

Guess Who

They Don't Know What We Look Like

by Harold Bronson
"Rolling Stone is a biased paper."
"They're full of shit."
"Erroneous information."

Such were the comments I received when I asked Canada's Guess Who about a certain article that appeared in Rolling Stone—an article that grossly distorted their artistic values, making them out to be a money-grubbing bunch, and made me somewhat suspicious of their ideals. The Guess Who, in fact, are very pleasant fellows who are very much concerned about their music, monetary rewards falling second.

All has not been so pleasant with the group, however. Just as they started getting recognition and achieving star status, leader Randy Bachman left the group. Drummer Gary Peterson explained, "It was triggered off by

vocalist Burton Cummings, "and I used to see them when we came off the road. Sometimes we used to jam together. We wanted to get someone from home because of the border situation—getting papers—because it was the easiest thing to do. We couldn't decide which guitarist we wanted so we accepted both of them."

The Guess Who evolved some years ago out of Chad Allen and the Expressions. Back then, around 1965, it was difficult to get Canadian-based records airplay, so, as a promotional gimmick, their record company made up a contest to name the group. They were looking for a British sounding name (that ilk being "in" then) and "Guess Who?" was selected. They recorded a song originally performed by Johnny Kidd and the Pirates called "Shakin' All Over" and it became a big hit in America.

knows who's in the group. Now if you talk about the Rolling Stones, everybody knows who's in the group, but we really haven't had that type of publicity. They don't even know what we look like."
Burton Cummings then described their music and speculated as to any future changes: "Everything that we've done so far are personal experiences that can be taken on a mass level. We'd like for people to pick up on what we're communicating and have them relate to it in their own ways."

"We're building more layers on our next album—there'll be more music and less trite lyrics. I went back and looked at some of my classical stuff because I got my degree in piano. There'll be more music instead of cute little tunes."

"One thing that's really hard to do is superimpose chords," the Walrus added. "Nobody's done that for sometime and I'd like to really get into that."

It appears, then, that the combo are about to get deeper into their music, accompanied by the contributions from their guitarists who, up till now, are still searching for their own identity within the group. As for future expectations from the music scene in general, most of the quintet agreed in the prediction that a type of free form music will prevail.

Last year the Guess Who played the White House and received much criticism for it. Cumulative comments from the group included: "It was bad because we play concerts and that was more of a dinner-dance. Gary Puckett went down better than we did, although they danced more for us. It was too superficial. It was a groove to see the place, yet it really wasn't our kind of thing; it limited us in that we couldn't do songs with different tempos as that would have confused the dancers."

In conclusion, let me mention that the Guess Who are, at given times, nothing short of an incredible rock 'n roll band. Only their confused innovativeness, minimum inspiration, and a limited concept of themselves, along with a tendency toward writing obscure lyrics keep them from a state bordering on the highest artistic level. When the current lineup jells stylistically we might witness a step forward in this direction. Yet one impetus directing a progressed change is the group's sensitivity with regard to their overly commercial image. This is not valid and could meet with disastrous results. The Guess Who have written some of the most enjoyable songs of the last few years, and if they base their progressiveness upon using the elements of their foremost strengths, they might yet realize their promise.

Perhaps the most basic element in a film is The Quality



sickness—he had trouble with his gall stones or gall bladder. That's why he left the group while we were on the road. Then it got to the point where he was doing a lot of things away from the band and he became farther apart from us. I think his having two children at home and not being home while they were growing up had more than fifty per cent to do with it. It really was a combination of reasons. Actually we asked him to leave the group. But he really didn't want to stick around and would have left eventually."

"He was hanging in for the money," added bassist Jim Kale. "When this situation was coming to a head we had a meeting. The first thing he asked was whether we wanted him to finish the next album with us." Randy retreated to a hospital midway through a Guess Who tour last year, and eventually replacements were found.

