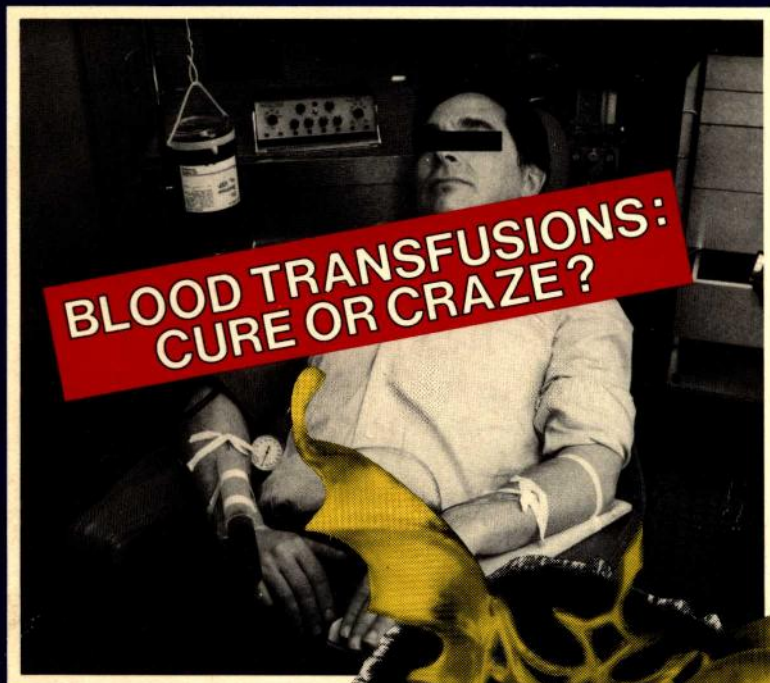


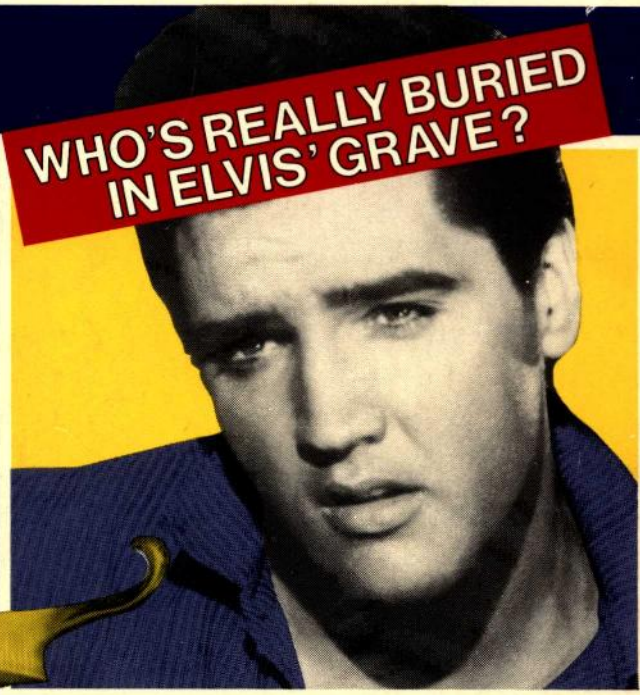
# ROCK 'N' ROLL

PENNY STALLINGS

NO DISCOGRAPHIES! NO RECORD REVIEWS! NOTHING BY HUNTER THOMPSON!!!

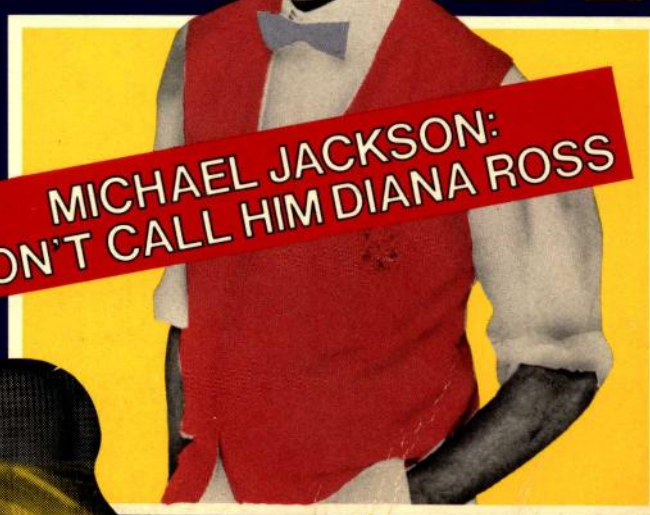


BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS:  
CURE OR CRAZE?

