



on disc



Loud & Unprincipled

Four middle-aged black men?

Kiss: Alive II (Casablanca)

Alice Cooper:

The Alice Cooper Show (Warner Bros.)

Sammy Davis Jr.:

A Live Performance of His Greatest Hits (Warner Bros.)

There's a story going around in music business circles that's so hot you won't read it in the major magazines. *Rolling Stone*, *Circus*, *Crawdaddy*, and even *The Music Gig* are staying away from this one. Editors point out that the story is simply unsubstantiated rumor, based on circumstantial evidence. Well, a lot of good people have gone to the electric chair for less! So here goes, and remember that you heard it here, first.

It all started with Led Zeppelin. When Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones proved that it was possible for session musicians to make a huge amount of money if they were

to forget their principles, play loud, and yell a lot, studio players around the world tried to find a way to follow suit. Most of them, though, were just too musical for their own good.

But then, just a few years ago, several of New York's very best session men were hit with inspiration. We can't give their names here — this is too hot — but just look at the back of any album made in New York during the last ten years.

They could play loud, and they even found someone who could yell nearly as effectively as Robert Plant. But there were problems. The singer didn't look at all like Roger Daltrey (a prime requisite, they believed), and the players were all black and in their forties. Hardly the acceptable image for a power band.

And so here's where the inspiration came in. The musicians would work in the studio, creating the loudest records that they could.

Then they'd get a number of kids off the street, paint them with makeup so that nobody could tell what they really looked like, and put them on the road pretending to play over prerecorded tracks. Such details as personal background, deemed unimportant anyway, were left to the record company mythmakers, who were used to fabricating careers on the spot.

Imagine! Every concert would sound just like the record; there'd be no troublesome ego problem (if one of the road "musicians" gave any trouble, he could be replaced — as several have — and no one would be the wiser); the entire career could be carefully controlled; and the studio musicians would never have to go on the road. They could remain in New York and make their usual triple-scale backing up sensitive singer-songwriters and cutting one-take disco sessions.

Now there's no way that any of this can be

proven. It was too carefully planned for that. But listen to "Beth" and tell me that that track isn't prerecorded. Anybody who attended the concert (as I did) can tell you that "Detroit Rock City" was an encore, not the first number played. If they'll fiddle around that much, why not all the way? And why is it that the chief thing to have been written about Kiss and issued through official channels is a comic book? Huh?

Now if all of that is true, we've got to admire the New York studio musicians for doing a fine job. Kiss are just as loud as Led Zeppelin, and nearly as unsophisticated musically (can't expect these guys to have unlearned everything, after all). The choice of an old Dave Clark Five cut ("Any Way You Want Me") is perfect: the Five were pulling this sort of thing on their audiences at the start of the Beatles era. For any band, even Kiss, to be able to do a Dave Clark number more crudely than Clark himself