



# KISS PHOTO SPECIAL

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# CIRCUS

THE LEADING ROCK & ROLL BI-WEEKLY

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## CALIFORNIA BREAKOUT JACKSON BROWNE JONI MITCHELL

Their hottest albums ever...  
A look at West Coast Rock  
& Roll With—Eagles,  
Neil Young, Linda  
Ronstadt, CS&N

## STEVIE WONDER

Triple-LP Anthology  
Captures Genius And  
Roots Of 'Little' Stevie  
Wonder

## STARZ

'Attention Shoppers!',  
The Self-Produced New  
LP With 60's Sound—  
Recharged Image

## NATALIE COLE

A Revealing Profile: At  
Home With Rock's  
'Sophisticated Lady'—  
And, The Scoop On  
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## PAT TRAVERS

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Makes Big Musical Move

## SEX PISTOLS

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## ALICE'S TV DINER

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JACKSON BROWNE



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# Jackson Browne and Joni Mitchell Keep the Sun Shining

California's Golden Age of Songwriters

by Steven Gaines

**C**huck Berry once called it "the promised land" and indeed, for a while anyway, it was where everybody wanted to be. California was America's post war dream; it was clean and big, everybody was healthy and tanned and the beaches were populated by millions of teenaged war babies. Rock & roll was already booming and California was the perfect place for it to grow.

Over the last two decades California has become the heart of the music business, a wild conglomeration that attracts English tax refugees, New York rockers and a throng of hopefuls from across the nation waiting to be discovered in Duke's Coffee Shop at the Tropicana Motel. Then what is California music and who makes it? The people who live there or the people who write about it? Is Leif Garret and Shaun Cassidy the California sound? Rod Stewart or even Elton John?

The first pure bred California sounds came in 1961 with the Beach Boys. It all began when younger brother Dennis Wilson returned home from a day at Santa Monica beach and suggested to brother Brian that he write a song about the California sport. "Surfin'" was released on the small Candix label that year and since the western coast of the nation has never been the same.

By 1965 the vortex of California creativity had moved north to San Francisco, a shift which even changed the national consciousness. Acid eating prophets like the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane proselytizing drugs and free love. Meanwhile, down in Los Angeles, a minor California trend started with folk-rock, whose short lived popularity gave us the Byrds. Monterey Pop exploded in 1967, and Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix showed there was no stopping the west coast. And probably more than any other group save the Beach Boys, the Mommas and Poppas wrote love songs to



Jackson Browne, on tour in 1977, when *'Running on Empty'* was recorded.

Fellow Asylum artist Joni Mitchell, as *Don Juan's* reckless daughter.



the state. Once you heard Cass Elliot singing about it, who could not want to be out there, California dreaming?

But by the end of the sixties California music went through a dramatic change. San Francisco psychedelia had run the gamut; Timothy Leary, said the Moody Blues from London, was dead. Haight Ashbury had become a slum. Brian Wilson was schizophrenic. Even the Woodstock nation, the spirit of which lived on longer in L.A. than it had in upstate New York, was coming to an end. The hard nosed evolution of the music business replaced the euphoria of the flower children when the realization dawned that no mass movement would change the world, no protest songs would stop wars. In the supersonic seventies it was up to the individual to find the way.

The music of the 70's turned inward. From a jam session in a Laurel Canyon living room emerged Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Although they were touted as a group, each was a singer-songwriter in his own right, and Graham Nash once described them as "four solo performers making a record together." For a time, Neil Young's unamplified melancholic intimacies became the theme music for searching youth. CSN&Y's dominance was soon passed to the Eagles, a latter-day sophisticated Beach Boys. The Eagles, including Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Don Felder, Joe Walsh and Randy Meisner, became the blue-blooded L.A. group. The circle contracted and expanded as other musicians faded, for a time, into the limelight. But, of J.D. Souther, Chris Hillman, Richie Furay, Warren Zevon and others, only the Eagles themselves have managed to make life in the fast lane work for them.

And in the midst of it all, a bra-less waif from Phoenix named Linda Ronstadt left her folk music origins behind to become the pinup girl of this select California circle, and per-

Duana LeMay

Norman Seeff



haps the best female vocalist of the decade as well.