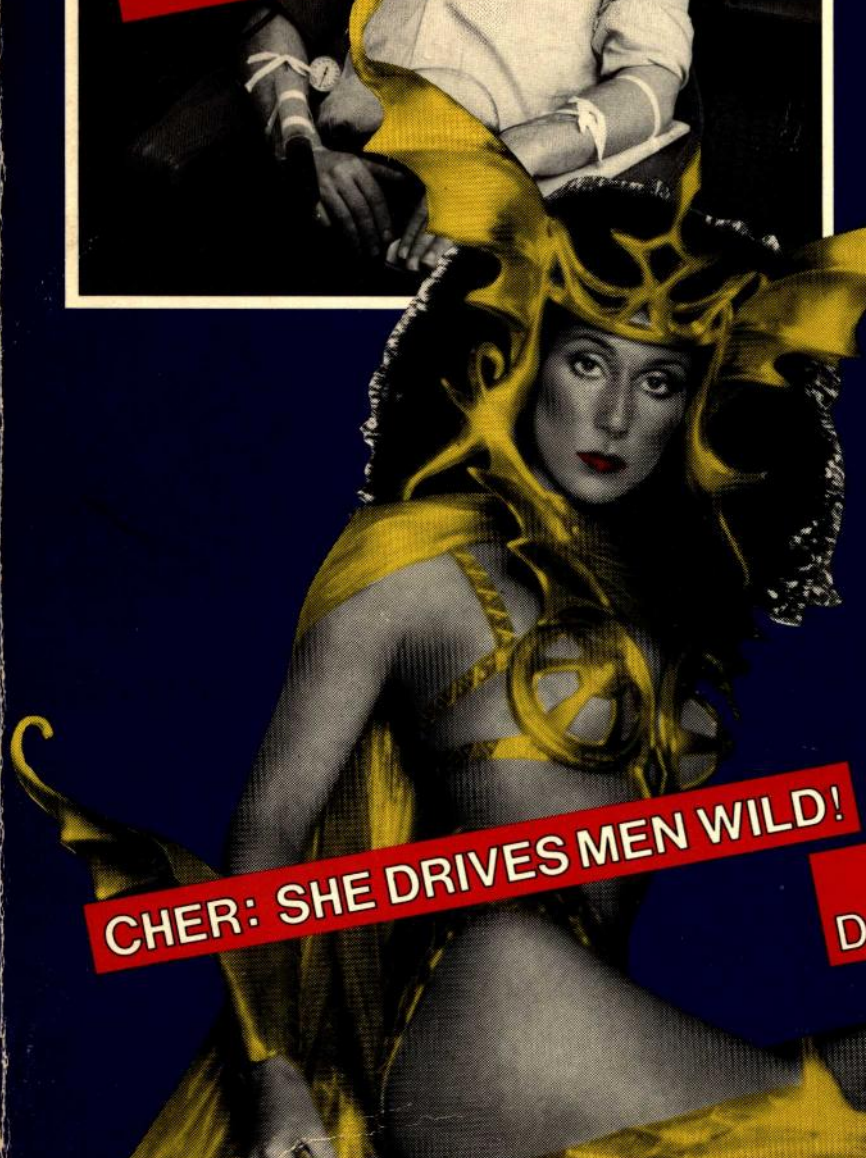


WHO'S REALLY BURIED  
IN ELVIS' GRAVE?

