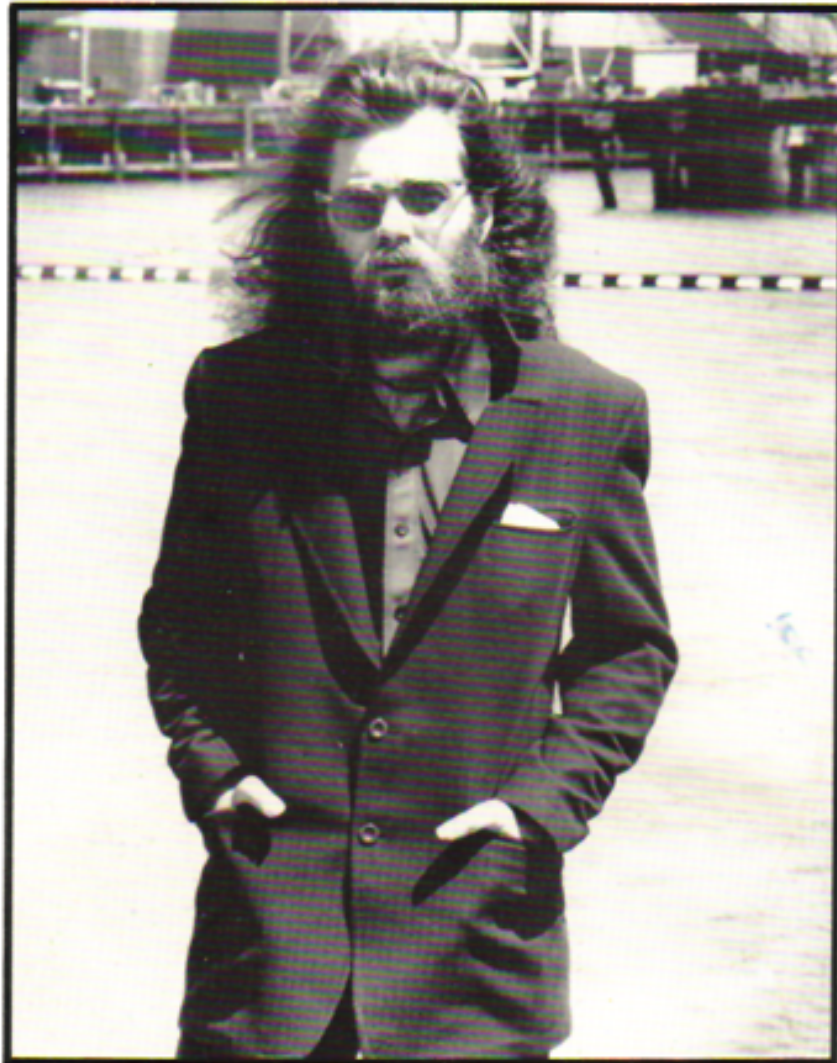


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Issue 19



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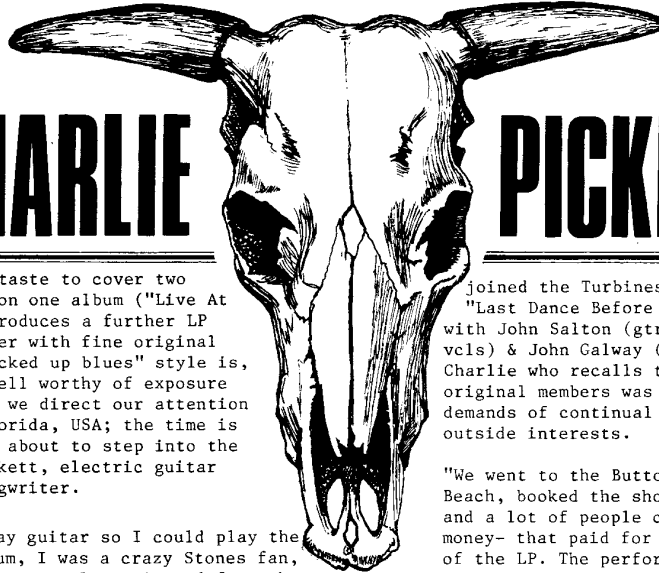
ROKY ERICKSON

FLEXI DISC WITHIN
PLUS

DIED PRETTY, MOJO'N'SKID, WIPERS,
DROOGS, DENTISTS, GIANT SAND,
CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN,
CHARLIE PICKETT, YOUNG FRESH FELLOWS,
SOUND ASLEEP, GAME THEORY

RIDIN' DOWN ROUTE 33.

