disques



by Stan Twist



Gene was wandering around the neighbourhood department store one morning and as he passed the record department, he spotted a record with an American Eagle on the front.

"Must be the new Airplane album, they're always making some sort of joke at the expense of the American government."

On closer inspection, however, Gene read the name "Michael Nesmith and The First National Band" on the cover.

"Michael Nesmith...oh I remember him...he was one of the Monkees...they used to call him "Wool Hat". So he's got his own band now. I wonder if they do "Last Train to Clarksville, ha,ha,ha,."

Gene turned the record over and started reading the back cover. Up in one corner was a poem (probably the lyrics to a song) written by Nesmith. As Gene read it he began to take Mr. Nesmith a little more seriously.

"Pretty heavy", thought Gene as he finished reading the poem.

In the ablum credits, Gene noticed the names "Red" Rhodes, James Burton and John Osborne, some of the most respected studio men in the business. Rhodes, in fact, was actually a member of Nesmiths' band, the other two being guest artists.

"Maybe this wouldn't be such a bad album after all."

Gene also noticed that one of the songs on the record was written by Eric Clapton. Gene wasn't so sure about "Wool Hat" anymore. On a crazy impulse, Gene decided to buy the album.

"Hell, what have I got to lose."

Gene payed for the album and walked the block and a half to his apartment. As soon as he walked in the door, he put the album on the stereo, lit up a joint and sat down to listen to the latest addition to his abundant record collection. Gene moved only once during the next half hour, and that was just to get up and turn the record over. He was sincerely shocked and surprised with this record. He concluded that Nesmith was right up there with the rest of those west coast country-rock dudes; Flying Buritto Brothers, Byrds, Dilliard and Clark... in fact he was above them if just for his lack of pretention. He had the same sort of honesty in his music and lyrics that had made the Buffalo Springfield a legend back in 1968.

"Yeah, Nesmith is right there."

The smile on Gene's face became wider as he formulated a prank in his mind. Gene had a friend, Ron, who considered himself to be extremely cool. Always dressed in the latest fashions, always punctuating his speech with the latest expressions and above all, always up on what groups made it and what ones didn't;

Yes, Ron prided himself on his knowledge of the music scene. Ron could tell you who was playing in what groups at any given moment, who they had played for before and a lot of the time he could even give you a brief history of the particular musician he was talking about. Ron also had a deep contempt for "bubblegum" or top 40 groups and singers. Ron couldn't say the words Bobby Sherman, Osmond Brothers or the Guess Who without a snarl in his voice. If the Monkees were still together, they surely would have topped Ron's list of most hated groups. Yes, Ron certainly knew his music.

"Hey Ron, listen, why don't you come over to the apartment for a while. I got some really super weed last night and there's a new album I just brought that I want you to hear.

"Oh yeah. Too much. O.K., I'll be over in about twenty minutes I'm eating right now. By the way, what album did you get? "

"I want that to be asurprise, but I know you'll like it."

"Yeah, O.K. I'll be over in a while then."

Gene was reminded of the fact that he hadn't eaten yet today, so he began preparing a pot of mushroom soup.

Gene was halfway through his meal when a knock came on the door.

"Come in, it's not locked."

Ron walked in, smiled and nodded to Gene.

"Good day, Ron. I'm almost done eating. While you're waiting, you might as well roll a couple of joints. There's some papers over there on the desk, Here, catch! "

Gene tossed Ron a small plastic bag full of grass. During the next five minutes, Ron rolled four large joints and Gene finished his dinner. Gene walked into the living room and Ron handed him the joint he had just lit. As Gene took a toke, he saw Ron nod his head and let out his breath.

"Yeah, super weed."

Both of them started to laugh together, then suddenly Gene remembered why he had asked Ron over.

He walked over to the stereo as Ron took another toke and turned it on. He smiled as he heard the familiar hum of the speakers. He was proud of his stereo.

The needle came down gently on the record and the music began to flow from the speakers.