# EXTRA

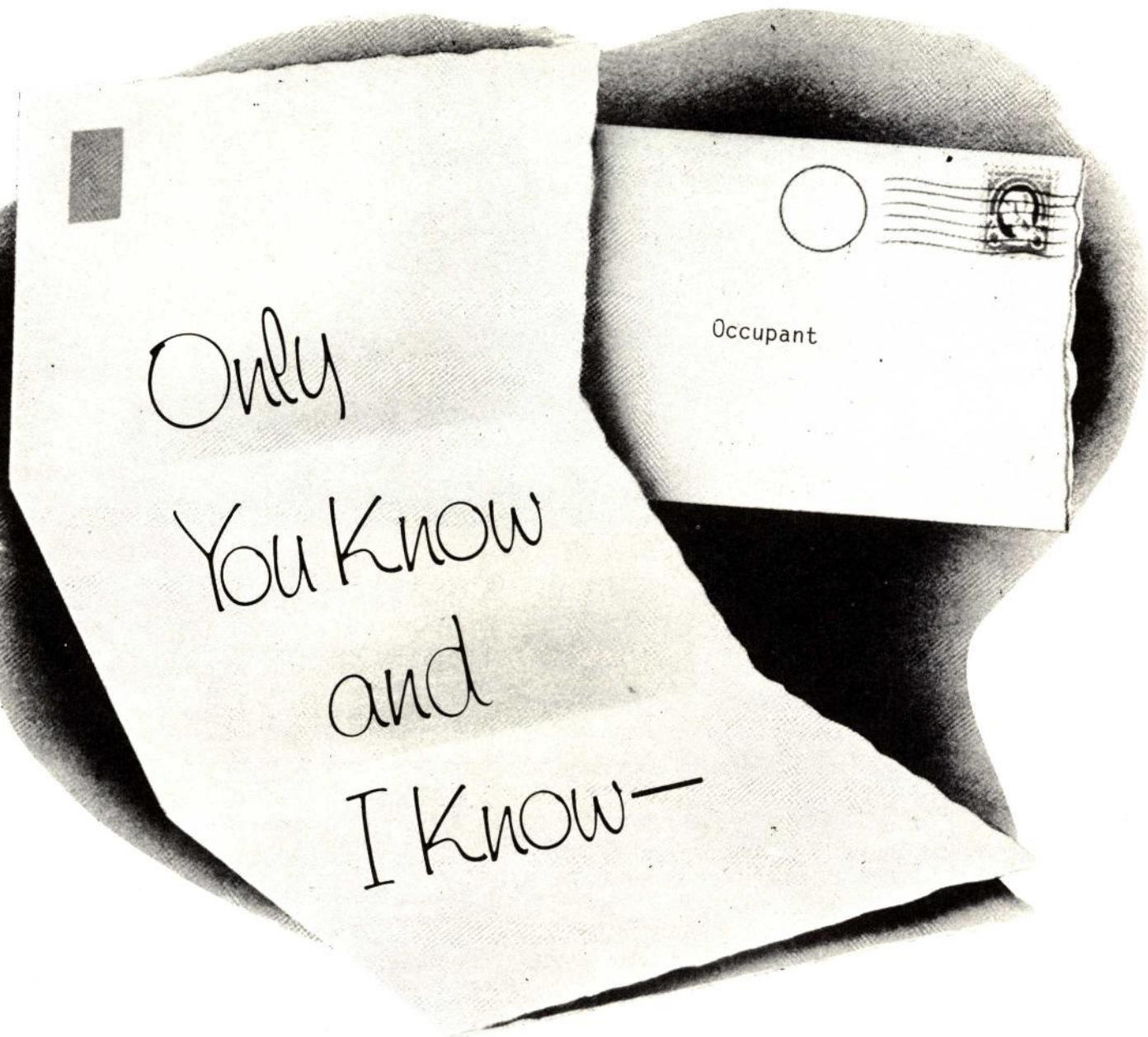


MICHAEL JACKSON:  
DON'T CALL HIM DIANA ROSS



CHER: SHE DRIVES MEN WILD!

CONFIDENTIAL



*"Everyone who writes songs writes autobiographical songs, but [Joni's] are sometimes alarmingly specific."*

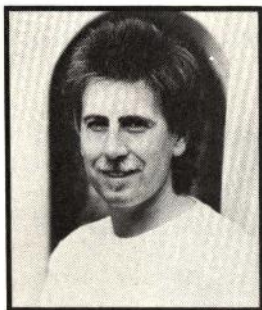
— JAMES TAYLOR

on Joni Mitchell's  
lyrical references to him  
following their breakup

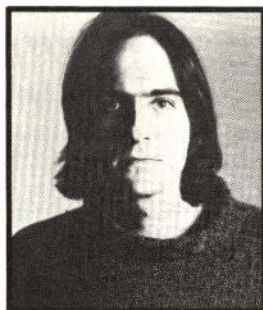
Ah, yes. Joni Mitchell. She's the very embodiment of the pop star as Sensitive Artist. One of those seemingly reluctant superstars who shun traditional show-biz hoopla and talk a lot about *Maintaining Her Privacy* and *Leading a Normal Life*. And yet, she's remarkably candid about her intimate relationships in her songs, harping continually on her personal angst in the lyrics, baring her soul in painfully explicit detail. She's soliloquized

about friends — mini-mogul David Geffen in "A Free Man in Paris"; lovers — Graham Nash in "Willy"; and first husband Chuck Mitchell in "I Had a King." She torched unblushingly for James Taylor in "Blond in the Bleachers," complaining that "you can't hold the hand of a rock and roll man very long," and ridiculed her former spouse again for his drab new wife and ultramodern kitchen appliances in "The Last Time I Saw Richard."

