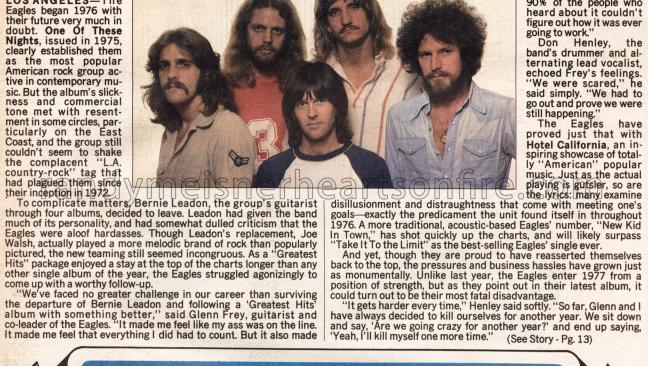
me feel alive!

By MICHAEL BARACKMAN

LOS ANGELES—The Eagles began 1976 with Lagies begain 1976 with their future very much in doubt. One Of These Nights, issued in 1975, clearly established them as the most popular American rock group active in contemporary mu-



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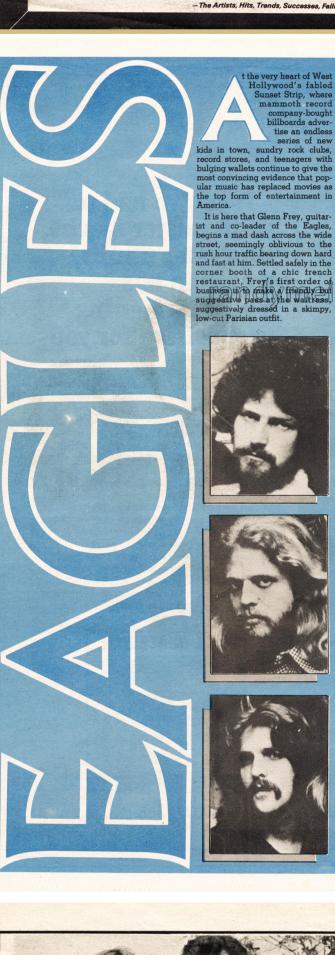
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"I personally thought that adding Joe Walsh was a dangerous move. 90% of the people who heard about it couldn't figure out how it was ever going to work."

Don Henley, the band's drummer and alternating lead vocalist, echoed Frey's feelings. "We were scared," he said simply. "We had to go out and prove we were still happening."

The Eagles have proved just that with Hotel California, an in-





More than any other of the Eagles' ongoing cast of characters who will later join him at this table; Don Henley, Joe Walsh, Irving Azoff and John David Souther, Frey exemplifies the reckless, rebellious, and break-neck attitude found in lyrics to such Eagles' songs as "James Dean," "Outlaw Man," and "Life In the Fast Lane." A cross between an easy-going playboy and an arrogant punk, Frey legitimizes his cockiness with a Horatio Algerlike drive that knows no failure. The biggest test came in 1976.

"We've faced no greater challenge in our career than surviving the departure of Bernie Leadon and following a "Greatest Hits" album with something better," said Frey, speaking in a slow, deliberate drawl almost straight out of Jack Nicholson's character in "Frive Easy Pieces." If made me feel the my last was onliheling in that made me feel that everything I did had to count. But it also made me feel f-king alive!

"I personally thought that adding Joe Walsh was a dangerous f-king move. 90% of the people who heard about it scratched their heads like they couldn't figure out how it was ever going to work."



Clockwise: Don Henley; Joe Walsh; Randy Meisner; Glenn Frey; & Don Felder.

"Johnny-come-lately, the new kid in town Will she still love you when you're not around?*

he said simply

ver since releasing their first single, "Take It Easy," which preceded their first album in 1972, the Eagles—Frey, Henley, bassist Randy Meisner, and guitarist Bernie Leadon—had ranked among America's more popular music groups. In the early days, they sang simple country furiged songs of the desett, but without the banality of America's "A Horse Without No Name." They spiced up those tunes with recurring crystal-clear waves of lush harmonies; without complexities the Beach Boys had previously found to be over most people's heads.

With the addition of Day Faldon

With the addition of Don Felder came a shift from the lightweight to more challenging, rock-oriented material. Following the release of One of These Nights and its two top ten singles (title track, "Lyin' Eyes'") in late '75, the Eagles finally were at the zenith of pop acceptance—#1 on the singles & LP charts, simultaneously. Frey had realized his life long ambition. "Shit, it's always been on our minds to get to the top," Frey commented candidly, sipping from a glass of imported red wine. "To excel is something that motivates—or should motivate—every working man in America. It's something we're born with."