"Am I suppose to guess who this is or something like that man."

"Yeah, that's the idea Ron."

Ron let out a quick laugh that remained visible as a large quantity of smoke burst out with it.

"You're crazy man".

The song played for about a minute, then Ron turned to Gene and spoke.

"Well you were right about one thing Gene. I do like it. Can you give me a few hints to help me guess who it is.? "

"Some hints, eh? Let's see. They're from the American west coast."

"Oh come on man. You think I didn't know that? All those country-rock groups are from the west coast. Come on, give me something solid."

Gene chuckled at his friends arrogance.

"Well let's see. YOU would probably guess the leader of the group before you get the group."

"Oh, so it's a him and them thing is it. I see."

The pair fell silent again. Ron was intently listening to the music to pick up some clue.

"God, that voice sounds familiar! ! "

Ron's face wasn't as calm as it had been a few moments before. He was on to something, Gene could see that.

"You're sure I've heard of this guy, aren't you? "

"Ron, who haven't you heard of! ? "

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

They remained silent for two more songs, then Ron's face lit up.

"Hey, this isn't the Gene Clark solo album is it. You know, Gene Clark, the guy that used to sing lead and write a lot in the Byrds."

"No, it's not Gene Clark".

"Oh"

Ron slumped back down into his chair and reached over to pick up another joint.

"Is that steel guitarist a studio man or a member of the group".

"He's a member of the band".

Ron contemplated that fact for a moment. He lit up the joint and handed it to Gene.

"Steel guitarist...member of the band...hey...the Flying Buritto Brothers got a new member didn't they? That's who's singing. It's the FBB isn't it?

"Nope"

The first side of the record has ended and Gene got up to flip it over. Ron sat staring at the floor, his eyes half closed because of the dope and a slowly increasing look of frustration spreading over his face.

"Come on man, I really don't know who this cat is, do I? "

"Oh you've heard of him. Almost everyone has".

Gene sat back down as the second side started. Gene smiled as he saw Ron nodding his head in time with the music.

"Well, whoeverit is, you can bet I'm going to cop that album. That's really far out, man."

Gene chuckled.

The silence between the two was maintained until the start of the third song.

"Hey, that's a Clapton song. Off Layla, isN.t it. Yeah, "I looked away" Pretty good version too."

The young men toked another joint during the album's last two songs. At one point Gene noticed Ron's face sort of brighten as if he had connected a name with the voice on the record. Then he saw his friend shake his head as if to say, "No, it can't be him."

The album finally ended.

"Well, have you figured out who it is Ron."

"No, I'm sorry man. I just can't think of who it sounds like. O.K., go ahead, tell me who it is."

Gene went into his bedroom and returned with the album cover, which he handed to Ron. Ron read the title out loud.

"Nevada Fighter-Michael Nesmith and the First National Band. Mike Nesmith...wasn't he one of the Monkees.

Gene smiled broadly and shook his head affirmatively.

"Nesmith. Well, shit, you really fooled me this time."

"You honestly mean you didn't know who it was Ron ? Oh come on, you really knew, you were just putting me on," Gene gushed out sarcastically.

"Fuck off", Ron retorted good naturedly. Then they both started laughing and continued to do so for about three minutes.

"Well, I've gotta split man. Got a one-thirty class. See you later, huh? "

"Yeah, sure Ron."

Gene didn't see Ron till a few days later, when he dropped by Ron's place to pick up a book. As he sat down on the edge of the bed, he looked over and saw an RCA Victor album on the stereo. He rose and went over to see what it was. Sure enough, "Nevada Fighter". However, beside the stereo, Gene also saw two brand new copies of the first two Nesmith albums. As he was about to turn around, another album cover caught his eyes. He picked it up and looked at its' familiar cover. The Monkees first album. Just then Ron walked back into the room. His face turned red as he saw the record Gene held in his hands.

"Well man, I was just getting back to the roots, you know."

"I know, Ron."

Suddenly both boys started laughing, the way they had done many times before.

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