

Pop

David Bowie Can't Beat The Band

The success of Richard Nader's Rock 'n' Roll shows, now four years and recently captured in the film "Let The Good Times Roll," undoubtedly sparks interest in early rock and roll acts, but they appear as if they've been sealed in vacuum jars for more than a decade, untouched by Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Otis Redding, Paul Simon, Smokey Robinson and all the other creative forces in contemporary music. Even though the revival acts have their place

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There are those who argue that the golden oldies receive airplay and attention because nothing new is happening. These are usually the same people who waste a lot of time wondering who will be the next Beatles. It's as if the art world had constantly searched for the next Picasso without paying any attention to Dubuffet or Calder.

Although I'm not overwhelmed by the quality or creativity of a great many new records and new groups, there are enough good, sometimes excellent, records that deserve to be exposed to a wider public via AM radio. But the nostalgia boom, now in full flower, is stifling new talent and even making it more difficult for established names to click with new material.

An off-shoot of the nostalgia boom is that several artists who have previously contributed their own tunes to the rock scene are now involved in recording albums filled entirely with oldies. John Lennon is reportedly working on an oldies album in Los Angeles right now, and The Band and David Bowie have just released collections of old tunes.

Both albums are characteristic of their artists. Even though it's disappointing not to hear at least a few new songs from The Band—especially because their last album was a live concert recording—they have come up with a thoroughly entertaining and musical album. In

The Band and Dylan are reuniting for a two-month tour handled by Bill Graham; in New York they will be doing two shows on Jan. 30th at Madison Square Garden and two at Nassau Coliseum on Jan. 28th and 29th. Furthermore, this historic reunion will feature new songs by both Dylan and The Band and will probably be recorded live.

the arrangements, the interplay of the instruments all speak of The Band, not those early, essentially thin and monotonous rock 'n' roll recordings.

In the vocals there's no attempt to mimic the original singer and one of the high points of this album is Rick Danko's sensitive and moving rendition of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come"—a real tribute to Cooke's spirit.

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jump on, David Bowie will not only pounce but leap a little farther than everyone else. Even though sexual ambiguity coupled with make-up and theatrics were previously being explored by the likes of Alice Cooper, Iggy Stouge and the Cockettes, Bowie got credit as an innovator because he refined the shtick to its snazziest limit and then shouted about it so loudly that the public thought he invented it.

Depending on whether you like Bowie or not, you can consider him either eclectic or exploitive. Neither way does he come out a musical giant. He is his own best creation. At present Bowie has not

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only latched on to the oldies craze but he has also realized that rock's mid-sixties adolescence is now nearly ten years past and ripe for revival. So **Pin Ups** (RCA APL1-0291), complete with Twiggy on the cover, is a collection of Bowie's fave raves from the English rock scene 1964-67.

Rather than coming off as honest and vital interpretations of other people's songs, "Pin Ups" suffers from too much style and technique and not enough musical substance. What possible value is there in aping the Who or the Yardbirds or Pink Floyd when anyone interested in their work can hear the originals? If Bowie could add anything fresh to numbers like the Who's "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere" or the Kinks's "Where Have All The Good Times Gone," this record could have some artistic justification. But unless one enjoys impersonations, this album is too self-conscious and empty to be meaningful.

I dug out the Who's "I Can't Explain" and the Yardbirds' "I Wish You Would" to compare with Bowie's renditions. In both cases the originals were far more energetic, making Bowie's imitations sound rather effete. I



GWEN VERDON is among the artists who will participate in the bazaar and auction to benefit the New York Public Library's Performing Arts Research Center. At Lincoln Center Saturday and Sunday.

can remember the Easybeat's "Friday On My Mind" and the Yardbirds' "Shapes Of Things" well enough to know that Bowie's copies lack the vital drive of the originals.

When someone tries, like Bowie, to be so fashionable, so decadent and so liberated, the effort shows. In contrast, The Band proves that if one sticks to the basics and interprets them sincerely, old material can be valid today. Honesty to my ears is an important part of any music.