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However, despite the enormity of the Eagles' success, there remained some disbelievers. Many rock critics—particularly east coast writers—thought the Eagles' music shallow, the band's artistic vision contrived, their personalities pretentious. One of These Nights, the Eagles most blatantly commercial, most excessively indulgent album, provided ample ammunition for already-doubting critics. "Everybody turned against us," Henley recalled, a scowl crossing his face. "They said we were boring."

Bernie Leadon's decision to leave the Eagles in early-'76, further clouded the band's future. Leadon gave the group much of its personality onstage, and his accessible attitude coupled with a personal demeanor helped dispel criticism which spoke of the Eagles as "aloof hardasses." Joe Walsh, though much more a melodic guitarist than popularly portrayed, still seemed an incongruous replacement. Rumors circulated that Dan Fogelberg, a more likely choice, turned down an offer to join the Eagles because it appeared the group was on the verge of breaking up. Band manager Irving Azoff's decision* to

[Continued on next page]





press to have people writing about how the Eagles won't speak to the press," said Azoff. "I think kids like to read that." At one of the first concerts At one of the first concerts featuring the realigned unit, Joe Walsh wore a flannel shirt, and replaced his blinking construction helmet with a cowboy hat, but he still seemed out of place. Meanwhile, the group was having serious trouble finishing their first album

while, the group was having serious trouble finishing their first album together, in the fall, the Eagles began an extensive national tour originally designed to promote Hotel California, but the album remained incomplete.

14/Phonograph

Record/February,

"From the day Don Felder joined the band, Bernie felt like he was being threatened or edged out. Felder wanted to have somebody he could play toe to toe with, and he and Bernie never got that off. Hell, I'm not the greatest guitar player in the world, but if I was Bernie Leadon and we got a guy like Felder so we and we got a guy like Felder so we could do some double shit, I'd be ecstatic. But Bernie wasn't."

If any good has come of Leadon's leaving, it is that the Eagles are finally transcending the "L.A. country-rock" tag. With his laidback, soft songs, casual attire, and relaxed attitude, Leadon most reflected the band's L.A. character. Though the Eagles began moving away from music that fit compactly into one locational genre into more

Page 16/Phonograph Record/February,

1977

away from music that in compacting into one locational genre into more mainstream-rock as early as 74's On The Border, only now are many realizing that the Eagles play something more than strictly California music fornia music.

"I don't think we ever tried to make California music," Frey declared. "Our music is definitely American. I don't think it's only California. If more people would only start thinking of the Eagles' music more as Americana than the L.A. myth, I'd be glad."

"All the East Coast critics have been accusing us for a long time of trying to sell and market the fornia music

that image stays with you. You have to do something radical to break out of it. People are still calling us 'country-rock and mellow sounds.' We'd have to wear women's clothes to change that.''

"Joe Walsh was also very much a victim of typecasting," adds Glenn.
When we were listening to the first

Phonograph

we were still nappening."

The Eagles proved just that with Hotel California. An inspiring showcase of totally "American" popular music, the LP is without the slick, perfectly refined edges which detracted from One of These Nights, or the tentative experimentations that the tentative experimentations that flawed On the Border. For the first time, the Eagles sound confident and comfortable working in the rock idiom. Joe Walsh still comes off as a idiom. Joe Walsh still comes off as a quest, but his exhilarating interplay with Don Felder during the end segment of the title song indicates that he may have a place in this band after all

Frey: seuse." "I need a new mas "I need a new stew Frey: ardess." "I won't talk about the Eagles,"

interest in getting back into record-

"Our own poincy regarding berief's situation is that we really don't have anything to say about it," said Frey. "Once I asked Bernie why he left the Flying Burrito Brothers, and he said, 'None of your damn business, and don't you forget it." Still, the Leadon matter is a subject Frey can't resist returning to time and time again. It becomes obvious that their relationship ended on a strained note. strained note.

