't hear a thing. This accounts for some of the weird timing on the album. It's fortunate that Don is fanatical about rehearsals and knew all the music backwards by heart anyway...

The band was shut up in the house for weeks on end, with no contact with the outside world. Don had persuaded them that chicks and sex would interfere with their music, and so they played day and night, day and night. Unfortunately there was no money either and they starved, came down with illnesses, and were found wandering in search of food - one of them in a woman's dress, boots and a helmet, a crazed look in his eyes. Eventually they all left, some to return, but most to find food and recuperate and maybe even find a job with a band that made just a little money.

"I'm a great poet, better than those cats like Ginsberg, because I let it flow, I can't stop it... I've got books and books of stuff. I'm a great horn player, man - I've already exhausted the instrument. I've done everything that can be done with it. Really I need a whole new art form."

He is creative in too many directions, to develop just one seems impossible. He is torn by creative energies, musical, poetic and visual images flash by faster than satellites, as nervous as the crickets at his feet, or the long winged moths in the foliage. He is a beautiful guy.

Another day, back at TT&G Studios. Don and I are in the ante room where the coffee and candy machines are. In the distance the Mothers are recording. Don looks out of the window at the lights of East Hollywood, "I can break glass with my voice, it's that powerful, man." The volume is incredible as he strides round the room. After it has subsided, a distant voice can be heard: "What the fuck was that?"

In Britain, Don should find some of the facilities he needs: a more relaxed pro-life social environment where freaks are tolerated and the police don't wear guns; an appreciative audience, a less crooked and uptight business community.

His recording contract is with Frank Zappa's 'Bizarre Records' and is of course absolutely straight and honest. (Some American promoters on the other hand...) He is lucky to be with Frank who regards him as a genius. In return, he loves and respects Frank and declares him a genius. They are not however, a mutual admiration society.

It is 6.30 am in Zappa's basement studio.

Beefheart: "That was an earthquake... did you feel it?"

Zappa: "Yes, but it was so small, it made the people seem enormous."

Beefheart: "It could have been the blimp..."

I've Licked A Few Sidewalks Myself

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, alias Don Van Vliet, arrived in a bemused, almost feverish mood. He had been up all night, he said, writing songs and poetry and drawing. So a quick night's work there, I reckoned; he said he'd been to an Indian restaurant where, for the first time in years, he had been persuaded to eat meat. The resulting intoxication had obliged him to atone with an owl-eyed night spooked by the muse.

Even while the cab jolted him from Bayswater to Soho, he had scrawled a vignette of London's life in the streets, sympathetically choking in the diesel fumes (see pic.)

The Captain, as he adamantly remains to all but the most cynical observers, was back in London for another British tour; he certainly

believes in his own credibility. Some thought that he blew it a long time ago, and even his pals were shaken by the two awful records he did with di Martino.

But he keeps doing it. His white-noise bash at Knebworth Park still puzzled, even if he played to the front rows. Who are Beefheart's people: for everybody knows of him, yet few buy his records? Perhaps the people who suss in him more than just another hero.

But my heart sank when he waded in the water with the whale: the Colombian-based Project Jonah is OK by me — so long as somebody else is doing it. People can suss that sort of kick as an image hang-on: depending on who "save the whale" comes from. I guess if you live in Trinidad, Northern California, and you can see 'em blow out of your front window then you get attached to them (when it blows its stacks"). Anyhow, Trinidad California sounds some guru place to be, forests and mountains. (Where you from boy, Trinidad. Derision. Trinidad where? Trinidad California. Hey!)

The thing about the Captain is he lives the part. He's out there, a genuine, creative freak who still has the good grace to be publicly bonkers. An authentic nature freak: lives in the mountains, writes crazy words and songs that fit together, in the end, like a natural code to which only a few learn the key, painter, healthfood faddist, pantheist — talks to the trees and the spiders in vibrations. Do they answer? "Yeah, you can get a really

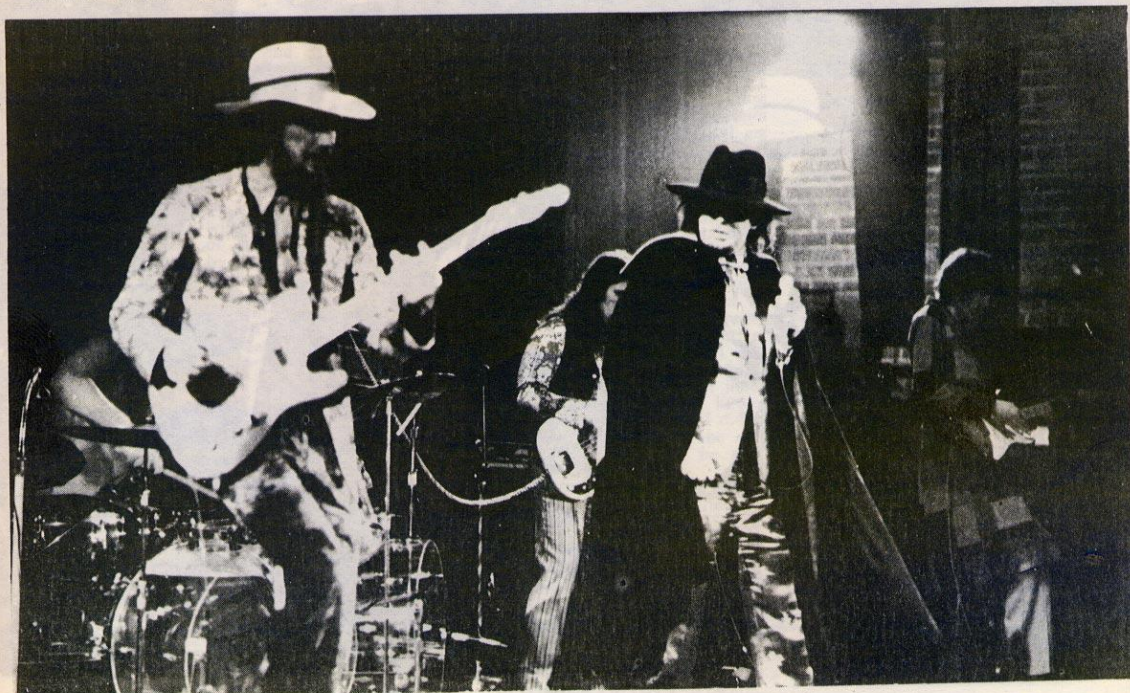
good communication thing going with them." Do you believe it? Does it matter so long as the Captain believes it, which he evidently does?

Drawback has always been that people expect him to be a Saint as well. Get known as a Mr. Natural and a lot of people try to vamp on you. Bill Harkleroad and the Mallard people, the former Magic Band? Dreadful and tedious musicbiz histories, not worth recounting. After Van Gogh, the discovery is Shakespeare (time for the Beefheart aphorisms: does he invent them in advance, or do they spontaneously spring to mind?): "He was out licking the sidewalk to feel the texture of the souls . . . I've licked a few sidewalks myself."

Only when business comes in again does Beefheart's psychic self-sufficiency as an artist become confused with the bruising business of spy v. spy. He said Bill Harkleroad could never even play a guitar till given a start on 'Trout Mask Replica', composed by Beefheart in eight-and-a-half hours on a piano (first time ever) and faithfully charted by John "Drumbo" French. Said he gave Bill a guitar without an amp or strings, just to jig around, "feel the rhythms of the sky and the earth."

Finally proclaims himself artist, hence: "Pshaw! I'm an artist. To make music like that (the music of natural rhythms) you have to be humble. You have to let it all come to you . . . that's why artists fuck better. They know how to hold off. Isn't that the truth?"

Martin Hayman



A Legend Comes So Life

A MAN with a bass guitar, white suit and hat to match, suddenly lopes from the darkness and onto the stage, plucks aggressively at his instrument and prowls around the speakers like Groucho Marx meets the cast of West Side Story. Finally, he stops and tells us he's going to smoke a cigar—twice. This is Rockette Morton.

There shambles into the spotlight a catatonic figure that looks as if it stopped by while sleepwalking. He plays something like a washboard. He scrapes this thing once. This is Ed Marimba. He plays drums.

The man emerging in the lustrous pinky orange suit with the furry black and white cape, looking like a tubby Billy Butlin, is The Cap, short for The Captain. Captain Beefheart, alias Don Van Vliet.

He walks front stage, lifts the microphone, cups it in his hands with his harp, and blows and sings "Click Clack." For the next five minutes a train

choogles and clatters around the old hall, its wheels powered by The Magic Band, its whistle shrilling from the fingertips of Zoot Horn Rollo's guitar. This is the beginning of a performance to savour—Captain Beefheart plays the Albert Hall.

Beefheart live is legend made flesh. Some legends are best kept under wraps for fear the mysterious quality should look threadbare under the spotlights. This isn't one of these.

Van Vliet is truly a monumental figure in contemporary music. For once the talent equates the image. At the Albert on Monday night one could only marvel at his magnificent voice with its four-and-a-half octave range, that progresses from a subterranean growl, through a stentorian bellow to a falsetto hiccup—a voice of such amazing power that the Albert's difficult acoustics were mastered and cowed in frightening fashion. His music is a sort of blues exotica. The bassist is R and B, but he

has restructured the form, imposing discordant, fragmented rhythms that are linked to wild, enigmatic imagery. The music is as truly surreal in its spellbinding fascination as looking at one of those vaguely sinister Dada objects, like the cup made of fur. Irritating almost in the way it rubs against the nerve-ends, but as if it contains all the secrets of the universe if you only knew the key.

