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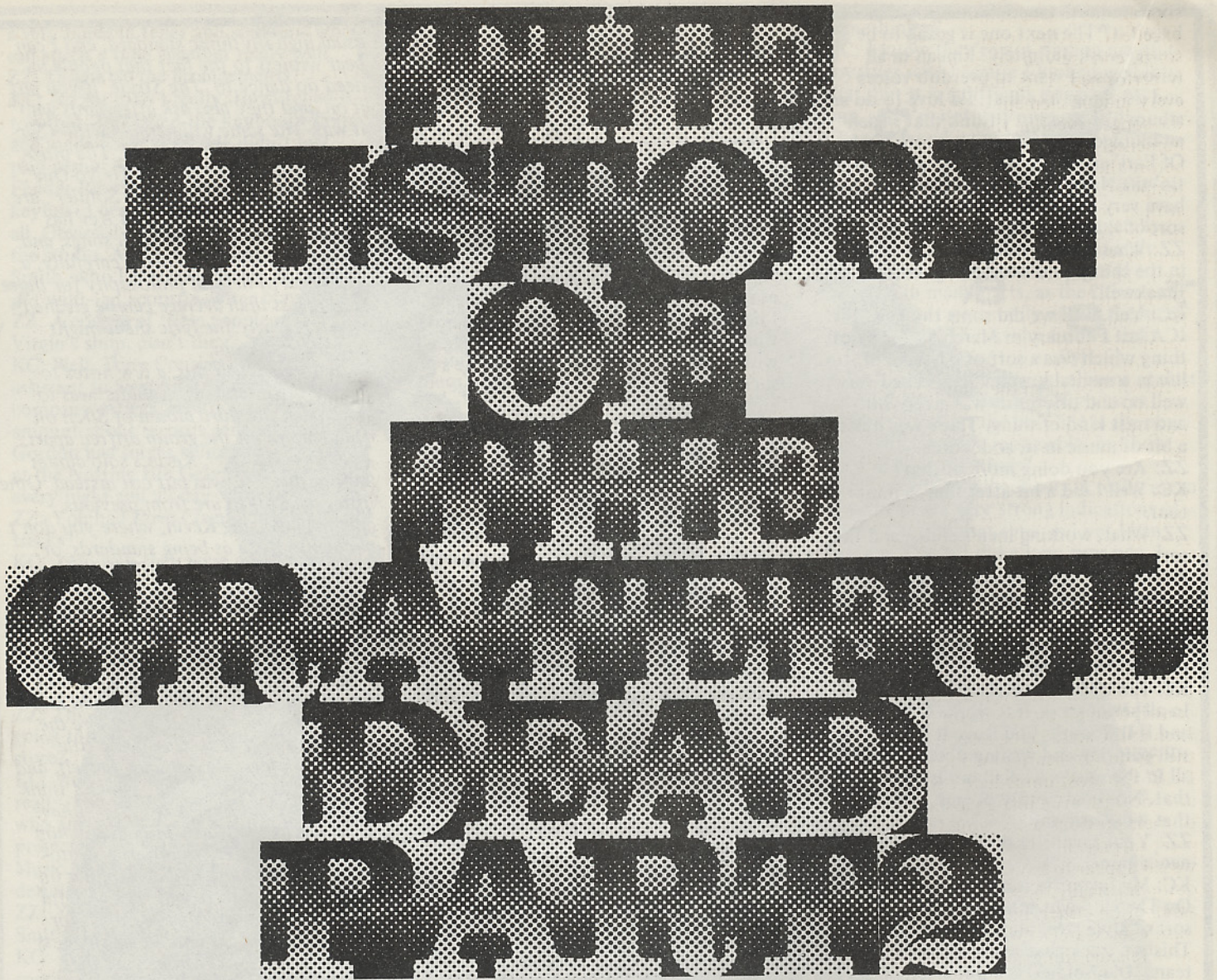
**SPECIAL  
ALBUM  
OFFER**



**GRATEFUL  
DEAD  
STAN  
TRACEY  
& LOTS  
MORE**

**VAN  
MORRISON**





1970 was a busy year for the Dead. To begin with, in February they were busted en masse (bar Tom Constanten and Pigpen, but including our old friend Owsley) down in New Orleans at the same hotel where the Jefferson Airplane were busted two weeks previously. Then Tom left the band to supposedly devote more time to his interest in scientology, and around about then came the particularly distasteful episode in the Dead's history when they were eventually forced to file a charge of embezzlement against their manager Lenny Hart after they'd found out that he'd ripped them off for at least \$70,000. Apparently, as Rock Scully tells it: 'Lenny had come to us as a man of God. He said "You've been fucked around. Now, I don't ask you to believe in Jesus, but believe in me."' (Rolling Stone) In fact Lenny had mysteriously disappeared in March 1970 and wasn't located until the following year when private detectives tracked him down in San Diego where he was baptising Jesus freaks under the name of The Reverend Lenny B Hart, the same name that he'd used when he first joined the Dead. By then he had opened eleven separate bank accounts throughout California and had left the band in a near-disastrous financial situ-

ation, one that didn't clear up until the end of 1971 following the success that accompanied their next two very well received albums. The fact that his own father had seen fit to deceive him and his friends obviously upset Mickey who decided to leave the band shortly after, but not before he accompanied them on their first, albeit very short visit to this country. (Tom Constanten also came over with the band but didn't perform.) The month of May saw the Grateful Dead play an historic set at the Hollywood Festival held at Finney Green near Newcastle-Under-Lyme, and the British press were unanimous in their appraisal of the band's performance. Good old Mac Garry (in ZigZag 13) said that they were 'totally magnificent', and Dick Lawson in Friends No.8 went completely bonkers over it all describing their set as 'the most ecstatic exploratory music ever witnessed in England'. Even the pop weeklies, most of whom had previously dismissed the Dead as an over-rated hype, had to admit that here was a band who literally commanded respect simply through their style, their approach and the nature of their music. What they gave in return on that day at Hollywood

was three hours of non-stop quality rock music that apparently left a large proportion of the audience in a state of speechless wonder. After countless rumours of impending visits (notably a projected free 'West Coast' concert in Hyde Park), they'd finally made it, and for the lucky people who saw them the myth became reality. I'm quite sure though that on that occasion they frustrated many more people than they satisfied mainly because they went straight back to America without playing any other dates, but also because the general consensus of opinion within the band was that they didn't feel they'd played well at all! How difficult it must be for those present at Hollywood to imagine them playing any better is a thought that I don't care to burden my brain with.