"It's healthy to have diverse musical influences, but with Bernie, we just couldn't work it out," Henley, the more serious, least emotional of the two, explained. "If we had done it his way, we wouldn't have had any hit records, frankly," "The cat didn't want to write lyrics with Henley and me," said Frey, irritated. "Bernie, coming from an acoustic background never

Frey, irritated. Bernie, coming from an acoustic background, never seemed to relate to electric music. We had to play the music as well as we did Stuff like "On the Border," we had the right idea, but just didn't quite nail it. [Cont'd. on next page]

younia

trying to sell and market the California Myth,'' Henley said bitterly. ''Hell, the Beach Boys are a

"When we were listening to the first Barnstorm album, and actually watching him make some of So What, we often commented to each other that there was much more to this than we'd heard about. Joe has been very underrated."

after all.

Just as the actual playing is gutsier, so are the lyrics: many examine the disillusionment and distraughturess that come with reaching bae's goals exactly the predicament the group found itself in throughout 1976. A more traditional, acoustic-based Eagles' num-

"I won't talk about the Eagles," says Bernie Leadon. He is standing against the very back wall of L.A.'s Roxy nightclub, awaiting the arrival of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band onstage. It is late summer, and Leadon is appropriately dressed in his seemingly ironed on blue jeans and white T-shirt. Since leaving the Eagles, he says, he's been on an extended 'vacation,' going for the beach a lot, just hanging out, living in Neil Young's old house in Topanga Canyon. He expresses interest in getting back into record-

California band, we're not. I've only California Band, we re not. I ve only been here six years.

"California is American, anyway.

It's a melting pot. It's the last frontier. It's where everybody comes to ...

'It pisses me off. When you trey
appear on the scene the press tends
to pidgeothole you right then, and
that image stays with you. You have

more to this than we'd heard about. Joe has been very underrated."

Joe Walsh and his companion for the day, John David Souther, are greeted warmly by Henley and Frey as they arrive for dinner. Both have been part of the Eagles complex for several years. Souther and Frey roomed together and made an album as the duo, Longbranch and Pennywhistle. Later, Souther collaborated with Frey and Henley on the award winning ballad, "Best of My Love," and he shares composer credit for the current hit, "New Kid In Town." "We write out of pain, but it's a lot of fun," says Souther.

After leaving the rocking James Gang, Walsh built a moderately successful solo career. His three

中国的社会工程的工程工程的企业工程的 on the following of the studio albums show an artist more concerned with songwriting form and instrumental tastefulness than on attacks. But you could tell

hard-on attacks. But you could tell he missed playing in a band. He'd show up playing solos for the Beach Boys, and on occasion, with the Eagles, while his own stage shows deteriorated. By joining the Eagles, Walsh regained the spotlight he was losing, and also gained the perfect excuse for playing pretty.

"There's a kind of rowdy side of me," Walsh said in a slightly drunken slur, "but I feel a lot more comfortable this way. At first, everybody was thinking how they could hear "One of These Nights" and "Rocky Mountain Way" together. But it works!

"I used to get crazy a lot, but that was part of that James Gang image. Everybody said I represented rock for roll with big amps, and that was kind of unfair. There's a much more melodic side. melodic side. "I don't like to smash up hotels anymore. It makes everybody un-comfortable. Henley doesn't like for

Of Walsh, Henley says, "Joe's real versatile. He doesn't do the fast kind of crap. He can, but he doesn't."

kind of crap. He can, but he doesn't."

Frey adds, "Henley and I, being songwriters, like guitar solos that are songwritten. As much as I like Hendrix, I liked Clapton better during the late-60s because he played more melody."

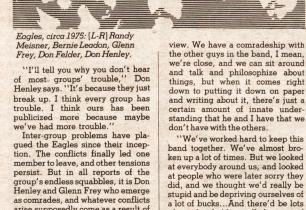
The tension between guitarists Leadon and Felder has been public knowledge for sometime. Now, it is Walsh and Felder who are competing for creative space. Felder contributed one full song, "Viscions," on One of These Nights. On Hotel California, Walsh got the solo spot. Was the Leadon Felder syndrome respiracing with a different chatacter?"

