

Local farmer—sculptor sows seeds of creativity

By Jerry DeLorenzo

The story of sculptor Arlo Bray is comparable to a fairy tale.

One day in 1968, Bray said, he had some scrap steel left over in his farm machinery repair shop. The pieces struck him as looking like wing feathers. From the imagery he created an eagle and on the suggestion of a friend, he entered it in the State Fair where it won a ribbon.

Since then, his sculptures have become popular throughout the country. Former vice president Nelson Rockefeller owns two of them. Bray sold a line of bull sculptures to a large midwestern insurance company for a sales promotion and has sold several to private individuals.

In the fairy tale story of Arlo Bray one factor has so far been eliminated—the fairy godmother. Bray says he has one somewhere because he has never had any formal training in art or welding.

Despite his success, Bray still farms near Lincoln. Bray said his art work is only a hobby when farm work is less demanding, usually during the winter.

He works with the Lincoln Public Schools and produces sculptures for many Lincoln elementary schools.

His sculptures are usually birds or animals. He admits that he is limited in how far he can go without pictures and usually has some on hand while working.

When creating one of his sculptures, he begins with a cardboard design and cuts pieces of steel the size of the cardboard and then welds the steel around the cardboard. He starts with what he said he thinks is the biggest problem—the head.

By today's art standards, Bray says, he does not charge very much for his sculptures. For a one foot-high owl that Bray said took him about 9 hours to complete, he will charge about \$90.

"I'm a farmer and I've never been in the driving seat before. Generally, I'll follow grain to market and I have to take what they give me. It's difficult to price things," he said.

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Photo by Ted Kirk

Local sculptor and farmer Arlo Bray relaxes between his art work.

arts and entertainment

Music

A look back at Steve Miller Band can be rewarding

Review by Douglas R. Weil

Not so long ago I regarded music as just another of life's simple pleasures. But times and perspectives change and now good music has become more of an obsessive pursuit.

In the last year or so finding palatable music has become a rather formidable challenge. Many think the explanation is that rock 'n' roll is slowly creeping into its third decade.

Music has become (though not to the extent some claim) little more than recycled chords, hooks, riffs and phrases.

The quality of today's rock 'n' roll is still passable but it has fallen into a handful of easily distinguishable categories which have robbed it of a measure of its individual character and spontaneity. Too seldom music is not explained in terms of quality but who the band or artist sounds like.

Spotlights are beginning to shine upon a few of the important and vital artists of the 1970's. George Benson, Bob Seger, Boz Scaggs and Steve Miller are good examples of some musicians that have recently been relieved of their previously faceless status.

What all this adds up to is that sometimes looking backward can be as important as looking toward the future. Sometimes one can't avoid looking back and many times one can't afford not to look back. Such is the case of Steve Miller.

Steve Miller/*Anthology*/Capitol SVBB-1114

Steve Miller/*The Joker*/Capitol SMAS-11235

Steve Miller's latest release, *Fly Like An Eagle*, brought the Dallas-born singer-songwriter the same fame gained by his last album released in 1973, *The Joker*.

Forgotten talents

After Miller and his band's three year absence from the scene many (including myself) had a tendency to forget about Miller's considerable talents.

But by the end of 1976 *Fly Like An Eagle* had tapped countless fans on the shoulder and exclaimed, "Remember us? We're the Steve Miller Band".

Though record albums obviously are incapable of such sophisticated human characteristics, the music in *Fly Like An Eagle* ("Take the Money and Run", "Wild Mountain Honey", "The Window" and the album's title track) provided more than just a run of the mill listening experience.

Miller has long been providing this kind of setting for his fans. On *The Joker*, the title track extends Miller's fondness for created characters. In "The Joker" Miller refers to space cowboys and gangsters of love, both characters in previous songs.

Not only was the song successful on a musical level but also on the commercial level. I wonder who could resist a song with an inviting lyric like—"I really love your peaches, wanna shake your tree."?

Two classics

The Joker also yielded two other Miller classics, a disc-jockey's nightmare, "Shu Ba Da Du Ma Ma Ma Ma" and the downtown rocker "Your Cash Ain't Nothin' But Trash".

The Joker and *Fly Like An Eagle* are the modern music of the Steve Miller Band. For a look at the real Steve Miller (and his roots) his *Anthology* is most revealing.

Naturally *Anthology* is a compilation of Steve Miller's best moments. Released in 1972, *Anthology* is 16 songs selected by

Miller from seven albums he made dating back to 1968.

Anthology is a valuable album aside from the fact that it is the cheapest way to get Miller's early hits. Miller selected the songs himself, whereas many greatest hits albums are planned and packaged by money-possessed record company executives.

Miller states in the album's liner notes that *Anthology* is "what I always wanted to make—two good LP's that'll hold up."

And the two-record set, *Anthology* certainly holds up well, even though some of the material within it is nearly ten-years-old.

"Space Cowboy" for instance, was released in 1970 but it sounds just as lively today as the first time I heard it. "Space Cowboy" is one of the better-known songs from Miller's early recording career and is rather typical of his approach to music. The song is heavy on manipulative guitar and production techniques.

West Coast influence

Miller has been headquartered in San Francisco and Los Angeles since 1968, and the influence of living on the West Coast in the sixties shines through ever so subtly.

While most West Coast bands were playing either protest or psychedelic songs, Miller combined the two and plays at those styles rather than within them. As a result "Space Cowboy" and most of Miller's music is fresh-sounding even today.

"Living in the U.S.A." is another example of Miller's talented production. It also attacks television, politicians, the plasticity of life, and the absence of Uncle Sam's helping hand.

Speaking of helping hands, Miller gets assistance from some of the best musicians in the business in addition to his regular band.

Nicky Hopkins, who gained fame with Jeff Beck, Quicksilver Messenger Service and John Lennon, plays keyboards on several songs. Boz Scaggs plays guitar and does some singing on "Living in the U.S.A." Charlie McCoy, who many regard as the world's finest harmonica player, contributes on two songs, "I Love You" and "Going to the Country". Other guest artists include Paul McCartney, Lee Michaels and Richard Thompson.

Anthology is easily one of the most coherent and pleasing repackaging of an artist's work in the history of rock music. More to the point, *Anthology* is one of those backward glances you can't afford to miss.



Photo courtesy of Capitol Records.

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