THE
CHARLIE



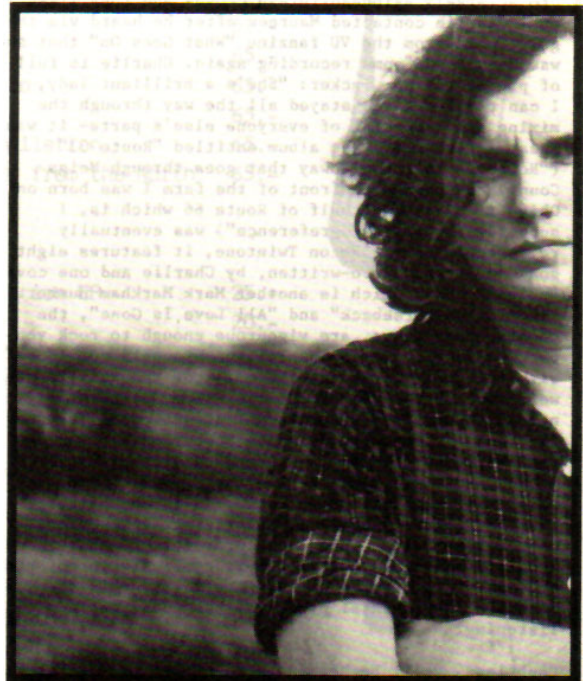
STORY
PICKETT

Anyone who has the good taste to cover two Flamin' Groovies' songs on one album ("Live At The Button") and later produces a further LP ("Route 33") brimming over with fine original numbers in a raunchy "jacked up blues" style is, I'm sure you'll agree, well worthy of exposure within these pages. Thus we direct our attention to Dania, a suburb of Florida, USA; the time is the mid '70s and the man about to step into the spotlight is Charlie Pickett, electric guitar picker, vocalist and songwriter.

"I wanted to learn to play guitar so I could play the "Get Yer Ya Yas Out" album, I was a crazy Stones fan, it took me about three years to learn it and from then on I started playing slide guitar". Charlie's guitar tutor was his pal Bob Mascaro who was managing a South Florida band called the Sick Lids. Around 1980 Charlie decided to put together his first band, the Eggs, and recruited members from the Sick Lids circle of friends and fans: Barry Elliot (gtr,vcls), Ken Lindahl (bs), Leigh Stoner (drms) with Charlie on guitar and vocals. "My original intent was just to play "Slow Death" and "White Light/White Heat" once, in South Florida, which I thought would clear the air...like the air is clear after a rain-storm; South Florida is a notorious current-hits/cover band area, so I thought it would be a blow for the good!". The band recorded two singles for Open Records, a new label operating out of the Miami record store of the same name, the first record features covers of Johnny Heath's "Feelin'" and the Velvet's "White Heat/White Light" and the next Mark Markham's "If This Is Love Can I Get My Money Back?" & the Flamin' Groovies "Slow Death"; both records were released in 1981, David Shibley taking over the bass role on the latter. Regarding these covers, Charlie emphasises "I hate the rock intelligencia's view that playing a cover version of an obscure song is some kind of shit-ball move; I think covering a hit is a pretty low rent thing to do, but I'm tired of being criticised for covering the Flamin' Groovies! The Flamin' Groovies and Lou Reed are great but my influences are also Mountain/Leslie West, Chuck Berry, The Pirates, Jimmy Page/Yardbirds, Rolling Stones, 'Pistols, Hypsterz and contemporarily, Gun Club. As a singer I try to imitate the great male vocalists who sing like MEN, which is rare, I like Johnny Cash, Mick Jagger, Willie Nelson, Albert King, B.B. King, Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix. As a guitar player: Son House, Freddie McDowell, Keith Richards...the whole usual white boy/blues guitar thing but keep the emphasis on Leslie West, you'll not find anyone more emotional than he can be on one of his great excursions". "White light.." on the first single is enlivened by Charlie's slide guitar and girlie backing vocals while "Feelin'" is not a million miles from the Pirates' classic "Shakin' All Over", and is given a solid workout here. Single number two was better, "If This Is Love...." is a driving number with mid-period Stones style hooks, a good party record. The songwriter Mark Markham is Charlie's first cousin, "he played in a Florida rock'n'roll band in the mid 60's called Mark Markham and the Jesters, they released a 45 on RCA Victor called "Marlboro Country" (available on the Eva "Punk Bands of Sixties" collection in France)- later, Charlie would record more of his songs. On the flip is a fine version of "Slow Death" with lashings of slide from C.P. and a suitably gutsy performance from the band. Good records for sure but the first to get a lot of attention was the 1982 "Live At The Button" LP. By this time the Eggs had a revised line-up (Barry Elliot went to the Sick Lids, Dave Shibley eventually