With all of the energy pouring out of New York here at the end of the 70's, it's not surprising that a new wave of musical strength seems to be developing there. But as we push toward the 80's, California music is still dominated by the singer-songwriters, or chirper-cleffers, as *Variety* once dubbed them. Marked by simple composition, the music is heavily colored by isolation and frustration. But probably more than any style or lyrical content, California balladeers carry with them a special charisma that one can almost sense in the night wind rushing out of Laurel Canyon along with the smell of eucalyptus. And the still-reigning king and queen of the elusive California sound are Joni Mitchell and Jackson Browne.

## Jackson Browne Thrives on the Endless Road

by Wesley Strick

**L**ate last summer, Jackson Browne sipped a glass of Burgundy backstage and said, "I'm touring with The Section, who are the best studio players in Los Angeles. These are the guys who would have been recording for me if we'd recorded this album in the studio. I really think we're capturing some magic things."

Now "this album"—*Running On Empty* (Asylum)—has neatly coasted into the national Top Ten, startling music-biz insiders who'd supposed that a live album of all-new material was "not commercial." Even Browne, who said, apologetically, "There just wasn't room for the old songs," may be stunned by initial sales, bigger than last year's studio gem, *The Pretender*. Indeed, a monster chart response may not be the least of the "magic things" captured by *Running On Empty*.

Most live albums serve as sing-along "greatest hits" collections, gassed up with guitar jams and sprawling covers of "Johnny B. Goode." Aggressive rockers, whose raucous energy and audience rapport get lost in the studio, are often best represented on-stage. Why should the painfully reclusive, craftsmanlike Browne, whose tour last winter was respectfully panned, take *his* reputation on the road? Perhaps to show the critics who've called his concerts "stiff," "dif-

fident" and "same-y sounding" that his wistful introspection can flex muscle in a clinch?

"These tunes that we've got," Browne patiently explains, "were put together around these people, and this experience, that's all."

Certainly, most live albums are strictly "in concert" affairs. But *Running On Empty* includes songs recorded backstage in the "big rehearsal room" at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, on the Continental Silver Eagle tour bus "somewhere in New Jersey," in Room 301 at the Maryland Cross Keys Inn and, finally, Room 124 at the Holiday Inn, Edwardsville, Illinois. As Jackson sings on "Nothing But Time" (cut, suitably, on the bus), "Well, it's a rock and roll band or a movie, you can take your pick." And the album's most cinematic moment—as close to montage as mere vinyl can get—occurs in the mid-verse segue, from bare hotel room to SRO hall, in Danny O'Keefe's "The Road." Jackson's voice, quietly confidential on the line, "You've got it down," suddenly opens up with echo, excitement, and the support of a nonpareil band:

*It's just another town along the road...*

Precisely how was this breathtaking effect brought off so smoothly?

"We had a machine that we carried with us everywhere," Browne recalls. "And I had the guy who mixed my last album [Greg Ladanyi] right on the road. We'd record rehearsals, in the hotel room and on the bus. Then he'd go back to the studio right after he'd got the tape out of the machine. He'd run straight over and listen, 'cause he was so into it."

However unique the concept—and *Running On Empty* is one of the boldest, quirkiest statements from a major artist in recent days—plenty of somebods out there are listening. Clearly, it's time to downshift, pull into a pit stop, and see who's at the wheel of this miracle lead-free flivver.

Maybe you've never heard the name before. "Here Comes Those Tears Again" hit AM radio last year, but you've probably been humming Jackson Browne's songs for close to a decade. Born in Heidelberg, Germany and having grown up in Los Angeles, Jackson began performing in clubs in California coffeehouses when he was 14 and listening to the music of Mississippi John Hurt and the late Sam Cooke. Three years later he traveled across the country to New York on his mother's graduation present of \$50 and started playing guitar for Nico of the infamous Velvet Underground.

