

# Tracks

## The Spike-Drivers

1967

Under this seemingly innocuous heading we initiate what we think is the first joint effort music column in literary annals.

The *Fifth Estate's* heroic radical stance required something more than a bland record review column and this added something is what we hope to accomplish. The format and topics of each column will constantly change as the mood strikes us. So in the words of Jim Gurley, of Big Brother and the Holding Company, "Watch Out!"

One thing that must be discussed these days when reviewing a record is the baffling world of "Production." For example: This week we listened to two albums, The Hollies' "Evolution" (Epic) and the Jimi Hendricks Experience "Are You Experienced?" (Reprise). Both these discs are products of sophisticated technical accomplishments. In other words, there are three levels of analysis essential for a clear perspective on a technical plane.

These are, in relative importance: Music, Sound, and Production. Production in the fine art of record-making, is the process of translating the tonal qualities of the music and the textural electronics of the sound of amplified music from the musicians to their axes, into the amps, through the teeny tiny wires, to the board, by the control knobs, onto the tape decks and blowing it all out through the speakers sounding like a unified whole.

In comparing the slick sound of the Hollies and the nitty-gritty sound of Jimi Hendricks one can only guess about the technical data. And we feel this is an unfortunate situation. The medium of recording has indeed become so technical that a listener, and especially knowledgeable listeners, can't tell reality from illusion. And it's scenes like this that do strange things to one's mind. But with profound truisms dripping from the ceiling, we see that many great and groovy gobs of True Art are unconscious, unreal, spontaneous creative bursts. Also we see that many pretentious efforts are conscious, slick, hack, phony and cynical.

One thing we'd like to see as a concession to better music would be a small resume of technical data for the songs. The kind of studio, approximate length of the sessions, the instrumentation more detailed, and the names of the sidemen used on the record. Such information would give everyone a greater depth of understanding of the music and also serve as a solid basis to either dig it or hate it. But back to the subjects under consideration ...

The Hollies come very close to what the title suggests, evolution. It's taken the Hollies a year to slowly evolve to where the Beatles revolutionary approach brought them two years ago. And the puzzling thing is: Is this really the Hollies? Or is it some sinister mysterious producer and several faceless studio musicians? The album is light, tricky, novel, cute, pretty, (we won't say tasty though) gimmicky, and nice. And in the obscene lingo of the business, will be a SMASH, baby.

Jimi Hendricks has a smash sound too. But if this thing is assimilated into the scene it will be one of the biggest doses of hard stuff pop music has had since the Beatle Revolution. It is one soul brother and two white cats who have transported the blues beyond the three-chord slave system. It is truly blues raga.

Emancipated music that is truly mind-blowing, in that you never know what to expect next. This is not freak-out stuff, but as far out as we've ever heard on record including all the so called "serious" madmen (Bartokeva, Stringbeanberg, and Handinmouth). Believe us when we say: You have never heard such sounds in your life. This is not an esoteric record.

In fact, it is so far out that a knowledge of music only makes it more unbelievable than it already is. The only negative aspect of the disc is the poor (in some spots) quality of the recording. We wonder if the messing is with the pressing. Our own personal experience with that outfit testifies mightily that Reprise is notorious for pissy pressies. One last comment on this record: "Oh, God. Please when I die, send me to fuzz tone heaven."

The recent minor and minimal full-scale national metropolitan-megalopolitan war of liberation cut down on most live music things, so we can't get into any of that in this column, but we will next time. In fact, Jimi Hendricks and San Francisco's Grateful Dead are both coming to the Grande so we will have interesting things to say about that.

Also a P.S. in the public interest: The Spike-Drivers have their own self-constructed recording studio, which is available to local bands and folksingers at very low, nominal, cut-rate, our-price-cheap, rates.

For the first time artists can eliminate several strata of parasitic show biz vermin by directly approaching the recording companies with a professional-sounding demonstration tape. For more information telephone us at a reasonable hour at 873-7305.

# fifth Estate

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