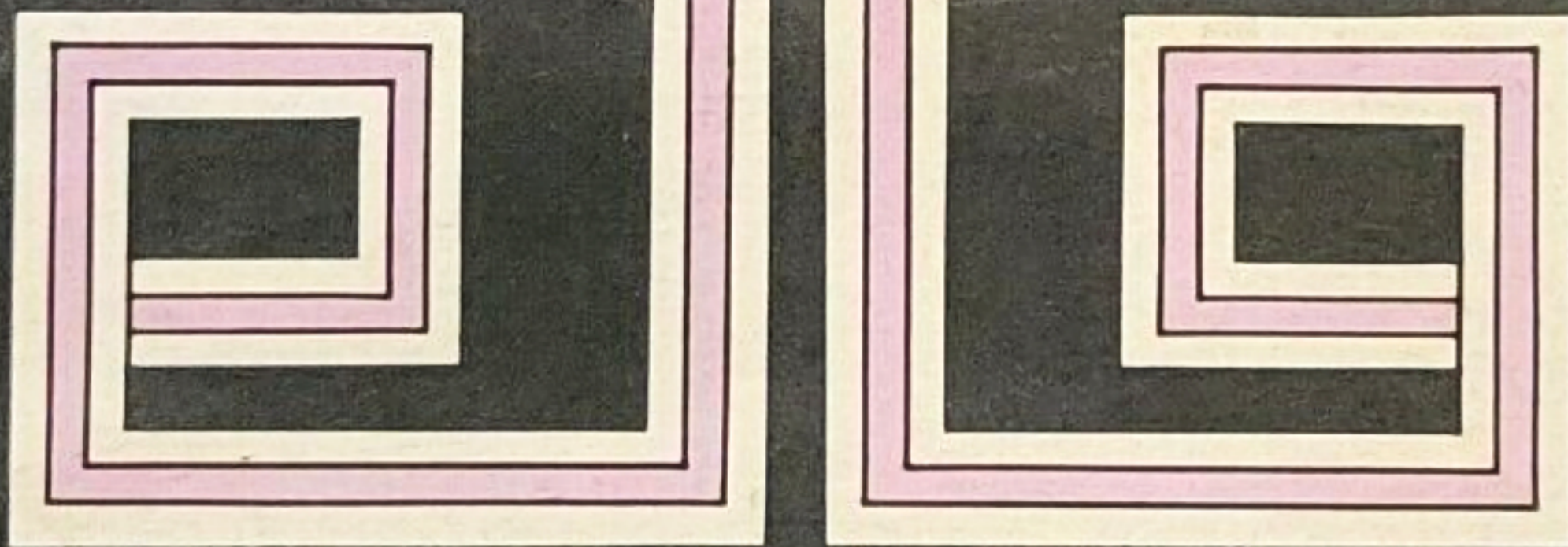


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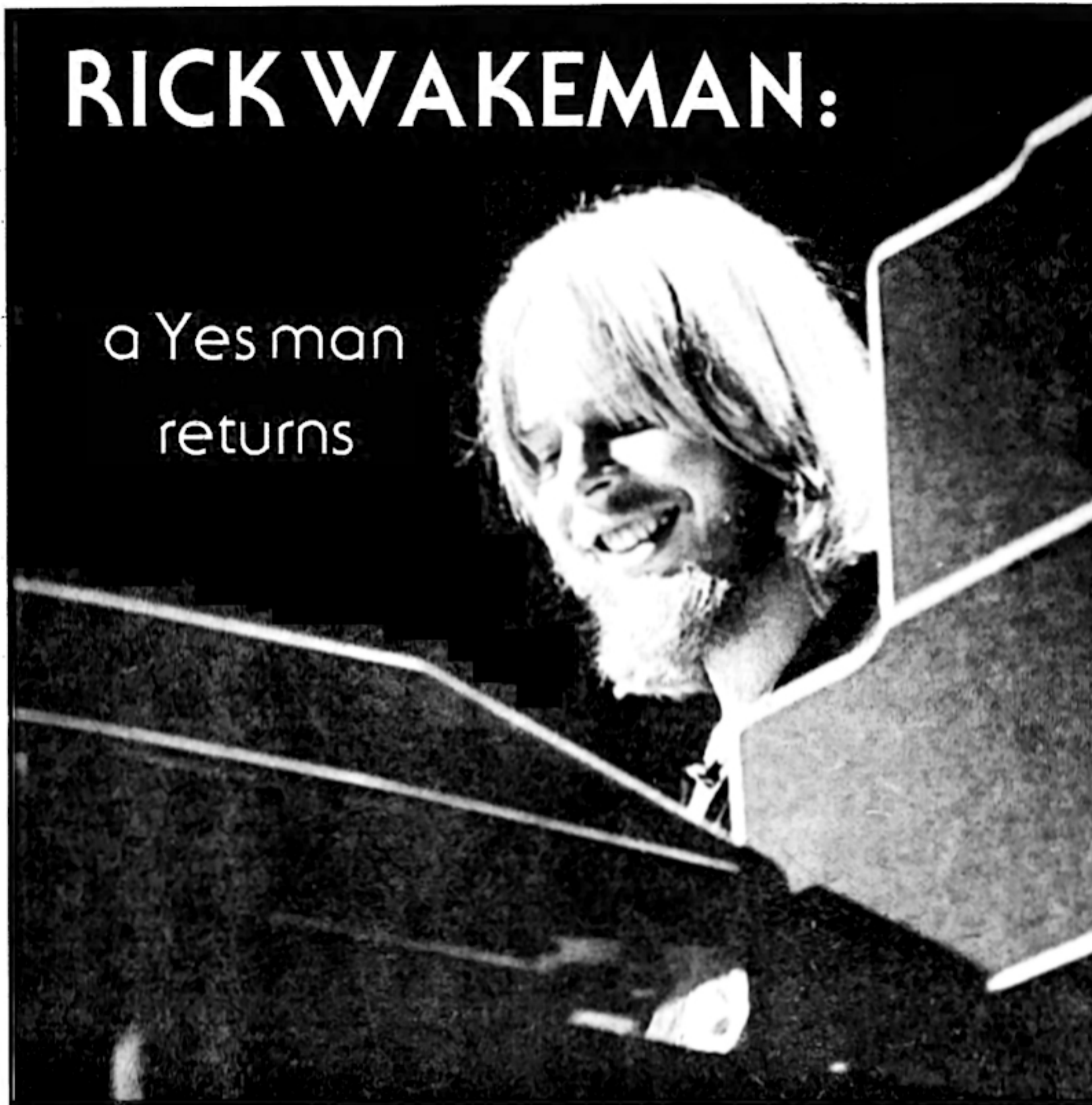
## RICK WAKEMAN: a Yes man returns

interview by Jim Girard, p. 11

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# RICK WAKEMAN:

a Yes man  
returns



by Jim Girard

photo by Linda Woods

A little over three and a half years ago, Rick Wakeman left Yes to pursue a solo career he'd begun while still in the band. His first solo project, *THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII*, had been a highly acclaimed debut, and shortly following its release [after doing Yes' *TALES FROM A TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS* tour of 1973], he left the band.

Wakeman followed up the very simple and direct keyboard flavor of *THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII* with a more technical and flamboyant approach in an adaptation of Jules Verne's *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* [1974]. Then came the elaborately

staged, fully orchestrated three-day pageant which launched *THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE* [1975]. And almost simultaneously, Wakeman turned to help Ken Russell and Roger Daltrey with the soundtrack of *LISZTOMANIA*, that album / soundtrack in actuality becoming his fourth solo album.