With the Captain everything is strange. "A psychiatrist," he said at one point, "is someone who wants to die in your other life." It's one of his Beefheartian pieces of epigrammatic wisdom. There's a pause after each song introduction, then The Magic Band spills out its rhythms on cue. They've all been totally immobile whilst not playing, now they jerk around the stage like metallic puppets, motivated by some unseen power.

Zoot Horn, a tall, thin figure, bobs and weaves on his heels; Marimba's arms, which seem to

be unnaturally long for a human being, splay outwards and Roy Estrada, the old Mothers bassist, shifts rhythmically from one foot to the other. Rockette grouches over his bass. Winged Eel Fingerling, the second guitarist, looks almost natural, just shuffling around. But none of it seems quite lifelike.

Beefheart, although not a guitarist himself, is said to have taught his band how to play each note of his music. They mesh with such absolute precision that it's frightening. And yet after a time one hopes they would play just one straight lick to break that formulaic perfection. Of course, they never do.

When they finally left the stage and the audience yelled for more, the Captain came back and did just that. He whistled the theme of "More." Weird scenes indeed.—MICHAEL WATTS.



Zappa stole my ideas, says the Captain

by CAROLINE BOUCHER

"I am not," says the Captain vehemently, "a freak," and then he dives off into his particular picture language to tell you why.

"All that image was created for me by Frank Zappa," he spits the name out. "He used me, and he was trying to keep the artist in me back. He stole my ideas from me in the desert. 'Hot Rats' was my title so was 'Lumpy Gravy.' He used me for publicity purposes for himself; all this bit about being friends since we were young. I only met the guy about 25 times in the whole time I've been alive. I would never have said anything, but I don't like to have my heart deluded."

He grumbles on about never getting a penny royalty from "Trout Mask Replica," another grudge he lays on Zappa's doorstep. "He stole all my facial expressions and my movements too," and he fixes you with a baleful stare remarkably like Zappa's.

The Captain is wearing brown suede trousers, black leather coat, shattering Al Capone silk tie against a black shirt. His shoes are red suede and black patent with tassels, and cost 75 dollars because the Captain likes to treat his feet well. His hair is slicked back.

For a man who hasn't done very many appearances, and whose albums don't sell phenomenally well, the Captain is a hero to his followers who are staunch to the death. He is a living legend, built about with stories and anecdotes, some of them undoubtedly put about by Frank Zappa, some by friends and first-hand observers.

"I am a genius," he says. "I was born with my eyes open—I didn't WANT to be born—I can remember deep down in my head that I fought against my mother bringing me into the world. But I have a very high IQ, you know that? But I NEVER read books, and I never went to lessons at school—I couldn't take that."

"School makes you focus so sharp that if somebody came up and threw something your eyes would shatter."

The Captain is very into eye-consciousness today. It is tied up with his perturbation of the music business, and how it is taken much too seriously. He is happy that people actually get up and dance at his concerts now.

"Otherwise I am embarrassed the way music is now, the same way with sex—almost anything that's

available is soon scalped. I think most of the people are so eye conscious. I expect at Rock-n-Roll concerts to walk up to somebody's ear and see an eye looking out at me."

Eye-consciousness—i.e. the inability to look further than first glance—destroyed Marilyn Munroe, continues Beefheart. "She was thought of as a cow that should go out and graze by the whole world. Now WHERE is that at? If she'd have been flat-chested, then it would have been a different story. People never got over eye-consciousness with her."

When Captain Beefheart was five years old he was a very good sculptor and rich ladies were patting him on the head and treating him as a child prodigy. "Ugh," says the Captain, "and WHERE was THAT. I got out, right out although at the time I thought my folks were mean pulling me out."

He still does some sculpting and lots of paintings.

"I did 30 paintings in three days before I came over here. It's just like combing your hair really, you can't get interested in it otherwise you'd just end up watching yourself. I run away from mirrors."

"Music... there's a lot in it, but I don't dwell on it and marvel at my spectacular compositions. Most people only do one thing in their lives, they don't get past the first change. Look at Rock-n-Roll, it never got past the bang bang beat stage."

Captain Beefheart has always been pretty hard up—mainly because he's pursued his own particular brand of music for the past seven years regardless of whether or not anybody else liked it. He's done the odd tour, and is particularly in demand nowadays, but there have been periods in his career when he's spent a long time closeted in his house with the magic band around him and only the occasional local gig to do. Well, it doesn't cost much to live, he says, and he does like good shoes and Rolls-Royces. There's no point driving one of those awful aluminium cars.

Two years ago the Captain got married, and takes his wife round with him wherever he goes. "I can't leave a woman at home watching the steam come out of the pot, oh no. My wife's really good, and she's good at painting. On the whole women don't like me you know; they sense the woman in me. I have that inner core, that intuitive inner knowledge that women have. If I didn't have such big bones I'd be one of THOSE you know," he rolls his eyes.

The current line-up of the Magic Band is: Winged Eel Fingerling on guitar; Ode-jon on bass; Rockette Morton and Zoot Horn Rollo on guitars (they've both been with the Captain three years and Rockette used to play bass); and Ed Marimba on drums.

"The band is very complicated now and we're into a lot of telepathic things, but it's harder to put that out, it just furthers this freak element I'm trying to escape.

And the great thing about it is that nobody has to tell anybody to go—they all want to go like crazy, which is unusual. Their energy is so nice, after that honesty I don't know what will follow, they scare me occasionally; if I'm not honest I feel kind of out of place."

There have been a fair number of comings and going in the Magic Band. Winged Eel has left and joined several times over the past few years; and at one point the Captain's cousin, Masked Snake, was in the band, and he found the Captain's house Eureka.

"One guitarist I had made bird noises. He walked into the bush at full moon and ate bread. I thought that was rather artistic. Sometimes you couldn't understand the bird noises too well but otherwise he was pretty normal—a lot more normal than a short-haired human anyway."

One reason the Captain wants to shake off the freak tag is that he wants to do some things with Ornette Coleman, the jazz trumpeter ("he's a great painter with that horn").

"Now I'm free of that tag I'd like to go on tour with him. The first thing I said to him was 'do you like lullabys' and he said 'no I don't they're dangerous.' And that was it. Lullabys are dangerous you know."

A lot of people try and analyse my lyrics: I don't often write very heavy things. 'Space Age Couple' on the 'Lick My Decals' album meant something. So did the title of my album 'Safe As Milk'—I was talking about the dangers of DDT in a mother's milk then, but everybody thought I was on about LSD—the freak thing, you know.

"And I wrote a good song called 'It's Not Worth Getting Into The Bullshit To See What The Bull Ate.' When music becomes something to have over somebody else—a superiority thing—then it becomes nothing. You have to be very careful of that."

"But all the time I have to explain myself to people—I actually have people trying to get me to explain why I have a right to be on this planet. Hundreds of people a day."

The Captain sighs. Recently he struck up a friendship with Ian Anderson, of Jethro Tull, because he found he was intelligent and could talk to him. That all came about because Jethro's bass player, Jeffrey Hammond Hammond, took the Captain's Trout Mask hat from Kinney's offices. An office boy gave it to him, which enraged the Captain who had left it there for safe keeping. But since meeting Jeffrey he has forgiven him, and spent one night last week lecturing Ian on the perils of the music business.

"There is only the slightest movement of the fingers that makes the V-sign different from the Nazi salute. Always watch that," the Captain nods wisely.

blabber 'n' smoke



Beefheart is an incurable jester. He has often said that it is important that his music is played in an unselfconscious, playful way and on his recent tour he interspersed wisecracks, and surreal little bits of dialogue with the songs. Most of these episodes have great significance. 'Meditation soothes the mind and body', which Beefheart proclaimed was a slogan that the Maharishi used in Los Angeles, and the gabbled bit of Spanish that Orejon replied with is what all the Mexican kids use to beg a bob or two off American tourists. Get it? Anyway, talking to him is just like that and all the interviews that show him docilely waiting for the question to end were either a different guy or a faulty cassette machine. One of his favourite tricks is to ignore questions so that a backlog builds up, from which he will then choose one, and then, in the middle of answering that, he'll start answering another. Whew. So what follows is an attempt to capture the feeling of talking with a luminous intelligence, but as well, a twinkling, humorous player. (His talk is constantly punctuated by winks and little smiles that he employs to reassure the listener that he is just playing and not to get too upset by the apparent illogicality of it all).

While the usual preliminaries were being gone through, Bill Shurnow, the group's road manager, put on 'The Spotlight Kid'. The Captain asked whether I minded the music playing while we talked.

—Not if you don't mind talking over it.

—Wasn't there an album on before? Who was it?

—Leon Russell.

—No wonder it was so insignificant, I couldn't even hear it. Ugh, I can't make that cat.

—What, musically?

—He stole my hat, you know. He wears a hat exactly like mine.

Well, there is a similarity of hats, but I'd always thought of Beefheart's hat as the Pilgrim hat featured on the cover of 'Trout Mask Replica'. I asked what had

happened to that hat.

—Ah, Hammond Hammond has that one. Geoffrey Hammond Hammond, he got it in New York. But I like Geoffrey Hammond Hammond, I don't mind him having it.

