

1967

ALBUM TRACKS

January 1967 (Japan) Live LP

On Stage Encore!

Liberty LP 8068 Stereo



1 [67/1L] LA BAMBA ||| 2 [67/2L] A TASTE OF HONEY ||| 3 [67/3L] SECRET AGENT MAN ||| 4 [67/4L] CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' ||| 5 [67/5L] BATMAN THEME ||| 6 [67/6L] THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. ||| 7 [67/7L] GINZA LIGHTS ||| 8 [67/8L] KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO ||| 9 [67/9L] YOZORA NO HOSHI ||| 10 [67/10L] 00-711 ||| 11 [67/11L] WIPE OUT '66

Carrying on with the need to satisfy the insatiable demand for Ventures music in Japan, this is a selection from the concert-round of summer 1966. It is refreshingly different from its predecessors in focusing on live versions of relatively recent studio cuts with the solitary exception of the final track, the ever popular WIPE OUT (see for that the comment on entry [65/21L]). The first track is from the 1965 *À Go-Go* album [65/37]; all the remainder started life in 1966, thus: tracks 8 & 9 a Japanese single from January ([66/75–76S]), track 2 on *Where The Action Is* ([66/6]), tracks 3, 5, 6, 10 on *Batman Theme* ([66/19:13:18:17]), tracks 4 & 7 on *Go With The Ventures* ([66/62:52]).

Of the live sets issued in the 60s, *On Stage Encore!* is perhaps the most satisfactory taken as a whole¹: not only do The Ventures perform at the top of their game with a fluency, cohesion and drive that set unbeatable standards — not forgetting the pace, which is brisk but not too frantic overall — but the sound also is well engineered with a crisply focused stereo soundstage, awesome dynamic range and judicious audience management, creating a vivid impression of ‘being there’.

The studio version of **LA BAMBA** ([65/37]) was an elegant and elaborate production job which projected a notably vivid, sharply-etched sound. The reduced forces on this live outing provide a winning alternative by upping the pace without going to extremes: this is Latin music at its most lively, with Nokie’s twangy lead lines carried

along in fine style on the back of a driving accompaniment. The rocked up 1966 version of [66/6] **A TASTE OF HONEY** (which was put out as an A-Single in Japan) showed The Ventures at their most vibrant. In the two examples of live renditions from the 60s involving Nokie Edwards, *Encore* and *Live Again*, with no organ to enliven the proceedings, he not surprisingly took the opportunity to embellish the main melody with those trademark deft touches, on the second of these far more extensively and adventurously than the first — though that offers the tighter all round performance. There is an organ on *In Tokyo '68*, yet despite the grand fanfare at the start the number never gets off the ground, as the sound is dismal, scandalously dark and recessed — a great pity, as the arrangement had plenty of go and Gerry McGee on lead guitar indulged in some very fancy ornamentation of his own.

The first of four items on *Encore* associated with *Batman Theme*, **SECRET AGENT MAN** was both a US single ([66/77S]) and an album track ([66/19]), in slightly different arrangements. As a stage number it is ideal: taken at a slightly faster pace than the studio cut, its effortless flow and drive highlight the group's complete mastery of their craft.

With the slight acceleration and the greater punch applied to **CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'**, with its nobly resounding middle eight, we need to disregard a number of the song's finer points and more especially the moody textures evoked in the studio cut ([66/62]) which called upon the combined forces of lead guitar, organ and female backing vocals. In fact, this is undeniably a worthy alternative from a group that could evidently air in public with signal success just about anything they produced behind closed doors. Rather than wonder whether there were just too many live albums put out in the 60s, any admirer of the highest achievements of RI during that period might well lament the fact that there were not even more.

In the hands of The Ventures the dazzling **BATMAN THEME** has to be reckoned one of the truly great instrumentals of the decade in the estimation of the present reviewer (it was an A-Single in Japan, coupled with **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.**, a version of which follows on here). Could a live version possibly do justice to the original ([66/13]) without the support of those chanting female vocalists, or the theramin, not to mention its colour and the sheer evocation of menace? They pull it off without doubt (you can just catch a relatively rare example of a player, probably Don Wilson, voicing his own exhilaration at 1:15): the tempo is upped, but not excessively so, and the lead guitar is gripping, for Nokie positively spits out the melody to wonderfully clangorous accompaniment, bringing in the lower registers of his instrument to awesome effect at the start and finish (and what a finish!). File under not to be missed.

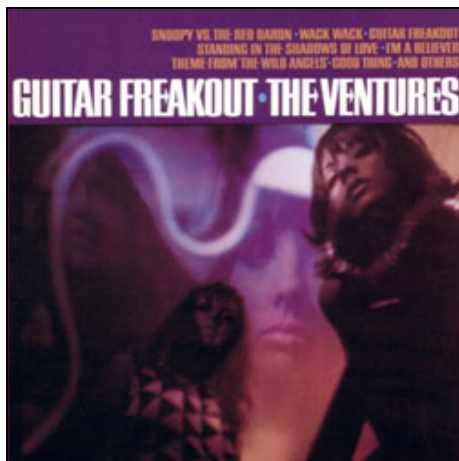
THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. emerged from its makeover by The Ventures as a classy example of theme music ([66/18]), with guitars, organ and chorus coming together beautifully. The more limited onstage resources turn this into a twangy workout taken at a pretty hectic pace, not one of the best examples of the group's tendency to hurtle through compositions where the evocation of a particular atmosphere contributes significantly to its effectiveness.

The group's own **GINZA LIGHTS** (studio cut: [66/52]; an A-Single in Japan) is taken by the scruff of the neck, delivered at speed by a lead guitar that rings out magnificently, and must have sounded really something in the concert hall, scintillating enough one would have thought to make the Japanese audience jump up and down in wild glee. Well, maybe not, but this is certainly another to drool over. There is a further version on the *Live Again* set. It is smoothly delivered, less strident and more subdued (by Ventures standards that is): a nice one.

One of the most refreshing things about this LP is that the programmers were now ready to feed in Japanese items, a trend carried even further in the next live release of January 1968. Two outstanding if very different numbers, **KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO** and **YOZORA NO HOSHI**, made up a hit single in Japan early in 1966 ([66/75–76S]). The former has a more pronounced lilt than the studio cut, and its beautiful melody, the atmospheric organ part now not a part of the equation, is carved out by Nokie in big bold colours to a robust accompaniment. The belter of a B-side (another divested of organ) is treated exactly as expected on present showing, the four piece motoring at breakneck speed and producing a stormer of an instrumental which is incontrovertibly in the demonstration category.

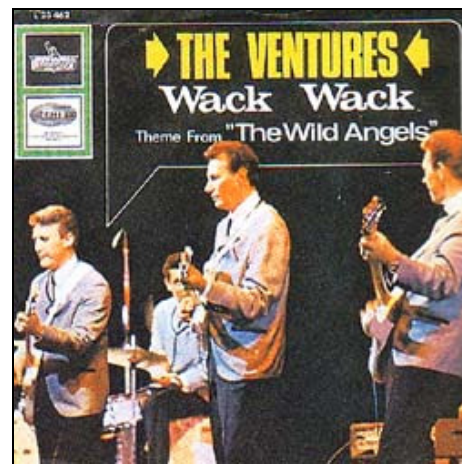
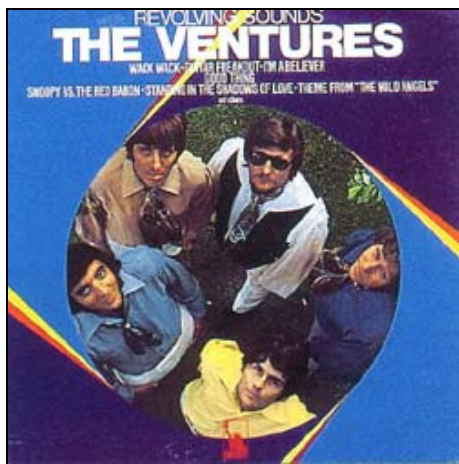
Another ‘spy-flick’ flavoured piece, **00–711**, is one of the less striking tracks on the *Batman Theme* album ([66/17]) and does not seem an obvious choice for live performance, but this turns out to be one that does benefit from being put through its paces more energetically, Don Wilson’s crashing chords coming through with great force.

