

& OUT THE OTHER

A Plethora of Pix, A Bunch of Bucks

HOLLYWOOD IS SMACKING its collective corporate lips these days; 1978 was its best year ever, thanks to *Grease*, *Jaws II*, *Heaven Can Wait*, *Foul Play*, *Hooper*, *Revenge of the Pink Panther* and *Animal House*, among others. The industry is already poised for its annual year-end gold rush of 30-35 films, including two animated features, *Lord of the Rings* by Ralph Bakshi and *Watership Down*, after the rabbit book; a few big stars will appear, Clint Eastwood in *Every Which Way but Loose*; Sylvester Stallone in *Paradise Alley*; John Travolta and Lily Tomlin in *Moment by Moment*; Jane Fonda and James Caan in *Comes a Horseman*, Brando in *Superman*, Gregory Peck and Laurence Olivier in *The Boys from Brazil*, Dreyfuss in *The Big Fix*. . . we won't tire you with all the titles. It's interesting, though, in this fattest of all years, to note the absence of certain big stars who did not contribute to the tall stacks of coin: Pacino, de Niro, McQueen, Redford, Newman, Bronson, Streisand all stayed home. We didn't need them after all.

Fresh Clay

A CHAT WITH MICHAEL NESMITH, who prefers to be identified (and aptly so) as one of the founding fathers of country-rock, rather than (equally aptly) one of the Monkees, reveals that he's busy creating his own empire based in picturesque Carmel, California. Mike's purchased the masters to all of his highly-regarded, though slow-selling solo albums from RCA Records, as well as his instrumental jazz-country-rock *Wichita Train Whistle* long-player from ABC, and reissued them on his own Pacific Arts label. He's releasing new material, too, some of it under a unique arrangement whereby master tapes are merely leased from independent producers or artists, sans advance, and "royalties are paid from the first disc sold." There's a new "live" Nesmith album just released (see "On Disc," this issue), and Mike — letting no grass grow beneath his boots — has just produced an album for Motown's Fresh, characterized by him as "heavy metal r&b." When the label approached him, Mike tells us, he wondered how he'd been selected. "You've only seen me work in acrylics," he challenged them, "how do you know that I can work in clay?" Their reply: "Michael, an artist is an artist."

Brace Yourself

HOT ON THE HEELS of *Animal House* and *Almost Summer* come three more youth-student flicks in the making, according to *Variety's* casting column. The Ones We've Been Waiting For: *Disco High*, from New World Pictures (the folks who brought you *Deathsport* and *Grand Theft Auto*), has parts for a pretty disco-mad femme, a school brain (also femme), football captain and a Sgt. Bilko type. *Chasing Rainbows* is about college graduates today and what they face in society (snore); producers want a 5'8" femme without shoes, and don't ask why. *D. Minus*, a "satire on public education a la *Dr. Strangelove*," needs "a cross between Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman (who doesn't?) a Barbra Streisand prototype

(sic) and a Richard Dreyfuss prototype (sic again). Don't call us.

THE BIG FIX isn't even out yet, but Richard Dreyfuss is so in love with the character of Moses Wine (see our interview, page 8) he's already agreed to replay Wine in Roger Simon's next installment, *Peking Duck* — which takes place in China, no surprise, Simon wrote one other Wine book, *Wild Turkey*, which was optioned but never made by Warren Beatty. Beatty is the kiss of death for many projects . . . he was eager to make films on the lives of Howard Hughes and writer John Reed. That was two years ago.

The Distant Clattering of Typewriters

REPORTER PETE HAMILL has written the first of three detective books — but instead of a detective the hero is a reporter named Sam Briscoe. The first is titled *Dirty Laundry*; all three have been purchased by Universal for more than \$1 million. So far no word on whether a rich and famous widow appears in any of the books.

COLUMBIA PICTURES RECENTLY ANNOUNCED formation of a Writer's Workshop program designed to discover and develop screenwriting talent from the farflung hinterlands — that is, universities and colleges. Students (or recent graduates) selected by the writing departments must submit an original work—short story, play, screenplay—and a written recommendation from one or more faculty members. Those chosen will attend a 16-week workshop at Columbia Studios in Burbank, after which they'll hand in their screenplays. David Z. Goodman, director of the Workshop (and author of *Straw Dogs*, *Farewell, My Lovely* and the wretched *Eyes of Laura Mars*) will read

each and choose those deemed worthy of further development—to be purchased by Columbia Pictures for real money. So says the press release. Remember, when you're bewildered in Burbank, *Ampersand* is just a phone call away.

IF INSTEAD OF SCREENPLAYS you write songs, take note: BMI has announced its 27th annual Student Composers competition for people under 26 in accredited schools. Deadline is December 31, prize money is \$15,000.

Wax Fax

DAVID BOWIE IS RECORDING IN SWITZERLAND, with Brian Eno co-producing; Warren Zevon still isn't in the studio, but his record company devoutly hopes he's at home writing songs, as he says he is . . . Captain Beefheart returns to Warner Bros. Records with an album called *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)*, produced by WB exec Pete Johnson, who is merely one of the best people in the world; on the album the Captain introduces his newest dance craze, the Floppy Boot Stomp . . . Alice Cooper is still working on that album inspired by his drying-out experience in an East Coast sanitarium for alcoholics; his co-writer is Bernie Taupin, the no-talent turkey who churned out sappy lyrics for Elton John. Alice has written a few good songs in his day; Taupin hasn't . . . Rod Stewart's next is *Blondes Have More Fun*, available as a regular record and, in limited quantities, as a picture disc. As one disgruntled Scene Observer muttered, "Who wants to buy his mug on a poorer quality record? But never overestimate the morosity of the American public."

