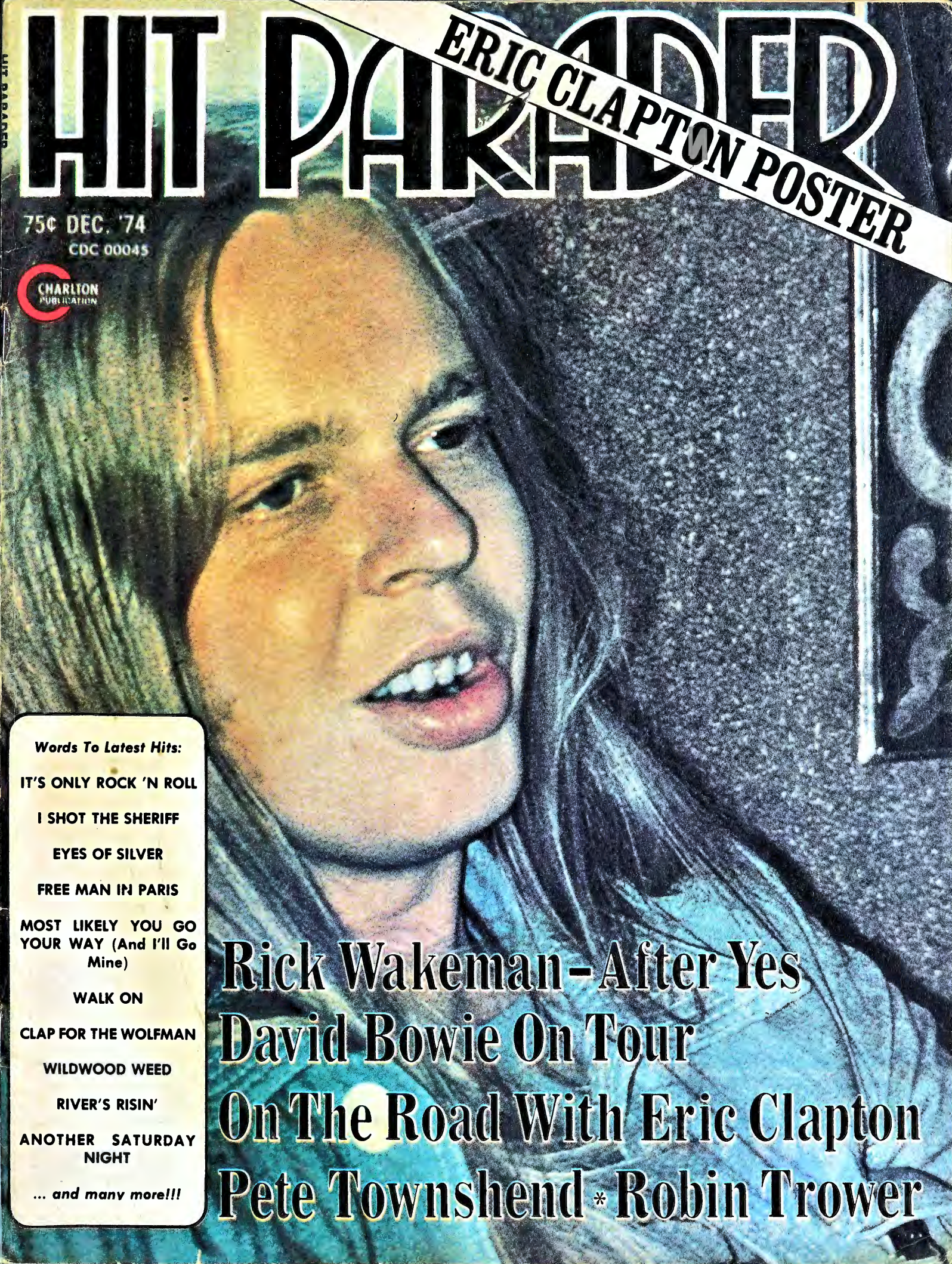


HIT PARADE

ERIC CLAPTON POSTER

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Words To Latest Hits:

IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N ROLL

I SHOT THE SHERIFF

EYES OF SILVER

FREE MAN IN PARIS

MOST LIKELY YOU GO
YOUR WAY (And I'll Go
Mine)

WALK ON

CLAP FOR THE WOLFMAN

WILDWOOD WEED

RIVER'S RISIN'

ANOTHER SATURDAY
NIGHT

... and many more!!!

