

GREATEST HITS EXTRA

By MICHAEL BARACKMAN LOS ANGELES—The Eagles began 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 music.



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1976 REVIEW

The Artists, Hits, Trends, Successes, Failures & Highlights of Rock '76

At the very heart of West Hollywood's fabled Sunset Strip, where mammoth record company-bought billboards advertise an endless series of new kids in town, sundry rock clubs, recording stores, and teenagers with bulging wallets continue to give the most convincing evidence that pop music has replaced movies as the top form of entertainment in America.

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."

Don Henley, the group's drummer and alternating lead vocalist, slid into the booth and echoed Frey's feelings. "We were scared," he said simply.

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

It is here that Glenn Frey, guitarist and co-leader of the Eagles, begins a mad dash across the wide street, seemingly oblivious to the rush hour traffic bearing down hard and fast at him.

"I personally thought that adding Joe Walsh was a dangerous f---ing 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."

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 top ten singles (title track, "Lynyrd Eyes") in late '75, the Eagles finally were at the zenith of pop acceptance.

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.

Joe Walsh, though 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.

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

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Bill Graham, Eagles and Azoff settle out of court.

allow no interviews following Leaden's departure, further alienated the press. Charges of "over-protectiveness" became commonplace and unabashed hostility towards the group quickly developed in many media circles.

"I would have broken the momentum," Henley said, speaking as intensely as Frey. "We felt obliged to tour and let everybody think that Walsh was in the band. People had started rumors that we were breaking up. Lisa Robinson or somebody started them. I'll break her face if I ever see her..."

ber, "New Kid In Town," has bulleted quickly up the charts, and will likely surpass "Take It to the Limit" as the best-selling Eagles' single ever.

ing, but isn't sure if he wants "to do a solo thing." Instead, maybe a collaborative thing with someone like Chris Hillman, with Glen Johns, the Eagles' former producer, at the helm.

"I happen to think it's a great press to have people writing about how the Eagles won't speak to the press," said Azoff. "I think kids like to read that."

"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."

"I won't talk about the Eagles," says Bernie Leaden. He is standing against the very back wall of L.A.'s Roxy nightclub, awaiting the arrival of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band onstage.

"Our own policy regarding Bernie'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.'"

"I'll tell you why you don't hear of most groups' trouble," Don Henley says. "It's because they just break up. I think every group has trouble. I think ours has been publicized more because maybe we've had more trouble."

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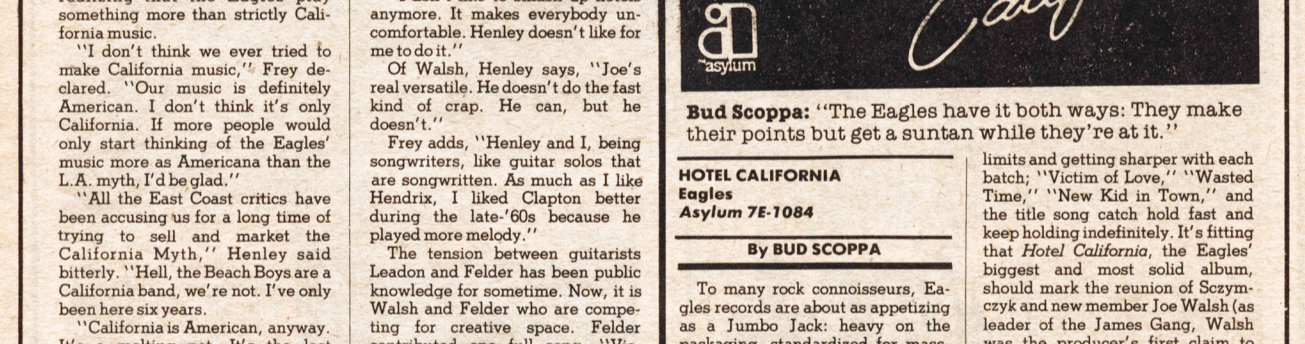
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Bud Scoppa: "The Eagles have it both ways: They make their points but get a suntan while they're at it."

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Essra Mohawk, singer-psychiatrist of rock, jazz, pop, soul and blues—a rare artist in a field by herself.

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