

& OUT THE OTHER

Dire Dylan

BOB DYLAN reportedly didn't want CBS to release *Live at Budokan*, his latest album. (We've heard it; they should have listened to him.) Anyway, Dylan's currently in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, at work in the town's famous local studios with guitarist Mark Knopfler and drummer Pick Withers from Dire Straits, bassist Tim Drummond (James Brown, Neil Young and Ry Cooder) and keyboardist Barry Beckett. Rhythm & blues master Jerry Wexler is producing, along with Beckett. Slagged heavily by critics and ex-fans for his recent records and tours, Dylan may be poising himself to land, once again, on his own deep-rooted feet. Dire Straits have delayed *Communique*, their next album, and their proposed European tour for the chance to work with Dylan.

Who Rates the Raters?

BLOODLINE's rating has been switched from an X (if you can believe Audrey Hepburn in an X-rated movie!) to an R because the producers agreed to remove one snuff movie sequence. That left three other snuff scenes, so we can assume the venerable MPAA (the film industry's rating organization) is offended by four murders-for-profit, but not by three. The MPAA is well known for its arcane judgments: the board has steadfastly (twice) refused to change *Manhattan's* rating from R to PG, reportedly because the word "f...k" is used twice in that film. But some of us recall *All the President's Men* with a PG and one "f...k," and last year's *Same Time, Next Year* with a PG and two "f...ks." Isn't that odd? Most insiders believe *Manhattan* remains an R because the old farts on the ratings board could not accept Allen's character having an affair with a 17-year-old girl.

The reason we can't spell it out: some of our schools refuse to distribute any *Ampersands* that contain the dreaded four-letter word. F...k is acceptable, though. Old farts are everywhere.

Oh, Shut Up

NOVELIST RICHARD CONDON, after viewing the film version of his *Winter Kills*, intoned, "It's the first American movie about the American culture that takes a real look at the American culture." Condon also wrote *The Manchurian Candidate* several years ago, which was made into an excellent film that Condon thought "too cold."

COSTUME DESIGNER Theodora Van Runkle (*Bonnie & Clyde*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Godfather II*), now working on Steve Martin's debut, *The Jerk*, reportedly told *Variety's* Army Archerd, "Steve is the best actor I've ever worked with—he's a young Olivier." Stick to clothes, Thea.

"**ELTON HAD** other music to do," asserted a defensive publicist, explaining why two years have elapsed since Elton recorded three Bell and James tunes with Philly producer Thom Bell in Seattle. A three-song single is planned, but no album. "I think they were both ahead of themselves," concluded the publicist.

Big Screen

MONTY PYTHON's *Life of Brian* has been delayed until October, drat, but now for the



MARTY BALIN, in Los Angeles working as co-producer for the second Jesse Barish album, granted a rare, in-person interview, in which he said he was looking forward to "the challenge of doing my own album," although he has not yet signed with any of "several" labels pursuing him (he doesn't have a contract with Grunt or RCA; his last sojourn with the Starship was strictly casual).

Balin says he quit the Starship because their schedule wasn't his. "They have their way of doing things," he said obliquely. "I wasn't ready, I didn't feel like going on tour then, so I said 'Get yourself a singer.' Mickey Thomas, he's pretty good, he'll keep 'em going. And I gave them a good rock & roll song..."

There's no doubt in some of our minds that a Starship without Balin is like the Tin man with no heart; his tender, sexy love songs have always been the perfect counterpoint to the aggressive, intellectual, opaque music by Slick and Kantner.

Balin left the Airplane almost ten years ago, but during that time he made no solo album, choosing to spend his time working for the Indians and producing the first Jesse Barish and Bodacious albums. "I'm so un-ambitious," he joked. "I'm looking for a job. If I find something interesting to do I'll give the whole thing up."

Balin, who looks exactly the same as he did ten years ago, still lives in Marin County (with his dog), practices yoga, still paints and gives the paintings away as quickly as possible. "I don't like to keep them." His pithy prediction for the music scene: "The next craze will be disco-God-pop."

good news: the original group (Eric Idle, John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Terry Jones and Michael Palin) will write and perform six two-hour specials for American TV. Chapman is currently in Hollywood writing his own movie called *Yellow Beard*.

HONEYSUCKLE ROSE, a kind of star-is-born-in-country-music, will star Willie Nelson in the Norman Maine star-on-the-skids role; no co-star has been cast yet. Nelson just

finished *Electric Horseman* with Redford and Fonda and recently signed a multi-picture deal with Universal—which does not include *Honeysuckle Rose* or *Red-Headed Stranger* (the movie to be made from Nelson's album of the same name), which will be produced by Nelson, Gary Busey and Jan-Michael Vincent.