It seems that the situation in Winnipeg is quite a bit different than in L.A. In that city there are only about "forty rock bands and half a million people" and all the musicians know each other. Kurt "Walrus" Winter and Greg Leskiw were selected to fill the void. "Both of them were in bands," related

(There are certain people who believe that "Shakin' All Over" was recorded by members of the English Who backing a singer called Eddie James, but this was denied by the group.) The record became a hit without any large U.S. promotional push, and subsequent Guess Who records were given the same treatment, which only resulted in dismal failure. In the interim Chad Allen left the group (he is currently rumored to be involved in a brand new group with Randy Bachman, recently signed to Reprise) and Burton Cummings replaced him.

Although the Guess Who have been around for sometime now, their success came about suddenly. Gary, who has been with the group since before their initial success, commented on this sudden change: "I accept our success now, although I really can't believe it. There is more pressure on you and you become harder on yourself. It's a matter of trying to stay on top. It's very different being popular in Canada, and being popular in the U.S. and other parts of the world. There is more of everything and the demand is greater."

"For the kind of success the group has attained, nobody really

'Celebration at Big Sur': Stepson of 'Woodstock'

by J. Hendler

Celebration at Big Sur attempts to do for the Northern California "non-profit" concert of 1969 approximately what Woodstock did for its larger Eastern counterpart. Celebration's producer, Carl Gottlieb, says that the difference between his film and Woodstock is the "difference between a spectacular and a warm, intimate film." He would have been more appropriate in saying that the difference lay between a spectacular concert and a warm intimate concert. The size of the crowd and number of performers at Big Sur was dwarfish when compared to those of Woodstock. The concert at Big Sur, which featured Joan Baez, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Joni Mitchell,



Dorothy Morrison and the Combs Sisters, John Sebastian and others, was held at the Esalen Institute, a far more civilized and conducive setting than Farmer Yasger's Field.

These differences between size and volume of both concerts and settings made the Big Sur concert a far less dynamic subject than the Woodstock concert, at least on a superficial level. In order to filmically delineate the "energy" which the filmmakers of Celebration apparently felt distinguished the concert, they had to try to make a small event look "big" rather than a big event (such as Woodstock) look small (enough to watch in one sitting). Unfortunately, they did not succeed. Filmically, the concert at Big Sur, which by reputation was indeed intimate and enthusiastic, was extremely average.

This is largely because little to no dramatic structure was created in the editing of the film. The Woodstock film, which also obviously outdid Celebration in terms of expense accounts and numbers of technicians, presenting a visual storyline, following Woodstock from its setting-up stages through the garbage removal after its end. Celebration, on the other hand, fails to utilize this device for involving the audience in the film. Celebration documents part of the concert rather than the entire concert, and thus much of that which constitutes its essence is lost in the translation. The audience is shown merely for effect (i.e. — end song, quick shot of crowd applauding). A couple of passerby comment on the beauty and vitality surrounding the concert, but the cameramen largely disregard both.

The only objective basis for judging a film is in terms of its technical efficiency. It is in this respect that Celebration suffers its greatest inadequacies.

Visual. This beast as we know it, characterized by the clear, comprehensible picture, was not characteristic of Celebration. Camera focusing was often disregarded, featuring zooms which, while closing in on subjects, rendered them simultaneously indistinct. Granted, documentary footage is hard to collect because it cannot be re-shot. And if Baird Bryant and Johanna Demetrakas, the film's editors, had cut out poor footage, they would have had little more than a film short. Speed-blinding pans accompanied by poor focusing, however, are too much to tolerate even in a film of a mere 82 minutes' length.

Straight footage which might have otherwise been quite decent was often hindered by pseudo-artistic gimmickry. Coarsely-changing colours and badly matched gold tinting did not enhance Joni Mitchell's rendition of "Woodstock" (the song). And save us from the blatant film metaphor! As Joni sang, "turning into butterflies above our nation", you can imagine what appeared on the screen. Perhaps the most offensive was the in-and-out zooming technique thrown in by an apparent veteran of TV's Shebang.

Such technical problems tend to aggravate Celebration at Big Sur's greatest failing, which is to inadequately serve its function as a documentary. First, the film fails to draw any lucid and consistent illustration of the event. Second, it gives the concert itself no appearance of continuity. Third, the cameramen too often fail to linger long enough upon the performer being featured, as, for example, upon Neil Young, who seems to be singing from another world. Fourth, bad shooting rendered that which was depicted difficult to look at.