At this point, Wakeman formed a six-man band called *The English Rock Ensemble* and toured with them heavily for almost a year. Following the tour, Rick released *NO EARTH-*

*LY CONNECTION* [1976], still another outer limits concept album that related to only a few of his fans. No sooner was it out than Wakeman was working on another soundtrack album, this one called *WHITE ROCK* — for the 1976 Winter Olympics [held in Austria].

However, as *WHITE ROCK* was being readied for release [by A&M Records, his company throughout all his solo endeavors], word was out that Yes had replaced their keyboard man of the last three years, Patrick Moraz. His replacement, of course, was Rick Wakeman.

With little fanfare, Wakeman was reinstated into the band that had helped launch his solo career. So he now once more has the best of both worlds — the security of being in a successful band like Yes and the freedom of doing his solo projects as they come.

When I caught up with Wakeman a few weeks ago, he was sitting in a Holiday Inn near the Richfield Coliseum and talking about how things couldn't be better. He was more than ready to answer any and all questions about his activities of the past four years, as well as his role in the new Yes album, *GOING FOR THE ONE*.

**SCENE:** So, you're back. We haven't talked in a few years, and the last time we did, the furthest thing from your mind was joining Yes.

**RICK:** True. But this band is like a disease; once you've got the bug, it's hard to get rid of it. It's very strange, but even when I was working on my own I felt a part of the band.

**SCENE:** I think you fit better in the band than Patrick Moraz anyway.

**RICK:** Well, I think it was very difficult for Patrick to feel a part of the band because he came into the band at a very funny time. He's a very good player, but he hadn't gone through what the five of us have gone through — playing with small bands 10 years ago and driving up and down the motorways. Learning the hard way and paying your dues is what creates music. Patrick must have found it hard to relate, yeah.

Once you're in this band though, you're in for life.

**SCENE:** When you left Yes after *TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS*, you weren't bosom buddies with the others, though.

**RICK:** True, but when I decided to leave the band, I left purely because of the music. I believed so much in the band, but the music on *TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS*... I couldn't offer what was necessary for that sort of music. That's not my part of Yes, and Yes has to have all of the main ingredients for that type of music. So, I decided to leave because otherwise I'd be letting myself down and letting the others down.

Cover design by Tom Schmidt

Now, the reason I came back is exactly the same; we're all on the same wavelength again. Everybody has done their solo trips, and we're still gonna do them; it's important to diversify your music. But just why the five of us work so well together, I don't know.

When I came back and we set all the gear up, it had been like three and a half years since we'd all played on a stage together; it was like we'd done a concert three days ago. It was ridiculous.

**SCENE:** The solo things everyone did helped make the band better, too.

**RICK:** The best part about the solo areas is that I felt that we were building into the realm of experimentation with the listener. Experimentation should be something you do by yourself — in rehearsals and in writing music — until the experiment is proven in your own mind. And when you're through, then you can put it on record because then you can stand up for it.

My problem with *TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS* is that it wasn't proven in my mind. It was an experiment that hadn't completely worked out, and I couldn't stand up and say, "This is another great Yes album." There were some great moments on it, but the experiment wasn't very successful.

In spite of what the people might think, I was very worried about that album — my contribution and everyone's contribution. It was important for me to go away and collect my thoughts — as everybody else did — and come back together again. The band has matured even more, grown up a lot and now the rapport on-stage is really fun.

**SCENE:** The new Yes album is much more accessible, too.

**RICK:** It's really funny but Yes has gone, in a way, back to its roots with *GOING FOR THE ONE*. I have an album coming out in October, and I've sort of gone back to the feel of the *HENRY* album. It's just a three-piece album with Chris Squire playing bass and Alan White on drums. The name of it is *RICK WAKEMAN'S CRIMINAL RECORD*.

**SCENE:** Does that mean you might even do another solo tour?

**RICK:** If time allows when Yes gets a break. I wouldn't do a heavy tour, but I might do a few dates. I have two albums in the can, the one I just mentioned and a live one I did a few years ago with *The English Rock Ensemble*. But there's gonna be a double Yes album that'll be live too, which will be done in Japan or Australia.

