

ore than twenty-five years after they first entered the charts, the Rascals' musical contributions remain fresh and intact, fondly remembered in the hearts of listeners and firmly established on radio playlists. Criss-cross the dial and you're bound to hear any of their long list of Top 40 classics.

From 1965 to 1970, Felix Cavaliere, Gene Cornish, Dino Danelli, and Eddie Brigati churned out hit after hit for Atlantic Records, the mainstay black label that chose the group as their crossover act. The Rascals certainly qualified. And although barely out of their teens when Atlantic released their first record in November 1965, I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore was a powerful debut which reached No.52 on Billboard's Hot 100 vir-

tually on their reputation alone.

Their music was that of the streets; unsophisticated, raw, and earthy. It was, essentially, R&B aimed at a mass white/black audience. But it soon became the standard for blue-eyed soul. Their second single Good Lovin' soared to the top of the charts, boosted by the first of their four appearances on "The Ed Sullivan Show," to become their first million-seller. Throughout 1966 they were the major attraction of the New York City club scene, drawing capacity crowds at such famous nightspots as Harlows, the Phone Booth, Tom Jones, and Steve Paul's The Scene. At one point it seemed the forever in-demand Rascals either opened or closed every club in the entire city.

Their first LP, THE YOUNG RAS-

CALS, and their second, COLLECTIONS, both released in 1966, documented both their musical influences, and by just the second album, their growth, as they began writing more of their own material. Their first attempt at such, You Better Run, scored them a modest hit. This was followed by Come On Up, which was perhaps a little before its time, with heavy electric guitar, screaming vocals, and suggestive lyrics. But it was their next single, Lonely Too Long, which marked their emergence as major songwriters.

Initially, the Rascals found it difficult to capture a satisfactory sound in the recording studio, and their first two albums were basically studio "performances" of their live act. However, buoyed by the critical success of their original compositions, they

decided upon a new direction, fusing their grassroots influences with their creative experimentation.

The result was *Groovin'*. A radical departure of the result was *Groovin'*.

ture from the Young Rascals sound, it was an innovative move which opened the door to a whole new audience for the band. The top song for all of 1967, *Groowin'* has become a perennial summertime classic as well as spawning endless cover versions. Likewise, the album of the same name was a production masterpiece, providing the Rascals, by now joined on backing vocals by David Brigati (formerly of Joey Dee and the Startiters), with their next two his

singles, the melodic How Can I Be Sure

and the brassy A Girl Like You.

FELIX CAVALIERE

DISC: You played in a band called the Stereos in the late '50s.

FELIX: That's one of those little errors that happens from time to time. There was a band called the Stereos that made a record and one that was a high school singing group which I was in. The two have no relationship to one another.

It's amazing how an untruth like that can appear in print like it has. Obviously, I wouldn't have used the same name. We never recorded so there was no reason to copyright a name or have it trademarked. DISC: You also founded a doo-wop group, Felix and the Escorts with Mike Esposito [later of the Blues Magoos]. The group had one single, The Syracuse, backed with Save, on Jag Records.

FELIX: That was a band, not a doo-wop group. It was formed at Syracuse University where we were both students. It took me from premed to a full-time musician's career. I left school in my junior year as a result of a job I had picked up with the Escorts.

The Syracuse was the next step to becom-

ing more legitimate than the Stereos. The song was a product from upper New York state that was released and made for that area

DISC: Do you still have a copy?

FELIX: Oh, yes. Years later it appeared as a bootleg copy of the Rascals, but it wasn't the Rascals. When the Rascals started becoming popular the bootleg appeared. It was immediately squelched.

DISC: You met Eddie Brigati and became backing vocalists for Joey Dee and the Starliters. How did this connection come about?

FELIX: It came about through Eddie's brother, David, who was an original member of the Starliters band. I had been working with the Escorts when I was asked to join the Starliters' tour in Europe. Eddie was a lot younger than his brother. We first met in a club when Eddie came up to see his brother play.

DISC: You and Dino played in Las Vegas with a band called Sandu Scott and Her Scotties in late 1964 and early 1965.

FELIX: I met this lady from Canada at a period of time when I really needed something better to do than to work for Joey Dee and go nowhere! She asked me to put a band together to back her up in Las Vegas for more money than I had ever seen (at that time) in my life. I was making 50 bucks a night working for Joey Dee and I would have continued to do that the rest of my life because Joey Dee is still earning 50 bucks a night! It was a lounge-revue-type of act. DISC: The Young Rascals were thought by some to be an American answer to the British invasion, yet the band was more suburban R&B.