At that time, the Dead's fifth album 'Workingman's Dead' (WS 1869) was available on import but wasn't released here until July. When I finally laid my trembling hands on a copy, contained incidentally, in one of the most beautiful and distinctive sleeves you'll ever see . . . one that matches the music perfectly, I could hardly believe my ears. The Dead had finally made a near-enough perfect studio-album. All eight tracks are under

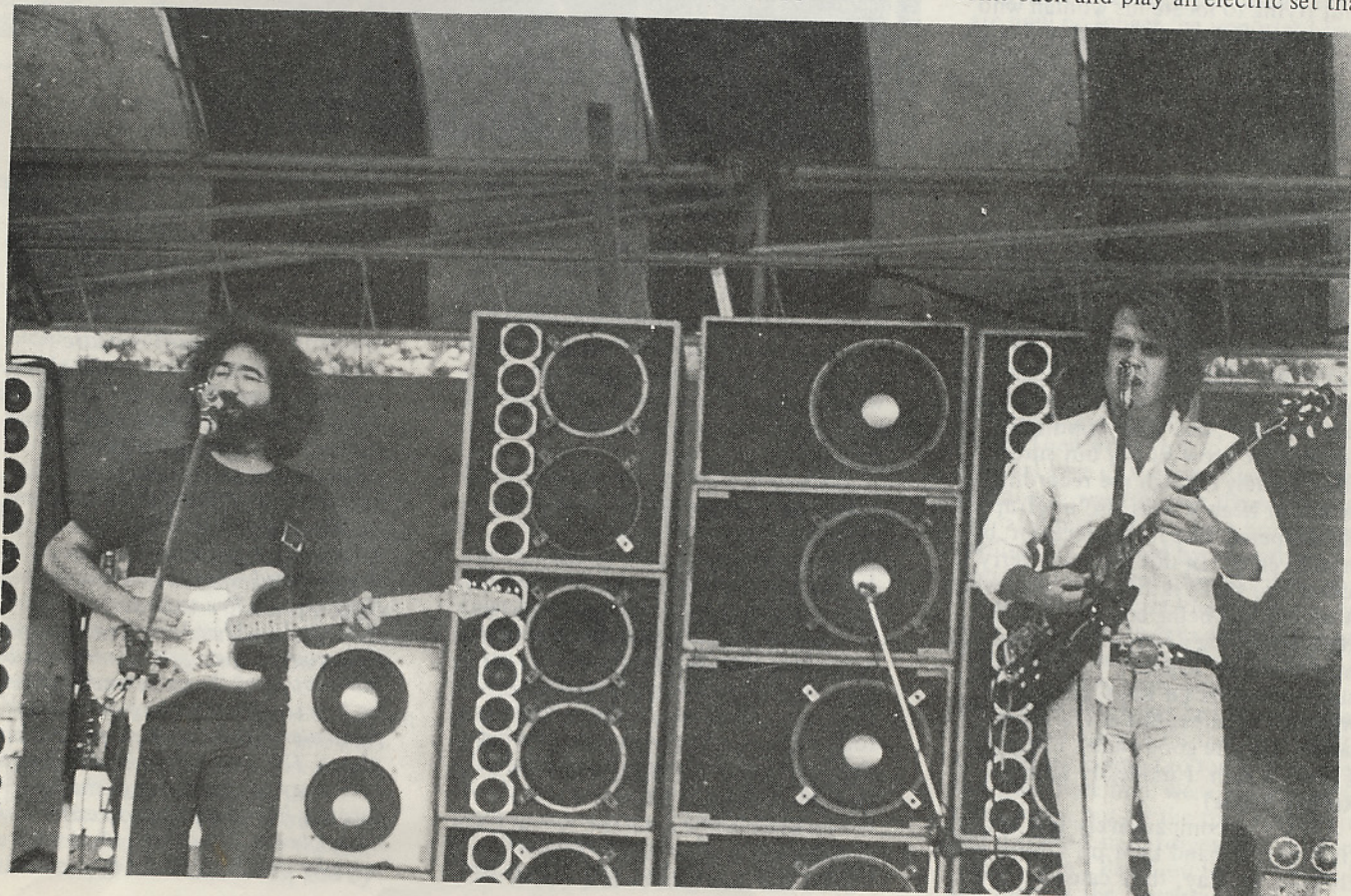


six minutes in length and they're all excellent, mature country-flavoured songs, concisely arranged and meticulously performed. They managed to condense every unique element of their style into the songs, revealing themselves to be immensely disciplined musicians where before they appeared to be somewhat temperamental and unable to perform at their very best when working with tight arrangements. Their vocals had improved beyond all recognition as well, the result of hanging out with David Crosby, Steve Stills, and Graham Nash who were working with complex harmonies at the time. Also, it seemed that for once Warner Brothers were satisfied. For them the album had definite commercial potential and they took one track off it, 'Uncle John's Band', butchered it about until it was approximately three minutes long, and then released it as a single. For a song that Garcia describes as 'a major effort as a musical piece' that shows how insensitive record companies can be, but fortunately the song retains most, if not all, of its magic. It's a marvellous, joyful composition with lushly-strummed acoustic guitars, flawless harmonies and in particular the beautiful lyrics of Robert Hunter who, it must be noted, contributed all the words on the album, Lesh and Garcia being responsible for the music. On hearing 'Workingman's Dead' the most immediate reaction from anyone with even just a passing knowledge of their previous work would be one of great surprise in as much that they would appear to have altered their style quite drastically. Not an unreasonable assumption either, but in fact it just wasn't so. Garcia: 'We were into a much more relaxed thing about that time. And

