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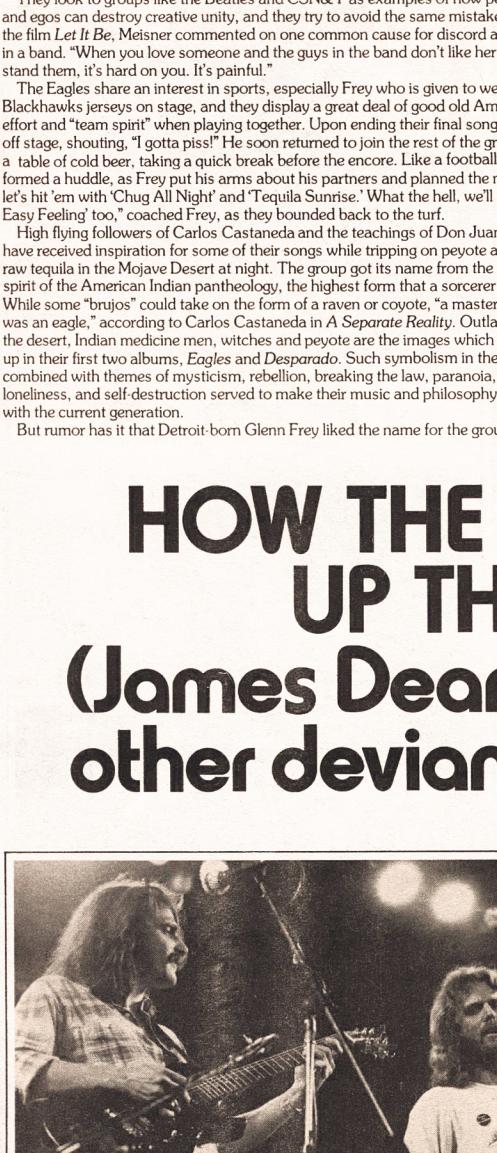
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EAGLES: A RARE INTERVIEW WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL DESPERADOES

by Linda Cain



After earning two gold and two platinum albums, composing an uninterrupted string of hit singles long enough to compare a group's hits alphabetically to the Stones' "Sticky Fingers," and getting invited back up band to headline a concert tour, it is safe to say the Eagles have reached a pinnacle in the rock industry. Named the "Best Band" of 1975 over the Stones and Zeppelin by the judges of Don Kirshner's Rock Music Awards, The Eagles also won the Best Song award for "Hotel California" and the Best Album award for *One of These Nights*, topped the charts for most of the year. They are the yardstick against which critics continue to compare all others. And the band refuses to let anyone forget it.

Yester evening, the band was giving a special performance in a smelly, high school gymnasium. They turned up in a weight lifting room, filled with the odor of dirty jockstraps, sneakers and the awesome humidity from the swimming pool below. Glenn Frey lingered in the girl's locker room, waiting for his turn to use the only available toilets in the gym. "Any girls in there?" he asked. "Only me, but come on in. Just don't be the third one, I'm in." He entered two stalls down, carrying on a conversation as he prepared to go on stage (which was not even a platform, just an area fenced off from the rest of the gym). "I never thought I'd end up on an Eagle while going to the john." The things one has to go through to get interviews these days.

On the evening of *One of These Nights* was released, in the spring of 1975, the Eagles were ratified off of a WGCF radio contest as the price for the Chicago area high school with the most school spirit. A school in the sticks, McHenry High, eventually won a free concert from the Eagles and Frey when the students were able to get the station's letters, written 5,000 times, onto a minuscule piece of paper. In exchange for the gig, the Eagles received prime promotion as the nation's number one disc jockey interviewed them on his show and premiered their most recent album just before the show. During the concert, the winners seemed more enthusiastic over the contest's sponsor than the prize. Superrock Larry Lujack caused a near riot in the bleachers when he tossed records to the grapping crowd after Fogelberg's set. But the Eagles managed to win over the new audience. The entire house audience and roadsides alike, were cheering for the one school that had won the contest.

Playing high school games is nothing new to drummer Don Henley, bassist Randy Meisner, guitarists Glenn Frey, Joe Walsh (recent addition) Bernie Leadon (gone) and Don Felder. Individually, they struggled as impoverished musicians playing with a wide variety of bands until they found success as Eagles.

"Since I was 14, I played in high schools," commented Meisner.

Four distinctive individuals with diverse musical and social backgrounds, the Eagles—like the Beatles—have had their personalities pegged by the media. The group's intellectual is Don Henley, 29, who grew up as the only hippie in Laredo, Texas. The bushy haired drummer attended college for four years before leaving to live in Fort Worth, on the advice of a country culture English professor. Now that his dreams have come true, he's back in college again, but not for a degree, rather for a master's in business or financial hassles. Both he and Frey keep sharp of the music industry by reading all of the trade papers. The change in management from Geffen to Azzoff, which has played a large part in the group's recent success, was a decision made by Henley.

Behind 27 year old Glenn Frey's "playboy/rowdy" image lurks the soul of a literature artist. He also attended college before taking off to the West Coast to further his musical career. While he enjoyed some success with the Bob Seger System in his home town of Detroit, singing back up on the group's one hit "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," the last of California's music, drugs, and sex was strong. He became close friends with John David Souther and they formed a duet called Longbranch Pennywhistle. Moving into a garage in Echo Park, they recorded one obscure album on Amos Records as the lead singer and drummer for Shiloh. Al Perkins quit Shiloh to join the Flying Burrito Brothers (and later Mannassas) leaving Henley up in the air. At this point, Frey had finally got David Geffen to manage him.

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