February 1967 LP
Guitar Freakout
 Dolton BST 8050 Stereo/ BLP 2050 Mono



As dedicated followers of fashion, The Ventures were bound to reflect something of current sociological trends, among them the dissemination of hallucinogens and their impact on popular music. However, the ‘freakout’ element does not extend to the

entire album or anything like it. The title track, though its startling tempo change, derived from The Count Five, is almost certainly drug-related, is not in itself strongly suggestive to anything like the degree encountered at this period in the recordings of The Beatles, to take the most publicised example. The Glen Campbell number likewise must harbour a reference to the drug culture (see the comment on track 5), but disregard the title and it could be appreciated as just a goofy guitar workout. Similarly, unusual as the composition is, there is nothing in track 4 to link the use of the number '93' specifically to the fad of thelemic mysticism to which it may allude (see the note). Suggestive terminology appears also in certain of the titles to the follow-up album *Super Psychedelics*: 'psyched-out', 'vibrations', 'endless dream', and also the topographical allusion in 'Kandy'.



The remaining numbers are split between covers of recent hit parade material, all six of them from Americans born and bred, and four group originals in contrasting styles. The organ continues to play an important role, in the hands of Evelyn Freeman: see p.26 below for her and other musicians contributing to the sessions.

In 1967, for the first time to a marked degree, The Shadows admitted elements of humour, buffoonery and parody into their work: a sign of the times. The Ventures on this set pick up on a trio of wacky/comic/ novelty numbers (tracks 5, 6 and 10) and look to be sending up a number which they reportedly were unhappy about recording in the first place (track 12). An interesting mix then, the album earning them a #57 placing and 26 weeks on chart.



<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

Three contrasting numbers head the list: the tight and punchy **GOOD THING**, the atmospheric **MOD EAST** and the delightful **PAPER AIRPLANE**.

1 [67/12] GOOD THING

(Terry Melcher/ Mark Lindsay)

Paul Revere & The Raiders' manager Terry Melcher and group vocalist/saxophonist Mark Lindsay came up with this, their third US Top 10 hit (it peaked at #4 in January 1967). They meant nothing in the UK for a variety of reasons, one being that from the British perspective the amalgam of influences assimilated by a group with a decidedly insular dress sense, whose main appeal lay with teenyboppers, seemed to offer little to compete with home-grown talent. The present song is a case in point, a forced vocal delivery bolstered by Beach Boys styled harmonies. Not for the first time, though, a mediocre vocal is transformed into a cracking instrumental. The pace is stepped up markedly, the ensemble playing is superbly tight and assured (the cymbals are very splashy in the mix however, though DP remarks "they were meant to be: that is Mel's style"); a taut lead guitar supported by Don Wilson hammers away in hyperdrive in tandem with a throbbing bass. And there is a brilliant outro, one of those hell-for-leather efforts that are over so quickly that the listener is left thirsting for what has been inconsiderately swallowed up in the fade!

2 [67/13] HIGH AND DRY

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

"A Dick Daled surf theme that boasts a superb middle section with a killer bass run"². This grandiose, exotically styled number is most unusual in its approach. The organ, very much integrated into the action and not a mere concomitant, plays a prominent role in the creation of a densely textured 'wall of sound'. The style and rhythm of the central passage in particular, heralded by a dramatic pause from which the music progresses gradually from a dark silence to its full strength, suggests the influence of The Tornados, though the Ventures are far more disciplined and do not have to contend with a woefully restricted dynamic range. As for the outer frame of the piece, with the ensemble firing on all cylinders, the agitated lead lines positively rattle along. At 1:28 Bob Bogle's bass tracks Nokie with a powerfully scudding accompaniment to thicken the sound still further for the final push.

3 [67/14] STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF LOVE

(Brian Holland/ Lamont Dozier/ Eddie Holland)

There is no reason in principle why the ebullient and inventive music of the Motown stable should not have suited The Ventures well, especially now that the organ contribution of the accomplished Evelyn Freeman had become a fixture. In line with the policy of marketing albums with a goodly number of very recent and instantly recognisable titles, this Four Tops song was probably scooped up the moment it entered the charts in December 1966. It went on to climb to #6 in both the US and the UK, and it is as likely as not that it was expected to do better, being a very close relative of the blockbuster 'Reach Out I'll Be There'. But surely these, as opposed to say something like 'Bernadette', were the two most intractable pieces imaginable to turn into guitar-led instros — so complex and absorbing, so deservedly praised for their dramatic touches, the verve of the vocal performance, the tonal shifts, the richness and ingenuity of the instrumentation. The Ventures' version is not only weak-kneed, Nokie has altered the contours of the melody and not for the better (take the sequence 0:16 to 0:31 as an example), and he is more preoccupied, one suspects, with the art of tricky improvisation (in itself diverting enough). That apart, there is no slam whatsoever, with bass — and indeed everything else — sorely lacking in go.

4 [67/15] OFF IN THE 93RDS

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

The number '93' could allude to any number of things, but particularly attractive is an observation by Ken Arnold in response to a query fielded on a Ventures website that it was commonly associated over these years with the concept of 'Thelema' developed by British mystic Aleister Crowley — crass mumbo jumbo most certainly, unrelieved by even a semblance of intellectual rigour, but taken seriously by fellow drug-advocate Timothy Leary and his ilk. Ken Arnold sees the title as an attempt to capitalize on "the peace, love, drug culture of the time". Whatever the allusion, this is stirring stuff, sweeping and billowing along with a powerful momentum to the accompaniment of a curiously toned, chittering, coruscating guitar accompaniment from Don Wilson, which in a brief passage at 1:09 moves right into the foreground.

5 [67/16] COOKOUT FREAKOUT ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

(Glen Campbell)

The group have recalled that Glen Campbell was actually one of the musicians on this album: cf. what appears to be an especially sharp recollection on Don Wilson's part reported by Del Halterman³. The documentation has it otherwise (see p.26 below), but if he did it seems logical to assume that he played a prominent part in putting together this nonsense piece, since the outlandish dissonance of the runs at 0:27 and 1:03 in particular — the product one must presume of a notional hallucinogenic state, the 'freakout' element — must surely have been difficult to transfer from his own head to someone else's fingers! The breathtakingly beautiful Lookout Mountain in the Chattanooga area, memorably mentioned by Martin Luther King in his famous 'I Have A Dream' speech of 1963, attracted hippies and other devotees of the new counter-culture. There is a joke, I take it, not only in the jingling title (people eating out, cookouts being a popular pastime in the Appalachian district, and using the occasion to drop out bigtime) but also in the countrified styling — the drugs of the urban hordes infiltrating the bedrock of American society!

6 [67/17] WACK WACK

(Isaac Holt/ Donald Storbball/ Don Walker/ Eldee Young)

Downmarket in terms of commercial muscle by Ventures' standards, this unusual number from The Young Holt Trio only made #40; but it did not enter the listings until well into January 1967, so it must have been talent-spotted in advance by somebody in the group. Holt (drums) and Young (bass) had both been in The Ramsey Lewis trio, and taking pianist Walker on board from 1965 they specialised in soul-jazz fusion with Ray Charles-styled keyboards, bursts of scat vocals, and lively audience participation. All these elements are present in this hit, but they are not taken over lock, stock and barrel into our piano/guitar version, which is just as light on its feet, with the scat wiped out, and Nokie's fuzz guitar spot sounding like a saxophone in full flood! In the end then, it is not nearly as silly, and the (double) bass/percussion input is certainly serious stuff.

7 [67/18] MOD EAST

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

By 1967, the Cold War still an ever-present fact of life, we were constantly assured, spy flicks/ TV spy series/ TV spy feature films were rampant both in the US and the UK. MOD EAST might have served as a theme tune for one such production, given the liking for exotic locations, often blessed with plenty of heat and sand. With its

scythe of a rhythm guitar and powerful backbeat, it cleverly bonds the new beat idiom pervading the West with a melody line that savours strongly of the East. Great atmospheric lead guitar, and a great organ-led bridge, Nokie joining in with gusto midway.

DB notes “The tone of the piece is in my view Asian or, more specifically, Indian. Surely this was an attempt to take account of the Indian influence that The Beatles were then spearheading into popular culture?”, while AT observes “It is quite clear that the guitar is mimicking sitar runs.” In my opinion we are dealing rather with a hybrid, or, if you prefer, the number is not ‘Eastern’ in a confined sense. Agreed, in terms of *tonality* and (to some degree) *technique* the Indian influence is at work, but this particular combination of *melody and bouncy rhythm* has a distinct Russian-Persian texture in the mould of Glinka or Rimsky-Korsakov. After writing this I noticed that music critic Kurt Edwards, who admires the piece, talks of “a Persian melody line”.