The hat in question has a mighty peculiar brim, like half of it is missing. Is it a Beefheartian illusion, allusion, or what?

—Oh, I made it like that, with just two bits sticking out. Well, all of a sudden that cat Leon Russell appears with my hat, the top hat, Dickens hat, or whatever, that Dickens got my hat, you see, wore a hat like mine. Now where's that at, you know what I mean? He's too thin to wear a hat like mine. . . No I'm just kidding. No, I'm not really.

—What? Too thin?

—Yea, up here, mentally (Beefheart kind of bores his finger into his temple and gives a little wink).

—Well, where do you suppose he got the vest from?

—Oh, Hendrix, or somebody else like that.

I asked who the fellow called Berman was who had been credited with co-authorship of the songs on 'Safe As Milk', the Captain's first album.

—The Bearman did you say?

—The Birdman.

—That's about it right there.

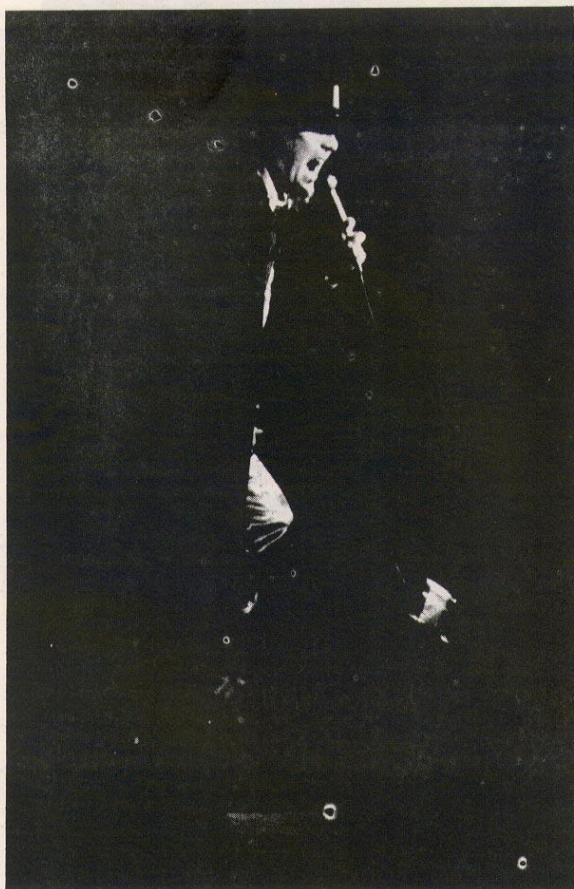
—Alice in Bearland.

—You said it.

— . . . who co-wrote some of the songs on 'Safe As Milk'.

—Well, he was a fellow that I met up in the desert; he was a writer and I sort of collaborated with him on some of the songs on the album. He didn't really write that much but what he did write was nice. I got together with him because at the time, the group that I was with wouldn't listen to a thing I said, and I thought that if I was with what they thought was a professional writer that they would listen to me. You see, my stuff seemed too far out for them. But it didn't work out. They still wouldn't listen. As a matter of fact, they came over here and we played at the Middle Earth and they really dug it, you know, everybody was really there, you know, we were there, but they, the group, weren't there. I mean they were still over in America thinking that nobody wanted to hear them. So that's why I have the group I have now, it took me five years to get this group together. They're honest men and they don't look down on people, they look straight across at them. Which is important to me. Honestly.

Well, honestly certainly hasn't



been evident in the way the business has treated the Captain. I had been rather puzzled by the absence of lyrics for either 'Trout Mask Replica' or 'Lick My Decals Off, Baby'. Both albums contain some of the Captain's most potent images. Take this, for example, from the Buggie Boogie Woogie on 'Lick My Decals Off, Baby':

'One day I was sweepin' down by the wall

I bumped a mama spider and the babies began to fall

Off o' my broom

Now I gotta keep sweepin' 'n sweepin'

'Fore they fill the room'

There weren't any lyrics over here? Oh, the bastards... the bastards... why do they do it to me... oh why... the shits. And if you want man, I'll sign that. You send that to me and I'll sign it.

Was that put out by that man (a reference to Frank Zappa)?

The Captain feels that Zappa was not at all interested in his music and that this explains why The Magic Band were promoted as 'one of the animal crackers' by Zappa's label (along with other 'weirdo' groups like the GTOs and Alice Cooper). I thought it only fair to point out that if it hadn't been for Zappa 'Trout Mask Replica'—an astonishing creation—would never have got made.

—Oh shit, man, he did nothing. The boys did all the work, they were great, that man just curled up in the control booth and went to sleep. Anyway, I don't want to talk about it.

At this, some of his composure returned and that little devilish smile that he finds so hard to curb returned as he added:

—I did it, man, I did it. I put myself in the music business, so they naturally gave me the music business' trademark—the bum's rush.

Beefheart feels that much of the poverty of modern life is connected to the divorce between ourselves and natural things like organic shapes and colours. He commented some time ago on the decline in kite-flying as a clear indicator of this malaise. Well, as he was staying near Hyde Park, I mentioned the kite-flyers that played there.

—I've been watching them, they're real nice. Everybody ought to go fly a kite. You feel the wind and that strain. Put a brush in your hand and do the canvas like the wind does the kite.

—They have some beautiful kites, one is like a huge hawk.

—Well, if they do that maybe they'll appreciate how beautiful

the hawk is and won't shoot it out of the air. You know, if they can feel the way the feathers feel... It's a good way to see over the hill, you know what I mean, you put your eyes in the kite and you can see over the hill.

—To see

—Without seeing with your eyes. I think the hill is eye consciousness, you know just seeing everything with your eyes, like interpreting who a person is on first glance without feeling them, with your eyes shut. You don't have to shut your eyes physically, but I mean you should look deeper than just the way they look.

—But everyone has their own hills, don't you think?

—Anthills, or own hills—no, I'm only teasing. I think that a lot of those hills have been put there out of fear. I think that the long black dress and the fear of the female ankle and the worry about private parts and all these kind of things are ridiculous. Now I don't say that everyone should jump out of their clothes and run around naked, I think that's really ridiculous, they'd freeze to death and get sunburnt, but I think that everybody that's taking a shower shouldn't be that embarrassed. The rain when it falls hits everybody, everybody takes the same shower. Water is the cheapest drink, now, but the glass is the lowest.

Beefheart seems to be entranced by vacuum cleaners. He is shown holding one in the little photo on the sleeve of Zappa's 'Hot Rats' and there is a photo of him performing in Washington with several huge industrial cleaners draped in and out of the sound equipment. It emerged that these pleasant creatures had important lessons for us too.

—I think that you can look at a vacuum cleaner and find out a lot of things, like the dust, you know, they collect a lot of dust and dirt and everything. You can find out what somebody's had for dinner, or you can find out what they do, or how they walk, which is far out. —You've never written a song about them; because they'll be in the Smithsonian someday, for sure. —Sure will, and one day I will, like it's... to see the world, in an Oldsmobile.

At this point, the Captain began whistling a tune that sounded awfully familiar, but which I couldn't place until he continued:

—Remember that. Holiday 88 (a TV show, I think). That was when everything got real pointed. Like the DC3 as opposed to the F104 or the Boeing, poking that or whatever they're doing. I mean, like

the sabre jet, emulating the shark as opposed to now they're emulating needles and things.

An important figure in the Captain's cosmology at the moment is Jean-Pierre Hallet, a Belgian animal lover who tried unsuccessfully to start a zoo in an area of California near the Captain's home. He was unsuccessful because people were frightened that the animals would escape. Hallet is also the author of two books which his wife is presently reading to him.

I asked him if he didn't dislike zoos?

—Yea, it's terrible that they have to lock them up in zoos. But, man hasn't learnt how to communicate with animals yet. He isn't very intelligent.

—That's why people are frightened of them.

—I'm not. I used to go into cages with lions. You know the MGM lion, Leo, their emblem lion? I used to go into cages with him when I was five, down at Griffith Park Zoo in Los Angeles, to sculpt him with a good friend of mine. And do you know what happened? He was very old, the lion, and some idiot threw a cigar on him and it burned through and killed him. It burned through his skin while he was asleep. Made me sick. It was one of the most traumatic things I remember out of my childhood. Isn't that awful. That son-of-a-bitch.

Of course, the extension of his concern for animal life takes him straight to the ecological conundrum. But not for him a trendy preoccupation with plastic bottles. Beefheart's solution is quite clear—just love, cherish and care for the things of nature.

In the songs that he has been writing since the very beginning this care has been displayed. A most telling insight is in The Smithsonian Institute Blues, on 'Lick My Decals Off, Baby', where the parallel between the fate that befell the dinosaurs and the stage that we have reached in our interaction with the environment is simply stated:

*'All you new dinosaurs
Now it's up t'you t'choose
'Fore your feet hit the tar, you
better kick off them old shoes'*

The Captain explained:

—Well, that's about the La Brea tar pits in Los Angeles; because if they don't change, then they're gonna sink into the tar pits. I've been saying it for years... look at 'Safe as Milk'. I don't want to take credit for starting anything. I just wanted them to hear that they got deluded again. I'll tell you

what, 'Safe As Milk' meant the mother's breast that's going to be unfit for the child because of Strontium 90, the hot juices of the breast. Everybody thought I meant acid, but I wouldn't talk about an Aspirin at that length. I was inferring that the feeling that something is 'as safe as milk' can't be a feeling anymore because milk isn't safe.