Rick Wakeman - After Yes
David Bowie On Tour
On The Road With Eric Clapton
Pete Townshend * Robin Trower



THE HIT PARADER INTERVIEW



By Lisa Robinson

RICK WAKEMAN

HP: Tell me a bit about why you finally decided to leave Yes ...

Rick: Well, it's a short story and a long story rolled into one. Basically, it started when we were doing "Tales From Topographic Oceans" - which was an album that really was the first album the entire band wasn't totally involved with. It really was Steve and Jon rather than the rest - and it was the first time that that happened. That's not necessarily a bad thing - because sometimes individual people can come up with great ideas to produce a good album. But there were some things that went wrong there - and it was partly my fault - partly the band's fault. I sort of let it ride ...

It was an album that took a long time, and I was never particularly happy with it, especially when we took it on the road. I don't think we played it half as well on the road as we could have - because the band is capable of playing some amazing things. So - I guess when I did the "Journey" album and it did so well in England, I thought - well, if I stay with the band, and then we were due to go to America again - do some festivals, and then go to Brazil - all in October, and *then* start a new album ... you know. I just thought if I had to come back and do "Tales" again I shall be really cheesed off.

We'd be halfway through a new album and I would want to give me notice, which wouldn't be fair to the band ... plus it would mess me up personally - I'd be unable to take "Journey" on the road. When we came back from the end of the last U.S. tour, I went down to my country place with the wife and kids - down by the sea, and I thought about it alot. I bought the place to be able to get away from everything, to get away from outside influences. I thought that since I was basically disagreeing with the musical policy of the band, if I left right away it wouldn't be too late for them to get somebody else in.

It would help make people in the band who haven't been that important suddenly become more important, they could start a new album fresh - and get things sorted out. It would make them get together more. It wouldn't interfere with their timing at all - because it wouldn't

interrupt anything that they'd be into. It also wouldn't be too late for me to take "Journey" on the road and start working on the orchestras and that whole project. So ... I just sent a telegram to the manager and said I wasn't coming back. It was strange really - because it was the first time the band really believed it. I had handed in my notice before, when we were on the last American tour I handed in me notice.

HP: This past tour? What happened?

Rick: Yes - halfway through the last American tour. I just wasn't happy with the way we were presenting concerts on the stage - which is a highly personal view, but an important one. If four people want to do one thing, and the other wants to do another - well, needless to say it becomes very ... there's unrest in the camp. See, the thing is, I like me drink, I like mucking about, I like having a good living. And sometimes - if you're outside of the music, well - it irritates me music seriously - and it's difficult for people to take you seriously.

And if you say - 'look man, this is getting to be a joke, we've got to do this seriously', and they say, 'well - you're the one who's going fast', and then you say, 'well, okay - I'll leave'. And then they react with something like ... 'yeah ... listen, we've got rehearsal on Tuesday.' It really was that sort of thing. None of it really sunk in until I was in Devon, but I definitely think it will be the best thing for the band. I mean, they might not agree with what I'll say now - which is that I think Yes would an amazing path through "Fragile" - starting with the Yes album up through "Fragile" and through "Yessongs".

I think we veered off the path with "Tales" because of various reasons. And if I had stayed with the band it would have veered off even more. It would have ruined the band and ruined alot of good music. I think that because I have left, whoever will come in with them will now help the other four people pull it together, and they'll get back onto the path and continue to make really good music.

In the long run, it will undoubtedly be the best for them. It certainly will be the best for me because I'll be a helluva lot

happier. I'm not saying I've been miserable with the band, because if you add it up - I've had a great time. The thing is now, it's all going to the music - the music has got to stand up. All the way down the line - if it's something I do, or something the band does, it has got to be down to the music and down to nothing else.

HP: Was there a conflict because of the success of your solo albums? Did people come to see *you* as opposed to coming to see Yes in performance, do you think?