8 [67/19] I'M A BELIEVER

(Neil Diamond)

This song topped the charts in the US on the last day of December 1966 and did the same in the UK in January 1967. The Monkees had a formidable array of pop songwriters amassed for their earlier efforts, and this piece came from one of the most accomplished of them relatively early on in his own glittering hit-making career. It is a class song, beyond a doubt. The arrangement was skilfully crafted to suggest comparisons, without resorting to slavish copying, with the UK's Fab Four in their fresh-faced formulaic pop song phase: a solid beat in which guitars and drums played a major if not exclusive part, spirited harmony vocals and a McCartney-like flourish in the outro to import just a bit of grittiness. With The Ventures the high surface polish remains intact. It is an elegant instrumental that serves as a showcase for Nokie Edwards' ultra-slick quick-fire improvising touches, which are thrown out repeatedly. Whereas track 3 had emerged the worse for wear from this technique, with this much more straightforward piece it works effectively. Again there is an exciting spurt into the fade, but it is tantalisingly brief.

9 [67/20] GUITAR FREAKOUT

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

This interesting piece owes much to ‘Psychotic Reaction’ from Californian group The Count Five, a US #5 in 1966; popularly labelled purveyors of ‘garage punk’ they are usually compared with our Yardbirds, though they were much cruder and had nobody of the calibre of Jeff Beck. The song moves from a relatively sedate raunchy white soul groove to a truly frenetic guitar-led workout, and The Ventures follow suit in an AB:AB sequence with a fleeting period of silence interposed midway. However, while in The Ventures' hands the A-section sounds rather one of those laid-back sleep-inducing Duane Eddy workouts with a faintly western flavour, the B-section simply bursts into a frantic but entirely coherent spurt into the fade, without the bewildering welter of notes one encounters, for example, in similar convulsive runs from Jimi Hendrix. The reaction alluded to in the hit single is of course drug-related and might relate generally to ‘freaking out’, or alternatively to the transition, claimed for some hallucinogens, from torpor/ drowsiness into the racing, but not necessarily chaotic, mental images associated with an alleged state of ‘heightened consciousness’.

10 [67/21] SNOOPY VS THE RED BARON

(Philip Gernard/ Dick Holler)

This number by The Royal Guardsmen of Florida about Snoopy the Beagle from the popular 'Peanuts' comic strip soared to US #2 in early January 1967 (#8 UK), blocked by 'I'm A Believer'. It's a fun piece heartily sung and laced with various OTT sound effects and chatter, with lyrics whose vocabulary and imagery do not extend beyond the basic (the hero is "A funny looking dog with a big black nose"). The Ventures resort to the simple expedient of equipping it with a lead guitar line and aping the various fripperies. Reviewers have reacted with undisguised revulsion but it does reflect the spirit of the times (while providing an eye-catching and immediately identifiable title for prospective buyers), and in any case The Ventures, like The Shadows, did go out of their way to cultivate a range of styles, one very important reason for their enduring appeal despite the decidedly unenduring nature of certain of their recorded works.

11 [67/22] PAPER AIRPLANE

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

It might well require an expert in the aerodynamics of paper airplanes (the subject of very serious study) to visualise with precision the images in the minds of the composers of this divertingly buoyant and sparkling piece of froth. Initially the music bobs along jauntily, wafted along by a thudding bass, then (0:33), in a delightfully effervescent passage, it seems to gain momentum, only to slow to a halt (0:47) prior to scooting along once more. It certainly looks as if these last two stages correspond to the way a paper plane becomes stationary, stalling just prior to tracing a rapid loop. To take us into the fade a piano appears to represent the eddying descent to earth when the plane has run out of motive energy altogether. DB opines that the title was dreamt up once the number was written, but whatever way round it was, it certainly fits the case admirably.

12 [67/23] THEME FROM 'THE WILD ANGELS'

(Mike Curb)

Dreary, smeary, jarring, dire ... No, not this track, but the original theme from the 1966 biker movie from Davie Allan & The Arrows. Even more dire etc., yes, this track, which makes the coarse original sound cultivated (well, almost): a guitar line which sounds like a blend of The Chipmunks and Bugs Bunny is locked in combat with female backing vocalists and rasping bike engines. It had better be parodic (according to GW, The Ventures did not want to record it), but whether it is or not, it is not worth the tape it was recorded onto. "So crass that it's not true" is Dave Burke's verdict⁴. In December 1966 it had put out as a single paired with [66/82S] KICKSTAND — the last ever on the Dolton label.

June 1967 LP

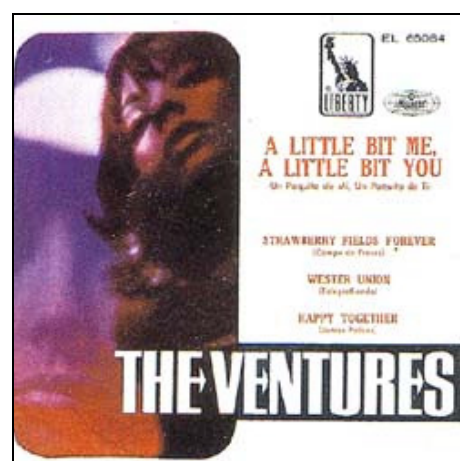
Super Psychedelics

Liberty LST 8052 Stereo/ LRP 2052 Mono

'Psychedelia' had many faces, and this album, with Evelyn Freeman again on keys (see pp.26–27 for further instrumentation employed, esp. sitar), which earned the group a placing of #69 and remained on chart for 15 weeks, reflects some of them. In graphic design and art generally, bold, luminous colours and swirling, irregular shapes were in favour: witness the LP front cover. (There was also a handsome colour-

illustrated gatefold sleeve, on which see Halterman 147.) In the realm of music, there were bright, breezy songs bursting with the joys of life, but at the other extreme profound, densely textured compositions that tunneled into the darkest recesses of the human psyche — the tone and tempo of the present programme are varied in line with these trends. Then there is the drug culture to consider, briefly aired in the commentary on the *Guitar Freakout* album. Clearly *Super Psychedelics* has been put together from attentive listening to a range of music which sought to express itself, whether directly or indirectly, on the basis of stimulation by what were popularly termed ‘mind-enhancing’ drugs. A number of the features associated with this phenomenon are discussed in the individual analyses below.

The Ventures seem to have been enthusiastic about the project, for their own input is considerable: they contribute no fewer than seven numbers themselves with an eighth penned by close associate Danny Hamilton. The remaining tracks are covers of recent chart hits, again with a strong home-grown bias: The Five Americans, The Monkees, The Turtles, with The Beatles furnishing what proved to be an enduring classic (though The Turtles’ mainstream pop song hasn’t done too badly either over the years both in compilations and on radio).



<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

A quality album, one of their very best. Three of the group-penned numbers are particularly impressive: **REFLECTIONS**, **GUITAR PSYCHEDELICS** and, for entering into the spirit of the age with a real Sitarfest, **ENDLESS DREAM**.

1 [67/24] STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER

(John Lennon/ Paul McCartney)

As a double A-side with the scintillating 'Penny Lane', the song only made it to #2 in the UK in 1967, a marketing ploy that had been tried twice before and had secured chart-toppers, but this time The Fab Four were kept at bay by Engelbert Humperdinck. In an identical coupling in the US, 'Penny Lane' made #1 while 'Strawberry Fields' got to #8. But it was the latter that made real waves very rapidly as a shining exemplar of the hallucinogenic experience in music-making, with its dark textures, shifting tempos, and outlandish dissonances, and it must have been a natural for the short-list of openers on this set. The Ventures' version though is a reflection of 'psychedelia' in its array of bright colours and bouyant rhythms (see introduction to this album), enlivened by an intricately crafted intermeshing of guitars, electric piano/organ (double-tracked at times) and fleeting bursts of electric sitar floating like wispy clouds across the stereo soundstage. They round the piece off with a wonderfully vamping outro. John Lennon would surely have approved; in one of his occasional flashes of impeccable taste, pop journalist Dave Henderson included "the instrumental twang" of The Ventures among his "ten best versions" (*The Beatles Uncovered*, The Black Book Company [2000], p.30).

2 [67/25] PSYCHEDELIC VENTURE

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

Despite its title, this has much in common with regular Ventures stompers (and was picked up as such by UK radio DJ Tony Blackburn), though mental agitation is certainly on the cards the way that the organ tugs away naggingly at line-ends, giving way to a savagely chopping rhythm guitar (0:38), bobbing bass runs (0:53), dissonant flourishes (the opening, recalled at 1:05), and finally, after a follow-up assault, a curt and unsettling end to it all.

3 [67/26] WESTERN UNION

(Mike Rabon/ Norman Ezell/ John Durrill)

A #5 in 1967 for Dallas group The Five Americans, three of whom penned this number (John Durrill would go on a couple of years later to play keyboards for The Ventures; see under 1969, p.23 for a profile). It is a melodic piece of pop-rock with prominent organ and harmony vocals. The American lads fulfilled their aim of setting up as an alternative to the incoming Brits: the vocals (Byrds influenced) have that rather out-of-breath quality found in other home-grown outfits of the period. WESTERN UNION makes a more than passable if repetitious instrumental out of something as mundane as a transcontinental telegraph line, with nice vibraphonic plink-plinking and an all too brief if stylish organ break where a groaning guitar cuts in expressively (1:31).

