

Bach on Rock

Franklin Bach

1966

In 1964, when almost everyone in Greenwich Village was playing an acoustic guitar and singing “folk, there was a red-haired ex-Marine named Tim Hardin who was using an electric guitar and sang a sort of jazz flavored blues. Before Hardin had left New York for Los Angeles he had already made a great impression on people who were later to become The Mommas and the Poppas and the Lovin’ Spoonful. Since then Hardin has developed a unique sound which is something like motown rock, jazz, folk, and blues and is different from all those things at the same time. Tim has sung at the Newport Folk Festival; and one of his songs, “If I were a Carpenter,” has been made a hit by Bobby Darin.

Not too long ago, Hardin’s first album, *TIM HARDIN* (Verve/Folkways) was released. Tim has written all of the songs on the record himself, and most of them are slyly simple love ballads that sensitively slice into the core of human emotions. For an example of the Tim Hardin art, try this from “Part of the Wind”: Fortune falling with my heart / Luck be trusted in time / Trusting the breeze to be mine / Hoping you’ll be part of the wind.” Or from “It’ll Never Happen Again”: “Every time I leave you alone / I remember the time I couldn’t come home.”

Hardin has a funny side, too; in “Smugglin’ Man,” “I’m an old time smugglin’ man, I know just what to do / I sell shotguns to the Arabs, I sell dynamite to the Jews.” The instruments on the record include guitar (Hardin), piano (a Ray Charles-tasting Hardin), harmonica (John Sebastian), drums, bass, vibes, and strings. Over perfectly subtle music Tim’s voice floats and flutters, taking the meanings right inside of you. It’s a real trip.

Tim Hardin is really entertaining just to watch on stage; but, since it may be a long time before he comes to town, here are some more impressions of relatively recent releases to read while you’re waiting...

JIM AND JEAN CHANGES (Verve Folkways) is an album which proves rock can have both delicacy and taste. The musicians here are chiefly concerned with interpreting pieces written by America’s contemporary lyric poets—Dylan, Ochs, Blue, etc. (“One Sure Thing” was written by electric bassist Harvey Brooks in the kitchen of the Chessmate. Isn’t that interesting?) Most of the songs live up to what they are trying to be, as do the arrangements. We noticed a little too much stiffness in some of the instrumentation, perhaps due to the tight structures of the music being played. Still one of the prettiest albums I’ve ever heard...

In about the same bag as Jim and Jean are Simon and Garfunkle. In *PARSLEY, SAGE, ROSEMARY, AND THYME* (Columbia), S. and G. rely less on amplification and more on breathy harmonies and social commentaries. This record is an improvement over their last, “Sounds of Silence,” which was basically a rock over-dub. Of their first one, “Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.” “Parsely” is nice, but we think the next side will be even better as the writing develops along with the music...

The Walker Brothers in *THE SUN AIN’T GONNA SHINE ANY MORE* (Smash Records) have managed, like Motown, to mellow the “rock sound” and still keep it strong and jumping. The record has equal parts guts, emotion, and harmony with an amplified band, horns, and strings for accompaniment. Originally from Southern California, the three Walker Bros. have had a great reception in their new home, England. Considered not strictly as a rock band, but in the whole rock, jazz, blues vocal scene, they have to be one of the best. The fact that currently more popular groups are sounding tighter vocally is evidence that they are listening to cats like the Walkers...

Donovan has found a new home among more and more musicians, some of them electric, some not, in DONOVAN SUNSHINE SUPERMAN (Epic), a turn that should be heard by anyone and everyone interested in modern music. This one is full of electric guitars, harpsichords, sitars, violins, electric organs, tambouras, and cellos, all wonderfully put together. Donovan has been thoroughly turned on to (and in) this country as indicated by two intriguing songs, one about "The Fat Angel" who "will bring you happiness in the pipe/ He'll ride away on a silver bike," the other called "The Trip," which Donovan's notes describe as "a hub of life, a club of life in the vest coat of the Americas."

Dig the feeling of urgency you get in "season of the Witch" from hearing Donovan shouting over a sinister, hard rock background, "You've got to pick up every stitch/ The rabbits are runnin' in the ditch/ Beatniks are out to make it rich / Must be the season of the witch / must be the season of the witch!" There are a lot of different opinions about Donovan's lyrics, but this album shows a definite artistic maturity that might have been lacking in his earlier sides. After all, he's only 19...

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