joined the Turbines and appears on their "Last Dance Before Highway" 12" on Big Time) with John Salton (gtr) Dave Froshnider (bs, vcls) & John Galway (drms) coming in to join Charlie who recalls that the split with the original members was amicable and due to the demands of continual gigging conflicting with outside interests.

"We went to the Button Club in Fort Lauderdale Beach, booked the show for two weekend nights and a lot of people came and we made a lot of money- that paid for the recording and mixing of the LP. The performance that was captured on those two January nights was hard, tight and steaming hot, bursting into life with "American Travelust" a Pickett/Galway original in a "Route 66"



Charlie Pickett.

PHOTO: Daniel Corrigan.

vein with Charlie and John Salton's guitars skiddin' n'sliddin' all over the stage, then without a pause the band slam into a powerful "Please Don't Touch", the first of ten covers included. Things slow down towards the end of side one with "You're A Better Man Than I" and the bluesy "Watch Out" prior to the first of two Flamin' Groovies covers, "Shake Some Action". On side two, together with the likes of "Lonesome Cowboy Bill" and "Talahassie Lassie" are two more original songs, "Doreen", a horny slide guitar showcase and, to close, a rip-snorting "Phantom Train" that piledrives right into the run-out grooves. This excellent performance drew rave reviews from "Record" and "Melody Maker" amongst others, Charlie recalls: "we got such good press from that album we couldn't believe we weren't picked up by a label".

The band continued to play live constantly in South Florida and toured the East coast and the southern

states with the line-up from the album. Then, in 1984 came the 12" EP "Cowboy Junkie Au Go Go", again on Open Records. This time, the four of the tracks were band compositions, the only non-original being cousin Mark's 60's hit, "Marlboro Country" which sounds like "Let It Bleed" era Stones even down to Charlie's almost perfect Jagger vocal impersonation. Of the original songs, "Trash Fever" is a ruff'n'tuff back-alley rumble of a song in total contrast to the bitter recriminations of "Liked It A Lot" where the singer recounts, very explicitly, what his lover got up to with someone else as the guitar wails lonesome in sympathy. Completing the EP are "Overtown", a very (early '70s) Stone-ish mid tempo romp and "But I Didn't" which is pleasantly poppy but little more. "Without Open Records, we never would have released anything. They sold real well and we had a great relationship. They always wanted us to go onto a bigger label, because we were friends and they wanted to see us do well". This hope was realised in 1986 when the band were signed by Minneapolis' Twin Tone Records.

