



# ROD STEWART

by John Morthland

Photographs by Annie Leibowitz

In the season of the solo star, the attention is focusing on people like Neil Young, Randy Newman, Elton John, Van Morrison and, yes, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr.

And Rod Stewart, sort of. Sort of. Because he's unwilling. While he has put out two superb albums of his own since leaving the Jeff Beck Group, he insists that his main gig is as vocalist with the Faces, and he wouldn't have it any other way. He resents it when they're billed as Rod Stewart and the Faces, because they're equals in their own eyes.

The night before this interview was conducted, the Face-Stewart, guitarist Ronnie Wood, bassist Ronnie Lane, drummer Kenny Jones, and Ian McLagan on keyboards - has packed Fillmore West on a Wednesday night as the only act on the bill. They were in the middle of one

of those ball-breaking, six week tours that has maybe four days off in a string of one-nighters.

In America, the Faces's chief claim to fame is «Itchycoo Park» (and maybe the round-jacketed «Ogden's Nut Gone Flake»), and they still seem to think they have to live that single down before they will get the kind of recognition they seek. They're well on their way to doing just that, and perhaps is won't be long before people quit thinking of them as the Small Faces. «First Step»: the initial album with the new group, is certainly little indication of what they displayed at the Fillmore.

The Faces do play loud, but with care. And let's face it, friends, there are few better things in life than a rock and roll band that is loud and still musical. Wood, who was bassist with Beck when Stewart was in that group, is developing into a

fine lead guitarist, and plays a beautiful bottleneck? On a bad night, they're probably extra bad, just as they're extra good on a good night, because they are that kind of band, much like the early Stones.

This was a good night. On this tour, they're playing songs from «First Step», from Stewart's own «Gasoline Alley», some new ones, and a few surprises like «Baby I'm Amazed» and «Love in Vain». They did a rocking two-hour set, passed out bottle after bottle of wine, and were rewarded with a long encore. They loved every minute of it, as much as did their audience.

Stewart himself is a dynamic performer. He never stands still, moving about with abandon, but not a trace of self-consciousness, as if being on a stage was the natural thing for him to do. His trademark is picking up the whole mike stand and swinging it about; in Chicago,

he literally brought the house down when he put the mike stand through the low ceiling of the club. When the other Faces lean into a microphone to sing harmony, they occasionally mime his gestures, throwing their arms out just like he does. It's all in fun, and everybody gets a good laugh.

Still, they're not sure of it all themselves. «How did we sound, really, in your honest opinion, was it good?» Ronnie Wood asked backstage after the show ended, after they'd told the audience they couldn't continue because they'd exhausted their repertoire. Self-confidence - or more accurately, lack of it - seems to be an obstacle.

The fun's just beginning when the show ends. Backstage, a photographer walks up and the five Faces immediately wrap themselves up in each other, like the cover of the first Lovin' Spoonful album,

all writhing and squirming and shrinking: «Take our picture! Take our picture!» The faces are an unusually close group; they're good friends with each other off-stage, and they stick together.

A few minutes later, the same photographer has Stewart off in a corner, and he's lifting his shirt up and down, waving this arm, changing his facial expression every second while she clicks madly away. A scene right out of «Hard Day's Night».

As the Faces leave the dressing room to head back to their hotel, they stop for a chat with some of the crowd waiting outside. A black guy walks up to Stewart and says «Keep singing with all your heart and soul man, 'cause you got it». «Thanks», Stewart replies. «But, remember, the king is gone. Same Cooke is dead.»

There's still plenty of time left to hit

the bar, which is done in short order, and, when the bar closes, the merriment continues back at the hotel, until the police arrive to suggest that the noise cease, or, at least, that it be kept down a bit.

Stewart was a gas to interview. Like the rest of the Faces, he's warm and exuberant, loves to tell a funny story, and has a bit to say on most anything you'd want to ask him about. And on top of all that, he's humble.

- J.M.

When we talked earlier this year, you said you'd never go out as a solo performer. Do you still feel the same way, after the success of «Gasoline Alley?»

I'll stay solo as far as records, yes; as far as live performances, no, I'm just not responsible enough to put a band together and keep it together. I have enough of a time keeping myself together, let alone a band. And even if I chose a band, I'd

choose the same guys I got in the band now anyway.

Have you ever performed as a solo act?