FELIX: Wait a second! First of all, there was no desire to be the answer to the British invasion. Basically, we were just trying to make a living as musicians. It's much like today. The majority of the talent is really coming out of England. They're not giving Americans the shotthey deserve. There are a number of reasons for that. One is economic. Also, I think they can control the minds of the Europeans better than the Americans. It's always been that way. They're more used to it than we are.

I think what we started doing became R&B without anybody saying let's do R&B. Nobody ever said the word. It's like when I speak, for better or worse, a New

York accent comes out. We were doing songs that were in the British genre, and i would sound funky. It wasn't a consciouthing that we were trying to be the firs white R&B group.

DISC: Who was responsible for the arran gement of I Ain' i Gonna Eat Out My Hear Anymore?

FELIX: I pretty much took care of most cethe music with that song. We had idea flying in from everybody, but I was reall committed to the music for the band. I fee that was what I was supposed to do in life (Lo and behold, I could have been a singin doctor!) The idea was to make a three piece organ band. That was the origin idea — to sing with good voices and a organ. Have you ever seen a good vociblack three-piece band?

DISC: Like Archie Bell and the Drells?
FELIX: No, it was a more jazz-oriente vocal concept. Then it became more psychedelic so that the organ became or "wall of sound." The Phil Spector sour was the organ concept to me. We we trying to create that sound. That song car and we just took it and put it into the picture which was based around an organ

n, good voices, and a funky rhythm. : Were you aware there was a New nd band, the Pleazers, that did a cover Ain's Gonna Eat Out My Heart ore?

X: No, but you see, we don't own ong so it's not ours as far as royalties. idn't write that song. The people who I know that are the people who wrote the publishers.

: What about the B-side, Slow Down rry Williams? The song was already ed by many other groups. Why did elect it?

IX: It's a great song. It's like one of songs that you play and the audience "You know, I never heard that song e." Still, people think it's a Beatles . It's not. It's a Larry Williams song. guy was great. He had Slow Down, Moronie, and a couple of others that great songs. Williams was in the ory of Little Richard, but he never got irplay. We would take songs like that play them. The only difference was the hat our skin was a different color, and ould throw a guitar and organ into it make it sound like a new song. Most music didn't feature guitars since primarily had bass and homs. Therethey ended up painting a horn picture ose days.

C: The second Young Rascals single the cover of the Olympics' Good n'. What inspired you to cover a song had just recently been a hit for another

IX: It wasn't really a hit. It was a very or hit since there was no white airplay. C: Who selected this song which went o. 1 in 1966?

IX: We used to listen to the radio and songs and grab them. It was fun. It n't work, wasn't a job. I'm talking it hearing songs like Temptation Bout let Me, Mustang Sally, or Midnight r. I used to go to these black sections own and sit down and listen to records buy them with my lunch money! I still e the collection of the songs we found. iink anybody who's ever been a ician, from the point of view of pop ic, has done that. It's like, "Hey, let's

our day, you had to go out of your way eally find songs. One of the best places down South. I remember the first time ent down South - I couldn't believe at was in the stores. We didn't get that duct up North. If we did, we had to lly hunt for it. So it was literally like a sion.

SC: In the lyrics of Good Lovin' the ger says, "Honey please, squeeze me ht." At the time, there was a controversy out the record because some people night the second "squeeze me tight" inded like "Jesus Christ." Was the group are of this?

LIX: Gee, I never heard that one. I ow people sometimes misunderstood words. It wasn't until years later that I ilized some of the lyrics sounded slurred were misinterpreted.

SC: Why did you start doing more of the cals instead of Eddie?

LIX: We broke it down to fast and slow. vould do the fast songs and Eddie would the slow. He had a much more melodic, ecise voice. I had a much harder rockin'pe sound. Ultimately, the audience alays decides. And that's basically what as going down. Plus the fact that when ou're writing the song, you kind of tailor for yourself. If I tailored it specifically r him, it would be slow. Unfortunately, at caused a lot of problems in later years.

But it was never done like I wanted by the front man. He was the front man. But it was a different world. Eddie was a young kid and he used to take direction from me. And when he did, there was no insult intended. I had eight years of music school. What the hell did he know about music - nothing! So when I told him something, he would listen. And I would try to help him with his writing and his singing. We brought some of the best performances of his life out of him and he should be aware of that. He sang so well because there were people who really nurtured that out of him. In later years, he all of a sudden became the teacher, and thought the student relationship had changed. That's absurd!