4 [67/27] GUITAR PSYCHEDELICS

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

At the outset the organist or (as DB suggests) a cunningly disguised guitar imparts a Celtic colouring to this atmospheric composition, which combines an enchanting melody with lead guitar lines ranging from restful to forceful to dramatic to strident, a delineation of drug-induced inner turmoil or mood swings perhaps. It is trance-like in places, particularly where the electric piano contributes to the accompaniment, and slightly exotic too with a mild Indian flavouring, in that respect mirroring psychedelia's quest for sounds from remote climes. Had somebody in the group been

listening to psych folk? DB notes that the guitar figure is reminiscent in places of that of 'Needles And Pins'.

5 [67/28] KANDY KONCOCTION

(Danny Hamilton)

Candy was one of the euphemisms fashionable in the 60s for both hard and soft drugs, while Kandy in Sri Lanka was one of the main centres of the illegal trade in narcotics, and the Eastern flavour of this piece points to such a connection in the composer's mind. It may well have been conceived originally as a 'spy flick' theme along the lines of [67/18] MOD EAST on the previous album. In any event, it lacks nothing in pace and energy, not least as a result of Don Wilson's invigorating rhythm guitar work.

6 [67/29] REFLECTIONS

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

It would take a fair amount of special pleading to argue that The Ventures' forte lay in mellow mood music, but they do have their moments and this unassumingly titled composition is one of the very best of them. With a steel guitar imitating a keening Indian flute and at other times (DB) a lone female voice, this is a wonderfully evocative piece, full of yearning and infused with melancholy. Forceful acoustic rhythm guitar on one side and gentle harpsichord on the other lend a pleasing degree of sonority and build a perfect frame for Nokie's vibrantly rounded lead lines. Unusual or even exotic musical instruments rapidly became one of the key ingredients of 60s pop, though you will not find anything like a multiplicity of strange sounds on this set.

7 [67/30] A LITTLE BIT ME, A LITTLE BIT YOU

(Neil Diamond)

Ring the changes, a slab of pure pop, bearing the unmistakable imprint of Neil Diamond's skill as a tunesmith. It was another song written to order for The Monkees (though it was only Davy Jones representing the group on this one), who took it to US #2 (UK #3) in April 1967 — and a cracking good job was made of it too, with full-bodied acoustic guitar, organ and harmony vocals all deftly managed. The Ventures don't let the side down either with one of America's best at the time: mirroring the effervescence of the original and adding some slam and cutting edge of their own in league with incisive organ accompaniment and vigorous hand-clapping, their version swings along *con brio*, fulfilling handsomely one of 1967's prime musical requirements, that of making the world a happier place. A top-drawer cover.

8 [67/31] ENDLESS DREAM

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

By 1967 the sitar was one of the 'in' instruments in Western pop. Its enthusiastic espousal by George Harrison in particular ensured not only its rapid proliferation but also, through the recordings of The Beatles, its association with 'psychedelia' and the musical activities associated with it. Its contribution to this mock-Indian piece is extensive, providing as it does a virtually continuous swirling, droning, yawping backdrop. Add the fact that Nokie's lead lines are awash at different times with reverb, vibrato, tremolo and damping, and the net effect must inevitably prove disorientating, in keeping with the unsettling title. — "One of their most superb originals: a wall of sound just dripping with all things electric" (DP).

9 [67/32] VIBRATIONS

Album Version

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

Hallucinogens induce a variety of vibratory sensations within the body, and ‘good vibrations’ rapidly became a fashionable expression for the state of mind resulting from what were perceived as good ‘trips’. The number seems to explore the mental perturbation involved in such experiences. After a brief intro from guitar and keyboards, eerily oscillating bass tones — the ‘vibrations’ of the title — emerge from silence with rising intensity to usher in a driving passage wafted along by hell-for-leather rhythm guitar, clattering percussion and thudding bass, a cycle then repeated with even greater emphasis. VIBRATIONS was pressed into service again for a B-side in January 1968 ([68/61S]) and subjected to a wholly unbridled degree of phasing, taking the principle of marketing dense-sounding singles to absurd lengths.

10 [67/33] PSYCHED-OUT

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

A catchy, throbbing number, which would reappear presently in doctored form as [68/27] FLIGHTS OF FANTASY, bonds a melody dominated by Nokie’s rasping fuzz, with robust rhythm support from Don Wilson, to a couple of conga breaks set off by a mesmerically tapping bass accompaniment.

11 [67/34] 1999 A.D.

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor/ Don Wilson)

Anyone living in the 60s would have automatically associated the year specified by the title with Nostradamus, a name to be reckoned with in a decade when eccentricity became highly fashionable. 1999 A.D. was a date popularly supposed to have been marked out by him for the end of the world (cf. Prince’s fatalistic ‘1999’ fifteen years or so further on), though what he says is arcane and muddled in the best tradition of prophets and his temporal awareness has proved to be deplorable at best. Hallucinogen-induced apocalyptic visions are attested well before the golden years of the 60s and well before Nostradamus for that matter, but one would suppose that they are rather more disturbing than is suggested by this present plodding piece, which sounds like a theme tune for a documentary about the leisurely gait of the hippopotamus. The organ throws out batteries of squeaks from the right channel, to no obvious benefit that I can detect, except perhaps to divert attention from the laboured main theme. Still, there might be a different, wholly innocent explanation for the title. In any event it could have been much much worse, with ‘The Return Of The Red Baron’ there for the taking.

DB takes a quite different view of the track: “The main theme is quite jazzy in nature, and Mel’s tricky snare work is a delight of some originality. I see the pace as deliberate — not plodding — and the changes of tempo that occur during the number are artfully and skilfully worked”.

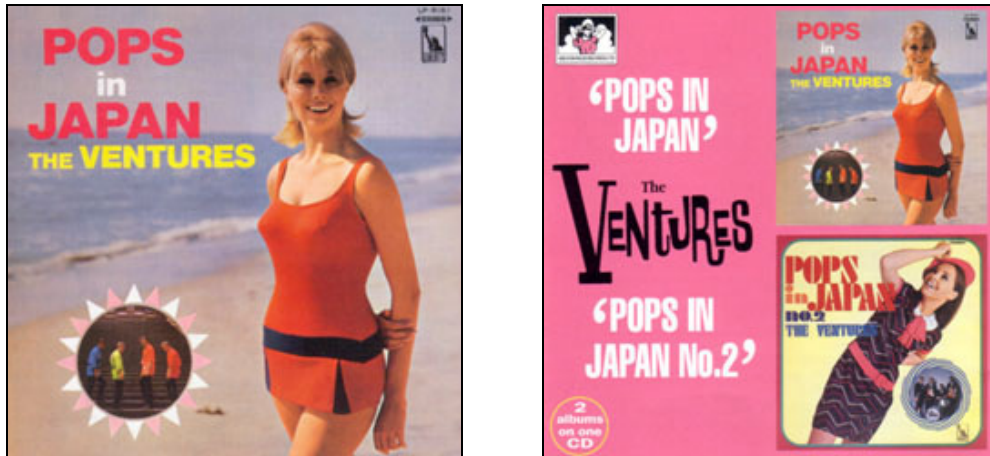
12 [67/35] HAPPY TOGETHER

(Gary Bonner/ Alan Gordon)

A number with excellent credentials, a US #1 (UK #12) in 1967 from The Turtles. When this group eventually got their act together they came up with an American production to rival the best of British. The closely-miked lead vocalist is projected powerfully enough, but it is the room-filling harmony vocals that really lift the piece: they are ingeniously varied in their approach as well as skilfully delivered at every

turn. In fact, the whole piece brims with vitality. The Ventures have not even begun to do it justice: in their hands it is shrunken, lifeless and plodding, while left-channel reproduction (organ) is fuzzy and ill-focused. And there are no backing vocals, a curious omission to be sure.

June 1967 LP (Japan)
Pops In Japan
Liberty LP 8161 Stereo



The first studio set aimed specifically at the Japanese market certainly stuck to its brief pretty thoroughly. Three numbers, with titles explicitly keyed to the country, are group-penned, but the remainder are all Japanese compositions, some the work of respected conductors/arrangers, who may have recorded them previously with Japanese vocalists (as for instance Hiroshi Miragawa in the case of his GIN-IRO-NOMICHI, see the comment on track 12). Another source of supply was a member or members of one or other of the numerous indigenous vocal harmony groups who usually provided their own backing in the form of electric guitar and drums, with or without keyboards of some description, and sometimes with a smattering of one or more native instruments worked in on an ad hoc basis as well for effect. As an example of this last we may recall the introduction to The Blue Comets' 'Blue Chateau' on American TV mentioned below. This same number may also serve as an illustration of how a Japanese hit vocal would be turned into an instrumental by The Ventures, who presumably listened attentively to the original records, or had instrumental or vocal demos sent over from Liberty in Japan. In due course the converse occurred: Japanese vocalists eagerly seized upon Ventures tunes written for their captive overseas market, the most conspicuous example in the present collection being Chiyo Okumura's version with Japanese lyrics of 'Hokkaido Skies' (see on track 7 for an onstage example).

