

Al Kooper

Blood Sweat & Tears

Mike Kerman

1968

Al Kooper, one of this country's leading rock artists, was in town a couple of weeks ago. He has been performing, writing, and now producing rock musts for ten years and is best known for his work as an organist for Dylan, a member of tire Blues Project, and organizer of Blood, Sweat and Tears.

His latest album is "Super Session" with Mike Bloomfield and Steve Stills. In the next few months he will be releasing a double album that he recorded with Bloomfield at the Fillmore, a solo album, and an album he produced for the Don Ellis Orchestra.

The following is from a transcript of a tape that was recording an informal discussion between Kooper, WABX's Jerry Lubin, Dick Crocker and John Detz, Martha Kinsella from the Free Press, Sandy Feldheim from the *South End* and myself.

Al Kooper: The only way I can listen to music is emotionally. And I don't like anything that doesn't reach me emotionally. That's why I love R & B music cause it's very sexual and it just gets me. Like the James Brown Live at the Apollo. Any time I listen to that., I'm against the wall.

Q: Do you think there's a trend toward live albums?

AK: There's always been live records. It's the kind of thing that if a group sucks live, there's no sense in doing it really. There aren't that many groups that are good live. The Moody Blues are fantastic live. That's a big shocker. I really like Canned Heat live. They're very sincere.

Q. How does Detroit's music set-up compare with other cities?

AK: This is only the second time I've ever been here. And I was only here for one day and was feeling sick that time. Now, we (Blood, Sweat and Tears) didn't really play well when we were here, mainly because I had laryngitis. This was the tail-end of the tour of Detroit, San Francisco, and LA. I was looking forward to Detroit because I had never been here. The people at the Grande were so good to us for how we played. We were trying really hard, but just couldn't hack it. it was really a drag.

There's cold people, man. Sari Francisco is the hardest place to make. I played there six tunes and the only time I ever made it was the last time I played there. Blood, Sweat and Tears played brilliant sets there. They have their own very peculiar taste there.

The Yardbirds were the top of the heap there. They suck. They have a very horrendous singer and a joker watched them play and I tried to realize why, well you know, everyone digs the Yardbirds. And they dig Mayall and Bloomfield. That's probably why I made it the last time I was out there recording with him. And Bloomfield's God there.

Jazz and Rock

There's a lot of jazz in rock and roll today. I have this instrument, the ondoline, that sounds like a soprano saxophone, among other things. The way I learned to play it was by listening to Coltrane records and writing scales down that he played and transcribing them, technically playing them on the ondoline.

It knocks me out that I can do that. I can play note for note any Coltrane solo and play them on a record, and very few people know they're Coltrane solos. Now I am getting into my own thing, based a lot and dependent on Coltrane's music. That I can do this in rock and roll really knocks me out.

When I started getting the concept of Blood, Sweat and Tears together, I was amazed that there were horn bands out but nobody was using them. Horns should be used, I thought that somebody has to jump on this to have horns play music instead of the da-da-da simple background stuff. The best band in the country is the CTA in Los Angeles. They use horns and make Blood, Sweat and Tears sound like kindergarten.

Zappa: The Blues Project

He's all right if you like dixieland! He liked Blood, Sweat and Tears but he hated the Blues Project. I really want to hate the Blues Project in retrospect, but I can't. Some of it sounds dumb to me now, but it made so many people happy that I guess it doesn't make any difference. Some of it sounds really good, but some sounds really hysterical to me.

My singing was just horrendously funny on some of the Blues Project records. I never thought about singing then. I just went out there and "Ahhhhhhh" every night, about three times a night. I learned a little about singing since then and I've still a long way to go yet. But at least it's getting better. My voice is really changing fast. The difference between the last Blues Project album and Blood, Sweat and Tears and the Super Session album and my solo album—it's all growth. But I've still got miles to go.

fifth Estate

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