we were also out of our pretentious thing. We weren't feeling so much like an experimental music group, but were feeling more like a good old band.' (Rolling Stone) Seen in its proper context, 'Workingman's Dead' is just one part of the Dead's vast repertoire of styles and musical forms. It wasn't meant to represent any new trend but is what Garcia calls 'one of the possibilities'. I think it helps to realise that the band consider themselves to be unclassifiable and without limitations in so far that they're not a blues band, or a country band, or an experimental band, or even a rock'n'roll band, but 'a group of musicians with lots of possibilities'. In 'live' performance they'll assume all of these styles and many more besides, so the fact that they might start off with 'Me And My Uncle', flow straight into 'Dark Star', and then come down to finish off with 'Johnny B. Goode', should really come as no surprise. Those of you who saw them on their last visit here will know exactly what I mean.

To dwell on 'Workingman's Dead' a little longer, it was in more than one sense a very important album for the band. For a start, the circumstances in which it was recorded served to bind them closer together than perhaps they'd ever been before. Early in the year they rehearsed all the songs for a month before going into the studio, but by the time they were ready to record they had much more on their minds than just the album. There was the bust in New Orleans and the threat of a jail sentence plus all the hassles involving Lenny Hart to contend with, but it all seemed to somehow make them more determined, gave them something to believe in if you like, and consequently the record turned out to be 'extremely positive'—totally opposite to

everything else happening at the time. And as a side-note, emphasising the all-round simplicity of the album compared to their previous releases, it is interesting to learn that it was recorded in just nine days. Then there was the critical success and wider recognition that followed hand in hand. Every review of 'Workingman's Dead' read more like a publicity hand-out than an objective judgement, but that is the effect it has on you. 'A brilliant finely-edged jewel, made with the warmth and energy of people playing to their family,' wrote Dick Lawson in Friends, and Michael Lydon who has come closer than anyone else to communicating on paper what the Dead are all about, describes it as being 'just about as good a record as a record can be'. Coupled with this, the album received an inordinate amount of air-play on the radio in America, and people who had never even heard of them before were writing in to AM stations asking to hear tracks like the brilliantly witty 'Casey Jones' where we are warned of the more bizarre perils involved in coke-sniffing, and really memorable songs like 'Cumberland Blues' and 'New Speedway Boogie'. Furthermore the band undertook several American tours with their offshoot band, The New Riders Of The Purple Sage, and each concert was billed as 'An Evening With The Grateful Dead'. The Dead would come on first and play an acoustic set for about an hour, and then the New Riders took the stage consisting at that time of Garcia on pedal steel, Mickey Hart on drums, lead guitarist David Nelson, John 'Marmaduke' Dawson on acoustic guitar and lead vocals, and Dave Torbert on bass. To end off the show the Dead would come back and play an electric set that





was designed to round things up on a suitably high note. The concerts were a great success, least of all for the fact that they attracted a whole new audience who had previously found them too complex and wayward a proposition.

Another event in that overcrowded year which is worth noting is the communal train ride across Canada that involved 140 musicians and friends including Delaney & Bonnie, Buddy Guy's Band, Ian & Sylvia and The Great Speckled Bird, Eric Anderson, Tom Rush, James & The Good Brothers (who Bob Weir has taken under his wing and intends to record), Rick Danko of The Band, The New Riders Of The Purple Sage, and of course the Dead. Only three gigs were played altogether, but by all reports a merry time was had by all with lots of booze consumed, old friendships renewed, and new alliances forged.

By November 1970 their sixth album 'American Beauty' (WS 1893) was released in the States, the last to feature the percussion work of Mickey Hart who finally left the band early in 1971 to pursue his own solo projects, the results of which will be discussed next month. But what about 'American Beauty'? Any record that continues in the same vein as 'Workingman's Dead' has got to be something special, but this one, if anything, is even more refined . . . a perfect record that exudes warmth and friendliness from every song. It's the sort of immaculately executed LP that usually ends up sounding sterile and lifeless, but not by any stretch of the imagination could you say that about this one. It positively overflows with character and vitality, expressing both lyrically and musically a full range of emotions. 'Operator' for instance has Pigpen singing in anguish about trying to locate his woman who has gone missing down in Baton Rouge, and 'Truckin'' is a humorous autobiographical account of life on the road with a chorus which just about says it all:

'Sometimes the lights are shining on me

Other times I can barely see  
Lately it occurs to me

What a long strange trip it's been.'

'American Beauty' sold more copies than any previous Dead record and Warner Brothers finally gave them the sort of publicity and attention that they'd wanted and needed all along. Again, the album was subject to unqualified praise from the press, and their popularity continued to grow slowly but surely. Unfortunately enough the recording of 'American Beauty' was also interrupted and hampered, like its predecessor, by personal crises. In this instance, Jerry's mother and Phil's father both died while the record was being cut, but it didn't stop them laying down several gorgeous songs of which 'Ripple', 'Brokedown Palace' and 'Box Of Rain' are special favourites of mine. But as Garcia remarks: 'They're good tunes. Everyone of 'em's a gem. I modestly admit.' (Rolling Stone)

1971 was comparatively less hectic, although the band kept up a busy work schedule. In May, they caused a spark

of interest when at a Fillmore East gig they brought the Beach Boys on stage and both bands played a 45 minute jam session that was supposed to be so good that it provoked numerous wild rumours about the possibilities of the Dead and the Beach Boys making an album together. Of course it never happened, but then again neither did the albums that they were reportedly contemplating recording with Bob Dylan, the Band, and also the Allman Brothers for that matter, and those rumours were even stronger with at least some evidence to substantiate them. We'll mention their relationship with the Allman Brothers Band in particular later on, but let's not jump the gun.

