

AMISH

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Our next feature is something of a "Strictly Canadian" Extra. Actually though, I had hoped to have had this done way back for issue #4, but here I am finally typing it up for an already overdue issue #5 !

Our story on the "Amish" is an in depth look at a (then) young band that for one reason or another just never broke through to the big leagues in the early '70s, and probably thought they'd disappeared into the world of forgotten, overlooked 70's hard-rock. Yet 20 years later with a strong return to classic hard-rock of yesteryear, (or so it seems) you may want to take note of the Amish - a band that, though they only left 1 album of utter classic rock, deserve to be looked back upon, as like so many others, little is known of the band.

My interest in the Amish began just a few years back when I came across their lone LP in a used record shop which was asking a steep price for something I'd never heard of before. My only clue to the LP was a recommendation in a collector's book. The price became of nil importance when I got the album home and was pretty blown away after a quick listen !

For lovers of the early '70s HR scene (ie: 'Heep, Deep Purple...) this album is a must find ! It has all the elements that the classic rockers were made of - hammond organ, strong vocals, and lots of amazing guitar work (with lots of raw sound and fuzz). The first 3 tracks alone should hook the listener. There's also a killer version of the Traffic classic "Dear Mr. Fantasy".

Now to the history of the band....

At a young age Ron Baumtrog got together with fellow Preston - Ontario mate Mike Gingrich and began forming R&B bands which covered such artists as 'Grand Smith' and 'George Oliver'. An early act of theirs' was "F.J. and the Impressions" which went complete with a horn section ! These early days introduced Baumtrog to the use of the hammond B-3 organ which would become a big part of the Amish sound.

In the late '60s Ron & Mike hooked up with singer Doug Stagg and drummer Jack Byrne (both of nearby 'Galt') and guitarist Richard Botts. With the name taken from (according to LP liner notes), a sect of Amish folks that lived in the Galt area, the band set out doing covers of such Canadian acts as "McKenna- Mendleson Mainline", and "The Modern Rock Quartet", as well they later included tunes by the "James Gang" and the "Doors".

Amish were picked up by the agency of "Dram Productions". The band toured the Galt- Preston area at the time playing in clubs and schools. Finally a demo tape was recorded and circulated by Dram. The demos caught the attention of "Sussex Records" in L.A. This would be the band's biggest break ! Sussex then wanted the band to record the album at "GM Studios" in Detroit, just a few hours down the road from the band's home. Right away this posed a problem for the Amish. The problem was that guitarist Rich Botts was in fact an American army deserter and would be unable to cross the border for the sessions. The situation was solved when a young Detroit area guitarist named Joe Gutz was hired to play on the album. (**If anyone out there know's anything about Joe Gutz- let me know ! Thanks.**) I don't know how Botts sounded, but after hearing Gutz' work on the album I'd have to say it was the best move ! Anyway, 9 tracks were recorded - 8 originals, (2 written by the band, and the other 6 by the team of Ron Baumtrog & Doug Stagg), plus the 1 cover tune. 7 of the originals wound up on the album, while "Upon My Leavin" was left out and intended to be the B-side for the single "Down The Road" - this however was never issued !