The stylistic gulf that separates this album from those destined for home consumption in the first instance is a very tangible one. What diversity there is is found within fairly rigid parameters: the overall textures are mellower, with less emphasis on your Ventures' trademark out-and out driving guitars (witness here the employment, occasional admittedly, of acoustic lead guitar, very rare to date in the group's recorded work). Where a direct comparison can be drawn with the musical accompaniment to Japanese vocal harmony groups of the kind mentioned earlier (The Blue Comets are a case in point), the overall approach of The Ventures is not a

million miles removed from it. But the differences should not be overstated, as they sometimes are, for this same month saw the US issue of the *Super Psychedelics* set considered above. Yes, that is more dynamic, more colourful and more varied than a release specifically targeting Japanese fans, but common to both is the circumstance that we are still essentially in 3+1-cum-keyboards territory, and not yet awash with, or in some cases overwhelmed by, the brass and/or woodwind that would presently lend a more strident, not to say shouty, element to The Ventures' sound.

The set taken as a whole is a satisfying enough one for Western ears, for although there is oriental colouring, from guitar and more especially organ, it is just that, nothing as radical say as some of the Indian elements taken into The Beatles' contemporary recordings. It is evident that some care has been taken to target accomplished or popular composers, whether in *eleki* groups (Kozaku Dan *aka* Yuzo Kayama being a stellar turn here) or not, but in any case composers clearly operating in a westernising rather than native musical sphere.



<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

BLUE CHATEAU, SENTIMENTAL GUITAR and ROAD TO SOMEWHERE stand comparison with some of the excellent material recorded for the Japanese market over the following few years.

1 [67/36] BLUE CHATEAU

(Tadao Inoue)

John Beddington⁵ regards this as “a great opener with a soaring melody”, and speaks of “Nokie express[ing] himself on the 12-string Mosrite”. It is indeed a strong starter, tuneful and punchy by turns; a soothing organ interlude is capped with a resounding flourish at 1:22 (the sequence is repeated at 2:11). It boasts an impressive pedigree. Tadao Inoue was lead guitarist of Japanese group The Blue Comets, who performed this number, with lyrics by Jun Hashimoto, on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1966 (it can be seen on YouTube at the time of writing). And what an assured performance it was too, the quintet (lead/rhythm guitars, flute, keyboards and drums) turned out immaculately and delivering elegant harmony vocals with finely crafted accompaniment and a few distinctively Japanese touches not replicated in this Ventures rendition.

2 [67/37] HALLELUJAH

(Kunihiko Suzuki)

One might wonder whether this restrained, sombre and formal-sounding composition reflects the serenely reverential Japanese attitude to higher powers. In western music certainly the title would normally carry the notion of unbounded joy or jubilation, an element not at all apparent in this piece. The organ has much to do and seems to weigh heavily in places. Kunihiko Suzuki: a distinguished composer, well known for his work towards the end of the 60s with husky-voiced songstress Chiyo Okumura (see on track 7), said to be the East's answer to Sylvie Vartan.

3 [67/38] SENTIMENTAL GUITAR

(Koichi Sugiyama)

One of the early works of a celebrated Japanese musician who went on to win fame as a composer of music for video games and TV shows. Comparable in quality to BLUE CHATEAU, this is a knockout track which became a Euro favourite. It exhibits a blend of mellowness — the main theme possessing a melody verging on the melancholy, warm and resonant in tone, with responses from a wistful organ — and punch, as series of crashing chords are adorned with intricate quick-fire fills from Nokie: a pure delight. An added attraction is the way in which Mel Taylor pushes things harder towards the close.

4 [67/39] WAKARETA-HITO-TO

(Taku Izumi)

Nokie on (electric) acoustic guitar for a tuneful, dreamy piece (not hazy: the tone is crisp and immediate), with a Latin lilt to it, jazz-tinged in places. Once more, organ plays an important part, and there is a vibraphone or electric piano in there as well. Taku Izumi was a prolific composer for film and TV in particular. A couple of pertinent examples: he wrote the music (said to be jazzy in texture, but I cannot confirm this detail) for the Japanese movie distributed in the USA under the title *The X From Outer Space* (1967), and for the song 'Love Is For The Two Of Us' recorded by the 60s Hispanic vocal harmony duo Rene & Rene.

5 [67/40] TOKYO NIGHTS

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Mel Taylor)

With an overall sound akin to that of spy flick themes with oriental colouring, the reference to the bustling capital city makes this an apt starter for The Ventures' policy of lacing their Japan-only releases with group compositions highlighting the country's great centres. The pace is brisk with the crisp rhythm guitar much in evidence; the organ break rolls along breezily and is one of the fainter examples of the group's reminiscences of The Tornados.

6 [67/41] SLOW SUNDOWN

(Shoji Yokouchi)

A lilting, relaxing number from the jazz guitarist of The Shoji Yokouchi Trio, which incorporated Hammond organ and played in the broad style of Wes Montgomery; he also fronted a Latin combo with jazzy treatments of Hispanic music. The main attraction here stems from Nokie's nimble-fingered improvising runs, while the organ accompaniment imparts a warm glow in keeping with the title, probably a reflection of the striking spectacles afforded by the setting sun in many areas of Japan.

7 [67/42] HOKKAIDO SKIES

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Mel Taylor)

A second number with acoustic lead (electric acoustic that is, with shimmering vibrato applied into the second minute), and a full-bodied chopping acoustic rhythm too, unusually romantic-sounding for The Ventures! There are mellow exchanges between lead and organ, and a tone of yearning is produced by a keening steel guitar. Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, is famed for the spectacle of its skies: azure, radiant, stark grey, menacing depending on season and precise locality. Chiyo Okumura (see on track 2) was quick to record a version with Japanese vocals and it was a massive hit in the country. See below, entry [68/2L], for a live version involving this very lady.

8 [67/43] KONO-TENOHIRANI-AIO

(Tsuneaki Tone)

A lazy, cosy stroll through a cross between a song to relax to by the camp-fire and a lullaby with oriental textures. The vibratoed lead guitar lines are set off effectively by a Floyd Cramer-styled piano.

9 [67/44] RAINY PAVEMENT (KIRISAME NO HODO)

(Kosaku Dan)

See on track 11. A gentle jogger this, not in the top league of the Yuzo Kayama corpus but pleasant enough fare, with the 12-string Mosrite and heavy vibrato brought into play to impart a shimmering, rounded tone.

10 [67/45] YOKOHAMA LIGHTS (HONCHO)

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Mel Taylor)

Yokohama, Japan's largest city after Tokyo, famous for its enormous ferris wheel and harbourside complex amongst other sights, is festooned with lights, but the reference here is presumably to the dazzlingly night-illuminated Honcho Dori, the main business street. Here's another one that may well have been conceived of originally as spy flick material ("Muscovite" Dave Peckett labelled it!). Yes, in the pauses inserted among this sinister-sounding mid-tempo piece adorned with hot licks from Nokie, a sinuous bass line from Bob and an atmospheric organ accompaniment, can't you sense the clandestine forces of the other side peeping furtively from behind that Iron Curtain?

11 [67/46] BLACK SAND BEACH

(Kosaku Dan)

For some background on Kosaku Dan *aka* Kuzo Yahama see under 1966, Further Tracks: January single [66/75S] KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO. He and his Ventures-inspired group The Launchers had a hit in Japan with BLACK SAND BEACH in 1965. It is a a mid-tempo toe-tapper with pattering damped rhythm accompaniment from Don Wilson to set off the dramatic lead lines, and what strike me as rather a stiff couple of brief organ breaks. You won't find a word said against this number in Ventures circles, and it has become what Alan Taylor has called "a surf-related staple", though personally I would rate it very good rather than unreservedly marvellous, in its studio implementation at least.