DRUMMER MICK WALLER has sued Rod Stewart in London court, claiming \$12,000 due for session work on *Smiler*, several years back.

BIG SELLERS: Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell* has qualified for "triple platinum" in Australia — that's 150,000 copies sold. *Saturday Night Fever* has sold 20,000 copies in Greece.

Flickers

JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO, ONCE PRODUCER of rock group Chicago, is now producing movies—one movie, anyway, called *The Hamster of Happiness*, directed by Hal Ashby (*Bound for Glory*, *Last Detail*) and starring Robert "Baretta" Blake—who also starred in *Elektra Glide in Blue* a few years ago, which was directed by Guercio. *Hamster* is an off-beat love story, a script that's been kicking around Hollywood for several years.

NEIL SIMON'S NEXT BROADWAY PLAY (will he never stop? After *The Cheap Detective* people are still giving him money?) is called *They're Playing Our Song*, about a composer and lyricist who fall in love. It's being scored by Marvin Hamlisch and Carole Bayer Sager, who happen to be composer and lyricist in love. Ain't that sweet? Fortunately, homely Hamlisch will not appear in the play; Robert Klein and Lucie Arnaz will star.

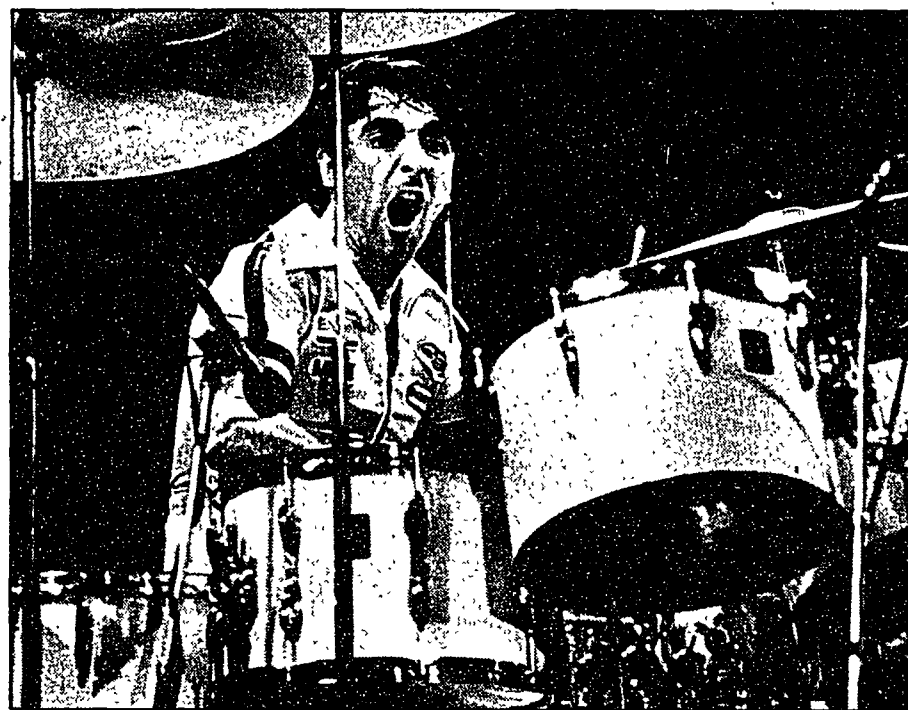
DUSTIN AND ANNE HOFFMAN are still separated on their way to divorce, but they're living under the same New York roof. Dustin is filming *Kramer vs. Kramer* (ironically, about a divorce) while Anne appears in Woody Allen's new venture, *Manhattan*; it stars Diane Keaton and is not, repeat not, a drama.

Bye-Bye

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL has lost three members: singer Leroy Preston has wandered off to pursue his songwriting career; pianist

(Continued on page 15)

R. I. P.



Keith Moon
1947-1978

RECORD PRODUCER TOM WILSON 47, died of arterial sclerosis at his home in Los Angeles on September 9. Not generally included on any list of superstar producers, Wilson was involved in many of the most important record projects of the Sixties. As a member of CBS's A&R staff, Wilson produced Simon and Garfunkel's first album, *Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.* Later, with Paul Simon in England and Art Garfunkel out of the music business entirely, Wilson took it upon himself to overdub electric guitars and drums on one track from the acoustic, folk-style LP, "The Sounds of Silence." Two careers were born, though at the time neither singer professed to be pleased with Wilson's initiative. He also produced Bob Dylan's first "electric" album, *Bringing It All Back Home*, and the single, "Like a Rolling Stone." Moving to MGM/Verve Records, Wilson produced the first albums by The Blues Project (with Al Kooper and Steve Katz, who went on to form Blood, Sweat & Tears), and The Mothers of Invention. Later, Wilson produced the album debut of the English band, The Soft Machine. Thus Wilson, a black, was almost exclusively identified with progressive white artists. As the Sixties ended, Wilson produced bands for Motown's Natural Resources subsidiary, plus, more recently, acts including soul singer Vernon Burch and pianist Professor Longhair.