To attempt to reduce Beefheart or his music to one neat little phrase is absurd. His music creates styles. It is literally incomparable. He himself creates a kaleidoscope of thoughts when he talks, and the only response is to lie back and enjoy it. Perhaps the deepest impression is left by his reluctance to think in words but rather in images. On one occasion as he was talking, his wife Jan was reading a book and the turning of the page was distracting him. Gently, he turned to her and said:

—Jan, Jan... I can't really hear

with those pages going, you know, I want to pick up an instrument to that percussion.

A question that may be answered by 'yes' or 'no' is very often answered by a short little image culled from some past glimpse of the world. The Captain carried a large book wherein these glimpses are often recorded and which may be published under the title *The Night My Typewriter Went Daadaaaaaa*. There was an obvious question for the conscientious interviewer:

—Do you use a typewriter?

There was an equally obvious Captain reply:

—What type of writer do you mean? A flesh writer, or a flesh writer with buttons?

A final quote from the book—entered on the flight-over: 'It's like someone that put on his brakes with an eraser in his mind'.



A bit of Beef Art

ANTENNAE JIMMY SEMENS: "Dali's Car"



Captain Beefheart often appears to attract more attention by his "weirdness" than any other way. His reputation as an iconoclast of genius also rests on comparatively few tracks and the "live legend". (It's still hard to believe that "Mirror Man" was made in 1965.)

Chiefly, in a host of good but lesser albums and the crassness of his current output, there remain two great records — "Trout Mask Replica" and "Lick My Decals Off Baby".

What is chiefly striking here is the degree of re-training the musicians went through to achieve the cohesion that the Captain could hear. One can understand his bitterness and disillusionment, whatever the truth of the circumstances, when the Magic Band left him after so long — so much effort must have appeared wasted.

And the musicians themselves were pretty stunning. Just as, now, it seems only too clear how important the original Mothers were to Frank Zappa, so we can see the extraordinary qualities of the 'real' Magic Band. It is particularly interesting to think of Art Tripp/Ed Marimba making the transition from rigorous classical training to the intense accuracy involved in Zappa's work, and then to the very different undisciplines of Beefheart's material.

With the guitar, what's important is not any special technical point about the instrument, but the music itself, its form and its demands.

The sound on the recordings

in question is a distinctive, thin, slightly distorted tone that seldom varies to any great extent. The style is a unique mixture of strange harmonies and lurching rhythms interspersed with snatches of melody. What Beefheart has always been good at is deploying two guitars, creating a constant contrapuntal tension between them. On "Trout-mask" this is demonstrated at its most developed.

"Dali's Car" is a very clear instance. This is a brief, formal, organised piece, completely outside the terms of what two guitars in rock usually means. It's discordant, angular, weirdly constructed and totally wonderful. In fact, the track is fairly comprehensible in conventional musical terms. Often this is much less true — on "Frownland", for example, or the unison passages on numbers like "Doctor Dark" which seem to be plucked out of thin air.

It is always alarming to hear people playing completely together and yet not in any recognisable rhythmic pattern. This is not free music; it is completely controlled all the time, which is one of the reasons it's so remarkable — forces that usually emerge in improvisation are harnessed and made constant, repeatable.

This has the strong and important effect of blurring the edges of reality, breaking down the distinction between normal and abnormal, possible and impossible.

**Analysis by FRED
FRITH of HENRY
COW**

CONNOR McKNIGHT OF "ZIGZAG" TALKS WITH "MALLARD"

Round about the Wiltshire border my mind wandered, in its usual aimless fashion, away from assessing whether the Stonehouse affair, the Common Market referendum, Princess Anne's forthcoming pregnancy, or her brother's forthcoming marriage deserved the nomination as Bore of the Year, onto the thorny problem of Don Van Vliet—how do you try and understand a man who's incredibly generous and yet capable of acts of spite that would make even Ian Paisley demur; a man who gave the world some of the greatest lyrics ever penned and yet has been responsible for driving two of the best L.A. musicians—Roy Estrada and Artie Tripp—out of the business; a man of awesome intelligence and yet a man who could describe Angela Davis as a "piccaninny on a pogo stick"; a man who would deplore the evils of the music business machine in most scathing terms, and yet a man who had no hesitation in training some very heavy artillery in my direction to stop me reporting that statement. Finally, after thrashing vainly towards understanding this ambivalence, what are we to make of a serious musician who can produce works of genius (yes—*genius*) like *Trout Mask Replica*, and yet a musician who

can let some worn out hack fart like Del Simmons take 10 minutes to parade every clarinet cliché ever invented on a foul gimmicky rendition of 'Sweet Georgia Brown'.

The mention of Beefheart cast a momentary pall over the gathering, but I thought it might be a propitious time to see if any of the people present could help me solve the Beefheartian paradoxes that had been rolling around in my head earlier in the evening. The response was immediate, like a Greek chorus.

Artie: That thieving arsehole.

Mark: The old fart.

Bill: Oh f**k man, I can't figure him out. He's certainly a great musician—really great—but he treated us pretty badly. I'm just glad we are finally away from him and able to work on our own.

The responses were amplified in subsequent conversation. Artie was definite. "Man, I've worked for two of the worst people in the business—Zappa and that f**kin' Vliet. The only reason I even thought of coming over here was because these guys' music is really fine, and the only reason I actually came over was because they gave me some money in advance. I've been f**ked so often and for so long by so many people that I

have to be like that about it."

Mark's sentiments were similar, although, being the easy-going amiable fellow that he is, they weren't expressed in nearly as venomous terms.

Beefheart is a genius; the word is properly used to denote the sort of person who can write lines like—

*Rather than I wanna hold your hand
I wanna swallow you whole
'n I wanna lick you everywhere it's pink
'n everywhere you think*

Whole kit, kaboodle 'n the kitchen sink
and it's no surprise that he has damaged people. Thank Christ the damage hasn't proved irreparable.

Like Don says:

**The stars are matter
We are matter
But it doesn't matter.**

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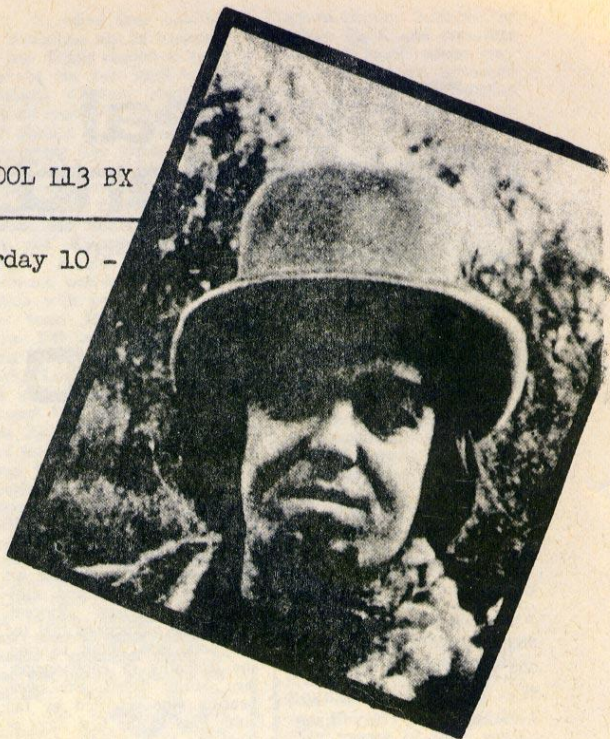
"One nest rolls after another
untill there are no longer any birds
one tounge lashes another
untill ther are no longer any words

I love

Fails

no birds"

Don Van Vliet 2/72



This is an exhibition of 15 paintings by Don Van Vliet - alias Captain Beefheart of Magic Band fame - an extraordinary man whose energies manifest themselves in numerous directions. He is first, of course, known to thousands as a music maker, and the Magic Band's indefinable, wild, heavy rock sound has had a vast following in Europe and the States for quite a few years now. But Beefheart is also a poet and an artist. Although he has painted for years this is the first time his pictures have been shown in a Gallery anywhere in the world.

At the Bluecoat there are 15 canvases - uniform in size and all primed white, on which in 2 days before his tour of Europe began, Beefheart executed various gestures, suitabl untamed, in black and white paint. In some of the paintings, the image is confined to single swift brush stroke almost as if the canvas were a detail from some enormous composite work, and in others the paint swirls and mixes to greys, practically spilling over the unframed edge of the canvas.

Whatever else he is, Captain Beefheart is a true individual - a man who sees and emulate the wilder more liberated side of life and has cleared a space in the world for himself. He uses his music, his writings and his paintings to define and colour that space.

We very much hope that you will be able to come and see this exhibition, arranged at extremely short notice by the Gallery. As well as taking place while Captain Beefheart is still actually touring Britain, it presents the North-West with a unique opportunity to see first what London and the rest of Europe will see before long - exhibitions are already being arranged in Germany and Italy and there will later be a show at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London.

Lucy Cullen.
Gallery Director.