What redeems Celebration at Big Sur are the performers themselves. If seeing David Crosby in a communal bath with John Sebastian and several other people doesn't excite you, then you'll at least enjoy seeing Steve Stills get into a fight with a spectator.

The most exciting performers are unintentional ones, ad-libbers, such as the police at the film's beginning who apparently didn't know that the camera and recorder were running. Also of interest are the painted teacher who'd been



fired for being "Too wierd" and a friendly Stranger who sings his conversation.

If Celebration at Big Sur had achieved the aura of intimacy which its producer had hoped for, it might have been a far more enjoyable experience. As it stands as a film, it is stiff and presumptuous and probably missed a lot of what the Big Sur Experience was all about. Still, the music was basically clear and audible, the people, as always, were entertaining, the swimming pool was blue, and there was a nude scene. What more could you ask for?



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The Preening of America

Recent polls taken on American campuses by Time and Newsweek have revealed unexpected, and most welcome, results. Both magazines found that today's undergraduates, far from boiling with revolutionary fervor, are just as torpid as everyone else.

Joyous tidings, of course, but I must say that I was never worried. Sure, lifestyles are a little different on campus these days; nevertheless, I've always felt that down deep this generation clings to the same solid values that sustained all their predecessors.

In my own college days, for example, the most popular aid to sociability on campus was precisely what it is today: Miller High Life Beer. And, mind you, my college days were a good long time ago. I got my B.A. way back in 1908. (My alma mater, incidentally, was a school I'm sure you all know—the Wyoming College of Belles Lettres and Commercial Baking, from whence, as you are undoubtedly aware, came a veritable host of graduates who later achieved stardom in the breadstuffs game—men like Darrell J. Inskip who invented rye bread with caraway seeds; Irving T. Whitsun who invented the toothpick, thus making it possible to eat rye bread with caraway seeds; Sol Bagel who invented the permanent doughnut which bears his name; and many, many others. Indeed, the list would be far longer if the college had stayed in business but, alas, it was killed by mold in 1921.)

But I digress. Even in 1908, I say, Miller High Life was a campus favorite. In fact, it was popular even before 1908, for Miller has been delivering flavor to discriminating Americans for over 115 years! And today it is more widely appreciated than ever! And why wouldn't it be? In 115 years no other brewer has ever duplicated Miller's flavor. Oh, they've tried to copy Miller, you can bet, but a fat lot of good it did them. Since the very beginning Miller's superb brewing formula has been one of the best kept secrets on earth. It has never been known to more than one man—Miller's chief brewmaster—and he has always been kept inside a hollow mountain in downtown Milwaukee.

But I digress. The polls, I say, have proved that today's college student, though he dresses in a homespun robe and wears chicken bones in his ears, cherishes the same dreams and drives that students have always held dear.



To illustrate, I recently visited a student commune at a prominent Southern university (Michigan State). Now, I'll admit it didn't look much like one of your old-fashioned fraternity or sorority houses. First of all, there was no house. Everyone slept in trees, except for one girl who made a hammock out of a discarded bra. In the second place, meals were not served; they were trapped. And in the third place, the kids didn't talk about the usual things like life, sex, truth and beauty. In fact, they didn't talk. They just sang "Om," holding the note till they hyperventilated and toppled over in a faint.

But appearances are only appearances, as I discovered when I started to interview these people.

"What are you studying?" I asked one young man.

"My navel," he said, and I was vastly reassured, for we all know the crying need for new doctors.

"What do you want to be when you finish school?" I asked another young man.

"A druid," he said, and again I was reassured, for as anyone on Wall Street can tell you, forest ecology is the coming thing.

"Do you believe in women's liberation?" I asked a girl.

"No," was the answer.

"Why not?" I asked.

"I'm a boy," was the answer.

And so it went. And so I say to you again: worry not. Take away the beards, the beads, and the buckskin, and you've got the same lovable freckle-faced achievers you always had, only naked.

We at Miller High Life are brewers, not social scientists, but this much we know: whatever may be changing in this country, it certainly is not taste buds. We will continue, therefore, to bring you the same delicious Miller High Life. If you've got the time, we've got the beer.

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