In June they crossed the Atlantic once more for another fleeting visit, this time to France, where they had been booked to play at a free festival on the Rodeo Ranch (!) at Auvers-sur-Oise just outside Paris. The whole episode is nicely documented in ZigZag 22 and the previously recommended Hank Harrison book but briefly what happened was this. After a torrential downpour of rain a couple of days before, the festival was cancelled and the Dead were toying with the idea of coming over here to play at Glastonbury Fayre as well as trying to organise something in Paris. Meanwhile they were staying at a large 16th century chateau that used to be the home of Chopin but was now fitted out with all the trappings of 20th century affluence—tennis courts, a large outdoor swimming pool, health spa, and curiously enough a very modern and expensive recording studio. As the days passed however, and it looked as though nothing could be arranged, the band became anxious to play and eventually decided to give their own completely unpublicised concert right there in the grounds of the chateau. And that's just what they did. In front of the entire population of the local village, including the mayor, and the fire brigade, and a few hundred farmers and peasants, they set up on a Monday evening beside the swimming pool and played for approximately four hours sending everybody home in the middle of the night deliriously happy. It certainly sounds the sort of evening that would make a 'Dead head' give up his entire life savings for a chance to attend; and I doubt very much whether any other band on earth could have pulled off such an event the way they did.

Back to the States straight after, and work began on the next album to be called simply 'Grateful Dead' (2WS 1935). A live double album, it was released in America in September and two months later over here, and this time the range of material they use near enough covers everything they've ever done. 'It's us, man. It's the prototype Grateful Dead. Basic unit. Each one of those tracks is a total picture, a good example of what the Grateful Dead really is, musically.' (Garcia, Rolling Stone) There are three excellent previously unrecorded group compositions, 'Playing In The Band' (Weir/Hunter), 'Bertha' and 'Wharf Rat'

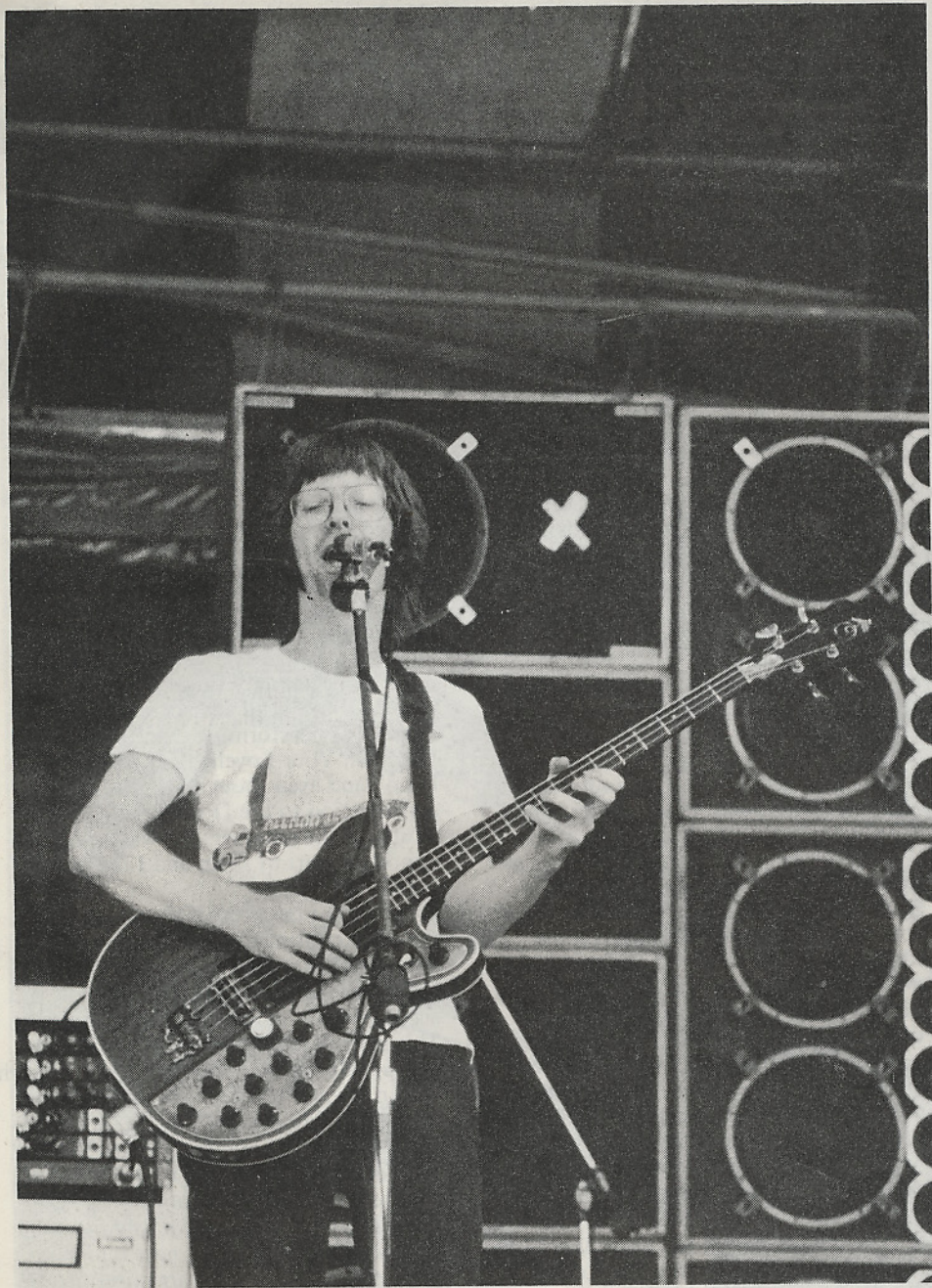
(both Garcia/Hunter), the latter being one of the best songs they've ever written. There are numbers like 'Mama Tried' by Merle Haggard, 'Me And My Uncle' by John Phillips, and Kris Kristofferson/Fred Foster's 'Me And Bobby McGee'. As well as this though, there is a fair sprinkling of rock'n'roll in 'Johnny B. Goode' (Chuck Berry), and 'Not Fade Away' (N. Petty/C. Hardin), an extended and improvised version of part of the first track of 'Anthem Of The Sun', 'The Other One', taking up all of side two, and finally a blues number, 'Big Boss Man' (Smith/Dixon), and two traditional songs, 'Big Railroad Blues', and 'Goin' Down The Road Feeling Bad'. The entire set consists of recordings made at Winterland, the Manhattan Center, and the Fillmore East, and is culled from the largest aggregation of music (13 performances, 9 reels of usable songs, 60 hours' worth) the Dead has ever assembled, and it is quite obvious that a lot of care has been taken in the selection of material. To my mind the record itself stands as proof of a significant step in the band's development in that they reached the point where they are supremely capable of performing structured and tightly arranged songs on stage with a consistency and confidence that is nothing less than a revelation. Listen to 'Wharf Rat' for a good example of what I mean.