The Real Magic Band

MALLARD

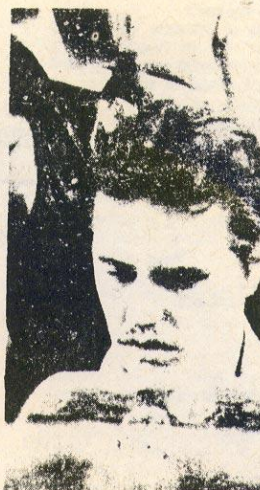
FOR EVERY action, an equal and opposite reaction; for every Icarus, a thousand burned only with envy and eager to strip him of his wings, see him tumble from the sky. Perhaps he played Mercury for too long, and is now paying the price for his hubris: the Space Captain brought to earth — for what? By whom? For doing his own down.

This will be a bitter pill to swallow for there are many indeed for whom Don van Vliet, in his alias as Captain Beefheart, is the very epitome of the winged messenger, the healer of all ills, the force of pure imagination untrammelled by the base elements. An in-

nocent who survives. There are more myths webbing Captain Beefheart than perhaps any other rock figure but his saturnine comrade and shotgun-rider Francis Vincent. Like those predictions that the telephone was about to ring, the telepathy of each successive Magic Band, the overbearing vibe reported by fan John Peel in the first days of 'Safe As Milk' airplay feeding back off the airwaves as he sat, alone in the ocean, at his programme 'The Perfumed Garden'. The legendary serenade to the dawn at Bicker, shaw or the sci-fi scream of the UFO, Covent Garden gigs...

Yes, this might hurt just a teeny weeny little bit...

Our story starts sometime during the Sixties in Antelope Valley, Lancaster, a small town in LA County. It is the hometown both of Francis Vincent Zappa and of Don van Vliet. Frank Zappa has



ART TRIPP III

already, by 1964, formed a group called the Omens featuring a guitarist named Alex St. Claire, and when Frank moved on to other ideas, it was St. Claire who called up one of the town's resident talents (albeit those talents had yet to find a form for their issue) and invited him to sing with the group. His name? You guessed — Don van Vliet.

The relationship between Zappa and van Vliet — so oft mystified in the past — will get no elucidation here. Some say they cruised for burgers together — but this I think is mere wishful thinking. California dreaming. It seems likely that they knew of each other, for in Antelope Valley who, and particularly the osmotic Frank Zappa, would have missed so extraordinary a personage? But it is true that there has been a close link between Frank Zappa's musicians and Magic Banders, a certain interchangeability.

Now the ex Omens, fronted by a crazy Dutchman who used his mouthharp for words and his poetry for blues, built up a strong local following with their blues and hard rock act. And always in the crowd were two local boys who from twelve onwards had thought that this was it, the only thing for them. Their names are Mark Boston and Bill Harkleroad. They've seen Frank Zappa up there in a grey suit, but all they want to do is join this band, by now known as the Magic Band, featuring Captain Beefheart (as he was later to be known) on vocals, harmonica and first time missettes — John French, alias Drumbo, on drums naturally, Jerry Handley, bass, Alex St.

Claire Snoutler and Jeff Cotton (alias Antennae Jimmy Simmons) on guitars. The names and aliases in this story get somewhat complex and the whole subject becomes somewhat fraught towards the end — but already the tale is back to front.

It was this line-up which recorded, "one night in Los Angeles in 1965", 'Mirror Man' which was not however released by producer Bob Krasnow, who presumably held the tapes, until 1971. Curiously the record, although acknowledging gratefully the Captain's time and co-operation, features a completely different line-up on the cover, a four-piece (hold tight, for all will be revealed). The sound of that record is instantly identifiable as Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, the rumbly rollerbass and all those jaggedlysplinters of guitar meshing perfectly and that crazy harp. Need I wring the dictionary out any further in search of that sound? No. It was a blues-rock sound featuring long work outs on Robert Johnson's 'Terraplane Blues' and of course 'Mirror Man'.

Business is business and anyway it was not until late 1966 and early 1967 that a rather differently constituted Magic Band went into a studio and recorded their prodigious first album 'Safe As Milk'. For information, the personnel was (reading left to right on the cover) John French, Jerry Handley, Beefheart and Alex St. Claire. Ry Cooder, who plays a prominent part, replaces Jeff Cotton. Between the five of them a sound emerges — but who led the way?

We skip lightly over the first rumbles of discontent with the Perry-produced 'Strictly Personal'. Jeff Cotton was back in the Magic Band and the disc, recorded April 25 through May 2, 1968 at Sunset Sound, Hollywood, created a stir among the hip nuts in Britain, who were out buying it alongside the first Doctor John album and getting off on the elementary and overdone cross-panning and phasing. But what the hell? You can read this on the cover... meanwhile out there two adolescent musicians who have by now reached the age of nineteen, are ready to burst from their chrysalis and wear their new names. Bill Harkleroad stepped forward... and became Zoot Horn Rollo. Mark Boston, from the village just up the road from Antelope Valley, became Rockette Morton.

We jump to the present, or at least last week. Bill Harkleroad: "I joined in 1968 though I'd been expecting it for about



a year. In fact I'd been hanging out waiting for it to happen. The Mothers and Captain Beefheart were the only two bands I'd ever liked, and here I was, the first day I'd joined, with Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa and Mick Jagger and a whole bunch of other people, and I was really afraid... I was excited and scared to death. After a while the excitement went, but never the fear."

Mark Boston's bearding was no less terrifying when he went to join them rehearsing in the house in Woodland Hills: "I'd always seen them doing hard-rock blues. I thought I was going to be doing that and I walked right into the middle of 'Trout Mask Replica'."

It is difficult for the two men to relate fully their experiences during the rehearsing and recording of 'Trout Mask Replica'. It was the first real gig either of them had played — the hole in one, as it were — and they readily admit that they found the Captain's personal magnetism, and along with it his way of working, overwhelming — after all, Bill points out, they were nineteen and the Captain was twenty-eight. But they both reject vociferously the claim made either by the Captain or on behalf of him, that he taught them from scratch to play their instruments. They'd been working on it for seven years with the specific intention of getting good enough to join the Magic Band.

The twenty-hour rehearsals were for real. John French, the only member with a musical training, was obliged "to sort out into a playable form the fevered and wildly various imaginings of Captain Beefheart. "He (Captain Beefheart) would hit a ten-note chord on the piano and say to me, 'Play that'. I'd reply that I'd only got six strings, but he would say, 'You'd better find another four,'" recalls Bill.

"Nobody ever went out. It was a great workshop. I played things then that I'll never be able to play again.

I've never worked so hard in my life, but at nineteen you're ready to slay the dragon. We didn't even see any women for a year... I was the only one who went out — to the grocery store."

Drugs were out. In fact on his first days with the group Bill brought the gear down and everybody looked at him as though he were crazy — "they were all into the Maharishi". But as he got more serious about the music, and he got very serious, so the drugs went. Inevitably, at that time, Beefheart and the Magic Band were strongly identified with the craze for LSD and eventually Bill found it "up-setting" to be catechized by members of "acid casualty" audiences on the brand of acid he used to achieve such-and-such an effect. He didn't care for sheer hard work being so construed.

'Lick My Decals Off' which followed also on Frank Zappa's Straight Records, used the same energy as that drawn from the players on 'Trout Mask' but "instead of having to fix something to be able to play it, there were more ideas coming out," says Bill, who by this time had become musical director, and was getting a lot of pressure from Captain Beefheart. "It meant that when he got to the studio he would expect everything to go down the way he wanted it — without his knowing, what he wanted."

Many people regard this as the most productive period of Captain Beefheart's history. Bill does not altogether share this view. He thinks that the two best versions of the many Magic Bands were that which toured the States immediately after the release of 'Decals', featuring both John French and Art Tripp (alias Ed Marimba); and that which did the first British tour after 'Clear Spot', with Roy Estrada (alias Orejon — he had also played with the early Mothers and Little Feat).

It was after they signed a contract with the Captain —

early 71, when they reached the American age of majority — that things started to turn sour for the two local boys. Naturally Captain Beefheart took all credit for songs, as he had always done — though increasingly, the actual detail musical work was being done by the members of the group. 'Clear Spot', the most commercial and well-balanced set that the Captain and his Magic Band had ever produced, was in some places written with very little collusion from Don van Vliet, claim Bill and Mark; 'Big Eyed Beans' almost totally by Mark; 'Low Yo Yo Stuff' by Bill and Elliot Ingber (alias Winged Eel Fingerling); and 'Sun Zoom Spark' by Mark. And yet, and yet... just when things looked hunky dory, as though the Captain had the makings of a modest commercial success, he again changed label and management and ended up with the di Martino brothers.

Over this period a veil is best drawn, though certain points must be made: Andy di Martino's principal claim to fame was having produced the Cascades' 'Rhythm of the Rain'. He wished to split Beefheart from the Magic Band — double your money with a ballad singer and a rock group instead of a weird cult act. Now there he was too putting pressure on the group. He remixed the album 'Unconditionally Guaranteed' and claimed a third of the publishing; it was cut in eight hours, and sounds like it. The band split, only a few days before the British tour, and were replaced by members of Buckwheat. Eventually Captain Beefheart went to join Frank Zappa, just recently; and Art Tripp, who has been with Bill and Mark here, reports from Pittsburgh he's still doing his thing with the word and the harp and sounding something strong in the middle of a Frank Zappa show.