Rick: I'll tell you, it was difficult sometimes - when I desperately wanted to play "Henry" onstage, and you knew you couldn't because you were at a Yes concert playing Yes music. And loads of people would come up to you before the gig and ask if I would play "Catherine of Aragon" or something like that. And it was strange because you knew that even though you were going to give them some good Yes music, to a certain extent you were disappointed and you were disappointing yourself in the fact that you weren't playing something you would love to play.

I would have loved to play some of "Henry" onstage, I really would have. It was difficult, of course. Because it was a Yes concert. The thing that could have been done would have been if everyone would have had a solo project. Of course when you've got five people in a band you've got to have certain inhibitions. There are bound to be some things you can't do. Actually, one of the things I'm going to miss out of Yes is that I won't have those four musicians around; there will be certain things I won't be able to do.

Having played with them for three years - well, you would go onstage and know exactly what everyone was going to play, exactly what everyone was going to do. Sort of like rushing with a confidence thing - that's what I'm going to lose. See - the thing is that they all should have done solo projects - they've all been ready to do solo projects for so long, Steve certainly has, he should have done it this year.

And Chris - Chris had bass things together way before Bill Wyman had his bass thing together, and he should have done it. I would have been all for it. I

think if that had happened onstage it would have been fantastic, a Yes concert could have been amazing in that we all would have had little solo projects and individual pieces of music we could have done and by the time we played the Yes music we would have been able to show how the different facets of everyone's music came together into making Yes music.

HP: Do you think any of them are as committed to solo projects as you are?

Rick: I'm not really sure. I know they've all thought about it and they've got things together. But you've got to go and do them. If you've got something that you really want to do - then you can't let it build up inside if it's not suitable within the context of the band. It'll only make you a worse musician within the band itself.

HP: The reaction in England when you left was amazing - it was page one on all the music papers. It really was like The Beatles breaking up or something ...

Rick: Yeah, it was actually funny. Because I had some doubts about being in the band before, as I mentioned - when "Tales" happened, and for months people used to ask me about leaving the band. Guaranteed every week, in one paper or another - there was a column item at least about my leaving Yes. I thought by the time it happened, it would be a bloody joke. People have read it for so many weeks that who really cares, you know?

So what, he finally left. It did put us in sort of a turmoil - how to handle the press. Because we have the same manager, the same lawyer, the same accountant, naturally - and there always are these terrible sort of legal and financial hassles involved.

So we just put out this story that I left and the band was on holiday - and we wouldn't talk to anyone there about it. We had to put out some announcement though, because in London word gets out so bloody fast - that if I were to start rehearsing another band everyone would instantly know - word would get out and it would be wrong. But anyway - they really handled it like it was such a big story, but nicely - like there would now be two important musical branches coming out of the split. Not like a split. Not like a split, really, more like a different musical idea.

HP: Do you think they'll have trouble replacing you? (Note: At press time, there was no replacement for Rick Wakeman in Yes.)

Rick: No - because Yes has always been a music band - it's always existed on music rather than individuals. Sort of like if someone said "Mozart" to you - you wouldn't think of a little white haired old man at the piano - you'd think of symphonies and concertos and things. In the same way I would hope that people who think about Yes don't think about the individuals but rather think about

"Close to the Edge" or "Roundabout" ...

HP: How have you reacted to the critical acclaim that your work has received?

Rick: Well - you know, one thing you couldn't ever really do would be to hear either my music or Yes music for the first time. It takes such a long time for the music to build up and you certainly couldn't go out into the audience and hear how it sounded. It makes it very difficult, but you really do almost have to be guided by people who write things about you and your music and people in the audience. After a concert I really like to go out there and talk to people who were there and find out exactly what they thought - the whys and wherefores. Because they saw things that you can't see and they often see the silliest things that you might miss but might be important. Then you think, 'Christ, yeah...'...