For money? No, not for money, I've done it for free, on the streets and stuff. That was in my old nomadic days, when I was about 17 or 18. I'm 25 now. Then I was wandering around, mostly Spain and Italy, trying to get myself together. I think that's something everybody should get out of them; when my kids grow up, I'm going to say «Out, you bastards get out on the road and live!»

I did that for two years, mostly in Spain. Spain is easier to play in than anywhere else for some reason: I don't know. It was a banjo; I learned how to play banjo before guitar. I was with Wiz Jones - he's a folk legend in England - I played with him. Mostly American folk music, like Jack Elliot. We weren't really aware



of any English folk music then. I got sent back from Spain, we got kicked out for being vagrants. Flown back on BOAC, and I still owe BOAC the money for that flight. We'd started out in Belgium, lived in Paris, the South Bank, for about eight months, then got so Spain, Barcelona.

What's you do then, after being kicked out and sent home?

I was in England, making picture frames. Did a bit of grave-digging - that was all right, we only had to work two days a week, and you didn't spend the whole day digging holes; we did a lot of other things there.

Were you singing professionally then?

The first band I ever sang in professionally was Jimmy Powell and His Five Dimensions. This was when I was 19 or 20; it was part-time, between making the

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picture frames, and we didn't get paid much, we used to play in the Stones in terminals in London. I used the harmonica; I never used to sing. They backed Chuck Berry in England after I left; by then I had joined Long John Baldry and the Steampacket with Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger and Baldry himself. We were doing our soul routine, like «Midnight Hour» and «Mr. Pitiful» and all the early Otis Redding hits.

*Were Otis and Sam Cooke, who you mentioned last night, the singers you liked the most?*

Cooke was the only one in fact that influenced me, but I listened to everybody and probably picked up a bit from them all. Sam Cooke was the only one that really influenced me, over a period of about two years, that's all listened to. This was about three years ago, just before I joined Beck. I'm really open-minded though; I'll listen to anybody. It had to do with the way I sounded; I didn't sound at all like anybody. Ray Charles or anybody, but I knew I sounded a bit like Sam Cooke, so I listened to Sam Cooke.

*Where does your voice come from?*

Last night, it was coming from there (strokes neck) too much. I was straining it a bit. Usually it comes from way down (patting stomach). When I first started playing the guitar, I had a sort of very bad mid-Atlantic cowboy voice, really a bad one. And it just developed from there, partly by listening to Sam Cooke.

*Were you consciously trying to emulate Sam Cooke?*

No, I don't think so, not really. If I'd sung one of his numbers, I might have, but I've never sung one of his numbers, probably never will. I wouldn't touch one of his numbers after he's sung them himself. I was just the tone of his voice, not the phrasing or whatever, just the tone.

*Well, how did you get your voice so hoarse?*

I don't know, just belting my ass off for five years. But it's stronger now than it's ever been, which is weird. Like I can work hard, two hours a night, and it doesn't give out like it used to, three or four years ago.

*When did it start to get that way?*

I think probably after the first record I made. Let me see, what was the first record I made? I made a tape of «Good Morning, Little Schoolgirl», about four years ago, with studio men; John Paul Jones was on bass, I remember that. I was singing with Jimmy Powell's band by then, and I got called out to make one record. It was a dismal failure. It was a good record, it was like a white attempt ... five years ago, before its times, but I thought it was good.

*How do you describe your own voice; do you listen to yourself sing much?*

Obviously, the only way to improve on anything is to listen to what you've already done, and probably after I did the first Beck album, which is the first album I ever did, then I had a collection of songs I could really listen to. I seemed to have improved far more over the last two years than I did the three years previous. It's pretty much down to that Truth album really. I could take it home and listen to, and I've improved since then.

*How do you think you've improved?*

My voice has become more sandpaper, as you call it, that's an improvement in itself. And I learned a lot from Beck, that really helped a lot. I learned how to fit in with a guitar - fit in, you know what I mean? - how to be a lead vocalist, and first in with the guitar. I think I learned that, which now comes out so I can phrase well. I think I phrase very well.

