

Alan Bisbort

'Live' tries

Rock N Roll Animal
—Lou Reed (RCA)
Live Rhythmin'
—Paul Simon (Columbia)

Bob Dylan isn't the only member of music's Old Guard to have come out of hiding. Lord knows (and so do we) that every last breath from Dylan's recent tour was jackhammered into our minds by countless overzealous publications, all trying, in so many words, to convince themselves that Dylan is back with the noble task of saving rock music.

I should hope that a few other people from Back then would at least prompt some nodding heads or polite applause, because right now I'm going to nod out if I hear another word about Mr. Dylan. I speak, of course, of Lou Reed and Paul Simon, who have both recently (in the last year) gone on tour after long absences. Their new "live" albums are more than just mementoes of the tour; they are statements from both saying, "Hey, we are still alive."

It comes as no wonder that Paul Simon would eventually release a live album; his popularity goes back almost as far as Dylan's (*The Sound of Silence* is included on *Live Rhythmin'*). But Lou Reed? Reed's music goes back at least as far as Simon's, yet until last year he was an "unrecognized genius" (a catch-phrase that arrogant critics like to throw around).

With the release of the single *Walk On the Wild Side*, people began to jump on the Lou Reed bandwagon, thinking that he was a flash (cashing in on the glam image). Still, even if it did threaten to hype him to death, the commercial success at least shed some light on his entire body of work, dating back to the Velvet Underground. Surprise. What we have here is one of the major forces in rock music for the past eight years and one of the few people who can honestly flaunt the title of rock n roll animal.

Paul Simon, on the other hand, fuses so many strains of music together with his usually incisive lyrics that he can reach a much broader audience. His motive is didactic, to teach and shed light with a general view of America. He sounds so genuinely concerned about his country, which is eternally threatening to deprive him of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that he is able to pull it off. Simon wants answers while Reed doesn't even want to ask

questions. It is a tribute to both of these artists that they overcome the dangers of "live" recordings. If you like Reed or Simon, you will buy these albums. It's as simple as that.

But, if you like rock and roll very loud and powerful, then you want the best. *Rock N Roll Animal* ranks up with the *Who's Live at Leeds* as one of the best live rock albums to date. From the opening interchanging chords of guitarists Dick Wagner and Steve Hunter, to Lou's manic rave-up vocal on *Rock n' Roll*, the album is relentless in its power. No question about it...this album was meant to be played LOUD (make the room shake).

Although he performs material mostly from his Velvet Underground days, Reed doesn't try to pretend that his band can reproduce those songs. Instead, the band puts every ounce of sound dynamics at their disposal into the music, and, with Reed's vocals miked way up front in the speakers, who cares anyway? When was the last time the outrageously simple chords (such as those in *Sweet Jane*) brought life into your eyes and got the blood flowing again?

Reed wants to teach lessons about as much as I want to die of food poisoning. What can you tell someone about heroin? Simon has written songs warning about drugs, but Reed's *Heroin* is haunting in its ambiguity. Do he or don't he want us to do it? He don't care. The life of the city flows through Lou Reed, despair being his calling card. "I guess, but I just don't know..." go the words of his frantic song *Heroin*.

Paul Simon spans his musical career on *Live Rhythmin'*. Many of the old songs sound almost new in their live treatment. Backed by the *Jessy Dixon Singers* (*Loves Me Like a Rock*, *Bridge Over Troubled Waters*) and *Urubamba* (*The Boxer*, *Duncan* and *El Condor Pasa*), Simon sounds more choir boy than ever before. Lyrics stand out much more evidently without the techniques of the studio, especially on *The Boxer* ("Ain't it strange, after changes upon changes we are more or less the same..."). Wild applause after that line. *American Tune* also benefits in the live translation.

With both of these albums, the presence of the performer cannot be denied. Love them or hate them, but you can't dismiss them or you might as well dismiss your own listening ability. It's all here: the poet and the animal.

A visit to Polk Youth Center

by CB Gaines
Feature Writer

Go directly to jail. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200.

On one of those crazy, rainy days last week, I go to visit a friend at Polk Youth Center in Raleigh, right off I-40. Juan is in on a drug charge. I go with his sister. Only relatives are allowed to visit.

We approach one of the six guard towers. An automated gate slides open in the ten-foot-high chain link fence. We explain ourselves, then pass through a second fence topped with barbed wire.

Later Juan says, "The guard towers have...let's see...whatever 20-20s are and shotguns." Juan wears a green fatigue outfit. The guards will only shoot to wound if he goes outside. "If you've got brown fatigues on," Juan adds, "well, you're in a little trouble."

We are asked to sign a visitor's book. Juan's sister does. I begin to, but Juan whispers, "No. Don't sign that." So I don't. We walk unescorted into a small conference room and sit at a bare table. The linoleum tiled floor is fairly dirty.