Even if it doesn't have anything to do with the music. A classic example is when we got a nice review in Hartford, but the bloke said that I looked very clumsy moving from keyboard to keyboard and wasn't it a pity that I wasn't wearing some fabulous coat to cover up the moves so the people would be more interested in the music and less in the movement. It was funny - we had two nights there and the second night the DJ came onstage wearing a black cape, and I asked him where he got it. He said he paid two hundred dollars for it, - he had had it made - and I said it really meant alot to me to



have a cape. So he sold it to me and I've been wearing capes ever since. And that's the sort of thing - it has nothing to do with the music really - but it's the kind of thing that people can see that you always can't.

HP: I read something once about your having problems with your health. How are you?

Rick: That was funny too. I hadn't seen Tony Tyler (*Not: of the New Musical Express in London*) in about a year and a half and the time previous to that I had been in the best of health. Up until last year I was always good anyway. Right before the "Journey" concert we started rehearsing for that - 24 hours a day literally. And after the last tour I had found out that I had ulcers or something like that - then Tony came down to the rehearsals, and we had equipment problems - no one had slept for about 48 hours, a tooth of mine started breaking and affecting my nerves and they had to rush me to the dentist and remove the nerves or whatever.

I was in terrible shape after some 30,000 injections and *then* I had a box of pills to take - first for the ulcer, and then for the teeth. And he had come in and seen me - popping pills, halfway through I just fell asleep - nodded out right during one of the narrations! There were only five days left til the concert - and then after the concert I was so sick I didn't remember anything - I just woke up in bed the next morning ... I was bad like

that for about three months, and *then* we did the American tour! Anyway ... ulcers can be really bad when you're on the road and eating badly and all ... After awhile I just said, 'see you, no more of this' ... and that had something to do with my leaving the band and all. You just can't try and do two things in one go. I'm fine now, though.

HP: What about your future? Do you have a band together?

Rick: Yes. I was very lucky really, in that we recorded the Festival Hall concert - and we were all able to listen back to it and really hear what it sounded like. Everyone really could analyze it, and I decided that I'm going to keep the same band that I used on it. I'll add another guitar player, but other than that they'll be those people. The good thing was that nobody really knew any of them. When I decided to do the concert everyone said you're off your head - with an orchestra and a choir and all. But I really believed that instead of writing a piece of music and then having it orchestrated, you could write a piece of music for the whole orchestra. I mean Mozart didn't sit down and write something for the piano, and then say, 'well, that's good. Now I think I'll orchestrate it.'

So I started off like that, and then I tried to look at things other people had done with orchestras - and to try and learn from their mistakes. There's no right or wrong really, but it never

sounded live to me. David Mesham - who did the engineering told me that an orchestra has its own internal mix. That's why they're set up the way they are onstage - and you never see a symphony orchestra with thousands of mikes onstage. You hear the acoustic sounds because they set up accordingly. So we only used three mikes - one on the left, one on the right, and one in the middle - so that we only heard the natural acoustic sound or the orchestra.

Next - I had to get the people. I went to see "Tommy" and ended up playing some of the piano stuff at the end. And I really felt that the music suffered because everyone who was involved was a face, and people weren't going to listen to the music - they were going to see ... you know, Rod Stewart's coming on next, and Maggie Bell's coming on next - and like that. And there certainly were lots of top class musicians about who people never heard of.

So I went hunting around in the bloody local pubs ... I went everywhere, and I came up with a bunch of musicians who people never heard of but who were willing to give their all and are just as good as any of the well known faces who are about nowadays. We went up onstage - with people who weren't known, and the whole thing had to stand up on the music. I went into a pub not fifteen miles from my house and there was a bass player in

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there named Roger Newell who was amazing. I sat in with him - I played a bit of piano and you can really pick them out if they're good musicians.

He wasn't doing anything particularly clever - but you knew he could if he wanted to. And we talked a bit about Yes, and he said he liked "Heart of the Sunrise" - and played a bass line for me that was fairly difficult and then he said, 'I would have liked it if after that you had done something like this' - and he played this thing that was really hairy. So I said, 'Oh yeah? What are you doing on January 18th?' - so that's how he came along. And then I met the drummer and the singer ... and Mike Egan who's the guitar player, he did all the stuff for me on "Henry".

He's a rare breed in that most guitar players want to be incredible superstars and stand up and leap about, etc. - but Mike is really tacit and he just wants to play, and has no illusions about being the greatest in the world. But if you stood him next to the greatest in the world - he

probably would be.

