

# COLUMNS



"I'm a roadrunner, BABY" rather than the "I'm a roadrunner, HONEY" with which Mssr. Diddley laid the cornerstone of the mighty "Roadrunner" empire.

Another loose end that I might as well address concerns that have come up re: my write-up of the Loli and the Chones show wherein the lame (in my humble opinion) headliners tried to throw around their weight (of which they have plenty) in order to hold up the rock 'n' roll action so that they could set up their double stacks, roto-toms, big gong in back of the drum set, etc., and play one of their marathon sets despite L & the C being set up and ready to play.

Apparently feeling that I had unfairly favored the young, fast and scientific over the old, lazy and cringing in primitive superstitious fear, a few kind and generous souls have asked me, "But don't you think that it's important to respect and give 'props' to the elders of the 'punk rock' scene?"

An interesting question, to be sure, worthy of a certain amount of pondering (which I did, in fact, give it).

My duly considered answer is, "no." Not only does the weight of additional years confer no automatic honor, but given that these years should contain numerous experiences which should prove enriching (and hopefully deepening to one's philosophical impulse) I would like to propose that oldtimers should be held to a MORE rather than LESS stringent set of whatever standards are being applied in aesthetic evaluation.

For example, the likes of, say, the Rolling Stones (might as well stick with obvious examples for clarity's sake) should be regarded at present as sucking even more miserably and rancidly than they objectively do (and have for longer than they were ever any good, a nearly sobering thought).

Muddy Waters, for an other-handed example, had enough spare ingredient X (guts, soul, whatever you want to call it) to make him a Titan up to his very end, even if his live and recorded accompaniment wasn't up to the quality of the bands in his first decade of commercial recording. He even had enough ingredient X to weather the likes of the "psychedelic" "Electric Mud" album (not his idea), although the pic in the fold out jacket of him is a remarkable enough exercise in violent absurdity to almost make owning the LP worthwhile.

The respect that the Rolling Stones had (and maybe still do, for all I know) for Muddy Waters was not mandated by his superior age, but by his superior qualities (which were given the final proof by his greater fortitude).

Besides, with the release of the Stooges first album, the Stones should have started to think about hanging it up (I speak, as should be obvious, from an aesthetic and not commercial point of view) as they were being superseded (actually, the Chocolate Watchband at their best as well as the Swamp Rats had already superseded the Stones, by that's beside the immediate point) (and being sans Brian Jones didn't help); of course they were able to coast by since the Stooges were almost universally taken to be some kind of unfunny joke (when they were actually "out of time" in the Nietzschean sense, when the

Stones were running "out of time" in the game show sense [and were soon to be "Out of Time" in the Stonean sense]. With the Ramones, the Stones were rendered absolutely obsolete as anything but a lame cash-cow (especially since "Exile on Main St." was the last Stones' LP for which any good reason to exist could imaginably be argued, and even then it's no easy argument).

So where does that leave us? Right smack dab in the lap of Ralph Gean, an old-timer whose talent should have put him on top of the heap of stardom but whose skewed perspective was/is probably too much for your basic mediocre masses to take.

Fortunately for the lovers of the splendid and esoteric (such as aesthete Shane White, who first pointed me in Gean's direction), World Serpent Distribution (Unit 717 Seager Buildings, Brookmill Road, London SE8 4HL) has put out a selection of Ralph Gean recordings from 1963-1996, "A Star Unborn" (CD only, sorry to say).

Musically, it veers from psychotic shit-kicking ("Homicidal Me") to bent rock 'n' roll ("Doctor Casey"), parodistic plodding heavy rock ("Hard To Be A Killer"), scary Casio nuttiness worthy of latter-day "Beat of the Traps" ("Granny's Grave"). In 1996's "Star Trekkin' Rock N' Roll Cowboy," he declares himself ready for his apotheosis (and high noon duel with the Legendary Stardust Cowboy?), and ready to kick the ass of any number of youngsters trying to play the weird roots card. He doesn't need any "bonus" respect points for his age.

Domestically, the CD is available for \$18.98 p.p.d. from Denver's leading (as I recall) record purveyor, Waxtrax (638 E. 13th Ave., Denver, CO 80205), from whom comes the information that Mr. Gean is not only still performing but likely to do some touring in the coming year. As the man says, "I'm the what might have been if what is hadn't happened."

Also for you digit-ophile whippersnappers, Revenant (P.O. Box 198732, Nashville TN, 37219) has a great selection of raw blues gospel (purists/categorists are welcome to take exception to the combined use of the terms "blues" and "gospel") on "American Primitive Vol. I." The packaging is beautiful enough that you can give this to square relatives for Xmas; in fact they recommend the set to "Salve Christmas Guilt!" (Personally, my only Xmas guilt is that I didn't manage to shoot, steal and destroy more Xmas decorations as a youngster, although I will here give myself props for the time I was reaching out of a friend's car to grab a four foot plastic caroling angel from the doorstep of someone's semi-circular drive-through driveway when the front door opened; the wheelboy prudently took off as the hapless homeowner started yelling and giving chase, while the angel's head that I had grabbed came right off of its shoulders, making a fine pellet gun target the next day, and making suitably punk rock sized rips in the fabric of society, man). If I was in the habit of hanging around people for Xmas, I'd certainly like to pop this in after the Huey "Piano" Smith Xmas album and savor the Red Death reactions that Charley Patton's one-two punch of "Oh Death" and "Prayer of Death" drew from the merry mak-

ers.

And what would a column be without a couple of vinyl plugs? Solamente (124 St. Marks Place #2, Brooklyn, NY 11217), which has probably accrued the best batting average of releases by current surf and instrumental bands, has two new 7"s which are quite above average. "The Royal Knightmares" are easier on the wildass r'n'r on the more restrained Euro-tip (not surprising, perhaps, since they're from Italy) but maintain a nice mood, while "The Penetrators meet the Space Cossacks" features stalwarts the Penetrators (definitely among the leaders in the surf sweepstakes) with up 'n' comers the Space Cossacks (who show good taste by covering the Atlantics' "Shark Attack," one of the few still-underappreciated old surf chestnuts) for two songs apiece.

And don't forget to heed the Ackermonger's advice and study Esperanto, "la lingvo internacia."