*What do you think when you hear your voice on record? It's a very distinct voice; no one else has anything like it.*

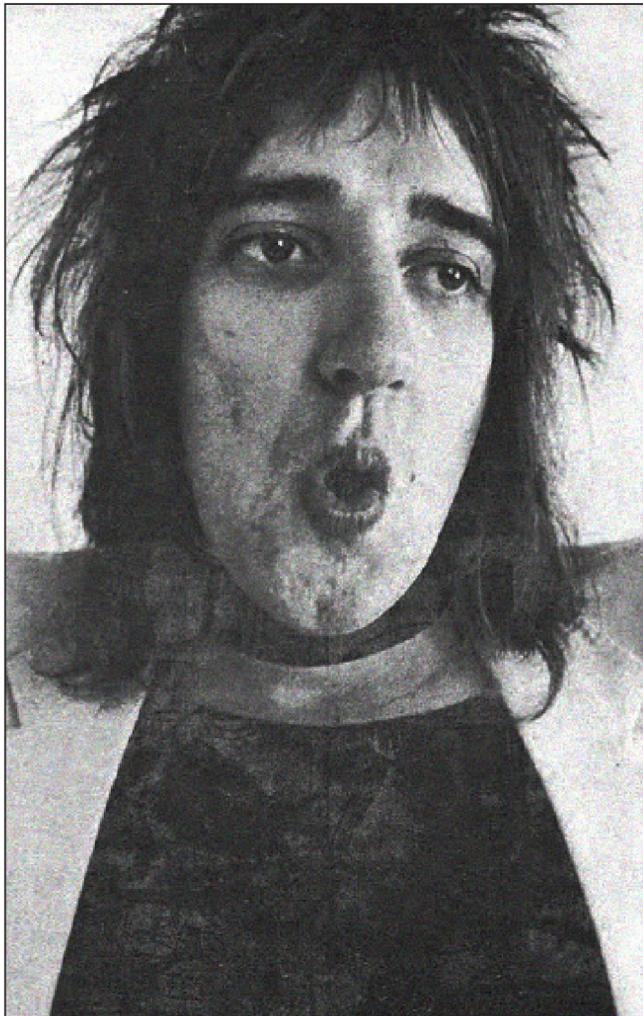
Everyone tells me that; I can't believe that at all. I wouldn't call it a distinct voice. I sometimes think. Oh, Christ, I sound too much like Sam Cooke, or Arthur Conley, or someone like that. What happened with Gasoline Alley was I picked the right songs, that suit my voice. So on that album, probably it sounds distinct.

*You didn't do that on the first one, you don't think. «The Rod Stewart Album»?*

No, not really, because I was out to try to prove myself as a singer more than anything. On Gasoline Alley, I

thought, I picked the right numbers to suit the voice, and that's a start. Like «It's All Over Now», which I thought was a good choice.

Let me think of someone who picks the wrong songs to fit his voice to show you what I mean... David Ruffin, the old Tempts singer. I'd love to produce that guy, and pick the songs he should sing, because he doesn't know, you know? Tim Hardin sometimes falls down on that. He writes most of his own songs for himself, but listen to the Tim Hardin II album, where he does beautiful songs all the way through, and then he does something like «I'm a Smuggling Man».



It spoils the album. There's an ideal example of someone picking a song they can't sing.

I'm sure if you looked into it you'd find loads of people who don't know how to pick the material for their own voice. Someone who does is Van Morrison. Not the world's best singer, but he doesn't write his songs so he can't conquer them.

*How much of your songs are autobiographical?*

Two songs on Gasoline Alley are very true: «Jo's Lament» and «Lady Day». Old loves. *What's Gasoline Alley? I get the impression from listening to it that it's English, slang for a working class neighborhood, or something like that.*

Oh, no Gasoline Alley is somewhere in San Francisco, right?

*Not to my knowledge.*

I got the idea from a girl at the Fillmore, last time we were here. We were talking and she said something like «I must get home, because my mother will say «Where have you been, down Gasoline Alley?» And I said «What?»

*That doesn't sound too autobiographical.*

Well, in a way it is; yes; It's just a return to a place that you are very fond of, which must happen to everybody, I'm sure. Gasoline Alley is nowhere in particular to me. It was about a feeling I had when I was in Spain, and I couldn't get back to England. I wanted to get back to England, but I didn't have the

money to get back. So it's a song about going home; I've experienced that. «Jo's Lament» is a song about a girl I put in a family way, and «Lady Day» is very true, about girl I fell in love with a long time ago and she didn't want to know me.