DISC: Your first album as the Young Rascals contained the Sawyer and Burton tune Baby Let's Wait a 1968 hit for the Royal Guardsmen. You also did a fine cover of the Beau Brummels' Just a Little [written by Elliott and Durand] which was augmented by some fine organ work. How did that come about?

Why wasn't it saved for that purpose? The song also appeared on COLLECTIONS. FELIX: Every B-side was as important as

the A-side to us. So it doesn't surprise me that the song could have potentially been a hit single, but in later years that changed. You have to remember the key word was the Rascals had bottom line on everything, at least artistically. Certainly it was one of the first and probably one of the last contracts to be written like that for an unknown

DISC: The Rascals did a fine cover of the Knight Brothers' great classic, Temptation Bout to Get Me, covered later by the Rationals and the Virgil Brothers as well. What inspired the group to attempt such a song since the original performance is so intense?

FELIX: There wasn't anything we felt we couldn't handle. Not to say that we did it better than those guys, but the point was we knew we had some good vocalists and we could cut it. We did that song and a lot of

FELIX: We had to cater to an audience that wanted to hear dance songs, but they also wanted to hear some of the current hits. Just a Little was a hit [No. 8 for the Beau Brummels], but not a major one. Those are the ones I liked best because they weren't blatant No. 1 records. We also had to include everybody in the band as far as playing. So, like I said earlier, when British-type songs were called for Gene would sing. I felt many times, in the beginning of the Rascals, that there was no type of music we couldn't play.

DISC: The next Young Rascals hit single came in the summer of 1966, You Better Run. This was a great song with fervent singing and a great arrangement.

FELIX: That was the first song we wrote and played. It came about just the same way everything else came about. We got into the studio and it was worked into a fever pitch.

DISC: The flip side of You Better Run was a great garage band basher, Love Is a Beautiful Thing. The song was strong enough to be an A-side in its own right.

people loved it. Absolutely loved it! We played it so much that people said, "Why don't you record it?"

DISC: Come on Up is a great R&B raver. FELIX: We had just started to write and put out all our singles so we didn't have to do cover songs at this point. It was an interesting time because neither You Better Run nor Come on Up were major hits. They were hits, but they weren't that No. 1 record that we wanted to follow up on. So it was a very difficult time for us because you have to realize, we were a hanch of kids. All of a sudden you get thrust into national attention. Now you have to follow it up with another hit. You're trying to write on your own, produce on your own, and play on your own. We didn't have anybody to come in and substitute for us. There was a tremendous amount of pressure. Thank God another song came along, Lonely too Long, which was in the Top Ten. If we hadn't had that boost, we might not have been able to develop as writers.

DISC: Was the group aware of a cover of Come on Up by the Hinge, and that Julie

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Driscoll with Brian Augur and the Trinity covered the same song on the Monkees' TV special "331/3 Revolutions Per Monkee" in 1969?

FELIX: I remember Brian Augur and the Trinity doing it. Come on Up was an attempt at the kind of raver rocker that I heard coming up on the horizon from Hendrix and Cream — music that was really rocking. I was trying to make people aware that we were still a band at the time.

As far as the English covers, I find that very interesting. There was a recent writeup in one of the electronic magazines how they are rewriting the history of our industry. American groups were first with a lot of these things, yet much of the credit and glory has gone overseas. I'm beginning to resent that. People who write articles like yourself, have a debt to society to tell it like it was. They have Brian Augur doing it before we did it in some of these magazines. What do I have to do --- hire a publicity agent to make sure people know what we did? It's very strange. They did cover a lot of our stuff and, as far as I'm concerned, they are still doing covers of American songs.

It's getting to be a disgrace. I recently found out that Steve Winwood got sued for the song which was his major hit, Roll with It. No one even knows about it. They ripped it right off an American artist. The point is, I'm glad somebody knows that Julie Driscoll and Brian Augur did those songs, but, again, we did them first.

DISC: The flip of Come on Up was What Is the Reason, a great, moody piece that set the pace for the next single.

FELIX: That was an attempt to emulate some of the Phil Spector sounds as far as production. We took some of the sounds that he used, sleigh bells, etc., and put it into that. It wasn't something that was tremendously thought out. It was supposed to be a B-side. In a way, I'm sorry we didn't spend more time with the song, because it came out very well.