**SCENE:** You need to do different things, I guess. Everyone does.

**RICK:** It's important because if you walk down one street all the time — which I think we all do — we forget some of the beautiful sideroads. And everybody in this band has discovered in the last three years that if you walk down the sideroads, it makes the main road look even better. There is just so much music about and so much to do. The scope within the band, individually and all together, is really quite phenomenal.

**SCENE:** The main reason, aside from the music, that you left Yes is because you and Jon Anderson didn't get along. True?

**RICK:** Yes. The irony is that Jon and I realize that we're both after the same thing; it's just that with different upbringings and backgrounds, we were trying for it in a different way. So, we have spent an awful lot of time together and we are bosom friends now. We do things like Jon will take his harp and we will go into a church and sit down for four or five hours and record everything. We have learned a lot about each other. The more we get to know each other on the friendship level and the musical level, the easier it is to get where we both are going.

Also, part of the problem was that if you graph the band's success, it would show a sudden upsurge within about six months at one time. Suddenly everybody is on a platter where you haven't got time to stop and think. We never got the opportunity to get to know each other. I never got to know Jon until I was working on my own. Then, we didn't have any pressures and we got to one another and realized we wanted the same things.

It's like going to Japan. One route is from Australia and the other is from Anchorage; they both end up in Japan, though. The problem with *TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS* is that I was in Anchorage and Jon was in Australia. At the time, neither of us could realize it.

**SCENE:** Leaving the band when you did was good for you anyway.

**RICK:** If I hadn't done it, the frustration would've started, emotional problems with the band. That wouldn't have been good for anybody.

**SCENE:** It must be a relief to be back, though. All of the responsibility of having your own organization and crew to worry about has been lifted for now.

**RICK:** That's right. The good thing about a band is that you have the strength of four other people around and the whole organization. When the others did their solo albums, they found out the same thing I did — that you have to make out your own decisions; it teaches you discipline an awful lot, though.

**SCENE:** What about just before you joined Yes this time. Didn't you have a band with Bill Bruford and John Whetton?

**RICK:** Yeah, with myself and Bruford on drums and Whetton on bass — sort of a rock and roll *Weather Report*. We were gonna get together and do an album but there were too many contractual problems. We all had different record companies, managers and all that — all these hassles. It used to end up we'd be rehearsing and we'd spend two hours on the phone with our respective record companies. Finally, I said "no" to it all.

You can't make good music when you've got hassles and problems. I've still got some cassettes from that band that I'm fond of — five or six songs of some very nice stuff, very interesting stuff. It would've evolved into a very nice band, but the hassles were just ridiculous.

**SCENE:** It should be interesting to see if your new album sells — because you are back in Yes, which should draw a lot of attention to it.

**RICK:** The new album is really a laid-back album. It'll be quite interesting to see what happens. If this one doesn't sell I won't know what to do next; I've come a full circle.

**SCENE:** Well, you won't be touring with any orchestras, right?

**RICK:** Probably not. It wasn't so bad financially. It is costly and expensive with an orchestra, but if you price it out as the maximum money you could lose, then you can afford it — if you have the money to start with. I mean, we figured out in the beginning of the tour how much we could lose. I'll tell you we lost a lot of money. We lost it all, but it was important to me in that I needed to do it. It was something that was important for me to do. Don't ask me why; a lot of people said I was mad to do it. I would like to think a large percentage of the people who saw the shows enjoyed it.

**SCENE:** Well, everyone who saw the shows loved them. It's just that people always expect bigger things next time.

**RICK:** I know. I am a great believer in the value of money — in a strange way. I would do it all again, though. Not now, of course. The only danger is that the next time I do come back with a band people will expect me to use the American Army and Air Force. Actually, if I had the money I would have done it — people jumping from parachutes and things.