*What are you looking for when you choose songs for your own album, as opposed to a Faces album?*

Two things, mainly. I look for a song that's probably been forgotten, that no one's done for a time. Something that can fit my voice so I can sing it right, and something with a particularly strong melody. Three things, actually.

to suffer. Something has to give, you know, there's not many people that can carry off the two. B.B. King can, but it's nearly impossible to sing and play something well at the same time. You can strum and yodel a bit, but nothing great. Hendrix was the only one who could carry off both at once.

*You seem to anticipate a song, to really anticipate a song, to really anticipate going up on stage to sing...*

I'm afraid to get up and sing, usually. I was really afraid last night. I always find out once I get on stage that it's OK, I sort a rise to the occasion, we all do, but we're all bloody nervous before we go on. And we were last night, because this was our second tour, and this is the first time I've - I don't know; I'm trying to find the right word - «fronted» a band as such. It was a big night for me last night, it really was. I only started coming to American a year and a half ago with Beck. I never got scared with Beck, and we played for really big audiences. Beck was the man in that band. I feel more responsible mentally with this band than I ever did with Beck. If we died a death one night, I didn't used to care: «It's not my band; it's Beck's band. Too bad». I tried, but I didn't lose sleep over it if we did bad. With this band, if we do a bad show, I lose sleep over it.

*Do you see yourself as the leader of this band?*

No, very far from it, I'm not the «leader». It's probably something I brought upon myself, because Gasoline Alley was so big, and I fell like a lot of the people are coming to hear the numbers off that album. It's weird, really, I shouldn't worry about it, but I do. And I want this band to be really successful.

*Do you guys think it is? Are you pleased so far?*

For two tours, we're doing bloody well. Gasoline Alley has made a lot of the difference. What I'm gonna try to do now is put an album together that's better than Gasoline Alley.

*Do you mean «Gasoline Alley» made the difference for you, or for the Faces? Do you get the feeling people are coming to see Rod Stewart or are they coming to see the Faces?*

This is one of the things that worries me; I hope they're not just coming to see me. Because we're a band, and I want people to realize it's a band up there. The other guys in the band are strong, too, in what they do. I wouldn't be in this band if I didn't think they were equally strong. I think if the band makes a really good album, better than Gasoline Alley, then people will recognize that fact. On this tour, it seems to be Gasoline Alley that we're living off. Gasoline Alley was numbers I wanted to do. It was my trip, really, but if the Faces make a really good album, a team thing, well, that'll change the whole thing. It'll bring the other four up a lot more. What I'm gonna try to do is really separate the two, by doing a solo album of really slow things, like a nice midnight-type album.

*Will you use the Faces, like on «Gasoline Alley»?*

NO, I won't use them at all - I might use Ronnie Wood a bit - but we really gotta separate the two issues. Put the band over there, and my albums over here. And keep the music as far away from each other as you can. So we can make nice heavy albums with the band - not heavy, that's such a played-out word - but nice rocker-type albums, and I can do a bit of smooth stuff on the quiet.

*Who will you use on your own album, then?*

Oh, there's a wealth of musicians in England. I wanna make an album like «Only a Hobo» all the way through, those kinds of songs. If I can sell an album like that, I'd be really happy, more pleased than with Gasoline Alley.

*Do you prefer to sing the slower songs? Every time, yeah.*

*You don't do too many slower things with the Faces.*

Sure, we do enough, we do about four: «Love in Vain», «Baby I'm Amazed», «Devotion», «Country Comforts». A bit of 12 bar blues, yeah. On records, I prefer doing slower numbers.

*How come?*

For a vocalist, a slower number lends itself better than anything else. In opportunities for phrasing, it's much more free. I've had my days of belting it out over 2000 watts of amplifiers, and doing the exact same on records.

*The Faces play pretty loud; you have to belt to get over them.*

Well, this is why I asked you when we

came off last night if we played a bit too loud towards the end. I think we started off quiet, but we all got carried away and a bit frantic toward the end. Compared to the Beck group, we're really quiet. We play loud, but we try to play... there's a difference, let me think of someone ... Grand Funk Railroad really do me in; they've gotta be the all-time loud white noise, haven't they?

*Indisputably, but lots of people come to hear you play really loud. If there's one thing a Fillmore audience likes, it's volume.*

Oh, I don't believe that; they're not dumb. They're the hardest audience I've ever gotten up and played for. I was really scared last night, believe me, nobody ever believes me when I say that. We went on in Detroit and broke Cocker's record, biggest crowd they've ever had, and I just had to get up and say I'm shit-scared. They don't believe it! They all say «Nyah, come on» and I was really scared!