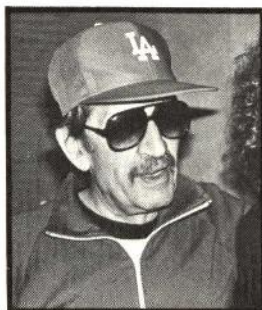
Some of Joni's subjects are flattered by her musical mentions. The late disc jockey B. Mitchell Reid was pleased as punch that he turned her on, and David Geffen rarely misses an opportunity to remind interviewers that he's the Free Man. But others — Chuck Mitchell in particular — have chafed at finding Joni's musical rendition of their romantic highs and lows pressed in wax. But Joni is at her most entertaining when she's writing



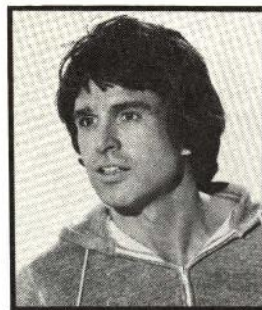
"Willy"



"The man in the suspenders"



The late B. Mitchell Reid; he turned Joni on.



He's so vain.

about herself and her intimate relationships. On the rare occasions when she addresses conventional topics, the results are usually remote and uninteresting. The ultimate irony is that it is shy, circumspect Joni herself who's to blame for making her life an open record; she's the Woody Allen of rock.

Of course, Joni isn't the only singer/songwriter to draw upon her private life for Top Ten inspiration. Fascinating bits of self-revelation have always been discernible in Bob Dylan's songs — for those patient enough to weed through their thick metaphorical underbrush. In many ways, Dylan's introspective lyrical ruminations transformed the popular song into a forum for public editorializing of the most personal kind, thus rendering Tin Pan Alley schmaltz and rock'n'roll jive obsolete in the process. (For a while anyway.)

Come to think of it, it was Dylan who was primarily responsible for introducing the whole Sensitive Artist routine to the music biz in the first place. He styled himself as a folk troubador while playing the part of the unwitting — sometimes unwilling — pop idol who appeared to have wandered into the lime-light by accident. He courted stardom surreptitiously, making a big show of refusing to play the game by the old rules. He knew all the answers all right, but he wasn't about to list them for Gloria Stavers. Anything he had to say could be found in the words of his songs.

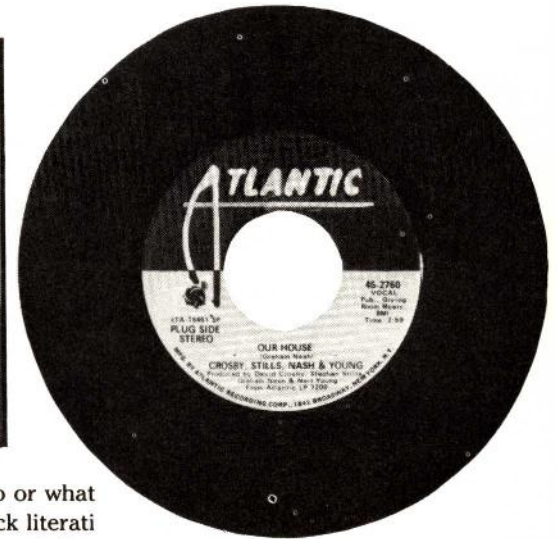
From Dylan on, music fans began to assume that the songs a singer recorded expressed his or her basic beliefs and true-life experiences. And sometimes, they did. Crammed with personal revelation and gossip about other ranking deities who resided atop the pop Olympus, albums began to seem like installments in an ongoing autobiography. Thus we were able to accompany the Beatles as they explored the world of acid, Krishna consciousness, romantic passion, disaffection and final disillusionment simply by listening to their latest release. Of course, these pop scenarios rarely took the form of straightforward narrative; real people were disguised or redrawn altogether. But this veil of mystery just made the songs that much more titillating, turning fans and critics alike into amateur sleuths.