Why then, are they all here? Cutting an album — under the name of Mallard. Seems like the Captain retains legal option on the names — as he does with all the aliases of the whole cove, a distinguished cast: Antennae Jimmy Simmons, Alex St. Claire Snouffer, Ed Marimba, Winged Eel Fingerling, Orejon, Zoot Horn Rollo, Rockette Morton. But those here, recording with Jethro Tull's mobile from a home in Devon, are Mark Boston Bill Harkleman, Art Tripp, for whom things got so tough that they had to dig him out of his job selling insurance in Pittsburgh; they have been joined by a night-club singer called Sam Galpin who had never

heard of Captain Beefheart, or a Magic Band, and says that if he had heard where they were at beforehand, he would not have come, but is settling down just fine. There'll be no gigs, though many an offer, and they hope to come back in the autumn with an album and a tour.

What though of the central figure of our story? For a Magic Band, life without Captain Beefheart is as unthinkable as electric music without amplifiers.

Let us restore our plain Californians their full panoply for a moment: Zoot Horn Rollo and Rockette Morton are indeed somewhat bruised and crushed and disillusioned from their long stay with Captain Beefheart. They put everything into their music which turned out, after all, to be only his music. As musicians they found it difficult to understand how a non-musician should receive all the credit for what appears a highly musical assemblage. They can't understand why he's blown it, again and again, when success seemed to be within his — and their — grasp. But they allow that his intense energy in some ways seems to focus and concert the possibilities of all those who surround him — while at the same time suggesting that physically, he's extremely lazy.

They say he's made money, and spends it, buys two or three pairs of the same shoe so he'll have a replacement; they say his creativity springs from an intense paranoia, a refusal to let anyone in to him, rather pushing out towards them all the time.

But he draws everybody into his own world: "definitely just being around the man influenced me" is an apt enough testimony.



ZOOT HORN ROLLO



ART TRIPP III



ALEX ST. CLAIRE



Beefheart is alive

WHEN I was in Boston, the writers were afraid to come see me — thought I was a mad freak you see. So I got on the 'phone and called them. C'mon, let's talk. I said what the hell is this? I came to town — I didn't know where to go, and the musicians, they wouldn't come round because they're all so f—king jealous; why, I don't know, but they are.

This man I met the other night, Ian Anderson. He's a nice man, really nice — but he's not like a musician, you know what I mean? There are musicians that fight each other on stage and all that sort of thing. Other than Ian Anderson and Ornette Coleman, who're the nicest people I've met in music, there's only a few.

■ Do you meet many other musicians?

Yeah, I do, but all I meet are these people who compete . . . and competition destroys art. I've been competed with by a lot of people and I haven't fought back, so I haven't been known until recently. I'm not a fighter. I'm a painter, I mean I'm not gonna get into a prize fight just because of earning a living — that's crazy. All those people saying "Well, I'm sure glad Jimi Hendrix passed away because I'm the best now". Jesse James — American cowboy movie. I mean that's what all that shit is — I won't put up with it in my group, but they don't do it anyway so I don't have to put up with it.

■ You've suffered quite a lot from the music business . . .

Not at all, not at all. No way man — do you really think that they could make me suffer? Are you kidding? I'm playing, they're working. I don't suffer.

■ But for instance, what happened to "Strictly Personal" after you recorded it . . . the music suffered.

Well, I told Krasnow, I said I hope you had fun, but I think that you should start playing yourself so that you don't have to do that to mine. It didn't make that mad at Krasnow, because he just wanted to play. He wanted me to make it it — he didn't do it vindictively or maliciously, he just wanted me to make it — and he thought that my music was so heavy that if he put that phasing on it, that fizz, that people would think it was jazz or something. Jazz with the fizz? He didn't mean, he wasn't mean when he did it, he wanted to help me. He says he's sorry now, but I said "man, don't be sorry, hell I've got years to go, I can make a million albums, what the hell is one little record, all that significance on one little record." That's crazy, to put all that sign-

ificance on a disc — all that significance on that plastic disc is why people don't know there are flying saucers all over.

■ Is that why you haven't been gigging much until recently?

That's the biggest reason, because I'm not willing to go out and get into a battle of the bands — I'm not afraid of the competition mind you, because I don't believe in it so I couldn't possibly be afraid of it — but it does disgust me that people are going back to the Twenties with .38s and the wide pointed shoulders, like the tanks and things — I see a war emulation in the youth, and I've always seen it in the older people. But on the stage, in music, and photography and painting and writing — everything. Instead of being here right now, they're going back in their minds and they bump into people. And that's war.

How can America, for instance . . . for 24 years they didn't even acknowledge millions of people in China, then all of a sudden boom, they acknowledge them. Where the hell is that at? You see what I mean — competition breeds cataracts on their eyes. With these competitive schools, children are enrolled in these schools to receive cataracts — where is that at? That's just insanity, that's like somebody sticking their hand over your lens. You go to school for a camera and they stick their hand over your lens, and it says their name on it, and they'll spread their fingers a little bit for you to see through the camera, but you know they spread their fingers or you wouldn't be able to see to shoot it.

Now I'm with a company that doesn't tell me what I'm going to play, and nobody's ever told me that they were going to turn me on, not the Beatles or nobody. That disgusted me, when I heard "I would like to turn you on" — man I've never been off, the minute I hit air I was on, as well as every other human being on this planet. I don't like stuff like that — I thought that was corny. But that's what record companies told me, they said "we'll turn you on to this", and I said you will not turn me on. I am on. Can't you see me? Don't you know that you're in a white light? Why did you turn your's down? When the record companies turn up to my light, that's it. But I still played as much as money would allow — but I'm realistic about it. Now I'm here of my own volition. It's better, it feels better. If I walked in here with a thousand people from Sourbuck records or something. . . do you think anybody would really listen? It would just be one of those fish fries that they call a musical thing.

■ Because they concentrate too much on details.

Right, that's right. You got it. What do you think about this . . . I'm doing an album now. I wrote it on the way from Yale to Boston, this album is called "Brown Star", and I have on this album a song called "Big Eyed Beans from Venus", and I think you'll like that one here . . . like "Hullo old beans".

But there's people around man, that have eyes and are from Venus, as opposed to be from what they try to make out as Paradise. This is a paradise, what are they talking about? Not once have they ever convinced me that it wasn't it — I don't have to go nowhere to know that this is it. And I'm not going to go off to find out that this was it later. I can't live this life, why should I be re-incarnated.

A fellow asked me a little while ago if I believed in re-incarnation, and I said I think it's a milk product of America — Carnation milk. Have you ever heard of it?

Or pulled out of the ground like a screaming root boutonnaire, you know, a carnation has been used as a thing that you stick on a military lapel. I love it in the ground, I don't wanna it out of the ground like that flower power bullshit. But for a better — what is it — evolution we'd have been maybe plucked out of the ground, so you kind of think about pulling the flower. The Maharishi with all those flowers backed off and stuck around him — you know what I mean? Where's that at man? But I know that the man definitely has a lot of good ideas, no doubt about it.

■ Can I ask you about the first album, "As Milk"? The English cover didn't have personnel — who the musicians were. Cooder was on it wasn't he?

Ry Cooder was on it — although he was a little less than another fellow. There was a fellow called Alex St. Clair Snouffer who had fingers — he didn't, but he did, and he was backbone of that album. He was the guitarist. And the bass player was named George Handley — he was English. The drummer was Drumbo — he played on every album now and then he left after this album (The Spotted Kid), why I don't know. He's not playing music now — I don't know why he'd want to leave my group, or his group because it's my group, it's all of our group. And I would be better than what we're doing, for him.

■ Does Drumbo have other names?

He's John French. Now Ed Marimba instead of marimba he's on drums. There was another guy on that other album — there was a fellow that did theramin — I can't remember his name. He played the theramin on "Electricity" as well as "Autumn's Child". He is the same fellow that did "Spellbound" in the Thirties. And there was one other guy named Russ Titleman, who was Ry Cooder's brother in law; he was a producer at Warners or Reprise, and he played guitar on "Autumn's Child" and "Where There's a Woman".

■ When were the tracks that came out on "MIRROR MAN" recorded? Were they about the same time as "Strictly Personal"?

A little before. They blew the sequence didn't they?

■ Yeah, because they sound a bit like "Strictly Personal" that hasn't been messed about with.

Look, you gotta hear that album ("Strictly Personal"). Some day I'll re-mix that album. I cause man, they're so heavy. They didn't know at the time what they heard, they still don't. Now I have an engineer, who I'm sure is going to be able to get the clarity and not leave the feelings off. Because very few people realise the feelings — they realise the overtones of what I'm striving for, and they go for somewhere near off of the centre. I'm going for overtones they're going for somewhere near off of the centre — some of them try a bull's eye, but that's a little bit too stiff. I want the edge

That's what I'm doing, that's the way I do my music for the edges. They didn't know that. And I didn't know how to work that damn thing — I do now, but realistically it takes a long time. You see I haven't been in this business that long, I've probably only ever been on stage 110 times in my whole career — that's nothing. I can't hardly even get a pilot's licence if I were an airplane pilot.

Do you find it difficult to work in recording studios, or did you?

I find it difficult to play . . .

Yeah, sorry, wrong word.

Oh no, not wrong word. They want to work. And I want to play, and I have to convince them that there's a way to work and play, so when I get in there it becomes a doctor or an analyst and his patient, and they lose their patience. They don't have patience to begin with. Now I've found one who does, I'll be able to do it, which is really lucky because you find them very seldom in a lifetime. Now the Beatles, they were lucky to have had who they had — you know that, they were very very lucky.

