

Henry Flynt & NOVA'BILLY
PRESS INFORMATION--July 1975

The Band

Henry Flynt & NOVA'BILLY play stoned country music aimed primarily at the audience for FM rock. Henry Flynt is the composer and performs the vocal and electric fiddle parts. Songs performed by the group include songs of personal politics, humorous country songs, and songs in which political subject matter is used to provide certain artistic effects. The group's songs and instrumentals extend country music in a variety of directions by the assimilation in a country music context of blues, Rumanian, and Indian sounds, and also open forms, non-periodic rhythms, and electronic sound modification. Most of the tunes are danceable, and Henry Flynt demonstrates for the audience the dance that goes with each tune. The group's aim is a trucking and trancing sound--a synthesis of grandstanding entertainment and transcendent experiences. The lead guitarist is Jim McAllister, an outstanding rock guitarist who has co-composed many of the guitar parts (notably the Indian-influenced segment in "Portrait of M.S."; and the guitar lead in "Double Spindizzy," which can only be performed by a blues-and-country guitarist, but which otherwise corresponds to no pre-existing musical form.) Tenor sax parts, which range from R&B to free-form jazz styles, are played by Paul Colin, who has many years of experience as a reed performer in R&B, jazz, pop, and Jewish music. Colin is also a co-arranger for the band. Don Christensen plays drums, in effect co-composing the drum parts; Larry Bennett plays bass; and Peter Gordon plays acoustic and electric piano. The band's first appearances were in Spring 1975: twice at the 80 Wooster St. theater, NYC, and once at "The Kitchen," NYC.

Henry Flynt: Musical Background

In 1961 Henry Flynt was an avant-garde composer of the post-Cage era. In 1962 he repudiated all European "classical" and "modern" music and began to devote his attention to ethnic music, concentrating on two systems that originated in his native region: blues and country music. He began to compose fully notated avant-garde music within the country music "mode," assimilating the electronic capabilities and open forms of the avant-garde to Southern music. He studied pop guitar with Lou Reed in 1965, and for two weeks substituted for John Cale in the Velvet Underground in 1966. He composed most of his political rock songs in this period. In the late Sixties and early Seventies he devoted his efforts to tape music and compositions for solo electric fiddle. He recorded three electronic music demos for Apple Records; and gave a concert of music from this period at The Kitchen, NYC, in 1972. During the same period, he made extensive studies of traditional hillbilly fiddle music, Rumanian nightclub fiddle music, Indian music, and Jewish frailach music, concentrating on learning to perform the music and on identifying the features of the sound elements of these musical languages that distinguished them from European "classical" music.

In 1974 Henry Flynt was invited to appear at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va., and while there he had some of his musical concepts realized in recording by Southern country musicians; these recordings were played in a concert at the university. It was this experience which impelled him to form a country band in New York, and to change his focus from tape music to live performance, band arrangements, songs, rock format, and audience participation in the form of dancing. Quality of entertainment and quality of live interaction with audiences are now his main concerns. His musical philosophy is stated in an essay entitled "The Politics of 'Native' or Ethnic Music."

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Henry Flynt: General Biography

Henry Flynt was born in Greensboro, N. C. in 1940. He attended Harvard College, and left in 1960 to devote himself to writing in the field of speculative philosophy. These writings were the basis for his recent work in the construction of non-scientific empiricist cognitive models (i.e. alternates to common-sense reality or everyday reality.) In 1961, he wrote a document for An Anthology (edited by LaMonte Young and published in 1962) in which he coined the phrase "concept art," provided the rationale for it, and presented the first concept art compositions. It is this document, copyright 1961, which establishes him as the originator of the most influential artistic trend of the twentieth century.* On the other hand, in 1962 he totally dissociated himself from the art world, and this probably contributed to the fact that he received little publicity in connection with the "conceptual art" movement as it became dominant in the late Sixties. He was active in Marxist politics in the Sixties, and this was the beginning of a continuing interest in social philosophy. In the late Sixties he dissociated himself from the sectarian Left and resumed his work in technical philosophy, formal logic, and related fields. An overview of his avant-garde writings was published in England in 1972 in the FLUXSHOE catalog. The Soho Weekly News of November 28, 1974, published an interview with him entitled "The Overthrow of Everyday Life." His collected avant-garde writings from 1961 to 1974 are to be published under the title BLUEPRINT FOR A HIGHER CIVILIZATION by Multhipla, Milan, Italy--a project which is currently in the galley proof stage. Henry Flynt is also a Ph.D. candidate in economics at the New School for Social Research, where he is writing his Ph.D. dissertation on the systems theory of control algorithm hierarchies as they would be applied in a totally automated economy.

*For additional documentation of his role as the specific originator of concept art, see The London Times Literary Supplement, August 6, 1964, p. 688; catalog of "The Arts in Fusion" exhibit, Temple University, January 1966, p. 6; "Expanded Arts Diagram" in Film Culture, Winter 1966 issue, p. 7; Art and Artists, October 1972, pp. 50, 59; Lucy Lippard, Six Years (New York, Praeger, 1973), pp. 22, 258; and Germano Celant's monographs on contemporary art.