HP: Will you be bringing "Journey" here?

Rick: Right, the orchestra and the choir and the whole thing. Really good players we can pick up along the way if we need them - and we'll bring the English Chamber Choir with us and David Hemmings and David Measham and - there are negotiations going on now, if David Hemmings can't do the narration I'd like to get Orson Welles. You know, it's funny. When we started, David was the only one interested in doing it - now the list is over 80 pages long ... The arrangements are all done, and if we have David Measham to conduct - which is very important because you have to have co-ordination between the narrator, the choir and the band - then the first concert would be at the Crystal Palace in England, and an English tour that would go through October 10th, then hopefully we'd come straight here.

HP: How did you manage to do something on such a grand scale and yet avoid sounding pretentious, or the music being excessive?

Rick: Well - there were so many people involved, and when you have people like David Hemmings and David Measham and the London Symphony Orchestra in-

volved with you - if any of it didn't sound quite right, they'd be the first to tell me. If you do take what people have to say into account - like people would often make a suggestion with an arrangement or a certain part - then you avoid that sort of thing.

HP: Did it turn out differently than you originally intended?

Rick: Well - it took me about a year and a half - but it didn't really change. I mean if I went back and listened to the original demos of it and the actual recording now, it would sound worlds apart. But things changed in tiny degrees - week by week, so that you wouldn't really notice if you'd been following the thing all along.

HP: Do you feel that your music is in part educating young people to the classics ... you know, like sneaking Grieg in there and all?

Rick: No - that wasn't deliberate. There's a part in the book where the volcano stops and it's pushing up all the water and in one of the transitions it says 'I appeared to be in the hall of a mountain - as if a king were looking down.' So I said, 'yeah, got to do that'. I mean music shouldn't educate, anyway, it's there to enjoy. If people want to be educated then they should be able to educate themselves. If



they want to learn something that's up to them - if they want to sit back and listen to a piece of music and enjoy then they should be able to do that from the same piece of music.

HP: You mentioned in our last *Hit Parader Interview* with you that you had a son, and you wanted him to learn the piano and the Moog?

Rick: Right, I've got two little horrors - one is two and a half and the other is three months. Now what happens with the Moog - when you take into account that it's really become the rich keyboard player's toy ... you can technically learn to play it without learning too much about knobs and dials if you just want to make noises. But that defeats the whole idea of the instrument. If you have to learn it from nothing - the way you do with the organ ... all the pedals and stuff, then you could really have some exciting keyboard players. What happens all too often though is that people get their keyboards together and then play the Moog afterwards.

I thought that if my little boy is musical - what would be interesting would be for him to start out on the piano and learn the Moog at the same time. There really are only a few people who use it right ... Walter Carlos ... Nobody really understands it fully. I've been at it for five years and I don't get it all. Keith must have been at it for 6 or 7 years and he doesn't understand it fully. Only Walter Carlos comes close ... it's just one of those instruments that you can go on learning about forever ...

HP: What about your next album?

Rick: I'm not doing any more albums. (Laughter)

HP: Ever?

Rick: After the American tour - which should end about the end of November - we will start - maybe not finish, but get something down that we can start thinking about. Then we'll go off to Japan and Australia and do another tour, and then come back - analyze what we've done, and do more from there.

HP: Do you have a concept?

Rick: Well, I often change my mind but I'm thinking of doing something totally musically removed from what I'm doing now. See the country around Devon - where my house is, is near the last county you come to which is Cornwall. King Arthur came from there - called Tintagil, and I'm thinking of basing the whole thing around the myth of King Arthur. So many things - the round table ... Merlin the magician, the various knights. I stayed on a farm near Tintagil for many years, I was very young, but I've never forgotten it. It's really an amazing place.

The place we've got in Devon is only about 50 or 60 miles from there so I'm going to have a look again and then delve into the history before I actually start writing.

HP: "Journey" actually was Number One in England wasn't it? And it went right on the charts here ...

Rick: Went right in at 78 on the Billboard charts. It's always a good move to buy shares in Billboard. (Laughter.) □