I heard you weren't happy with the Zappa produced "Trout Mask".

Well, he's a worker, and I'm a player. I don't believe in working, and he makes a task of what he does — small, you know, thoughts. Like you said about details, he's missing The Detail.

But you were friends at one time, were you not?

Well, you know . . . it's a chemical thing man. He's the kind of person that's interested in presenting himself to be some kind of genius. And I am a genius, and there's nothing I can do about it. And I think nothing of it — I want to be a human being, not a genius. If I used my mind for school work and things like that, I'd be walking along with my head way ahead of my heart, so the thing is that I just put myself together to be a human being. I don't wanna be walking around with spyglasses — that's crazy. Like Einstein, what did he do? He blew it. Look what he did, he discovered that terrible thing and gave it to more terrible people — if he really was a genius do you think he would have given that thing away like that? Pencil-necked geek — the beatniks used to say that, you remember that? They had it together, they smoked marijuana, not (stily) marijuana! . . . you know what I mean. But I don't, I mean they should legalise marijuana, if there's that many people using it they should legalise it and stop that ridiculous sentencing. But hard drugs — that's another story. Anyone who's ridiculous enough to take that poison . . .

Where would you put LSD in that?

I would say that it's an awfully over-rated aspirin (breaks into gales of laughter), and very similar to the old people's Disneyland.

Were you pleased with the way "Trout Mask" came out?

No. Because I don't think they had their distribution together, so that kept it away from all those people. And I thought that that was a very, very important message of energy — to people, everywhere, I don't care about their age or their hardships or whether they're paid their dues, or realise there's no use in it, that was an important message.

We worked for three years on telepathy and things like that together my group — Rockette Morton and Zoot Horn Zollo and myself especially — we learned to get that feeling of telepathy like that, and it was treated as some kind of freak show by Zappa and Cohen — all that Straight/Bizarre . . . Bizarre, what the f—k man? People who chop down Christmas trees and shave poodle tails and probably have very short Christmas or something, and they spend their lives lum-berjacking . . . I don't need a father or a mother — I had a mother and a father, and my mother has her navel and I have mine.

Zappa thinks he's a father or something. Some people think they're a father. What do you do to somebody like that? "I have to go back to work" . . . hell, go back to work, you'd have to go back to work, you'd have to go back into some weird way of thinking to even want to work — why not play through your job, whistle while you work? They even wrote that, why didn't they get that? "Row, row, row, your boat, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream." Hell, there's not enough like them — there's no reason to flex your muscles continuously, blood doesn't need to be in a man's head all the time to prove that he's a penis or something. Women don't want to see a man that's trying to be an erect phallus . . . there's no way, there's no softness, you see, that's why all these wars.

But this is a rather skyhook thing the children are doing now as well — it's gonna get together if I smoke a weed. Are you kidding? That's worse. I mean are they going to enjoy it as much as old people enjoy their liquor? Changing around their water intake, dressing water with odd gems that sparkle in the altitude — that's insane. No, not insane, very disconnected. Varying degrees of disconnection is what I believe to be insanity. I think everybody is very disconnected with their environment. Maybe they don't like the house they built, but how are you going to change it — the world has to be changed so why not change it intelligently? Why tear it apart and hide it away like the cowboys did with the Indian blood letting scene. Man, what is that? And English people like to see a damn cowboy picture, I know they do. But I don't think that this cult thing with this joint added to the human anatomy is going to do it, do you? Did you hear "There Aint No Santa Claus on the Evening Stage" on this album?

Right, and "Blabber 'n' Smoke".

Yeah, but I don't mean that I'm ashamed of the fact that I ever had a joint . . .

Oh sure, it's just people who sit around the whole time getting stoned and . . .

Yeah, I think with all the peaks showing as it is in this society, we know so much, from what's happened in the past, that we shouldn't go back to the twenties and have a war and sleep. Another lullaby — that's all we need is another lullaby. All that is is one change of life that we went through, but they see no future, they don't think they're gonna reach 25 — Zoot Horn Rollo, for instance, told me he wouldn't live past 22. He was real surprised to find out that he's 23 now, but the way he'd been to school he had to count to a hundred and then forget it, make a zero.

I didn't want him to do a numbers game on me. I told him the truth, I said I didn't know whether he would or not, but I don't think that's any excuse to admit that you're not alive when you're standing there breathing on my face like that. I think there's a lot of silly attitudes out here, I'll tell you, brought up by these silly movies and . . . a lot of things.

TV too.

Colour TV — I dug black and white much better, then you can use your colours. Colour TV is so inadequate, it's way behind colour photography, wouldn't you say? Well they should bring TV up to colour photography, and then it would be different. But even so, what do they put on it? A bunch of "look at my holster darlin'" . . . I mean what the hell is that shit? And there's absolutely no lovemaking, that's silly.

Do you think rock and roll music fulfills that function for a lot of people?

Well of course I know it, and you know I know it does, and you know it does too. Lullabye?

And you try to change that attitude when you're . . .

Don't you think I have? But hey listen, I

have no right to change anything, I'm mus- playing, I'm not a doctor, I'm not a nurse for the kids like a lot of women are for the men. When I'm playing, women come to see me, not nurses. I have real women in my audiences. You'll see. You watch — you wanna watch out. But these other women, they've got to learn something, the nuns. None me nun, I want some.

Was it right that the Magic Band that did "Trout Mask", people like Zoot Horn, were not schooled musicians, they hadn't learned to play?

Never played before. If he had picked it up and done a . . . you know, BB King. I mean where the hell is that — everyone like BB King, or Chuck Berry? They neglected their own art and went over to emulate things that had already been done, and could be successfully done right there, any time. BB King could do it, now why the hell didn't they realise that they could do it — the people that copied those people? I don't think that's right, for either party. That's why I tried to do something that was my own, and the thing is that invariably they'll tell me "you sound a lot like Howlin' Wolf" and I'll say that's impossible. The age difference . . . I wouldn't do that, I have honour for other artists. That's too easy, it's too easy for a writer to say "You sound like Howlin' Wolf". I want the writer to . . . well, be realistic, it's not that easy to write about me, and the thing is that it wouldn't be to easy for me to write about you, but those alternatives and concessions shouldn't be made in cases like this, there should be art put on top of it.

If you're writing about an artist, you gotta get into paint too. I've tried to tell writers at all the interviews I've done, man you write something you wanted to say. It's not fair for you to write about me and not have your say . . . I'm a realist, I'm not an abstract. Truly a realist, and they thought I was abstract — do you see what I mean? Now rock and roll, that's far out, it's far out for someone to do something that happened twenty or fifteen years ago.

I have a book coming out, it's going to be really funny. You ask them what they think about the Captain having sex, because they've always thought of me as a eunuch — a far out lunar eunuch, due to my brief association with Zappa. I mean I'm a sexy, healthy male, and I'm not in captivity so naturally I haven't regressed in my organs — I've got blood running everywhere I wonder what they'll think now that I have a group of men, who play men's music, to women. Other men can enjoy it too, but it is definitely to women because I'm playing to a receiver, I'm not playing to the phone company, or an operator.

I think we have to stop now because there's someone else waiting, but can I just ask you one more thing about "Trout Mask Replica". When you were putting the vocal track on, you didn't wear headphones, is that right?

Well of course not, why should I?

But how did you get it down?

You know how I did it, it's like I said, when you're a child with butterflies as big as your eyes. Nothing religious or anything like that . . . just a plumber who dug to take the fitting off his pipes, so the water runs. It's no big thing.

But not many people could do it.

Sure they could. I can see them doing it man, because I do it and I can see you doing it since I was in there. It's just the idea of trying to see yourself doing it that stops you from doing it all the time. You out of it is what it is. But that sounds Zen, and I'm not talking about Zen, I'm talking about Z'right now.

DISCOGRAPHY

EXCEPT WHERE STATED ALL TRACKS WRITTEN AND ARRANGED BY CAPTAIN BEEFHEART.
* with Herb Bermann

A&M SINGLES

Produced by David A. Gates

DIDDY WAH DIDDY (A. Christensen)/
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE FOOLING

MOONCHILD/
FRYING PAN

ALBUMS

SAFE AS MILK

Produced by Bob Krasnow and Richard Perry. Buddah.

Side One

SURE 'NUFF 'N YES I DO (*, Arr. Ry Cooder)
ZIG ZAG WANDERER *
CALL ON ME
DROPOUT BOOGIE *
I'M GLAD
ELECTRICITY *

Side Two

YELLOW BRICK ROAD *
ABBA ZABBA
PLASTIC FACTORY (* + Handley)
WHERE THERE'S WOMAN *
GROWN SO UGLY (Williams, arr. Cooder)
AUTUMN'S CHILD *

STRICTLY PERSONAL

Produced by Bob Krasnow Recorded April 25-May 2, 1968.

Side One

AH FEEL LIKE ACID
SAFE AS MILK
TRUST US
SON OF MIRROR MAN-MERE MAN

Side Two

ON TOMORROW
BEATLE BONES 'N SMOKIN STONES
GIMME DAT HARP BOY
KANDY KORN

Personnel on above albums and singles - Capt. Beefheart Vocals & mouthharp, Alex St. Claire Guitar, John French (Drumbo) Drums, Jeff Cotton (Jimmy Semens) Guitar, Jerry Handley Bass, Also on "Safe as Milk" - Ry Cooder Guitar, Russ Titleman Guitar, and Herb Bermann.