*Are you all happy with the first album?*

The First Step? I did well for a first album. Everybody in the band thinks of it as a first album. It really was, for this band. Something completely new. Did you ever listen to the old Small Faces album?

*Sure.*

There you go, it's a completely different thing, isn't it? It wasn't a good album, it was a bloody awful album, it was a poor album. It was very tight, but we played a lot of numbers off it last night, and it was much looser. On the album, they're mechanical, you know, clinical. Now how can music be clinical? But I've got really high hopes for the next album.

*The next Faces album - is that being recorded now?*

Yeah, we're about half-way through. We're gonna put «Baby I'm Amazed» on it, and the one we finished up with last night, «Feel So Good», we're gonna record them live at the Marquee in London. The rest will be originals by the band. There's three me-type songs, things I've done about my own experience.

*Do you find that's the best way to write songs, rather than complete fantasy things?*

I get you. The songs people have dug that I've written have always been about real things that happened. Whereas, like on the first album, «Blind Prayer» was entirely imagination, and I think that's where songs come from, they come either from imagination or from experience. Can't think of any other source.

*Do you write much?*

Not a great deal, no. It takes me a long time to write a song. I write lyrics best. Woody and I - Ronnie Wood and I - have got a really good combination, because he writes beautiful melodies, but can't write words. I can't write melodies at all, but I can words. He did the melody to «Gasoline Alley».

*How about the songs on your first album?*

That was a weird album. I was so naive when I went into the studio, yet I knew exactly what I wanted, whereas I don't really now, for a third album. I know I wanna do all slow songs, but I'm not really that sure about the idea.

For the first album, I had ideas of riffs. I said, go in, mates, play a riff, make a progression and do this, and then I took the track from it and wrote the words. Which is a great way to do it, because the backing track always conjures up something for you, and you can write the words around it. I think that's the way it should be done. The Faces will go in and play something, have a jam, and then they'll give the thing to me and say, all right, put the words around it. It doesn't always work. I had a definite goal when I did my first album for a song about something definite. I had no idea what the words were going to be, but I had an idea what the song would be about. Whereas we sometimes don't with the Faces, and this is one of the things we're trying to overcome.

*You mean for the next Faces album?*

Yeah, most of the songs are originals. *What are the originals like besides your own?* Ronnie Lane writes a lot. Ronnie writes very personal songs, which is why I'm trying to get him to sing them. But I don't know what's going to become of that. I think there's one track on the album he's going to sing.

*You seem to really prefer «Gasoline Alley» to «The Rod Stewart Album» though they're both very good. Any rea-*

*sons besides the ones you've mentioned?*

There's a lot more variation on Gasoline Alley, different styles of music, like the soul thing, sort of a Memphis thing: «You're My Girl». A bit of folk music, a bit of everything. I don't know if that's the hallmark of a good album, but it is for me - to put different styles of music together, but still make the whole album jell. I don't think my songs are good enough on the first album. I tried out my own songwriting on my first album and I didn't think my songs were up too much. I know my limitations now.

