

# Mixed Mead-Ear

Tony Reay

1969

The Pentangle's new double album, although as yet unreleased in this country, proves my conviction that this (dare I say it?) "super group" is by far one of the best groups around. "Sweet Child" consists of two albums, one live and one studio, beautifully packaged.

The live album opens with "Market Song," "No More My Lord" and "Turn Your Money Green," three fine examples of the complex coagulation of musical facets which comprise the style of the Pentangle. Respectively, these first three cuts are pure folk, pure gospel and pure blues, but having been Pentangled they all emerge as beautifully delicate transpositions into the harmonies and guitar style of Renbourn and 'the Mob.'

"Haitian Fight Song" is based (loosely) on a Charles Mingus composition and is a showcase for Denny Thompson on double bass. Thompson has been heard earlier on several cuts with the Incredible String Band, just in case you wondered.

"Good-bye Pork Pie Hat" was earlier released on an English album called "Bert and John" (TRA 144) featuring just Jansch and Renbourn. In fact, large portions of Pentangle repertoire is largely based upon cuts by either Jansch or Renbourn or both on their earlier albums on the English Transatlantic label. This later version of "Good-bye Pork Pie Hat" is somewhat slower than their former treatment of the Charlie Mingus tune written as a tribute to Lester Young.

The title song, "Sweet Child," opens the studio album, and if you've heard this one cut, that's all you really need to hear to know just how good Pentangle is.

The rapport established between Renbourn and Jacqui McShee on this group-written song is something akin to the harmonies used in John Phillips' brainchild, "Twelve-Thirty." After "Sweet Child" skip to "Sovay," a logical jump in style from traditional eastern-influenced folk to traditional English ballad. One of the first recordings of this song is on an album by Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick. Carthy could be described as the English Patrick Sky and Swarbrick is an English folk fiddle player who can be heard on the "Galleries" album by the Young Tradition (Vanguard VSD 79295).

These particular cuts that I have singled out for comment are not outstanding in anything other than their ability to pin down the instrumental, vocal and arranging talent of the Pentangle, and that they are indicative of the singular sound of this multi-talented ensemble.

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Fifth Estate #70, January 9-22, 1969

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