There is an eight-inch hole in the cheaply paneled wall between the conference room and the lieutenant's office. It has a fan in it for ventilation though the air duct in the ceiling looks more functional.

"If you want to go to the bathroom, go on the fan," Juan says. He looks through the hole several times during the visit to see if anyone is listening.

"When I first came here," Juan recalls, "I thought the longer I was here, the better it would get. Some of the cases here will curl

your hair. This is no boy scout camp." Males aged 16 to 21 are in Polk Youth Center. Convictions include first and second degree murder and armed robbery. Someone Juan knows has a double life sentence plus 30 years.

Most people at Polk are in for breaking and entering. Juan says, "The 16-year-olds scare the shit out of me."

One inmate was suspected of stealing another's radio. "They opened up his back with a shank." Shank is prison slang for a homemade knife. It is a violation to possess one.

He was taken to Central Prison Hospital which only treats persons over 18. Luckily, everyone who has needed hospitalization so far has been over 18.

Everybody tells me to get a shank," Juan says. "The only thing everybody understands here is violence. By the criterion here I should be a pussy because I'm passive."

"I get fucked-over a lot for trusting people. You become morallless living in here. You lose the ability to judge right from wrong. In making friends you accept their whole philosophy."

"I never used to be prejudiced before I came to prison. But it's set up blacks against white. This place is always on the verge of a riot. If you talk with a black, the whites will chastise you."

Juan lives in a dorm which was built for 40 persons. It now houses 65. His sentence is one day to five years. Designed to allow youthful offenders out quickly, the sentence has odd uses. After serving five per cent of your time, you can make honor grade. Honor Grades wear bright green fatigues and can occasionally leave the center or be

transferred to an honor camp to work or attend school.

"But if you're a drug case, they figure you're going right back to it. Drug violations are the hardest to get out of. You gotta stay here at least four months until the paper work is over."

"There are a bunch of crazies in here," Juan claims. Part of the inmate's record includes a psychiatric diagnosis. But once you've been diagnosed, they offer no treatment.

"People say prison reform never affects your everyday life, but I'll bet half of the crime in the United States is caused by the prison system."

If you are insubordinate to a guard or impolite or use profane language around him, you can get a write-up on your record, which means six more months.

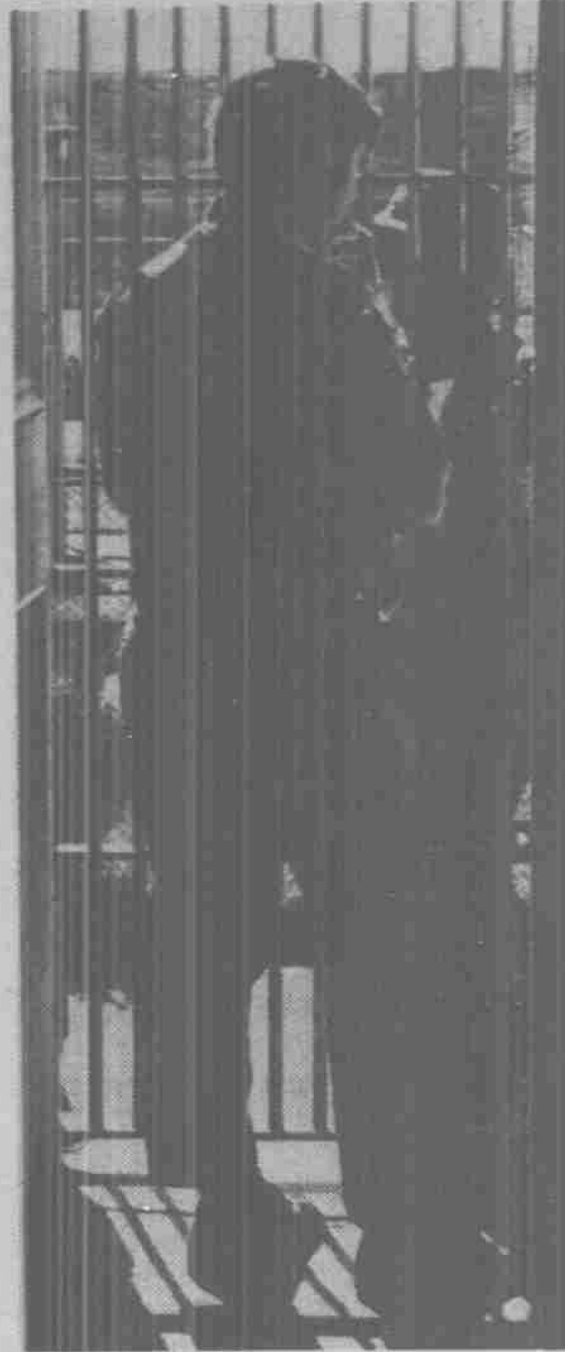
"My record is totally blank just because I haven't done anything wrong," Juan says.