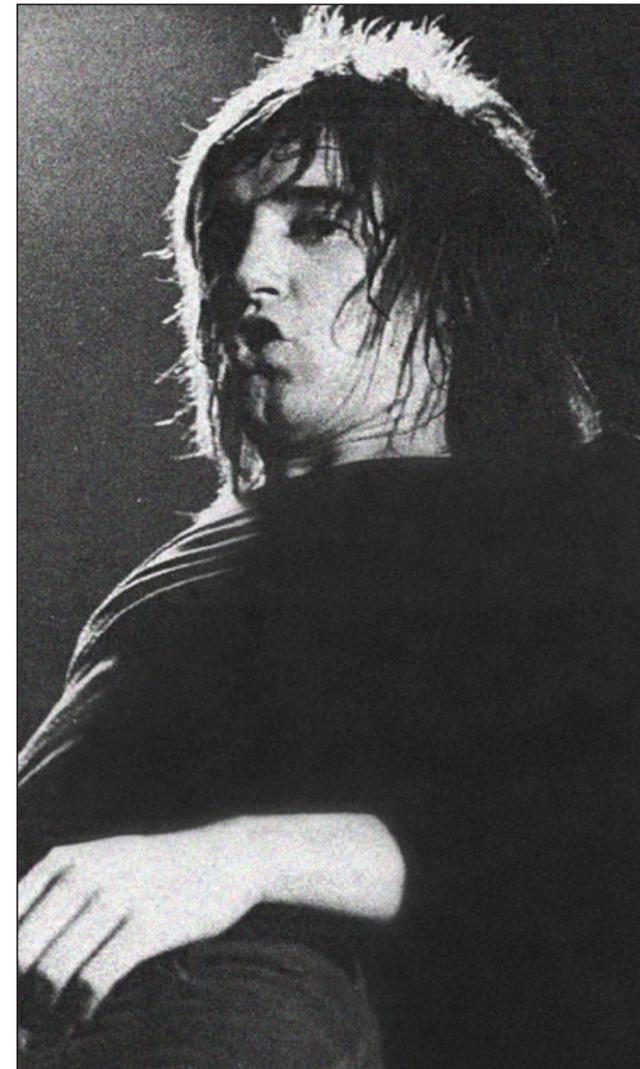
*What are they?*

Basically, I can write slow songs around the chords of G, C, and D, and E minor.

The Faces opportunity came up, he left. And I was really close to him, as I still am, and I didn't want to be in the band if he wasn't still around, so I split.

This was all of course after the Vanilla Fudge shit, where Beck and I were supposed to be forming with Timmy and Carmine. So anyway, the band broke up, Ronnie went to the Faces, Jeff didn't phone me up or anything, let me know what was going on, so I said «fuck it», and I split. And he is now looking for a bass player and a singer. A year and a half later. That says something, doesn't it?

*Well then how did you end up in the Faces?*



All right, and I twist the chords around. I don't pretend to be a songwriter, really. I try really hard, but it takes me about three weeks to write a song (Laughs) It does! If I'm pressurized, I can write lots of songs; people do good things under pressure. You gotta do it, so it gets done.

*What finally did happen with the Jeff Beck Group?*

I think very much we would have stayed together had we played Woodstock, but we passed it up because we all wanted to go home. The trouble started right about when we started doing the second album, Beck-Ola. That was really out of the blue for me, when Beck suddenly decided he wanted to get rid of Ronnie and Micky. He told me and I said that was a big mistake. Really, that was the tightest rhythm section I ever heard, Micky Waller on drums and Ronnie Wood on bass. But he wanted to get rid of them and I couldn't change his mind.

So he sacked Ronnie and Micky, then he got Tony Newman on drums, and we got an incredibly bad Australian bass player that rehearsed with us once, the night before we went on stage. That was in Washington, D.C., and we died the all-time death. So the bass player got sent back to Australia, and Jeff called back Ronnie Wood. So by that time, Ronnie was really pissed off, as well he should have been, because he'd been sacked and it hurts the old pride. So he was looking for another band to play with, and when

Funny enough, the only one I knew was Stevie Marriot, who had already split from them. Stevie married a girl that I went out with for three years. The first gig we ever did with the Beck Group, we were second on the bill to the Small Faces in London. The road manager for the Small Faces pulled the plug out on us in the middle of a song. Beck stormed off stage, and we blew the tour.

*But how did you come to join the Faces?*

Ronnie Wood asked me to go down and see them rehearse, which is what I did. I wasn't too impressed at the time. I thought they were putting together some nice things, but that there was no direction to what they were doing. Then Kenny asked me to join, and I took the plunge - the plunge - it was definitely a blind plunge, because I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I was more impressed with them as people - I said, «What a nice bunch of guys - I'll join that band!» Literally, that's what I said, and that's exactly what I did. We're good drinking partners. (Laughs) We do drink a bit too much.

Really, no we'd be the first to tell you we're not the world's greatest musicians, but as a group we've got something going for us. Last night proved that, and we really were nervous about going up there and getting the audience on our side. I think for a band together a year, we're doing really good. This is our se-

cond tour, and we're headliners. We're really being pushed a lot by some people; like, I don't think we're headliners yet, but I think we're a good band and we'll be together a good while.

You have to give and take. I don't get a great deal of pleasure from singing «Plymouth». I don't like singing «Wicked Messenger». They love playing that one - they really get into it. I'm just singing the words. But I do like singing «Love in Vain» or «Devotion», which I suppose isn't a good number for them to play. That's why it's so good to be in a band with five blokes instead of alone: so much give and take. Whereas as a solo I'd just say, «Fuck it, play this, it's good to sing», and they'd say «Oh, OK». I want the band to give as much to me as I can give to them. It's a psychological thing: if they feel they're a backing group, that's when trouble starts. They're not a backing group; Ronnie Wood is about the guitar player I know.