At the risk of repeating myself I'd like to quote from an American press release concerning the double album. Like me, you're bound to find some of it slightly pretentious and difficult to comprehend, but hidden amongst all the romantically philosophical brain fodder there are a few interesting points.

*The album is a sampler of ideas long brewing but never fully realised before. First there was the opportunity to include songs which weren't on any of the six previous releases. Second, there was the magic of live-performance energy—part sermon, part carnival—bouncing back and forth between the Dead and their audiences. That mood, that movement, helped to create, for example, 'The Other One', a long percussion solo breaking into three-quarter time dissonance on bass and lead, complete with mike feedback and the sounds of a crowd getting off on pure rhythm. Third, there was the chance to produce an album with "good old songs" on it . . . music that is traditionally western, nostalgic, that turns toward the country/western genre as both tribute and challenge.*

*Most important, 'Grateful Dead' sums up, for the musicians, an attitude toward what they are doing right now. A live recording means that the Dead have responded to the dynamics of their setting moment by moment. And thus a listener can feel he is part of that setting—on those particular nights, at those particular places. The new album has the tight chemistry of simple songs that cut through heavier rock progressions like a laser beam. It's almost impossible to mistake the Dead sound but some-*





*times the message gets confused, so—from the lips of its makers—here it is: 'Grateful Dead' means straight-arrow sanity in a chaotic world.*

*'The album covers that—and more. It illustrates the craft of the Grateful Dead as musicians. It tells of all the mishaps and celebrations and loneliness of being on the road—perhaps somewhere in the music it tells of the difference between east and west.*

*'Most of all, it gives a beautifully recorded slice of one month in the life of the Grateful Dead's music, sounding as it sounded on summer evenings somewhere out there on the road, where nobody knew if it was going to be any good until they got home. And listened to it all again and knew they had a record on their hands.'*

Near the end of 1971 Pigpen was taken very ill with a serious stomach and liver complaint caused through his excessive drinking habits and was admitted to hospital. He recovered well enough to re-join the band in December for the last of three major American tours, and by

then pianist Keith Godchaux had joined the band.

Bob Weir: 'Pianist Keith Godchaux and his wife Donna on vocals are incredible additions. I don't know, they must have come straight from heaven.' (Crawdaddy) They didn't in fact, but Keith was formerly with Dave Mason's group and met Jerry and Bill at the Keystone Korner club in San Francisco where they jammed once or twice together. And like in many aspects of the Dead's career, instinct played a large part in forcing the decision. Or as Keith calls it—'a flash'. 'I wasn't thinking about playing with them before the flash. I didn't even try to figure out what the flash was, what it meant, what would become of it. I just followed it, not knowing what was going to happen. I wasn't playing with anyone else before that. Just playing cocktail lounges and clubs.' Donna, on the other hand, had done studio work all her life at Muscle Shoals and Nashville, backing up people like Presley, Joe Tex, Wilson Pickett, and a host of R'n'B bands. She seems quite happy just to sing with the Dead

when they need her . . . 'they've completely changed my life, and I really love these people.'

That tour in December was, according to the 'Dead Heads' newsletter, 'a record high for the Dead as well as for their listening audiences. With simulcast radio broadcast of their sold out performances in Minneapolis, Detroit, Chicago, Syracuse, Rochester, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Atlanta, New York, Boston, and St Louis, the Dead's music reached a listening audience that numbered in the millions.'

1972 started on a very bright note with 'Grateful Dead' being declared a gold album . . . their first. Also in January, Jerry Garcia's solo album was released and that along with all the other solo and additional projects will be covered in the last thrilling instalment next month.

