

# HITTING THE ROAD

## Xplorers taking off permanently...

The Xplorers are splitting up sort of. "We're not really breaking up," says Henry Cooper, "we're relocating." Cooper and John Barley, the founders of the group, and drummer Marlin Reiber plan to move to Europe sometime this summer. "Eugene is becoming a ghost town," says Barley, "and Portland is almost as bad, as far as clubs closing." The three mention Amsterdam as a possible relocation point but their plans are not complete. "We got about as far as a local band can go," says Cooper. "Basically we want to get out. From there, things are subject to change without no-

vice. Sale ends Tuesday." Meanwhile, saxophonist Frank West will stay in Eugene, possibly to join the others later, and bass player Fred Kellogg plans to move back to his hometown, New York. Cooper says the early days were like "beating our heads against a wall, not having a lot of money, not being known." Now, almost two years later, jobs are more regular, but The Xplorers have still been unable to break into some of the local night-spots. "O'Callahans, Hookers, they think we're punk rockers," says Cooper. "It's stupid, we're not anything close to that." "They won't hire us because we don't do the accepted formula," says Barley. "You know,

shag haircuts, spandex pants, hype, light shows. "Trying to pretend to be something you're not," says Cooper, "letting your hair grow out and pretending you're Rod Stewart. A lot of those bands are a lot of show and no go. It's about ten years behind the times. They don't take us seriously and take advantage of us because we don't have a slick manager. "But we've always done okay. The people who go out (and listen to music) are okay. If it wasn't for them we'd already be gone." They hope that European audiences will be more appreciative of their brand of music. "I think they like it all over

Europe," says Cooper. "They know and appreciate American music more than we (Americans) do." And just what is their brand of American music? "Solid American roots music," says Barley, including The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Dave Edmunds, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Roy Loney (of the Flaming Groovies) and Merle Haggard. "It's American music, that says it all," says Cooper. "America has a lot going for it: jazz, blues, country and rock and roll." "With the coming of The Blasters the stuff that we do might finally have its day," says Barley, "and that's why we're going somewhere where what we do might finally get noticed." Although it's been rough here, the band bears no grudges. "I'm not down on Eugene," says Cooper, "none of us are. But we need a change."

Their goal in Europe is to work steadily to an appreciative audience and make some money, he says. Until The Xplorers leave, they plan to work as much as they can, with many local gigs scheduled and a farewell concert June 13 at the WOW hall.

by mark pynes

The Xplorers (Frank West, Henry Cooper, John Barley, Marlin Reiber and Fred Kellogg) are calling it quits in Eugene and "relocating," elsewhere, possibly Amsterdam.

photo by mark pynes

## but Siegel likes it here

Another Eugene musician is heading out of town. Unlike The Xplorers, he'll be back as soon as he can.

He's Dan Siegel, the Eugene whiz kid who made good. He's the musician who lately seems to always have an album on the top of the jazz charts. But to Dan Siegel himself, he's just a guy who's doing what he wants to do — and having fun at it.

"My whole goal for the future is to remain doing what I am doing right now," Siegel says. "I'd like to keep writing and performing live. If I can keep doing that, I'll be happy."

"Of course, the culmination of writing is being able to record it. Putting it on a record and hearing it on the radio is, for me, totally gratifying. I mean, what else could you do?"

Siegel's recording career spans just four albums, yet all have made their mark on the jazz charts. *Night Ride*, *The Hot Shot*, and *Oasis* have all climbed well into *Billboard's* jazz chart. *Dan Siegel*, his latest work, is currently the most played jazz record on album-oriented rock stations in America. *Billboard* debuted the album last month with a bullet — which means it's supposed to "shoot" to the top.

The reason *Dan Siegel* is expected to do so well probably has to do with some changes Siegel has made. His first three albums were on the Inner City label — a good, but small — operation. Now Siegel works for Elektra, a much bigger label that carries more weight in the music industry.

"Going to Elektra was definitely a step forward for me," Siegel says. "It's like going from the Eugene Ems to the Los Angeles Dodgers. With the move came more money and better promotional opportunities."

And on Elektra, Siegel is in good company. Lee Ritenour and Grover Washington Jr. are a couple of the jazz musicians playing on the Elektra label. Even though this is the first year Elektra has signed jazz artists, it is now recognized as the top jazz label in the nation, Siegel says.

"Of all the labels I've seen, they are the absolute best," he says. "They aren't too big — like Columbia where you can get lost — yet they've got Warner Brothers backing them up, which means they've got the best

distribution in the world."

