

Badcat Records review

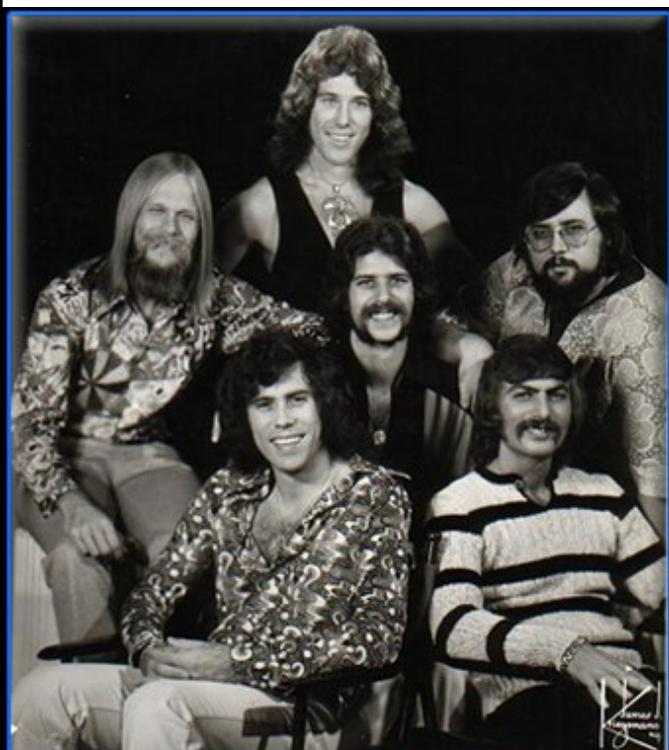
PIECE OF MIND - ORIGINAL US PRESSING HAPPENINGS

Label: JUBILEE Release Number: JGS-8028

Geez, if you'd asked me about The Happenings I probably would've smirked at you and said something along the lines of 'lame assed, Tokens-styled pop group'. Shows you that I don't know squat. Actually, for the most part my snide comments would have been right on the mark. What I didn't know is that late in their careers the group somehow managed to record one all but ignored killer album.

1969's self-produced "Piece of Mind" is simply unlike anything else in their catalog. Like many of their contemporaries (The Four Seasons and The Tokens readily come to mind), this album was apparently a last ditch effort to modernize the group's sound in the hopes of expanding their rapidly dwindling audience. The results aren't perfect, but anyone who knows these guys for hits such as 'See You In September' and 'Go Away Little Girl' will be amazed to hear original material such as 'Heartbeat', 'Living In Darkness' and 'Be My Brother'. With bassist Dave Libert and guitarist Bob Miranda responsible for the majority of the twelve tracks, the band turned in surprisingly impressive slices of lite-psych and rock. An impressive blend of their patented harmony vocals and some interesting studio effects, the set's high points are probably the rocking 'Don't You Think It's Time' and the six minute plus 'Imagine'. In addition to an interesting song structure the latter even sports a cool Eastern-flavored Bernie LaPorta guitar solo. One more song like that and the LP would've warranted four stars. Besides, ever imagine you'd hear these guys singing a song entitled 'Where Do I Go / Be In (Hare Krishna)?' Mind you, old habits die hard and it was probably too much to expect the group to totally abandon their old ways. 'Cold Water', 'New Day Comin' and the country-flavored 'Piece of Mind' were sufficiently schmaltzy to appeal to their older fans. The bizarre cover art is almost worth an additional half star.~~~~

Editors response: Growing up in the late 60s rock and pop harmony didn't fit in most record buyers head's. You were either into melody and harmony or you hated it and wanted seamin' guitar chords and pounding beat with as little melody as possible. After all this was new and innovative. This has persisted today with many as this reviewer shows. But many who loved melody and perhaps rejected rock at the time can now see how the blend the Happenings tried on this album was a fine mix of old qualities with new...and by retaining a sense of humour with 'Cold Water' and 'Piece of Mind' the group obviously caught this reviewer 'cold'. Maybe he will in time appreciate what the Happenings where and what they became. Both were excellent.



THE HAPPENINGS

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When I got this photo from John Paiva of the group in 1972 I thought it must be one of the earliest examples of a touched up photo. That 'hair' cannot be real....no-one with hair like that could be taken seriously. John Paiva corrected us... "All genuine hair....and original fashions. The long blond hair guy is Ted Clancy (Guitar) who is today a music professor at a NJ Uni. The guy with the big hair (totally real by the way,) was David "Chico" Ryan (bass). He was a wonderful funny guy who lived life at a very fast pace. He was offered a gig with "Sha-na-na" of "Wood Stock" fame and after joining them became quite famous as they toured and eventually had a weekly TV show.

When Dave was offered the gig he told me about it and asked what he should do. I told him that if he didn't go to the audition, that I would, so the next morning he drove to the city and nailed down the gig. Unfortunately later on he met with a sad accident and choked on food in Las Vegas. Due to oxygen starvation he spent the next couple of years in a coma. A truly sad ending to a great guy.

The fashions are I think pretty cool. I am wearing a top that a girl I met on Cape Cod made for me. It was a real fashion statement. In the middle is Frank Marcario (drummer) with whom I still have contact. Maybe in a follow on article he will be able to contribute.

Then in front is Bob Miranda and Tommy Guiliano."