But without a doubt the highlight of the year was the two month European tour in April and May that began and ended in London with visits to Denmark, Germany, France, Holland, and Luxembourg in between. I was fortunate enough to be able to see them four times, twice at Wembley Pool and twice at the Lyceum, London, and it's quite possible that I haven't been the same since. Most of the great West Coast bands to emerge during the late sixties have, over the years, received the dubious pleasures of a vast overblown reputation almost entirely created by the news media that puts them in a situation where they've got totally unrealistic expectations to live up to whenever they visit this country to play. The Doors and the Airplane were both superb on their initial appearances over here, but as their reputations spiralled, they were obviously past their peak and are now no longer the important bands they once were. The Doors are excused for obvious reasons, but the sort of rut that the Airplane are currently in saddens me greatly. The Steve Miller Band too impressed me very much when they finally made it here, and Spirit, Love, Country Joe, and even Janis Joplin all managed to justify to some degree the publicity that preceded them. The most enigmatic band of all, however, the one and only Quicksilver Messenger Service, we of course never got a chance to see, and almost definitely never will. But the Grateful Dead . . . well they had a staggering aura and mystique about them. Their brief visit to the Hollywood Festival gave us a substantial appetiser, but now it was time for the real thing, the 'acid test'. To be quite honest, I was profoundly affected by everything I heard and saw. Not only did they surpass the enormous hopes I had of them, but they proceeded to set completely new standards of excellence right there before our very eyes, and to see and feel it happening was just bloody magic. It was hard enough on that first night at Wembley coming to terms with the fact that there *they* were, less than fifty yards away, but by the time they were half way into an unforgettable version of 'Uncle John's Band' on the last night I saw them at the Lyceum, I had this



inexplicably warm, strange feeling that I'd known them all my life. Perhaps the most satisfying concert however was the previous night when I swear that very few bands could have possibly achieved in their entire careers what the Dead did in five hours. A list of the songs they played would be irrelevant, and anyway it's far too long, but every concert was structured and paced to include every conceivable musical form within their scope, and when it was all over it made me feel really good right down inside. Furthermore I was given irrevocable proof to support my theory that Phil Lesh is a genius beyond all shadow of a doubt. He was pushing out endless boulder-like notes that formed the base and cornerstone of the whole sound . . . beautiful imaginative riffs during the tightly arranged numbers, and when they stretched out, veering off the road to God knows where, it was pure counterpoint at its very best. I'll never forget one particular instance where the band had worked themselves into a piece that trained students of the game would probably describe as 'electric chamber music', and Lesh was completely and utterly in control of the whole thing, crouched next to his amp and playing his bass high up on the neck gradually stabilising all the many different melodies and rhythms flying around him, and then leading them off somewhere else completely. Phil Lesh at the height of his creativity, and that's not an experience you treat lightly. But there was so much more to marvel at and enjoy as well. Keith Godchaux for one, his piano work adding yet another intricate layer to an already rich texture of sound, and it was a nice surprise too to see Bob Weir fronting the band, taking most of the lead vocals and leaving Jerry Garcia halfway in the background but with his guiding hand ever present.

Now if there are any of you out there who are not confirmed 'Dead Heads' (and may the ghost of 'St Stephen' have mercy on you), you're probably thinking that everything I've just said is a load of euphoric bullshit written under the influence of an extract from some exotic species of flora. I must admit that that's what I would probably think as well, but you've got to believe me. Everything you've read is the absolute clear-headed truth, and there's no hype or exaggeration there at all because I know they wouldn't want or need it. They're the only band to have ever provoked such a reaction in me before, and I confidently expect no other band ever will.

But back to the story. The rest of the tour was, from what can be gathered in an interview with Bob Weir in *Crawdaddy* Sept '72, quite eventful. After the Wembley concerts they did a gig in Newcastle for the 'coldest, stiffest audience I've ever played for . . . nobody seemed to be at all interested in what we were doing,' and then they hit the continent for four concerts in Germany . . . 'we played in a couple of places that the old boy—Hitler—had built. That was weird.' Dates in France followed, one of which, in Lille, was cancelled because 'some asshole punk—if I may be so blunt—in

Paris poured water in the tank of our diesel truck that was to take our equipment there. So the motor seized up and the equipment never made it,' and the band had to make a hasty retreat from a considerable gathering of irate Frenchmen . . . 'we barricaded ourselves in a backroom and climbed down this drainpipe twenty feet to the ground and escaped through the back streets of Lille on a moonless night—kind of chuckling. It was great . . . a lot of fun.' Next it was back to England for the Bickershaw Festival—spoilt only by foul weather, and then Holland, Luxembourg, where they did a 'live' broadcast for Radio Luxembourg, Germany again, and finally back to London for four nights at the Lyceum. Every concert on the tour was recorded by Alembic Sound and the best performances were released on a triple album 'Europe '72' (3WX 2668) that came out here in December last year. Commercially it was a great success, becoming their second 'gold' album, but critically it received very mixed reviews. A lot of so-called critics both here and in the States took to playing that stupid and vicious little game that most of them seem to take great delight in from time to time, i.e. build up a band's reputation to a peak with a series of condescending reviews and articles and then proceed to mercilessly slag them whenever the opportunity arrives. Andrew Weiner in 'Cream' magazine for instance asks the soul-searching question—'Is this some kind of joke?' and then in the space of a few columns takes it upon himself to display his complete ignorance and lack of understanding of what the Dead are all about. And he wasn't the only one either. Several smart-arse Yanks, one of whom claims to fall asleep every time he goes to one of their concerts, found the whole thing insufferable. Well what a shame! All I can say is that it's their loss on all counts, and if it means they won't want review copies of all future Dead LPs then bloody good job too. They don't deserve 'em. On the other hand there were people like the guy from Melody Maker and many others who saw the album as the next natural step in the band's development—a live LP structured in the same way as their concerts, perfectly balanced and containing a suitable mixture of songs old and new. It truthfully represents the Grateful Dead at that time they were over here, nothing more, nothing less, and as such I treasure it. To be completely fair though, I think that anybody not totally immersed in the band and their music could probably find reasonable grounds for criticism, but nothing I read was anywhere near being constructive or even objective. Regardless though, it of course remains an essential buy for all Dead Heads. Enough said.