DISC: As time goes by, I think the Rascals will be considered one of the real giants in the music industry because the music is so listenable. I think eventually the public will catch up. Part of the problem in the '60s was that everybody was going through the "hippie" period and the heavy sound dominated. Groups like the Rascals, who were vocally-oriented, were getting lost in the mainstream because they didn't have the thunderous guitars.

FELIX: That's true. We had songs. The strengths of the Rascals were songwriting. singing, and, to some degree, musi ship. But we stopped cold in that & ment with certain instruments. That's the difference between a good group and a super-group. The fact is, they fill the stadiums with guitar players. They don't often fill them with keyboard players. Of course, there are exceptions. As a format, guitar is the way to go. U tunately, we just didn't have that con DISC: The next single was Lonely a Long. The single version is 54 m shorter than the LP vention which is edd since the LP version is just us minutes. What was the reing the single?

PELIXI Wash those days been with time on the me adversely to a lit MODEL OUT.

Lonely too Long was & tay song for us bossessed as songweiters. Op a only limited

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Otherwise, there would have been some serious problems from the record company point of view. We followed a No. 1 record, Good Lovin', with two Top Twenties. That wasn't good enough for the record company, but Lonely too Long bailed us out. DISC: If You Knew, the B-side of Lonely too Long, was a great acoustic piece. Who thought of the great guitar arrangement? FELIX: I wrote the music, and except for some of the arrangements, I was pretty much responsible for all the music there. I say that because, basically, it's true. I was very, very involved with the songs because they were seeds that I generated. My partner, Eddie, lyricized them. We were a good team.

DISC: Groovin' was a marked departure from the Young Rascals sound.

FELIX: The song basically expressed the way I felt since I was involved with a young lady whom I was madly in love with named Adrian.

DISC: The single of *Groovin*' from spring 1967 was a major turnaround for the band. Why the radical change in style?

FELIX: It's hard to understand why something comes along in your brain pattern. This song came into existence and it didn't have any kind of basis with the other stuff we did. It wasn't anything that was consciously done. The song just came into my mind and I took it over to Eddie to lyricize. It was different from what we had done before. In fact, we had some problems with the record company. They didn't feel Groovin' was appropriate for us to put out because it was so different.

Murray the K was a major New York DJ at the time. He happened to be at the ses-

sion where we cut it and literally marched over to Atlantic Records and told the president that this was a smash hit record and they were crazy if they didn't publish it. It was No. 1 for eight weeks.

DISC: What did the group think of Booker T. and the MG's instrumental cover that was a hit in 1967? And why did you cut versions of *Groovin* in Spanish and Italian?

FELIX: I thought Booker T's was great. That's another guy who has been totally ignored. I really enjoyed it and I thought the treatment was wonderful. It is nice when anyone covers you, especially the way that one was done.

We recorded in Spanish and Italian because Europe was just opening up to us. Since they were becoming more and more aware of rock music we did it in more languages as well. We did it in German and French, but it just didn't come out as well. Those are tough languages to sing. This was the beginning of what is now an international marketplace.

DISC: You probably had an easier time with Italian.

FELIX: Well, it's just that Italian and Spanish are much more fluid. The German language sounded real rough. The major problem with French was the pronunciation. But we had a blast. You can imagine four guys getting phonetic lyrics and having no idea what they mean. It was like a big party.

DISC: The GROOVIN'LP was the band's best album. It includes a terrific song, Find Somebody, with great guitar intro that is phased between the speakers in the stereo version. Whose idea was that? Who came

up with the great hook and vocal arrangement in the song?

FELIX: Most of the musical ideas were mine. Even with my limited playing ability on a guitar, I wanted to do what I heard being done out there in the marketplace. I was very interested in trying it. I think the idea was a good one. On vocal arrangements, it was pretty much a combination of Arif and myself, although to some degree, the Brigati brothers got involved even though they had very little musical experience at the time.

DISC: Also on the GROOVIN' album was a bizarre, jazz-like cut, It's Love, a precursor of what was to come on your ONCE UPON α DREAM album. Was this a jazz influence here?

