



Sounds

Carter Benefit A Losing Success

By Stephen Ford

NEW YORK (INEA) — Bob Dylan's heart may be in the right place (or was) but it appears receipts from his spectacular sellout at the 70,000-seat Astrodome in Houston aren't.

The all-star concert was organized by the same people who masterminded Dylan's recent "Rolling Thunder Revue" to benefit imprisoned boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. But after paying for size of the mammoth Astrodome, promoters' and box office overhead and the impressive array of performers, Carter's defense fund will see a mere pittance of the amount initially earmarked for him.

Performing in the five-hour show with Dylan along with Revue veterans Roger McGuinn, "Ramblin' Jack" Elliot and Mick Ronson, were Steve Wonder, Isaac Hayes and Sean Phillips. Muhammad Ali and Redd Foxx were also spotted on stage.

Incidentally, someone really needs to talk to Dylan about his choice of venues. In 1969, he immortalized legendary bluesman John Wesley Hardin, who in reality was a homicidal gunman; but Dylan cast him at a misunderstood Robin Hood. His latest la includes the dedication of departed crime syndicate boss Joey Galle. It is a ballad portraying "Crazy Joe" as a passionate sociologist fighting society's oppression. Who's next to be claimed by Dylan's lyrical redemption, Generalissimo Franco?

Township Superior: Expect a media blitz from those wonderful publicity sorts who live by wit and hypebole when they unleash Russian classical pianist Lazar Berens in America. Virtually unknown here before his signing with CBS Records and Deutsche Grammophon two weeks ago, the 40-year-old pianist has been acclaimed throughout Europe in brief appearances, and will release a whopping five albums in one month.

No SRO at RSO for EC & BGA's (regrets to Variety) A money threatens aboard the Robert Stigwood Organization's ship of state. RSO's premier artists, the Bee Gees and Eric Clapton, are threatening to jettison Stigwood's management because of his plans to park the RSO recording label out from under the wing of Atlantic Records and sign with Polygram. Clapton was not "rees in voicing his displeasure when told of the possible label shift. The Bee Gees reacted more calmly. They stormed out of a Los Angeles recording studio where they were preparing their next LP with producer Art Mardik who was ordered back to New York by retaliating Atlantic executives.

Most of the major components of the recording industry, the record companies, distributors, promoters, talent managers and stereo equipment dealers, hold their own inside inside every year but "Messexps" is probably the only convention where anyone interested in any facet of the business has access to all these markets under one roof.

The second annual Messexps, organized by Roddy Shabazian, will be held at New Orleans' Fairmont Hotel in September, and representatives from all interests falling under the expansive realm of music will be there.

Shabazian said they decided against last year's Las Vegas site because those attending spent more time at the gambling tables than at convention booths.

The health of British style rock seems to ebb and flow. If we are to believe music critics, British rock is nearing the dismal bottom of a low wave that could eventually level off altogether — much like the oscillating appeal of jazz.

Often, the very hands contributing to the gradual deterioration of British rock occasionally rally to defy critics, either in hopes of reversing a fatal trend or perhaps to plant one final feather from the golden goose. Whatever the motive, Britain's four-man ensemble "Sweet" is currently touring across the States and forcing the descending sine wave to at least linger.

Sweet's admirers say the raucous band has breathed life back into the guitar-oriented English sound that dominated America a decade ago.

In seven years, Sweet has totally conquered Europe, regularly finishing ahead of such upstarts as Yes, ELP and Pink Floyd in Continental rock polls. They have sold more than 30 million records worldwide yet their current U.S. tour is their first — odd for a group with such staggering overseas success.

"We just weren't ready to do it any earlier," explained Sweet's vocalist Brian Connolly recently while in New York. "We had been approached by American promoters many times before but we always turned down their offers. We had no American agent here to represent us in tour arrangements," he said.

More important, the only single released in the U.S. anyone recognized as it was "Wet Willie" which we felt didn't project the real spirit of the band."

Connolly laid the lack-to-back hits of "Ballroom Blitz" and "Fox on the Run," both among the royalty of last year's singles, encouraged them to release their first American album, "Desolation Boulevard," and tour the States.

The sound of Fox on the Run really portrays us now," he said. "We thought it would go well here, it's got the loud, rowdy lyrics that go well in America. The Europeans love our sound, our melodies, but they don't understand our lyrics, of course. America likes Sweet for totally different reasons than Europe."

Connolly disclosed some adjustments were made in their usually flamboyant stage show in deference to the fact they are not blessed with strong visual impact in this country. "We thought it wasn't to stress our music," he said.

Their distinctive four-part harmonies are still part of the show but the elaborate film projections and light shows are not. "We felt all the films were a little too artificial but we still show Mick (Tucker, drummer) across three screens as if he's trading runs and solos with himself. But beside that, it's our sound that makes up most of the show."

Anticipating the possibility of Yankee rejection, he reflects, "I don't know if we have the kind of music to hold up for years. We're still developing, still moving up. We should have a lot better idea of how we fare with the American audience after the release of 'Give Us a Wink,' our next album. I'll probably take a few years here to tell if we're going to remain a big group."



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