On the side Jackson wrote original songs, which he incorporated into his own early shows as an acoustically-based singer/songwriter accompanying himself on piano and guitar. His songs were discovered and recorded by the likes of Tom Rush, The Byrds, Brewer and Shipley, and Johnny Rivers. Linda Ronstadt included the apocalyptic "Rock Me On The Water" on an album in 1972 and the big break came when he co-wrote with Glen Frey the great early 70's anthem of freedom and youth, "Take It Easy," which the Eagles turned into their first big hit.

The low-profile boy wonder was finally acquired by Asylum Records mogul David Geffen for a recording contract and his first album, *Jackson*

*Jackson's closest companion on the road these days is his son, Ethan, who sometimes drops by the microphone for an impromptu duet—he also writes.*





Browne, was released in 1972. The same year he appeared nationally in clubs, and in concert tours with Joni Mitchell that spring and with the Eagles and J.D. Souther in the fall.

The audience response and critical praise to these tours was so great that while appearing at the Bitter End in New York's Greenwich Village (now the Other End), Jackson received headliner status over J.D. Souther, prompting a nasty telegram from David Geffen and Elliot Roberts (Souther was their main concern at the time) to club owner Paul Colby. Geffen and Roberts stated they would never deal with Colby again if he insisted on letting opening acts upstage their main attraction, and that framed telegram still hangs on the wall at the Other End.

During that period, Browne's other songs co-written with the Eagles—"Nightingale" and "James Dean"—forged an alliance with that supergroup which saw both careers rise dramatically. While the Eagles became the quintessential California band, Jackson was shaking up the earthquake state's sensibilities with his introspective romanticism, a mixture of highly-charged lyrics with a compelling instrumental atmosphere. While the established singers continued to record his songs, it was perhaps Gregg Allman's version of "These Days" on his *Laidback* album that demonstrated Browne's ability to communicate the plight of the sensitive rock star who functioned in an arena of fast-paced promotion and the selling of one's personal experience for the sake of record company profit.

Jackson Browne's second album, *For Everyman*, was released in October of 1973 and that fall he headlined his own national tour with Bonnie Raitt. The headlining continued with a 40-city national tour in the winter when he began selling out shows. His third album, *Late For The Sky* (1974), cemented Browne's critical reputation and *The Pretender* ('76) made him a chart heavyweight although, as new manager Peter Golden puts it, "Jackson's never really been concerned with what the rest of the world has been doing. He's feeling very comfortable about being totally natural. He hasn't been caught in the star-making machinery, and he's not out to do something commercial."

But then came Browne's biggest gamble, his most ambitious, unwieldy premise yet—and self-produced to boot. "The album was originally going to be *Road in the Sky*," Browne laughs, "but the idea was always the same." With the help of the West Coast's crack Section (Russ Kunkel, drums; Leland Sklar, bass; Craig Doerge, keyboards; Danny Kortchmar, guitar; plus David Lindley, fiddle and

lap steel) the idea paid off, with power and precision.

"We all play together a lot," Jackson says, "and when these assholes in New York start yelling incest, man, I want to—I don't know—fuck it. It's a really really good bunch of players who all know each other and help each other. It's like a city in Italy in the 18th century, in which wonderful violins were made by this one and by that one; the students of Stradivarius had their own students. I feel there's a seed of something wonderful there with us; something wonderful's happening."

## Joni Mitchell Meets Don Juan's Reckless Daughter

by Wesley Strick

Nineteen Seventy-Eight is a watershed year for Joni Mitchell; *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (Asylum) is the superlative singer-songwriter's tenth album; its release marks the tenth year of her association with "personal manager" Elliot Roberts. While last year's European tour was cancelled

on account of exhaustion, sources close to Roberts claim that Joni "just may" play the States in '78. But whether Our Lady of the Canyon opts for seclusion or the road, her new, deluxe double-set crowns a decade of ambitious record-making.

She was born Roberta Joan Anderson, in 1943, in Ft. Macleod, Canada. Her early musical inspirations, like those of Jackson Browne and Linda Ronstadt, were drawn from the well of folk music. Like them, she travelled during the early and mid-sixties. Primarily, she began as a songwriter, only incidentally plucking a guitar and singing her tunes. In those days, it was virtually impossible to get anyone to "do" your songs. So you sang them yourself.