That was a lot of the trouble with Beck; neither Ronnie or I got enough attention. It wasn't all Beck's fault, either; it was the management, the record company too. Nobody at Epic even knew Jeff Beck; they didn't even know they had us under contract when we made our first American Tour. They'd come around to see a concert one, and somebody from Epic actually came up to me and said «Hey, Jeff, you sang great, fucking good guitar player you got in the band, too». Really! The management was the same; they fucking brainwashed Jeff into thinking nobody had come for any reason except to see him. It was true, I admit it, but he really believed it. He really lived the life of a pop star right down to the last. Shit, it seems like I'm always running Jeff down; I do feel bitter about it in so many ways, but I still admire the guy.

*How do you feel bitter, and how do you admire him?*

I admire him as a guitar player, which is what he does; socially, we never really got on. Like I said earlier, I probably learned more from being with Beck and in the band than I did the three years previous. I learned a lot from him; I hope he learned something from me. The Beck band was the first band I took seriously; I can't take music too seriously, but that Truth album was really a landmark.

*Why can't you take music seriously?*

It's not a question of why I can't take music seriously. I refuse to take it seriously; I don't want to take it seriously. When you come to see us, and we're up there on the stage having a ball, it's not put on, you do mean it. We mean to have a ball when we play, and we do. Like somebody said to me the other day, «Boy, I was listening to Gasoline Alley the other day, and I was tripping, and, boy, it was unbelievable». And I said, «That's funny, I made the album on a bottle of brandy».

If people are trying to find something in music that's not there ... this happens a lot in America; they look too deep into the music. Like «Street Fighting Man» - it was like I was trying to lead the revolution over here or something, because I recorded «Street Fighting Man». Really, now! That had nothing to do with it at all. I recorded it because it was a funky old number, and because somebody had to hear those incredible lyrics. So now do you see what I mean about not taking it seriously? I don't try to find anything that's no there. There's a definite lacking of fun in music at the moment. We play our best, you know, we really do, but we like a big grin on our faces when we're playing.

*You talked before about a tight «circle» of people in England who were sort of emulating the American beat scene in Greenwich Village. Could you describe that a little better?*

After Dylan brought out that first album, we had thousands of Bob Dylan running about in their Bob Dylan carps, as you probably did over here; Everybody was doing a Dylan - it was a big scene in London, Soho. This was about 1962, and it was a close circle of folkie-types. Donovan was in that routine, limping about on one leg. Probably no one else that you would have heard of over here. The Stones were playing down the road, just getting it together. You could either go see somebody with an acoustic guitar at a folk club, or you could go see some blues types like the Stones - it was very close.

I remember seeing the early Stones: I remember Jagger's old lady taking me over to see them - Chrissie Shrimpton, Jean Shrimpton's sister, the model. She

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took me over to see them, saying it was this «unbelievable» band, and there were about 15 people there. They were incredible, and they've still got it all together. They used to have stools - they'd sit there on these stools and play, and that was their big thing.

*The Stones? You mean they sat there on stools and played their raucous electric music, the Chuck Berry and stuff?*

(Laughs) Yeah, it was really weird. Till they started getting really popular. Then they got out their first album. I was really naive then - I thought, they were playing the blues. Chuck Berry's not blues.

*Is this when your band was playing during their break?*

No, that was later. At this time, I doing the whole bit with the banjo and harmonica and hat, washed-out denims. It's embarrassing, really, talking about it because it was so weird everybody going through that whole bit.

*What got you out of that bit, then, and into the next thing?*

If the Stones hadn't been successful, I'd probably never have gotten the chance. They moved out of this little club to go on a tour with Bo Diddley, and that gave our little band, the Dimensions, the chance to make our first public appearance. If the Stones hadn't moved out, that wouldn't have happened, and, of course, once they moved out, they didn't look back. They didn't come back to the club.

So that's how they helped us. But they cleared the way for a lot of other bands, too, just making it possible for that kind of music to be played. If you moved out of London and gave them a bit of 12-

bar blues, they'd boo you off the stage. As they did the Stones sometimes. But thanks to the Stones, that's not true anymore.