Which brings us up to this year and a number of interesting developments and experiments. Plans to form their own record label, tours with the Allman Brothers, and Garcia's re-emergence as a bluegrass fanatic with a new band called Old And In The Way . . . all these were signs of the band's stability and integrity, not to mention their ever-increasing

population. But unfortunately there was one piece of news that overshadowed everything else. On March 8th at about 9pm Pigpen was found dead in his apartment at Corte Madera, California. He had apparently died two days earlier from a stomach haemorrhage after being extremely ill for more than a year. He accompanied the band on the European tour against doctor's orders and on arriving home he was said to have anaemia which developed into cirrhosis, a very unpleasant disease of the liver. It all stems from his love of booze which was the cause of all his problems. 'He drank junk—Ripple and Thunderbird, even Thunderbird mixed with raspberry Kool-Aid. And even after he was making some money, the highest grade lusc he ever drank was Bourbon Deluxe. He was never quite sober, even when he woke up; he'd wake up drunk.' (Rolling Stone) In his last year he played with the band very infrequently but was part-way through making his own solo album. Whether we shall ever get to hear the material he actually finished remains to be seen. But I shall always remember Pigpen for his storming rendition of 'Turn On Your Lovelight' from 'Live/Dead', and even though his musical contribution to the Dead was the least of any of the members, he was still an important part of them and I'm sure they'll miss him.

Life went on as usual however, and the band continued to play dates all over America in places that because of their drawing power had to sometimes accommodate more than 15,000 people. This seemed to contradict what they'd always felt necessary for their music which was to try and play in halls that hold no more than 5,000 people . . . preferably closer to a 3,000 capacity because of the problems with the sound that are encountered in places that are any larger. But a greater demand obviously means larger halls which in turn necessitates more equipment, bigger organisation, larger overheads and consequently more gigs to pay for everything. As an example of the sort of sized crowds that the Dead attract, earlier in the year they played three concerts at the Nassau Coliseum on Long Island (the Dead are enormously popular in New York) to a total of 60,000 people and the first two were completely sold out by word of mouth in 2½ hours!

As far as recording goes, their contract with Warner Brothers expired last January, which gave them a chance to organise something they'd thought about for a long time—their own record label with total control over all aspects of manufacture, production, and distribution. The idea finally became a practical reality last month when the Dead's first studio album since 'American Beauty' (that's not counting Bob Weir's solo 'Ace'), was released on Grateful Dead Records. But they left Warners owing them one album (on the last count), and that turned out to be yet another 'live' one, titled 'History Of The Grateful Dead, Vol.1 (Bear's Choice)' (BS 2721). But really it's unlike any other 'live'



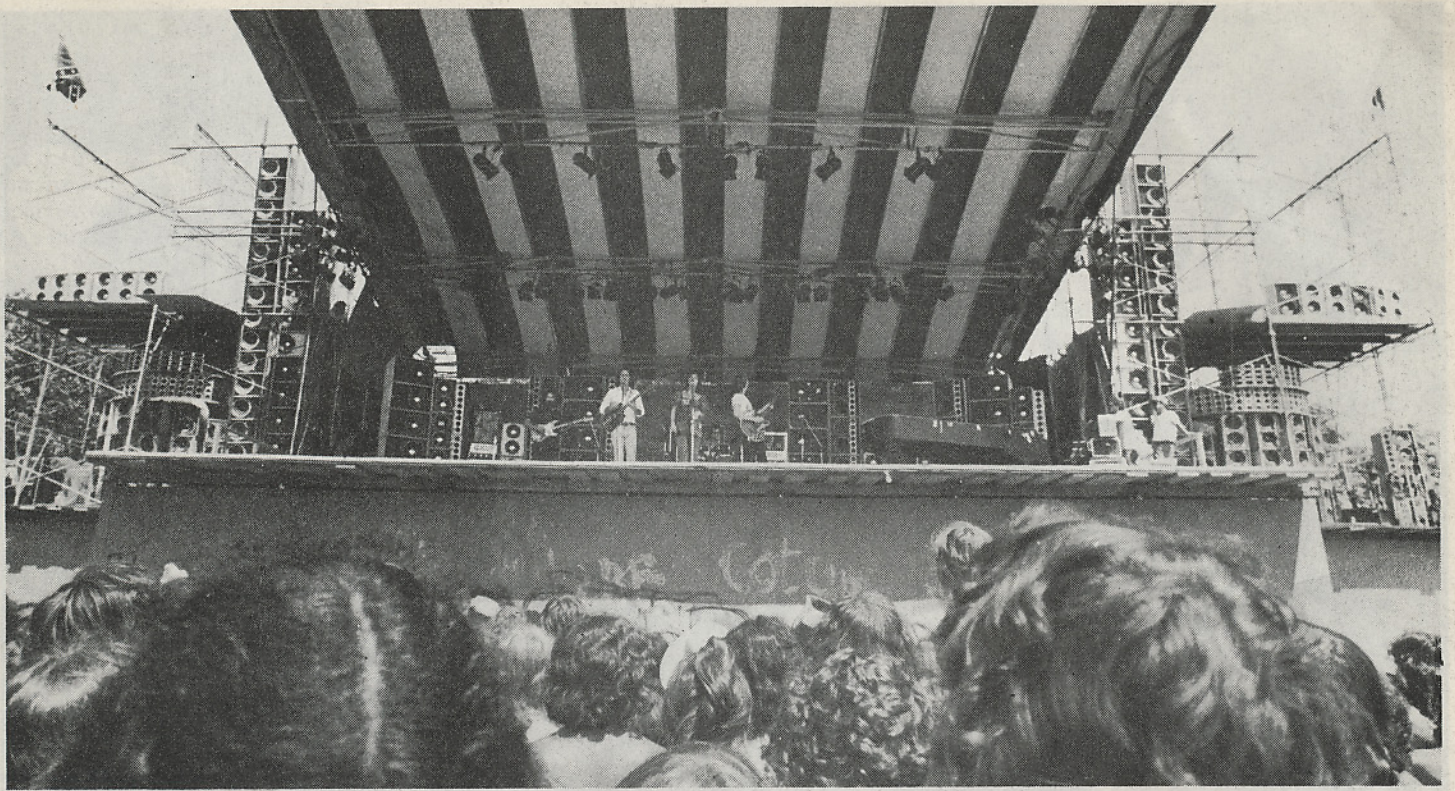


album they've put out. 'It's a side of the group that never went on record . . . it shows a Dead you'll never see or hear again.' (Garcia, Circus) I wouldn't say, as many have, that the album is exclusively a collector's item, because it's very pleasant to listen to, and when you know a little bit more about it, it be-