12 [67/47] ROAD TO SOMEWHERE (GIN-IRO-NO-MICHI)

(Hiroshi Miyagawa)

The English translation should properly read 'Silver(-Colour) Road', but 'Road To Somewhere' seems ingrained in Ventures credits (why so I have no idea). On this classy number and the recording by The Shadows see above on [66/75S] KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO. Nobody could reasonably fault the elegant version of this tune with its neat changes of rhythm, the waltz-like sequence at 0:53 resembling in its general approach and styling a number of group originals from the period 1964–1966. Originally a vocal performed by a Japanese male quartet who rejoiced in the name of The Dark Ducks, The Ventures give it that extra degree of oomph, with a nicely executed build-up and some very positive rhythm guitar accompaniment.

It was first recorded and performed on NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) by distinguished composer/conductor Miyagawa in August 1966 with vocals by Shigeru Tsukada, and no fewer than three differently styled versions appeared in the Japanese film *Canaria* ('Canary') from 2005.

September 1967 LP

Golden Greats

Liberty LST 8053 Stereo/ LRP 2053 Mono



Only one brand new track here plus a refreshed APACHE, but the album still made a pretty strong stab at the charts (peaking at #50), hanging on in there for 44 weeks.

[67/48] REBEL ROUSER

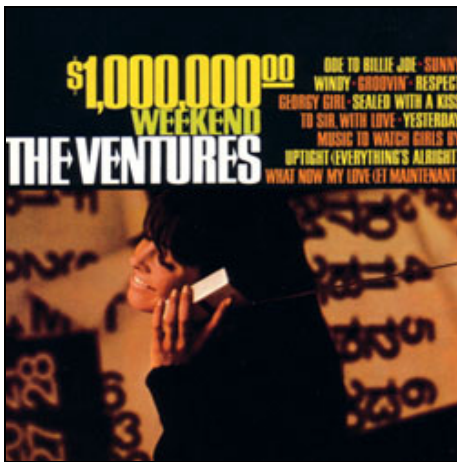
(Duane Eddy/ Lee Hazlewood)

The resonant guitar lines of Duane Eddy's first hit, a US #6 (UK #19) back in 1958, were decked out with shouty backing vocals and honking sax. Here sax gives way to organ and the vocal interjections are kept sparse and low-key. The result is an agreeably twangy and nimble-fingered workout from Don Wilson on lead⁶, supported by sharply etched rhythm and bouyant bass-lines. The track is conveniently available on the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*.

[67/49] APACHE
Updated Version

Del Halterman⁷ characterises this as “what many consider to be a superior cut of ‘Apache’ to that on the *Telstar* album [63/5]. Not only did the version have a brighter, so called ‘Mosrite sound’, it closed with a firm ‘ending’ rather than an engineered fadeout”. The accompaniment is much more robust, while the whistles are not quite as excruciating. The track is conveniently available on the 2001 Magic Records CD *The Ventures Play Telstar*.

December 1967 LP
\$1,000,000 Weekend
Liberty LST 8054 Stereo/ LRP 2054 Mono



Dave Burke⁸: “In October of 1967 the band began work on their most disappointing album of the sixties. They were obviously toying with the idea of a change of direction, looking to the major sales that could be achieved in the middle of the road market [in fact it got to #55, and was 21 weeks on chart]. A full complement of session men were therefore drafted in to achieve the desired effect ...” For full details of the individuals involved see p.28 below.



It was business as usual in that the group scouted through mainly recent hit parades to dig out suitable material, high performers having pride of place (half a dozen #1s including three in a row from 1967, a couple of #2s, one at #3, an album at #1).


However, with the exception of RESPECT and UPTIGHT, the emphasis was on numbers of a mellower complexion than had been presented on Ventures albums since *Play Telstar*, and numbers into the bargain with a less spare sound, depending for their effect on a wider range of tonal colours. The enlarged line-up also meant that there was less scope for Nokie Edwards' inventive solo breaks, which in any case arose more naturally with uptempo material — usually the more uptempo the better. There was also a move (not radical, but perceptible) away from the marked bias towards American artists encountered in the more recent recordings: now acts from abroad were in with a shout, Lulu, The Beatles and The Seekers.

Any appraisal of the set as a whole is hampered by the very fact that The Ventures had once again proved themselves chameleon-like in their approach to music, as they would do on a number of occasions in the future. Gerry Woodage in his liner notes to the SfM issue declares roundly that *\$1,000,000 Weekend* is “not a bad album”, but then proceeds to speak about it in such apologetic terms that any newcomer to the group's music, or anyone who had missed the later 60s albums first time round, would surely think twice about going anywhere near it. But where is the rationale, for instance, in deploring the fact that something doesn't “rock” when it was not designed to do so in the first place? What we should be asking surely is this: given the nature of the targeted market, do the group achieve anything musically worthwhile in comparison with the originals? The answer to that in my view is yes, but only for about a quarter of the time: MUSIC TO WATCH GIRLS BY, GROOVIN' and UPTIGHT are of interest in different ways. Had the other nine been set aside at the time of recording and turned up in the vaults some decades down the line, it would be hard to justify releasing them as anything other than a collection of curiosities.


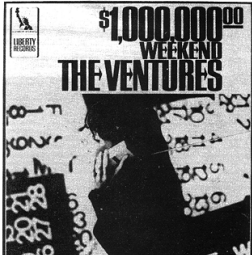
DP offers this appraisal: “A lacklustre choice of MOR songs without any rock edge was a disaster ... I'd pinpoint this album as the one that longer-term destroyed the band's chart status. It crippled the success of its follow-up, the superb *Flights Of Fantasy*. However, The Ventures never learned the lesson — they did it again later with *Hawaii Five-0*”.

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

See Introduction.

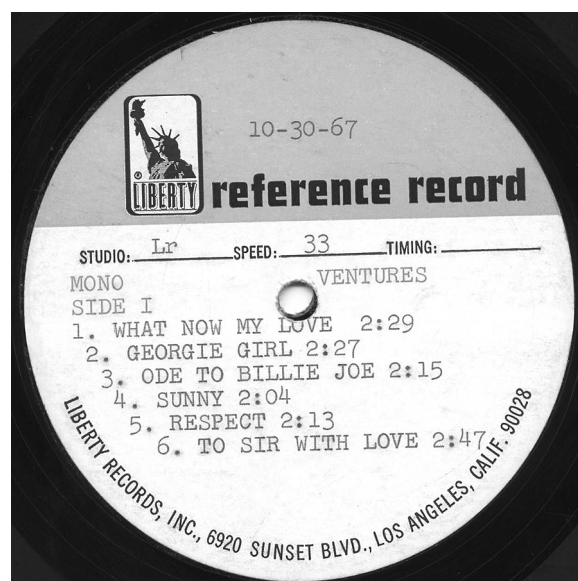


spend a
"\$1,000,000 weekend" with
THE VENTURES
on liberty records

LRP-2054 / LST-7054

Cash Box—November 25, 1967





1 [67/50] WHAT NOW MY LOVE

(Gilbert Becaud/ Carl Sigman)

Herb Alpert's version of this much recorded song appeared in 1966 on a US #1 album of that name, and it was also a hit single (#24). It was treated not as a mellow love song (cf. the languid arrangement of Duane Eddy that same year) but as a bright breezy piece with a samba rhythm and therefore plenty of go. Much of its appeal stemmed from the clever trumpet punctuations, said by Alpert to have been inspired by the beeping of two cars, one responding at a slightly higher pitch. The Ventures mimic the basic arrangement in their guitar-led transposition. Smooth but sticking scrupulously to the straight and narrow with little or nothing in the way of tasty licks from the lead guitar, it sounds too sterile by half. The organ contribution is nothing special either.

2 [67/51] GEORGY GIRL

(Jim Dale/ Tom Springfield)

The Seekers had enjoyed an impressive string of hits by the time this song made US #2/UK #3 in 1967. It is an upbeat performance set off by Judith Durham's pure lead singing and enlivened by cheery whistling. The Ventures' version does have a degree of sparkle with some help from keyboards, and Don Wilson's assured rhythm accompaniment and the tubby-sounding bass-lines are both attractive features which should appeal to the RI enthusiast. The material is just about strong enough to maintain interest for the duration, but there is not much in it.

3 [67/52] ODE TO BILLIE JOE

(Bobbie Gentry)

Bobbie Gentry's enigmatic song and its elaborate (contrived?) arrangement may not be everybody's cup of tea, but it topped the US charts in 1967 (only making #13 in the UK despite extensive airplay: people over here made even less of the song's obscurities/ obscurantism). The Ventures' approach is more energetic but there is not much of a tune in there and it shows, though there is some compensation into the second minute when the textures become denser (a clavinet joins in) and there is a bit more grunt — sounding rather like an early version of Sheryl Crow's band! A tricky one to instrumentalise in fact, witness Booker T's funereal church-organ meanderings in April of the following year (album *Doin' Our Thing*).