TROUT MASK REPLICA

Produced by Frank Zappa Recorded 1969. Straight.

Side One

FROWNLAND
THE DUST BLOWS FORWARD 'N THE DUST BLOWS BACK
DACHAU BLUES
ELLA GURU
HAIR PIE: BAKE ONE
MOONLIGHT ON VERMONT

Side Two

PACHUCO CADAVER
BILL'S CORPSE
SWEET SWEET BULBS
NEON MEATE DREAM OF A OCTAFISH
CHINA PIG
MY HUMAN GETS ME BLUES
DALI'S CAR

Side Three

HAIR PIE: BAKE TWO
PENA
WELL
WHEN BIG JOAN SETS UP
FALLIN' DITCH
SUGAR 'N SPIKES
ANT MAN BEE

Side Four

ORANGE CLAW HAMMER
WILD LIFE
SHE'S TOO MUCH FOR MY MIRROR
HOB0 CHANG BA
THE BLIMP
STEAL SOFTLY THROUGH SNOW
OLD FART AT PLAY
VETERAN'S DAY POPPY

Personnel: Capt. Beefheart Vocals, bass clarinet, tenor & soprano sax., John French Drums, Bill Harkleroad (Zoot Horn Rollo) Glass finger guitar, flute, Mark Boston (Rockette Morton) Bass and narration, Jeff Cotton (Antennae Jimmy Semens) Steel appendage guitar, The Mascara Snake Bass clarinet & vocal, Doug Moon Guitar on "China Pig".





The Magic Band: (left to right) Alex, Gerry, The Captain, John and Jeff.

LICK MY DECALS OFF, BABY

Produced by Captain Beefheart 1970 Straight

Side One

LICK MY DECALS OFF, BABY
DOCTOR DARK
I LOVE YOU, BIG DUMMY
PEON
BELLERIN' PLAIN
WOE-IS-UH-ME-BOP
JAPAN IN A DISHPAN

Side Two

I WANNA FIND A WOMAN THAT'LL HOLD MY
BIG TOE
PETRIFIED FOREST
ONE RED ROSE THAT I MEAN
THE BUGGY BOOGIE-WOOGIE
THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE BLUES (or
SPACEAGE COUPLE /THE BIG DIG).
THE CLOUDS ARE FULL OF WINE (NOT
WHISKEY OR RYE).
FLASH GORDON'S APE

MIRROR MAN

Produced by Bob Krasnow Recc ded '68, rel.'70 Buddah.

Side One

TAROTPLANE
KANDYKORN

Side Two

25th.CENTURY QUAKER
MIRROR MAN

Personnel same as "Strictly Personal".

THE SPOTLIGHT KID

Produced by Beefheart & Phil Schier '72 Warner/Reprise

Side One

I'M GONNA BOOGLARISE YOU BABY
WHITE JAM
BLABBER 'N SMOKE
WHEN IT BLOWS ITS STACKS
ALICE IN BLUNDERLAND

Side Two

THE SPOTLIGHT KID
CLICK CLACK
GROW FINS
THERE AIN'T NO SANTA CLAUS ON THE
/EVENIN' STAGE.
GLIDER

Personnel: Beefheart Vocals, harmonica, jingle bells, Zoot Horn Rollo Glass finger and steel appendage guitars, Art Tripp(Ed Marimba) Marimba, piano, harpsichord, Rockette Morton Bass, Elliot Ingber(Winged Eel Fingerling) Guitar, John French, Art Tripp, Ted Cactus, Rhys Clark on Drums.

CLEAR SPOT

Produced by Ted Templeman 1972 Warner/Reprise.

Side One

LOW YO YO STUFF
NOWADAYS A WOMAN'S GOTTA HIT A MAN
TOO MUCH TIME (Rel. as a single)
CIRCUMSTANCES
MY HEAD IS ONLY MY HOUSE UNLESS IT RAINS
SUN ZOOM SPARK

Side Two

CLEAR SPOT
CRAZY LITTLE THING
LONG NECK BOTTLES
HER EYES ARE A BLUE MILLION MILES
BIG EYED BEANS FROM VENUS
GOLDEN BIRDIES

Personell:Beefheart Vocals & harmonica, Zoot Horn Steel appendage,glass finger & solo guitar, mandolin, Rockette Morton Rhythm guitar & bass on "Golden Birdies", Art Tripp Drums, Roy Estrada(Oregon) Bass, Milt Holland Additional percussion, Russ Titleman Guitar on "Too Much Time", The Blackberries Background vocals, Jerry Jumonville arranged the horns on "Too Much Time", Ted Templeman and Beefheart arranged horns on "Long Neck Bottles" and "Nowadays a Woman's gotta hit a man".

Side One

UPON THE MY-OH-MY(Rel.as a single)
 SUGAR BOWL
 NEW ELECTRIC RIDE
 MAGIC BE
 HAPPY LOVE SONG

Side Two

FULL MOON, HOT SUN
 I GOT LOVE ON MY MIND
 THIS IS THE DAY
 LAZY MUSIC
 PEACHES

ALL SONGS COMPOSED BY DON & JAN VAN VLIET & ANDY DI MARTINO, ALL SONGS ARRANGED BY DON VAN VLIET AND ANDY DI MARTINO.

Personnel:Beefheart Vocals & harmonica, Zoot Horn Guitar and glass finger guitar, Rockette Morton Bass, Art Tripp Drums and percussion, Alex St.Claire Guitar, Del Simmons Tenor sax and flute, Andy Di Martino Acoustic guitar.

BLUEJEANS AND MOONBEAMS

Produced by Andy Di Martino 1974 Virgin.

Side One

PARTY OF SPECIAL THINGS TO DO
 SAME OLD BLUES (J.J.Cale)
 OBSERVATORY CREST (Beefheart/Ingber)
 POMPADOUR SWAMP
 CAPTAIN'S HOLIDAY(Feldman,Richmond,Blackwell

Side Two

ROCK 'N ROLL'S EVIL DOLL(Arr. by Beefheart,Ira Ingber,Mark Gibbons)
 FURTHER THAN WE'VE GONE
 TWIST AH LUCK(Arr. Beefheart, Gibbons)
 BLUEJEANS AND MOONBEAMS
 /Hickerson)

Personnel:Beefheart Vocals & harmonica, Dean Smith Guitar and bottleneck guitar, Ira Ingber Bass, Bob West Bass on "Observatory Crest", Michael Smotherman Keyboards and backing vocals, Mark Gibbons Keyboards, Gene Pello Drums, Jimmy Caravan Keyboard and star machine, Ty Grimes Percussion.

BONGO FURY

A Zappa/Beefheart Album

Produced by Frank Zappa 1975 Discreet.

Side One

DEBRA KADABRA*
 CAROLINA HARD-CORE ECSTASY*
 SAM WITH THE SHOWING SCALP FLAT TOP*
 POOFER'S FROTH WYOMING PLAINS AHEAD*
 200 YEARS OLD

Side Two

CUCAMONGA
 ADVANCE ROMANCE*
 MAN WITH THE WOMAN HEAD*
 MUFFIN MAN*

*Recorded live at Armadillo World Headquarters, Austin, Texas, May 20&21 1975.

All tracks written and arranged by Frank Zappa except "Sam With the Showing Scalp Flat Top" and "Man With the Woman Head", both Beefheart compositions.

Personnel:Zappa Vocals & lead guitar, Beefheart Vocals, harp, George Duke Keyboards & vocals, Napoleon Murphy Brock Sax & v cals, Bruce Fowler Trombone, Tom Fowler Trombone, Denny Wally Slide guitar & vocals, Terry Bozio Drums, Chester Thompson Drums on "Cucamonga"&"200yrs Old".

MALLARD

A Magic Band Album

Produced by Bill Harkleroad and Robin Black.Virgin,

Personnel:Bill Harkleroad, Mark Boston, Art Tripp, Sam Galpin, John Bundrick, Barry Morgan.

MU

A Jeff Cotton Album

Produced by MU Recorded '71, released in UK 1974. UA.

Personnel:Jeff Cotton, Merrell Fankhauser, Randy Wimer, Larry Willey.

TWO ORIGINALS OF CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

Re-packaging of "Lick My Decals Off, Baby" & "The Spotlight Kid" as a double album.

BAT CHAIN PULLER New album from the captain

OTHER APPEARANCES

Hot Rats - A frank Zappa album, the second track "Willie the Pimp" features vocals by Beefheart.
"V" - Double album sampler by various artists on the Virgin label. Contains "Mirror Man" and "Upon the My-Oh-My", recorded live at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London.
Zapped - A "Bizarre" sampler containing "Willie the Pimp", "Old Fart At Play", "The Blimp".
One Size Fits All - A Frank Zappa album on Discreet. Beefheart plays harmonica on the track "San.Ber'dino".

THE BOOTLEGS**LIVE AT LEEDS UNIVERSITY**

Double album recorded Wed.May 2, 1973.

Personnel:Beefheart,Zoot Horn Rollo,Alex St.Claire,Rockette Morton,Roy Estrada,Art Tripp.

WHAT'S ALL THIS BOOGA-BOOGA MUSIC - Personnel same as "Leeds".

BABYLON
BOOK