FELIX: I had a lot of jazz influences before the Rascals began. I was really a frustrated jazz musician because I really wanted to play jazz originally, but I had too many other interests. I wanted to be a singer, a writer, and a performer. I just couldn't get up to the level I wanted as far as being a jazz pianist is concerned. There are definitely jazz influences there. I grew up in a very fertile atmosphere of music, I'm happy to say, on the East Coast. I enjoyed the Newport Jazz Festival and Greenwich Village was like shouting distance from my house. I was very fortunate to have Hubert Laws play the solo on that [It's Love]. I'm proud of the fact that a lot of people were introduced to Hubert Laws and some of those Jazz riff songs. I don't think our audience had ever heard anything

DISC: How did the unusual ending of the song come about?

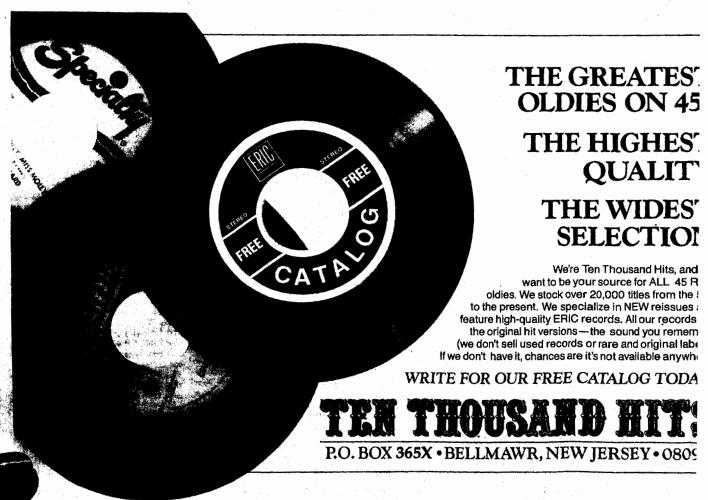
FELIX: This is basically a jazz-rock pi A lot of these things just happen. You these great ideas in the back of your n that say, "Let's try this." We had wonderful experience of having a k live stuff happen in our band. We ' allowed to use the studio as a labora and didn't have to pay much studio t Today that's just impossible because it expensive. We literally lived in that p As far as the ending of the song with flute, we basically just turned Hubert I onto that thing and he did a great job

DISC: Why the Vanilla Fudge-ish of version of Stevie Wonder's A Place i Sun on the GROOVIN' album? Sounds better done straight.

FELIX: Well, it's pretty simple act. The group was basically working in a before we recorded and that was on those songs people asked for when wanted to hear a ballad.

DISC: GROOVIN' also included major hit singles, A Girl Like You and Can! Be Sure, which were breezy ba! How Can! Be Sure employs the un'8 time signature and traditional Eurc arrangements to create a dream-like at phere. Was this intentional?

FELIX: How Can I Be Sure was la the result of Arif Mardin's magnit arrangement and production. I can with this idea for a song and wanter sound like a French piece. Here I hav wonderful Berkeley professor of a and he sat down with me to orchestra music. It was just magnificent! The a different atmosphere at the time the prevalent now. A great amount of



mentation was going on. Thanks to the des there wasn't the fear of having to at yourself and be commercial. There an openness and a searching for new orms. They blazed a trail for that bee everything they came out with was ifferent. That was the period of lelle and Yesterday. So the attitude "Hey, let's try this." It was okay with ublic and with the radio stations to do rent things. That was my interpreta-of the mood. I can't give the Beatles igh credit. Before that, it was getting y boring.

wCanl Be Sure was a song with a nice tion mark in it. At that time, I was still lved with that young lady. Now I'm at point of should we hook up for perence or not? How can I be sure? Then down with Arif and he painted this ous picture. I enjoyed working with man so much. When I lost him, it just me away because I had lost my En-ppedia Britannica. I mean God Alhty, we worked very, very well ther. Unfortunately, some of the other felt left out of that, but I think mara like that are made in heaven.

C: What happened to Arif Mardin?

IX: Arif became one of the major as in production in our industry. He ed with us. He is still producing major ts. He's done Carly Simon, Bette Midind the Bee Gees. He's a big man in the industry. He just did a new album, BOY MEETS GIRL.

DISC: What about the song A Girl Like You, an euphoric piece?

FELIX: Again, I went to that Berkeley professor and asked him to give it a big band sound. He's like a magic button. He said, "You got it." I would tell him how I wanted the music to sound and he would put it into arrangement form. I hadn't studied arrangement, but then, boom! It was delivered to my presence. It was wonderful.