The band started to record an album, though John Salton had quit and returned to Miami and during the sessions there were disagreements over the sound- resulting in the departure of both John Galway and Dave Froshnider. These developments necessitated fresh rehearsals involving Jim Duckworth (ex-Gun Club) and to the addition of Maureen Tucker who plays on four of the tracks- the former Velvet Underground drummer had been recommended to check out the Eggs, on the strength of their live version of "Waiting For My Man" which friends of Maureen's daughter had seen the band perform "to a largely skinhead/thrash crowd- and they liked it". Charlie contacted Maureen after he heard via the good folks from the VU fanzine "What Goes On" that she was keen to do some recording again. Charlie is full of praise for Ms. Tucker: "She's a brilliant lady, I can't believe she stayed all the way through the mixing and recording of everyone else's parts- it was a great experience". The album entitled "Route 33" ("Route 33 is the highway that goes through Meigs County and passes in front of the farm I was born on in Ohio- it's also one half of Route 66 which is, I suppose, the artistic reference") was eventually released in early '86 on Twintone, it features eight songs written, or co-written, by Charlie and one cover- "Meigs County" which is another Mark Markham number. "America On Horseback" and "All Love Is Gone", the opening body blows, are vigorous enough to rock you back on your heels as Charlie and his pals cut loose with the guitars burning fiercely- but the thrills are well distributed throughout the album, particularly noteworthy are the brooding guitar showcase "Tarwater", the fast'n'furious slide epic "Cowboy No.77" and the instrumental "Seka's Wedding" a slow blues which sounds, initially, not unlike the Stones' "Love In Vain"- another fine performance. To those who doubt Charlie Pickett's skill as an original songwriter, rather than rather than an interpreter of other people's material, this album is conclusive proof that the man has perfected his own craft, and this coupled with his instrumental prowess makes for excellent listening.

Doubtless, we'll be hearing more of Charlie Pickett in the months to come. Guitarist John Salton has returned to the revised band for live work, now working alongside new Eggs Bobby Tack and Pat Johnson (in '85 the Eggs, without Charlie recorded an EP as the Psycho Daisies, though I haven't heard this. Anyone got a spare copy?). The band made a video for "A(merica) On Horseback" and proposed to tour Europe this winter in support of the release of "Route 33" by Making Waves- sadly the demise of that record company hasn't helped the situation so European readers will have to wait to witness the band burning up the stage- in the meantime the album is still readily available and comes well recommended; the earlier records are harder to find but "Live At The Button" is certainly worth searching out.

Finally, a rather nice little tale of mutual appreciation involving both Charlie & The Eggs and R.E.M.: "We were playing Tuscaloosa, Alabama last year- the same night REM were playing the big school hall. They told everyone, at the end of their show, to go on

down to the club where we were playing because it would be really good. They came down in their tour bus- my guitars had all gone out of tune while we were playing and so Peter (Buck) took our mechanical tuner which had fallen off a chair and lost it's battery, went out to the bus and dug out one of his, came back in, tuned up our guitars constantly and handed them to me! At the end of the show he played a song or two with us. Absolutely so graceous and helpful, they're really something else!"

Thanks to Charlie Pickett, Leslie Wimmer at Open Records and Mike's Management for their help.

JON STOREY.

Discography

CHARLIE PICKETT 6 THE EGGS:

Feelin'/White Light-White Heat. (7")	Open Records OPEN 1 (1981)
If This Is Love Can I Get My Money Back/Slow Death (studio version). (7")	Open Records OPEN 2 (1981)
"Live At The Button". (LP)	Open Records LONG 1 (1982)
"Tuned Up & Howlin', Charlie Wants His Money Back".(3 track 7" EP of above 45 plus a remixed, live, "Phantom Train")	Jax Pax Records (198?)
"Cowboy Junkie Au Go Go" (12" EP): Marlboro County/But I Didn't/Overtown/Trash Fever/Liked It A Lot.	Open Records BIG 2 (1984)

CHARLIE PICKETT:

"Route 33".(LP)	Twintone TTR 8665 (1986) (Also in the UK on Making Waves).
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NOTES:

- "Phantom Train" (studio version) appears on "The Land That Time Forgot", a compilation album with 14 other Florida bands, and also the first issue of "Bang Zoom" cassette magazine.
- The "If This Is Love.." 45 was issued twice - first with a picture sleeve & then with a picture label only.
- All releases are US except the German Jax Pax EP.



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