comes particularly interesting. It was compiled by Owsley 'Bear' Stanley who had taped everything on a small Nagra two-track portable, wired into the PA console, and the resulting sound quality is remarkably good. Rock Scully describes the album as 'sixty percent Pigpen and forty percent acoustic material'. The

opening track, 'Katie Mae', features Pigpen singing and playing bottleneck guitar . . . 'it was the only time he ever did it'. Garcia and Weir followed with 'Dark Hollow', 'I've Been All Around This World', and 'Wake Up Little Susie' . . . both of them sitting down and playing acoustic guitars, something they just





don't do anymore. The second side of the LP is, in contrast, all electric with an 18-minute version of 'Smokestack Lightning', and 'Hard To Handle'. To bring things into perspective, it should be noted that the whole album was recorded at the Fillmore East during two Valentine's Day gigs in February 1970, which was just one month after 'Live/Dead' was released, adding validity to Garcia's statement that up until the second double album, their records didn't really represent them as a 'live' group at the time of their release. But despite what you may have read in other journals, 'History Of . . .' is a good album, and like I said, worth a lot more than just the curiosity value that a lot of people have labelled it with.

Concert-wise, the highlights of the year have been their appearances with the Allman Brothers Band. To begin with, both groups were booked to undertake a joint tour of the States but this had to be cancelled owing to the sad death of the Allman's bassist Berry Oakley. But they did team up again last summer at the RFK Stadium in Washington and played several other dates together as well as including the much-publicised Watkins Glen shindig where the Band also played and an estimated 600,000 people came to listen. Apparently there's going to be an album of material recorded at Watkins Glen although I understand the Dead may not be too enthusiastic about releasing such recordings as they weren't satisfied with their performance on that occasion. Future gigs and dates with the Allman Brothers, and the Band for that matter, are almost definitely on the cards though, and wouldn't it be really great to see all three bands come over here together for a tour?

So now we're just about up to date. All that remains here is to talk about the Dead's own record company and

give its first release, 'Wake Of The Flood' (GD-01), a well-earned mention. Grateful Dead Records took over a year in research, investigation, and financial problems to become a reality. But they finally achieved it, and you can be sure that it's going to set a precedent for other bands to follow. After talking with Alan Trist of the Dead's management, who was over here a few weeks back to publicise the new album and hustle Atlantic Records (distributors of the album over here), I was very impressed by the obvious care and attention to detail that would ensure that Grateful Dead Records becomes the most idealistic as well as the most realistic of record companies. For instance, 'Wake Of The Flood' was recorded, mixed, and mastered in Sausalito, Marin County, and is being pressed to weigh exactly 128 grams which is heavier than an average album and provides better reproduction. Three pressing plants are being used where quality control is supervised by a member of the studio production team, something totally unheard of in the record industry. Distribution too has been sorted out with no serious hang-ups. In the States the records are shipped to 18 independent distributors who constitute the company's primary distribution system. More about the future of Grateful Dead Records in the next issue, but now I want to tell you about 'Wake Of The Flood'. And what an album! Five beautiful Garcia/Hunter compositions, including one absolute killer of a song called 'Here Comes Sunshine', a Godchaux/Hunter song with Keith singing, 'Weather Report Suite'—a lengthy Bob Weir/Barlow/Anderson piece, and the added attraction of Doug Sahm on 12 string guitar and two ex-members of Doug's old band El Quintet, Martin Fierro (alto and tenor sax), and Frank Morin (tenor sax). There's also a rather good violinist named Vassar Clements

who like the rest of the additional instruments blends in perfectly with the music, which retains every ounce of that Grateful Dead 'feel', yet is continually expanding and becoming more sophisticated. They've come a long way since 'Workingman's Dead' and even 'American Beauty' but the essence of the music is still the same. 'Wake Of The Flood' has already established itself as one of my very favourite Dead albums, and I urge you to make sure that you at least get to hear it. Oh yes before I forget . . . there's a nice surprise on that impeccable Rick Griffin sleeve design. When you get the album home, hold it in front of you, turn it 45 degrees anti-clockwise, look at the cloud in the picture, and see if you can stop yourself from smiling. While you're recovering from that, put the record on and enjoy what is at the very least one of the best ten albums released so far this year.

Well, that, I think, concludes the main history. No doubt I'll think of something I missed out and will probably have to include it next month when I shall be dealing with all the off-shoot groups and albums, incidental characters, outrageous rumours, and everything and anything partially related to the Dead. One last point . . . the re-mixed 'Anthem Of The Sun' that I mentioned in the last issue has, I'm happy to say, been released in the States although it's not clear who actually did the re-mix. I thought it was Phil Lesh, but Chris McHugo who took all the photos spoke to Garcia at Watkins Glen and he claims to have re-mixed it. Anyway, the main thing is that your local import record shop should have copies of it very soon in the covers that were originally intended for it. Basically the design is the same, but the purple background now becomes white, and it shows up quite magnificently.

Andy Childs