*Is that the king of music the Five Dimensions played?*

Well, we had two guys who wanted to do all the Beatles hits, there was me and I wanted to do the blues - dee booze - and the other guy wanted to imitate Ray Charles, so the combination never quite hit off. The guys who wanted to do the Beatle things went back to being bricklayers. I got Jimmy Powell to start doing, playing the 12-bars, Jimmy Reed... we had three chords and we used all of them. Jimmy Reed I used to love.

*There don't seem to be too many artists anymore that are everybody's favorites, like the Beatles or Stones used to be; tastes seem to be getting more diffuse, and one person spends a lot of time listening to a few albums in particular, and the next person is doing the same, but with different albums.*

Well, the whole thing is like split up now; I learned this with Beck, actually. We had a certain audience that would come and see us, and every time we'd go to the Fillmore for a sound balance, there'd be people queuing up, and the audience was getting younger and younger every time we played there.

*I think that's happening all over, now.*

That's the same thing that happened to Led Zeppelin. They draw all the 14 year-olds out now, don't they.

*Did you notice you had a lot of screamers last night?*

Oh, yeah, I didn't know what that was all about. I didn't know what to do about that (Laughs). We got a few in Detroit, but I didn't know fucking what was going on here. The ones in Detroit were like nice screaming, not silly screaming like those birds on the left hand side of the stage at the Fillmore. I was afraid to go over on that side of the stage. But

we had a good time; that's what counts, really.

Girly-type screams are silly. When you get a guy that screams, an appreciative-type yell, encouragement, that can kind of turn you on when you're performing... I don't know quite how to describe it. But, I wouldn't go anywhere near that side of the stage; I was getting like five yards from the side and walking back again. Don't know what that was about, didn't know how to cope with it. The old Small Faces probably used to get it, but this band never had. That's probably what threw the Stones off when they came here: not playing for three years and then nobody screamed.

*That's true; Jagger really had to work to get people up and about this time.*

Well, it's about time he had to work - and he does it... he does it bloody well. He's a great performer; he learned a lot of it from James Brown, I hope he admits that, and I hope James Brown watches Jagger. See, they were complaining about four years ago - «I wish all those screamers would be quiet so we could hear ourselves play» - and now everybody is quiet and they don't dig it.

*How is it for the Faces in England as opposed to American?*

In England now it's very different than about two and one-half years ago, because England is very influenced by America now. It's just like playing in America now, in England, really. The audiences all sit down on the floor... the whole bit; no one dances any more. Whereas two and one-half years ago, it was completely the other way around. Yet, there's still not that many American bands, doing well in England. As far as albums go, they do bloody well, but when they go over for live concerts, they seem to bomb out... Three Dog Night played miserable, but I dig them, did when they first started a couple years ago. The best concert I ever saw was Joplin's at Royal Albert Hall - unbelie-

vable, really. I never thought I'd see an English audience like that.

*Do you get the feeling rock is stagnating now?*

I don't know. It's difficult for me to say, because I'm on the stage, and it's difficult for you to say, because you're no longer part of the regular audience. We don't go and follow a band, we don't have that thing of «Oh, I must see them, I've really got to go and see that band».

I used to have that with the Stones when I was about 1A8; I used to want to go and see them everywhere. And we don't get that way anymore, because we've gotten a bit older, unless it's something really special: so it's really hard to judge. Going by our tour, I would say it's exactly the same way it was when I first came over with Beck.

*It seems though like the music isn't as good, like we've hit a low point on the cycle for a while.*

I think it's as good - I just think there's too much of it. There's a lot of good bands around now; there really is. The competition over here is incredible. But there's a lot of bad stuff being put out too, under the «underground» tag. I think what it will always come down to is tunes... nice, little tunes, lots of tunes. Free are knocking me out now, actually - what a tight band!

*We have a lot more solo stars now than we do groups.*

I don't think it's a trend toward solo stars; I think it's a trend toward singers. It's leading away from guitar players now. Three years ago it seemed there was only guitar players. I think the lyrics count a lot more now than they ever did. People are prepared now to like lyrics like «the red train went up the hill» or «I'm a pot of bricks, mate», deep, stupid lyrics. So with the lyrics, you really have to try to hit people right between the eyes; the lyric has to do that. So there's definitely a trend toward, not necessarily solo stars, but singer-songwriters.