"You can feel that there might be

Bud Scoppa: "The Eagles have it both ways: They make their points but get a suntan while they're at it.' while they're at it."

limits and getting sharper with each batch; "Victim of Love," "Wasted Time," "New Kid in Town," and the title song catch hold fast and keep holding indefinitely. It's fitting that Hotel California, the Eagles' biggest and most solid album, should mark the reunion of Sczymczyk and new member Joe Walsh (as leader of the James Gang, Walsh was the producer's first claim to fame). HOTEL CALIFORNIA Eagles Asylum 7E-1084 By BUD SCOPPA To many rock connoisseurs, Ea-

You can feel that there might be a threat," Frey had speculated earlier. "There might be a little tension. But it's exciting to see those guys go out there and see who in fact is gonna have the hot solos Like Stills and Young on a good night?
"Technically, Joe and Don could bury Stills and Young. But that's the bury Shils and Young. But that s the essence of what we want to see happen emotionally onstage. To see Stephen and Neil going toe to toe, with Neil kind of doing the spastic and Stephen pulling the way he does on the neck of the guitar...it's great. I really love that." I really love that. Treally love that."
"Felder can play circles around me," Walsh admits, "but I've taught him a lot of stuff, like the talk box on "Rocky Mountain Way."
There is a tension there. We see who can kick each other in the pants.
"But Felder and me can com-Mights: The Eagles are in the same major league with cross-town rivals Steely Dan when it comes to making sophisticated, witty, endlessly irresistible records that sound equally good through the Philco and the 4311s. In Don Henley, they own a voice as rangy and identifiable as Elton's or Steely's Donald Fagen. The production of Bill Sczymczyk has the refined dynamic strength of the work of Gary Katz (Steely) or "But Felder and me can communicate. I'll goof up a solo and he'll come over and whisper in my ear, 'You really blew that one.' We've been able to do that so far without coming out swinging.''. the work of Gary Katz (Steely) or Gus Dudgeon (E.J.). The Frey-Henley writing team is endlessly inventive within strictly defined [Cont'd. on next page] jump in.



But what of their relationship with one another? Though Henley and Frey have much in common—both went to college, speak intelligently, are intense and outspoken—there are some differences just on the surface that could conceivably create problems. For instance, in some recent group photos, Henley has taken to smiling while Frey main-tains his mean "don't mess with me" look. Could such a simple difference as that actually symbolize

much more?

"Our relationship is as turbulent as anyone else's," Frey answers with a laugh. "We just happen to be more in love with each other." "We happen to get over it according to get over it to get over it to get over it to us, this thing is bigger than both of us, and it's really silly to let petty jealousies get in the way, like with what happened to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, He and I are pretty much able to carellers any bid of

much able to swallow any kind of "This is something which is, by nature, not easy to do."
"If you're an artist, automatically, you've got a big ego to start with." "I like what Don says about ale-female relationships, that it's hard enough to see two people, a man and a woman supposedly seeking only companionship, love and support, stay together for nine months."

months."
"He and I...there's just certain

"He and I...there's just certain people that you meet that this thing...you see things the same way. We can write songs together, like with John David and Jackson. I don't know if it's due to astrology or what, but you don't find that many people that have that certain creative spark with the same world

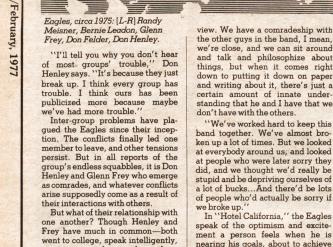
we broke up."

In "Hotel California," the Eagles
speak of the optimism and excite-

sadvantage 'It gets harder every time,"
Henley said softly. "We have to Henley said softly. "We have to really beat ourselves. It takes more and more time to get it better. We still change the lyrics right down to the last f--king day of the mix. A lot of Hotel California was written in the studio. We really didn't have that much going in. We had ideas and concepts, but not one complete song.
"So far, Glenn and I have always

Go far, Glenn and I have always decided to kill ourselves for another year. We sit down and say, 'Are we going crazy for another year?' and end up saying, 'Yeah, I can do it for another year.' I'll kill myself one more time...' I don't know, we're too old to start over.''



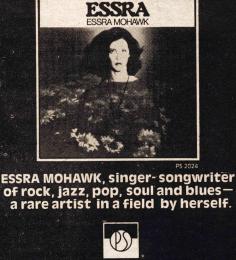


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ment a person feels when he is nearing his goals, about to achieve his dreams. Indeed, in interviews the band did just prior to the release of One of These Nights, the reader could sense this same optimistic outlook. But the victim in "Hotel." California" winds up wanting to leave his supposed citadel, while a similar person in "New Kid In Town" remains reluctant to give up the benefits he has won.

For the Eagles, this confusion is currently very real. Proud to have reasserted themselves back to the top, the pressures and business hasses have also grown ust a monumental. For starters, how do you follow Hotel California, a musical statement which, Don Henley says, brings the band full circle? Unlike last year, the Eagles enter 1977 from a position of strength, but as they say in their latest album, it could turn out to be their most fatal