Big Vinyl

ROBIN WILSON, Mork to his friends back on Ork, releases his first comedy record, *Reality*... *What a Concept*, any minute now... Jim Messina, the dark-haired half of Loggins & Messina, has been recording at Santa Barbara Sound, ninety miles above L.A., with a six-man cadre of local musicians—including horns. *Oasis*, their projected LP, is expected in August... Peter Frampton, an early Platinum Prospector, silent since his simpery *I'm in You* of 1977, is back on the racks soon with *Where I Should Be*—a "more rock & roll" record, spies say... Carly Simon's Elektra contract is up this June, and record companies are stampeding to make offers. Will she join Sweet Hubby James at CBS?... Sly Stone, the fringe-waving centerpiece of *Woodstock*, seemed right on time for his times, with the hottest adaptation of funky music to pop tastes. But Epic is now remixing the innovative Sly and the Family Stone hits for disco effect and calling the new package *Ten Years Too Soon*. With Stone's career currently languishing, maybe *Too Late* is more accurate... Frail Nicky Hopkins, sessions piano wizard for the Rolling Stones, Jerry Garcia, Steve Miller, the Beatles, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and several others, is now said to be assembling his own band. Hopkins has been unheard since his 1973 solo flop, *The Tin Man Was a Dreamer*, after which he split Mill Valley, California, for Egham, Surrey... ELO, the Symphonic Space Cadets, decided to precede *Discovery*, their ninth album, with a disco single, "Shine A Little Light." "High class disco," qualifies talkative drummer Bev Bevan... Nick Gilder, who held Number One last Fall with "Hot Child in the City," tries again soon with "You Really Rock Me." Called "the Nabokov of rock" for his emphasis on Lolita-style teenage girls, Gilder responds airily, "Yes, that's what I'm known for—sex and success."

There's Money in It...

AL KOOPER (early Blood Sweat & Tears, Dylan sessions and the Supersession album, Kooper-Goldberg-Bloomfield and Lynyrd Skynyrd production) is putting a new band together—centered on just-departed Doobie Brother Jeff "Skunk" Baxter and New York guitarist Elliot Randall. Bassist Richie Hayward, ex-Little Feat and a recent *Hollywood Squares* contestant, is slated for the new group. Keyboard player Jai Winding, son of famous bebop trombonist Kai Winding, may also be in, along with bassist Neil Steubenhaus from Larry Carlton's band. "There may be another keyboard player and singer, I won't know for a couple of weeks," Kooper told *Ampersand*.

Recent comments by guitarist Michael

Bloomfield, a Kooper co-worker in KGB and the Supersession album, however, might impugn Kooper's credibility with some listeners. "Al Kooper invented the term—super-group, supersession," Bloomfield told *Guitar Player* magazine. "It was a pure scam... Just a marketable name, like Froot Loops... We were a product, we were hula hoops, we were skateboards. Kooper said right from the beginning, 'We'll make a killing, that's all we're in it for... It's just a scam, a scam to make money.'"

Kooper, who has been busy recently with jazz session work, said he thought Bloomfield's comments were "funny."

MIKE CURB, California's new lieutenant governor and head of Mike Curb Productions, was accused recently on the front page of the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* of lying through his pearly teeth: Curb, whose company just sold a few acts to Elektra-Asylum, had promised to drop his record business involvement after the election. "Exposing the Choirboy Candidate," a lengthy investigation published in *New West* magazine just before Curb's election victory detailed a large number of rather questionable dealings by Curb in the music industry. The story, by Maureen Orth and Bruce Henderson, was carefully checked by *New West's* attorneys and never convincingly refuted by Curb or his organization. About the *Herald-Examiner's* charges, a Curb spokesperson told *Ampersand*, "No comment is being made on that at this time."

Curb's claims to fame also include production of Debby Boone's "You Light Up My Life" and falsetto vocals for the soundtrack of a soft-porn epic called *Mondo Hollywood*.

White Russia Indeed

ALEXANDER ZIMCHUCK provided the vodka while electric blues master B.B. King spoke recently at a press conference in the U.S.S.R. Consulate in San Francisco's posh Pacific Heights district. The topic was King's just-completed tour of the Soviet Union—22 dates at 3-4,000 arenas, all sold out. Zimchuck, the Soviet Consulate General, mentioned that King's records were played over the radio during the tour—an unusual twist because Soviet authorities don't want their youth affected by American music (it makes them want to buy blue jeans). Under the glare of TV lights, King was asked if he had encountered any racism on the tour. "No," replied the bluesman, "because I didn't see any blacks."

Winners

THE HOTSHOT winner of our Honorary Blues Brothers Contest was James McTaggart from the University of Texas at Austin—a junior and an accounting major, McTaggart claims, "College is great! I'm just trying to figure out how to make it a full-time career." The winners of our Bell Jar Poetry contest are Luellen Fletcher of Iowa City (first prize, \$500); Robert Due, Minneapolis (second prize, \$350); and Liz Gold, Austin, TX (third prize, \$150). Thanks to the hundreds who participated.