4 [67/53] SUNNY

(Bobby Hebb)

A much-recorded and much-anthologised piece, best remembered for the version by its composer, a US #2 in 1966 (in the UK it made #12, one slot ahead of an imitation by Georgie Fame). The song is a statement of unconditional love expressed in tones of unbounded optimism, reflected in the forward, punchy presentation, with a big build-

up and much use of brass and assertive female backing vocals. The Ventures present it as a reflective soulful piece, with funky little organ fills and a cutting rhythm guitar, not especially sunny in disposition.

5 [67/54] RESPECT

(Otis Redding)

The Ventures Play Aretha turns out to be something of a damp squib. Aretha Franklin's chart-topper of 1967 (in the UK she managed a mere #10, outsold by the likes of The Monkees' 'Alternate Title' and Topol's 'If I Were A Rich Man') proved one of the wonders of the 60s, a powerhouse performance with an absolutely incandescent arrangement (crisp and soulful gospelly backing vocals from her two sisters in superb form, a soaring sax solo by King Curtis, and more). To be fair, The Ventures have tried to do something different with it, with Nokie going for a bluesy, arty groove, but the whole thing bounces along awkwardly, the rhythm section sounds congested at times and the organ break is horribly ponderous.

6 [67/55] TO SIR WITH LOVE

(Don Black/ Mark London)

A five-week US #1 for Lulu in 1967, this was the title song of the Sidney Poitier movie, a lilting ballad with string accompaniment, sensitively sung with skilful use of the technique of melisma now hammered to death in popular music. Although The Ventures' version, with Nokie on electric acoustic giving off some nice tonal variations, has a lethargic feel to it initially, it perks up just before the minute mark with rhythm guitar and percussion providing a bit of slam, but the players do seem to lack spontaneity, like a set of actors doing a preliminary run-through of their scripts. The close (no fade for a change) seems very tentative.

7 [67/56] MUSIC TO WATCH GIRLS BY

(Sid Ramin)

A cover of The Bob Crewe Generation's 1967 US #15 brass-dominated big band version of a Diet Pepsi-Cola advert. The brash, in your face approach is mirrored in this guitar-led version by The Ventures (two lead parts): bursts of brass are represented by organ/ synths, there is a harpsichord solo played to the accompaniment of nicely crafted arpeggios from Nokie, and Don Wilson furnishes a jaunty background rhythm throughout.

8 [67/57] GROOVIN'

(Eddie Brigati/ Felix Cavaliere)

This, The Young Rascals' second US #1, came in 1967 (the first, 'Good Lovin' from the year before, had already been covered by The Ventures, [66/57]). Cool, laid back, introspective, embellished with an atmospheric organ accompaniment and, latterly, soaring harmony vocals, it was picked up by Booker T & The MGs who climbed to US #21 in September with a wonderfully stylish organ-led interpretation. The Ventures naturally switch the main focus to the guitar, and, while their rendition may not appeal to a rabid or indeed your average RI enthusiast (practically nothing on this set will), it is hard to fault the performance with its subtly varied instrumentation (tinkling piano, subdued then piercing organ, contrast of mellow with [1:29] metallic guitar timbre).

9 [67/58] WINDY

(Ruthann Friedman)

Light frothy songs with whimsical lyrics like ‘Windy’ were all the rage in America the year our album hit the shops, and The Association made it right to the top with this one in 1967. Their harmony vocals were accomplished, and the studio musicians summoned to do the rest came up with lively percussion and a breezy-sounding organ. With The Ventures nearly all of this lightness evaporates, but it is not as wooden as it might have been, thanks largely to a combination of energetic drumming and prominent rhythm guitar.

10 [67/59] SEALED WITH A KISS

(Garry Geld/ Peter Udell)

To describe this song as overblown and mawkish would be a kindness, even by early 60s pining teen idol standards, so much so that as an instrumental it is probably better entrusted to the lush tones of a large-scale orchestra. The Ventures in the wake of Brian Hyland, or rather perhaps of Gary Lewis & The Playboys’ cover version, accurately mirror its honied sentiment, making this one of the most cloying Ventures tracks ever. Steel guitar does nothing to relieve the tedium.

11 [67/60] UPTIGHT (EVERYTHING’S ALRIGHT)

(Henry Cosby/ Sylvia Moy/ Stevie Judkins)

Stevie Wonder’s hit (US #3/UK #4 in 1966) was very much mainstream Motown and had the label’s formidable musical forces solidly behind it, producing an ebullient dance number with a tremendous kick, the trademark thumping bass-line well to the fore to complement Stevie’s harmonica. Unusually for this album, Nokie comes out with an extended display of fancy fingerwork (most strikingly in the freewheeling break at 1:17), so flashy (and reinforced by an equally slick rhythm section) as to distance the number completely from the style and ambience of the original. There’s no harm in that though, indeed it makes a refreshing deviation from the norm — rather late in the day admittedly.

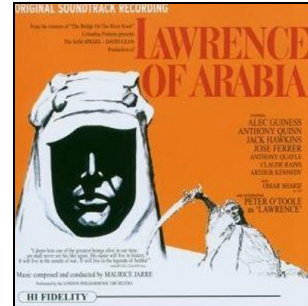
12 [67/61] YESTERDAY

(John Lennon/ Paul McCartney)

Given the fact that covers of ‘Yesterday’ (a US #1 back in 1965) are now beyond counting, there are bound to be several more like this one on the planet, very possibly several dozen, to wit, a languid acoustic guitar-led meandering through a stellar composition — a captivating melody with a stunning classically-coloured accompaniment masterminded by George Martin. And as for that school concert piano... The album thus ends on a low, or at least in the realm of mediocrity. Better to have swapped round track 11 and track 12.

1967

FURTHER TRACKS



June 1967 B-Single, Liberty 55877

[67/62S] THEME FROM 'THE ENDLESS SUMMER'

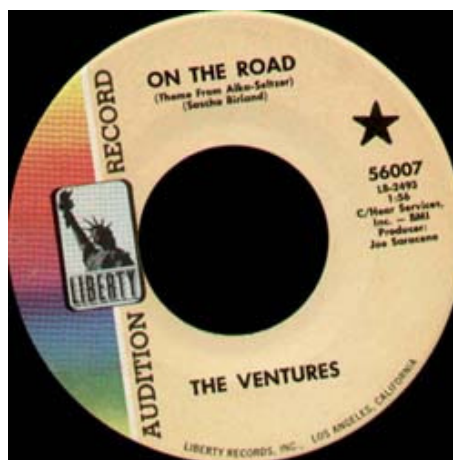
(Walter Georis/ Lou Josie/ Bill Norton)

“The Ventures could easily score a top of the charter with this light, easy going, relaxing effort” mused *Cashbox*, focusing on the flipside of [67/24] STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER. It was not to be, but it is certainly an appealing number. Dave Burke and Alan Taylor, liner notes to 1997 CD *In The Vaults*: “The tune had originally been written and recorded by The Sandals in 1964 and was used as the theme music to Bruce Brown’s cult film about surfing. It is a beautiful, haunting melody tinged with a subtle blend of wistfulness and sadness ...”. The soundscape of our version, not surprisingly — that is how The Ventures habitually go about things — is bigger and bolder than the original’s. The Sandals, notable for their spirited and clearly affectionate renditions of two early Drifters (the later Shadows) numbers, ‘Driftin’ and ‘Jet Black’, are usefully profiled by Alan Taylor in *Pipeline* 60⁹.

December 1967 A-Single, Liberty 56007

[67/63S] ON THE ROAD

(Granville Sacha Burland)



Cf. entry [66/7] NO MATTER WHAT SHAPE, February 1966 LP *Where The Action Is*. For recording details see p.27. Another perky if utterly inconsequential little piece celebrating the relief in prospect for the over-indulgent everywhere from Alka-Seltzer.

A whistler strutted his stuff in harmony with the lead guitar, so somebody was happy: there wasn't a lot you couldn't get away with in 1967. The track is conveniently available on the See for Miles CD *The EP Collection Volume 3*.

1967 A-Single (Japan), Liberty LR1811

[67/64S] EL GRECO

(Ennio Morricone)



The title theme from Morricone's score for the 1966 Italian soap opera-style film makes a stirring guitar-led beat instrumental, replete with castanets and the click of boots. Joe Saraceno passes on an amusing detail¹⁰: "... we thought it would be a good idea if we could add the sound of a Spanish dancer to the track. I hired this Spanish guy who came to the studio in full costume. We laid plywood on the floor, miked it, and had the dancer stomp around in his Cuban heeled boots. Trouble was the guy just could not keep in time with the track, so I asked him to remove his footwear and gave them to Hal Blaine who actually 'played' the boots along to the track!"