Siegel graduated from the University of Oregon in music composition in 1976. He grew up in Eugene, married his wife Melissa here two years ago, and plans on staying in the area as long as he can.

There was a day, however, when Siegel almost left Eugene for a bigger city — where he would find a larger market for his music.

"I was going to move to L.A. before I did my first demo tape, but Allen (Kovac, Siegel's manager) talked me out of it," Siegel says. "He said, 'There are enough people down there already who are starving, just like you want to do'. So I told him I'd give it a little longer. Six months later I got the deal for my first album."

"Now there's no reason for me to move down to L.A.," he says. "I'll just go down there for business occasionally, and otherwise I can live a normal existence here. Well, semi-normal anyway."

Siegel and his band will be living a less normal existence for the next few months, as they'll be on the road through the middle of July promoting Siegel's new album.

The tour will take them first to Disneyland, where they'll perform on Memorial Day with Lee Ritenour, Spyro Gyra, and Woody Herman. Then they'll head for shows on the East Coast, and stop at a few midwestern cities along the way.

## 'Now there's no reason for me to move down to L.A.'

Stan Garrett, who handles national promotion for the band, says Siegel draws good crowds in towns like Syracuse, Rochester, Atlanta and Miami. With the exposure Elektra plans to give Siegel, he should draw bigger crowds than ever.

"The crowds are different in the Midwest than they are here," Siegel says. "I think music is more a part of their culture. For them, recreation is going out to bars and buying records. So people there are generally more responsive, which makes us feel good."

Siegel first became interested in jazz and



Dan Siegel

photo by chris courtner

fusion when he was a junior in high school. He played rock and roll in several bands for a couple of years, but found he grew tired of it.

"It got to be too simple, and it wasn't rewarding anymore," Siegel says. "There was just no challenge to it."

"Rock and roll is kind of like toilet paper," he says. "People use it once and then flush it down the toilet, because it has no real lasting value. It's only good for what it can be used for at that moment."

But Siegel still appreciates the roots he has in rock, because he uses a lot of rock elements in the music he now plays.

"Since my background was in rock, I had the ability to cross over to a jazz-rock-pop vein," he says. "What made my music happen was a combination of these elements. Now that it's been happening for five years, it's hard to say where it will go."

"For now our plans are to tour behind the record, and make that happen. It looks real good, but it's going to be hard work," he says.

"I'm looking forward to the future." by chris courtner

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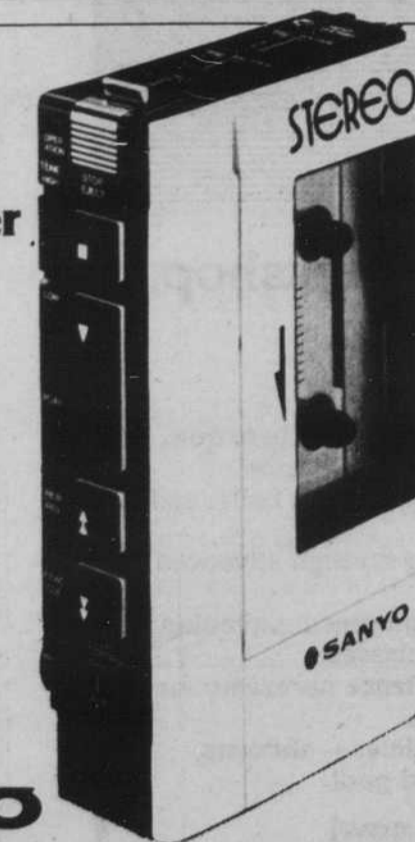


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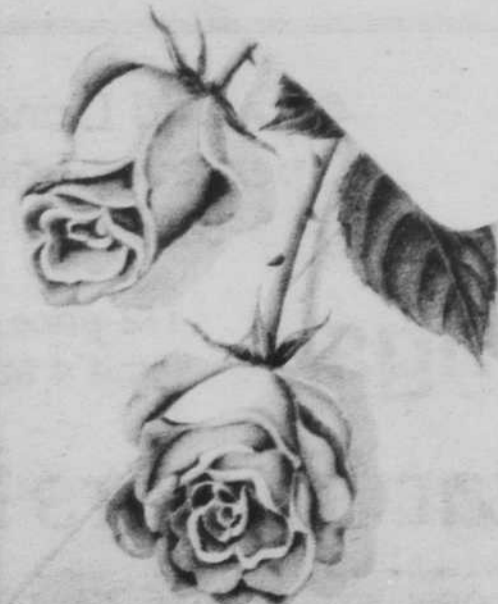
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