In 1972, for example, the flap over the true identity of the jet-setting cad in Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" almost rivaled the controversy surrounding the identity of Deep Throat. For months following the song's release, Simon's love life, past and present, was dredged for clues. Some radio stations even conducted call-in polls to name the real So Vain. (In one such contest conducted in El Lay, Kris Kristofferson tied with Mick Jagger, you'll be interested to know.) Before the furor died down, Carly had been tentatively linked with practically every male luminary in the free world. She then went on to accelerate the controversy by declaring that Yes, the song was about one of her own unhappy love affairs, and Yes, So Vain was a celebrity, but No, she wouldn't reveal his identity because, Well, that just wouldn't be fair. In the end, Carly's coyness provided "You're So Vain" with the kind of publicity money can't buy. It became the biggest hit of her career. (As you must have heard by now, her producer, Richard Perry, just happened to let slip to a reporter a while back that So Vain was none other than Mr. Hollywood himself, Warren Beatty.)

In order for this type of guessing game to catch the public's fancy, the fans have to be familiar enough with its cast of characters to have a fair chance at recognizing them behind their fictional masks. Thousands, maybe millions (maybe all) songs are based on real people or real situations, but somehow these tributes don't pack nearly the wallop of those that sing the praises of someone with whom the public is intimately acquainted. Consequently, pop à clef can succeed only in a culture where the lives of public figures are continually on display in one form or another — a place like the good old U.S.A. where, thanks to the miracle of television and the *People* magazine school of journalism, celebrities, their families and friends are practically part of the family.

What follows is a brief survey of some of the more interesting examples of pop à clef — songs whose lyrical import springs not so much from their profundity or wit as from the gossipy light they shed on the lives of the rich and famous, most notably their creators themselves.

The last thing Paul Anka wanted was to have the public recognize Annette Funicello as his "Puppy Love," but nowadays pop stars understand the value of having their names romantically linked with other celebs — so much so that they sometimes feature the subject of a musical accolade in the accompanying video (as Carly Simon did with ex-boyfriend, ex-*Dynasty* star Al Corley in "You Know What to Do" and Billy Joel did with his "Uptown Girl," Christie Brinkley). Of course, things were different in the pre-video era. Back then, it could take several years and two hit records before rock fans realized that songstress Rita Coolidge was Leon Russell's "Delta Lady."



While some singer/songwriters stop short of revealing exactly who or what their songs are about, preferring instead to sit back and let the rock literati conjure up its own mythology, others have been more helpful in pinpointing the source of their inspiration. . . .

Graham Nash, for one, wasn't shy about admitting that "Our House" was the home he shared for a time with Joni Mitchell. And Stephen Stills doesn't mind naming Judy Collins as the "chestnut brown canary" of "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes." As he once told a reporter from *Rolling Stone*, "A songwriter can do three things with women — love them, suffer over them or turn them into hit records."

When word leaked out that the Knack's "My Sharona" had been written about a Los Angeles high-school girl (and part-time girlfriend of head Knacker Doug Fieger), it generated so much curiosity that the band released a new pressing of the single with the real-life Sharona's picture on the sleeve. However, the publicity backfired a few months later when the "Nuke the Knack" movement lashed out at the group with a *Sharona Sucks* bumper sticker campaign. Fieger, who'd been a good sport about the anti-Knack campaign up until then, immediately got in touch with his detractors and told them to say all the nasty things they wanted about the group, but to lay off Sharona.



# WHO'S MAKIN' LOVE WITH YOUR OLD LADY

(WHILE YOU WERE OUT MAKIN' LOVE?)

No matter what he says now, Rod Stewart's brief romantic interlude with Britt Ekland was a great career booster. Sure, he got hung with a \$12 million palimony suit in the process, but he also came away with tons of priceless publicity and a reputation as a stud. Because rock mystique rests so heavily on sexuality, rock stars are obliged to engage in an elaborate kind of sexual posturing both onstage and off. When pumping up that sexy image, it never hurts to indulge in a number of well-publicized liaisons with a playmate of comparable celebrity. Elvis Presley was seen with a dazzling array of starlets, models and beauty queens during his brief lifetime (and is rumored to have gotten physical with thousands more). Mick Jagger has been linked with dozens of comely young things during the last twenty years, as have Linda Ronstadt and Cher. And since there are just so many of these glorious creatures to go around, it's not surprising that many of these fabled flirtations intersect and overlap. Joni Mitchell's intimate friendship with not one but three members of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young once earned her the title of *Rolling Stone's* Old Lady of the Year. And who can forget Marianne Faithful's celebrated relationship with the Rolling Stones. "I made it with Keith and Brian," said she in an oft-repeated quote, "and finally decided the leader was the best bet."

Here then is a casual genealogy of real and rumored pop commingling, which although limited by space, goes a long way to prove that when it comes to rock'n'roll romance, it's a small world.