DISC: Can you discuss Sueño? What does the title mean in Spanish? It has a nice Spanish guitar mixed in with some good vocals. How did this song come about?

FELIX: I think all the songs came about in the same way, I'm happy to say. They were all my own seeds. Sueño means dream or sleep in Spanish. There was a song years ago that I sort of went to college with, Coplas by the Kingston Trio. I emulated that intro and it was a take-off of their song which was a take-off of a Mexican song. I can't stress the creative atmosphere that existed in those days. It was something that was unique. The '60s was a Renaissance, not just of music, but there were these wonderful seeds of creativity being sown everywhere.

DISC: What about I'm So Happy Now? FELIX: That was Gene Cornish's song. It was his entire thought process and fit into

the song structure of the album perfectly. DISC: In autumn 1967 came It's Wonderful which had a weird ending not unlike that found on Susan by the Buckinghams, Bike by Pink Floyd, and I've Got Time by the Silver Byke. All of these records seem to copy one another. Was this intentional and did the Young Rascals hang out with Silver Byke, Buckinghams, or Pink Floyd then?

FELIX: I think, once again, I have to point to the Beatles. They broke some more new ground. I think it was in the Strawberry Fields or Eleanor Rigby era. With all due respect, with the exception of Pink Floyd, we didn't even know those other groups existed at that point. The English bands were the only ones doing anything sig-nificant. Frankly, I really didn't care for a lot of the music that was going on in America at that time. The musical beacon was coming from the Beatles. There is no doubt about that. Anyone that doesn't want to admit that, that's cool man, but that's where it was at. It was so strong, it changed our entire planet. I'll be the first one to admit it. When they pointed in a new direc-tion I thought, "Great try it." We were given the luxury of trying new things. I don't consider that copying. I looked at it this way. It was like thinking psychedelic music was open or Indian music was open. Also French and European were open areas. Prior to the Beatles, these areas were closed doors and we were stuck with it.

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DINO DANELLI

Coverles: Early on you played with lel Hampton, and Little Willie John, later died in prison in 1968 after a slaughter conviction. [Note: Little ie John was co-author and first to sing ?r.]

O: I was a freelance rock and roll and musician in New York who was lookfor everything [musical experience] I could find. So one week I would play Lionel Hampton and the next week I ld play with Little Willie John as well any other musicians.

ounced around a lot in New York, but as was the beginning of when we got ther.

C: What inspired the Young Rascals' r of Good Lovin'?

0: We liked to go through the record n New York and occasionally would something we'd like to play. We 't know what we had found with the npics' song, but Ahmet Ertegun tuned it immediately when he heard us play version at The Barge which was off hampton, Long Island. Good Lovin' on its own life when I put in a drum m that didn't previously exist, a Ray rles What I'd Say?-type beat. Gene loped a really nice energized rhythm

e song had a magic to it and we were to instill magic of our own into the when we cut the track in the studio. Mardin and Torn Dowd, who are lemen and great to work with, knew r than to screw around with our music. example, we didn't want to use the we recorded of Good Lovin' because twere several mistakes in it, but it had naw energy and they said, "Guys, it's the mistakes sound good." That was of foreign to us that mistakes should id good, but it's to their credit that we 't clean everything up and do it corly since the energy was there.

e next Rascals' hit single came in the mer of 1966 with You Better Run



who was a state of the

which has a great arrangement and fervent singing. It also was the first self-penned [by Cavaliere and Brigatil hit by the group and reached No.20.

We had a great deal with Atlantic Records in that we could use the studio whenever it was available at no charge. I remember that the rehearsal for You Better Run was great and we came up with the whole arrangement. I believe Felix came in with a straight four movement on piano, but then I changed it to a shuffle and everybody else followed. It really is a bizarre record. I actually made a mistake in the beginning with the bass drum pattern, which is very syncopated, with my foot. Tommy Dowd

picked up on it and said, "Hey, man, that's great!" I wanted to change it, but he said to leave it in. So I kept doing it and it turned into a rather catchy shuffle beat.

DISC: Maybe that song is typical of your style. [Note: John Densmore of the Doors mentions in his book Riders on the Storm that when he saw the Rascals play he was impressed with Dino Danelli and his style of drumming.] When I saw you play it reminded me of those toy monkeys where you turn the key and the monkey plays his drums with this rigid yet aggressive beat. I don't mean this to sound disrespectful in any way, but rather that you have a distinc-