For reading the inmates have a small library. Eight are allowed in for one-half hour at a time. There are over 600 prisoners in Polk Youth Center, which was designed to hold 450. It is virtually impossible to check out the books and it's a violation to give any books to the inmates.

Juan brought 25 or 30 books with him from the Orange County Jail. They burnt them.

Even stranger regulations apply to underwear. The crew shorts Juan wears is a violation.

As we left, a guard checked a birthday poem Juan had given his sister. He ripped it off its matting. Part of the poem read: "A Boy Child is crying at the window/He is being punished."



Only relatives allowed

Reflections on a soulful beat...

by Gary Dorsey
Feature Writer

If you missed the BSM Gospel Choir Sunday night, you may have missed one of the highlights of the Black Arts Festival. If you saw the Kuumba Singers Saturday night, you might have had a reason to miss the Gospel Choir on Sunday.

The Kuumba Singers kind of sang and read poetry Saturday in Memorial Hall, starting off the Festival with a fizzle. The Singers, a group of black intellectuals from Harvard, Radcliffe, MIT, Boston College and a few other prestigious schools from the North, seemed to be trying to teach the southern blacks about

the "black reality" through tinny voices, a band that sounded like a Detroit assembly line for General Motors and poetry that drowned itself in "utter blackness, infinite realities, and ultimate experiences through the void of space." Far out.

It all came over as sort of the northern black man's burden—help the southern negro.

But Sunday them "southern negroes" showed they understood their black experience far better than the Kuumba Singers did. They touched the reality the Kuumba people only talked about. The Gospel Choir didn't have to talk about it. Oh, mama, they sang.

Sunday afternoon the BSM Gospel Choir won the 1974 Inter-Collegiate Gospel Festival proving themselves to be the best college gospel choir in the state. First place, \$500 and a trophy. But that's just the half of it. These people have to be seen. Tell it, tell it, tell it, oh yes mama... those people tell it!

These outbursts of emotion must be forgiven, I know it's not journalistic objectivity but I, a white folk, am not used to seeing folks singing church music like they mean it. Seeing people with sweat on their faces and veins poking out at their head and moving on their feet, throwing their heads back and letting go with music for the Lord like water gushing from a fall. Sorry, us upper-

middle class whites just aren't used to that.

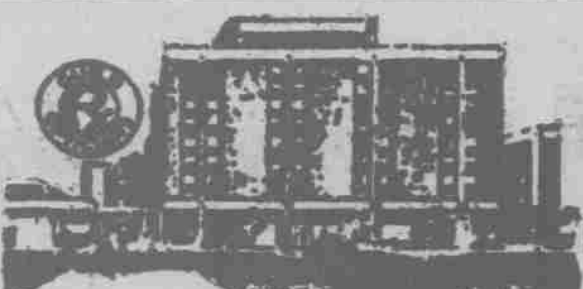
Musically speaking, the choir displayed a sparkling range and richness of color in their voices. Lucy Shropshire, choir director, moved the group with a blaze of enthusiasm in her direction, piano playing—pounding keys, that piano rocked—and singing.

Shropshire also did some solo singing with the choir filling background that displayed vocal and visual qualities reminiscent of a young Roberta Flack. Some other soloists in the choir spread the Gospel blues solidly as well. They were solid! There's no other word for it. Rock n' roll!

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- ACROSS
1 Mountains of Europe
5 Be in debt
8 Actual
12 Chair
13 Edible seed
14 Sea eagle
15 Communion plates
17 Refund
19 Primitive reproductive body
20 Ponders
21 Preposition
23 Sagacious
24 Things, in law
26 Declare under oath
28 Speak
31 Preposition
32 Openwork fabric
33 Negative
34 Dutch town
36 Animal coats
38 Crimson
39 Approach
41 Transaction
43 Showy flower
45 Shade tree
48 Looked intently
50 Amend
51 Hindu garment
52 Employ
54 Carpenter's tools
55 Gaelic
56 Negative
57 Sicilian volcano
DOWN
1 Snakes
2 Jump
3 Dialect

Answer to Yesterday's Puzzle

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55										

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Dear Steven,
As you know, your mother and I have made great sacrifices to send you through college. The very idea of you asking us if we can send you to Europe this summer is outrageous the nerve! Your mother and I haven't had a vacation in the last 5 years. But knowing you, you'll get yourself to Europe some way or other. Well to show you we do want you to enjoy yourself like the other kids, I've sent this STUDENT-RAILPASS coupon your mother dipped out. Because you're a student under 26, you can get unlimited second-class rail travel in 13 countries for up to 2 months for only \$165. The trains are clean, modern, punctual, fast, and comfortable. So once you get over there you can see Europe as cheaply as possible. By the way get your STUDENT-RAILPASS here; you can't buy it in Europe. It's a great deal Steve—tax free and one beautiful way to beat currency fluctuations. Now there are two things I suggest you do. First, send in the coupon so you can buy the ticket. Second, start saving your money. Love, Dad

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