The *In The Vaults* CD presents the track in mono (not mock stereo, as has been suggested), and in this mode the reverberation of the lead guitar is very pronounced indeed, akin to the acerbic tone associated with Rautalanka. It is not as marked in the rather less engaging stereo implementation available on Japanese CD.

1967

POST-60s RELEASES

[67/65U] ARTESIA

(Uncredited)

Rel. 2005: CD *In The Vaults* 3/14

Recorded in June 1967 according to Dave Towers¹¹. Evoking an expansive picture of something along the lines of a wagon train weaving its purposeful way over the boundless plains, it's tuneful and sentimental sounding with orchestral trappings, but signally regressive in its approach, very like those stirring western theme tunes rife in the early years of the decade.

[67/66U] LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

(Maurice Jarre)

Rel. August 1975, LP *Now Playing*, United Artists LA 471G

Assigned a 1967 recording date in the track listings for the 1997 *In The Vaults* CD. This is the main theme for the 1962 film scored by Jarre who took full advantage of the larger than life storyline and sweeping panoramas. The Ventures unsurprisingly rock it up in a strikingly macho, almost martial style, their rendition aided and abetted by an introductory then underlying growling 'Black Is Black'-styled riff of the kind that seeped into the collective consciousness of arrangers after its appearance in 1966. Add to that dramatic tremoloed chords, shimmering lead lines, a savagely slicing rhythm accompaniment from Don Wilson, and the odd touch of humour in the mock-eastern flourishes (note the incongruous intermeshing with modern western twang at the close). Spectacular, The Ventures at the top of their game.

1967

DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS

1

We were very lucky to have a relatively high number of original group compositions on the *Guitar Freakout* album and, nearing Christmas on the 12th of December 1966, Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel were at TTG Studios recording four of them. Named only as 'Original 1, 2, 3, 4' on the session contracts, I have been able to identify them by the timings listed in the EMI log and they are almost certainly 'High And Dry', 'Mod East', 'Paper Aeroplane' and 'Off In The 93rds'. Along with the expected nucleus of Bob, Don, Mel and Nokie are Evelyn Freeman and percussionist Gene Pello. Title-wise I can be more definite about 'Cookout Lookout On Freakout Mountain' and 'Wack Wack' which were also recorded in December and featured Don, Bob, Mel and Nokie along with Evelyn Freeman and percussionist Joe Porcano. The same team is employed for 'Wack Wack' with the addition of Don Bagley on string bass and Harvey Lavine on oboe. 'Good Thing', the album's lead track, had Mel, Nokie, Don and Bob with Evelyn Freeman, Frank deVito and Red Rhodes. It has always been assumed that Glen Campbell played on this album because of his composer credit on 'Cookout Lookout On Freakout Mountain' but, as we have seen, he is not present on this track or any others that I have been able to obtain details for. Percussionist and drummer Pello was another seasoned Hollywood pro who had recorded with The T-Bones, The Marketts, Screaming Jay Hawkins, The Monkees and Lou Rawls, as well as playing on many of the clandestine Hollywood based sessions for Motown Records with Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson and The Jackson Five.

2

Super Psychedelics is a strong contender for the most accomplished and, quite simply, best ever Ventures album. Not only is there a fairly high count of original band compositions, but the group are at their most assured and creative. They seem to relish the challenges and opportunities that the psychedelic theme offered them, fashioning adventurous and unusual sounds within inventive arrangements without ever falling into the trap that befell the younger psychedelic bands of making cacophonous noise just for the sake of it. The tracks were recorded over February and March 1967, beginning with an unnamed original which I believe to be 'Endless Dream'. The evidence for this is admittedly slightly tenuous, but there is often an element of

deduction required when dealing with The Ventures' recordings. Basically it's this — Mike Deasy, a session guitarist who played with Ricky Nelson, The Everly Brothers, Eddie Cochran, Duane Eddy and Sandy Nelson, is credited with "sitar" on the session contract. It's unusual to see an instrument named on one of these documents, so there was presumably some interest in the presence of what was then quite an exotic instrument on a Hollywood session. 'Endless Dream' certainly sounds as if it features sitar and, based on that observation, the title was recorded at United Recorders by Deasy with Evelyn Freeman, Bob, Don, Mel and Nokie. In March the four Ventures recorded 'Western Union' along with Red Rhodes and Gene Pello, while it is the same six man team — plus Danny Hamilton, James Gordon and Paul Beaver — who recorded 'Strawberry Fields Forever'. James Gordon was not the rather better known drummer Jim Gordon but an organist who also specialised in an uncommon instrument called the marxophone. This is a fretless zither which produces a mandolin-like sound, and because of the nature of some of the adventurous sounds on the album it's difficult to say with any certainty which of the two instruments he actually played on the LP. Paul Beaver, who had previously appeared on the *Batman* LP, had by now joined with his musical partner Bernie Krause. They had more to do with introducing the synthesiser to Hollywood than anyone else after the pair sunk their savings into bringing the moog synthesiser to the West Coast. The Ventures must have been one of the first bands to use a synthesiser in the studio and later on, when the demand for electronic sounds grew, Beaver and Krause became two of the busiest sessioneers in Hollywood.

3

On the 28th and 29th of September 1967 Don, Mel and Nokie recorded 'On The Road' and 'Torquay' at TTG Studios with keyboard player John Gallie and producer Dave Pell. Gallie had also played with Leon Russell, Freddie King, Trini Lopez, Albert King and The Everly Brothers, while Pell was by now a house producer at Liberty, having left his studio-created band The T-Bones in the hands of Joe Saraceno following Joe's big 1966 hit with them, 'No Matter What Shape'. I assume that this 'Torquay' was the re-recorded version of the tune which later turned up on the band's *More Golden Greats* LP in 1970, which itself was a follow-up to their modestly successful 1967 compilation of previously issued material (excepting 'Rebel Rouser') titled *Golden Greats*. Quite why they chose to re-record 'Raunchy' and 'Torquay' (the 1961 version of which had already been included on *Golden Greats*), and then present them alongside more previously issued material and four fresh titles on the new compilation, is unclear. Certainly neither of the re-cuts was treated with the same imagination as 'Walk, Don't Run '64', and it seems possible that they may have been thought of as a potential 45 during one of those bouts of nostalgia that sporadically arrived during the sixties. Digging up a couple of shelved re-recordings, which also happened to add to the title strength of the collection, was probably seen as a way of broadening the appeal of *More Golden Greats*. This was the first of many times that the band would revisit old glories, although it was later more to do with furnishing a new record label with their old hits and other popular titles. Another little oddity from around this time is the Japanese single 'Yozora No Hoshi'. It's a wonderful track with aggression and energy to spare but, curiously, the master tape can be found logged under the title of 'Washington Square' in EMI/Capitol's vaults. When you compare the two tunes carefully there is something of a resemblance between them, so perhaps The Ventures realised that the Japanese writer of 'Yozora No Hoshi' may have borrowed just a little inspiration from The Village Stompers early sixties hit.

Million Dollar Weekend is probably the least popular of the band's sixties albums with their fans. It was so much at odds with everything that they had recorded up to this date, a sudden and unexpected embrace of the restrained middle of the road style which The Ventures must have perceived as a lucrative market they could expand into as they and their fans grew older. Of course it wasn't realised at that time that most fifties and sixties teenagers would simply refuse to grow up — ever. Tracks for the album were recorded in October at the TTG Studio with 'Georgy Girl', 'Windy', 'Groovin' and 'Music To Watch Girls By' being cut on the 18th by Mel, Don, Bob and Nokie with keyboard players Michael Rubini and John Gallie, guitarists Bill Pitman and Red Rhodes, and with Gene Pello on percussion. A full complement of sessioneers was also employed on the 23rd when Don, Bob, Mel and Nokie reconvened at TTG and laid down 'To Sir With Love', 'Respect', 'Sealed With A Kiss' and 'Yesterday' accompanied by Michael Rubini, Bill Pitman, Red Rhodes and Gene Pello. Mike Rubini was another one of the Hollywood élite who had played for Bobby Darin, The Monkees, Sonny & Cher, The Deuce Coupes and The Marketts, and he was also a member of Phil Spector's coterie of musicians now known as the Wrecking Crew, as was Bill Pitman who played for everyone from Jan & Dean to Frank Sinatra.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

H *Del Halterman's Ventures book*

P *Pipeline*

VR *Ventures Resurgence*

1 Cf. Dave Burke, *P* 16 [1992/93] 42; id.42 [1999] 40.

2 Dave Burke, *P* 28 [1995] 28.

3 H143.

4 *P* 28 [1995] 28.

5 *VR* 55 [1999] 15.

6 H154.

7 H154–155.

8 *P* 44 [1999] 13.

9 *P* 60 [2003] 44–45.

10 *P* 55 [2002] 16.

11 *P* 68 [2005] 51.