Curiously, it was the opposite of this formula that became the foundation for Joni's recognition. Married to American folksinger Chuck Mitchell and then divorced, she continued to ply her trade in the States while, almost without effort, other performers began to include Mitchell material in their programs. Among others, Tom Rush and Buffy St. Marie recorded Joni's "Circle Game," in 1967. Buffy's version, with its rockabilly background, became a hit and listeners began to wonder about the name behind the song. In 1968, when Judy

Collins' version of "Both Sides Now" sold a million copies, Joni was poised and ready for public acceptance as a performer in her own right.

And circumstances were in her favor. Buffy's manager, Elliot Roberts, was so taken with Joni's presence on stage that he left his management position to devote himself full time to her career. He signed her to Reprise Records in 1968 and then, when he joined with partner David Geffen, brought her to Geffen's fledgling label, Asylum.

Joni eventually settled in L.A.'s fashionably rustic Topanga Canyon where, for many years, she shared the company of peers Crosby, Young, Nash, Browne and assorted Eagles. Most of the material for the series of albums that followed, though gathered through her travels, was formulated there.

*Don Juan* is an all-studio double—but, at just under an hour, it runs only six minutes longer than 77's stunning *Hejira* single LP. *Don Juan* is only one song bigger than *Hejira*'s nine, but what a song: the seventeen

*Joni Mitchell, once a solitary guitar-strumming folk singer, now the preeminent female songwriter. 'Don Juan' has been called a near-perfect epic work.*



minute autobiographical epic sprawled across Side Two, complete with full symphony orchestra, called "Paparika Plains":

*I would tie on colored feathers  
And I would beat the drum like  
war...*

Joni sings, forecasting Side Three's "Tenth World," the pop poetess's first instrumental track, a conga jam featuring ace Brazilian percussionist Airto Moriera.

There's much more: an all-rhythm (cowbells, congas, shakers, snare drum, sandpaper block) back-up on "Dreamland," Joni's jam-like contribution to Roger McGuinn's 1976 *Cardiff Rose* LP. Mitchell's rendition evokes her '75 *Hissing of Summer Laurus* set, with its startling "Jungle Line" track courtesy the warrior drums of Burundi.

"Jericho," on the other hand, is a straight studio re-make of the delicate tune which Joni debuted on her live *Miles of Aisles* package, with Tom Scott's L.A. Express. Here, drummer (and sometime lover) John Guerin is the only Express holdover, cooking with the likes of Weather Report's Wayne Shorter on sax. Report veteran Jaco Pastorius, who shared bass duties with Max Bennett on *Hejira*, defines *Don Juan*'s moody sophistication with a haunting, single-handed vibrato.

Around Elliot Roberts' office, they're calling *Don Juan* "Joni's best album in years. She's grown from the jazz proficiency of the Express to the sheer virtuosity of Weather Report." And, more to the point, "DIRD" was the highest FM add-on the last week in December."

Three months and "lots of money" in the making, *Don Juan* assumed many names—including "some really long, wierd ones that nobody remembers"—before taking its title from "the song with the ankle bells."

According to a studio assistant, Mitchell decided, midsession, that she needed "ankle bells" for "tempo and atmosphere." Longtime engineer Henry Lewy put out a frantic call, with no luck. "Finally," the assistant laughs, "somebody came up with a dancer named Alejandro Acuna. They

dimmed the lights, stuck her on a little stage, and ran the tapes. I think they got her from the Screen Actors Guild, actually. But she is a real Indian."

Real Indians—the North American kind—tend to recur ("They cut off their braids and lost some link with nature") throughout the lyric, as do Black Men, mostly pimps with dizzy, adoring White Broads. All three prototypes figure into the cover photograph—and all three are Miss Mitchell, in degrees of disguise. "Norman Seeff took a bunch of pictures," tut-tuts a friend, "and Joni happened to like these the best. So they cut 'em up, and stuck 'em on the sleeve." What the friend fails to mention is that, among her ten album covers—all designed by Mitchell, who once studied commercial art at Alberta College—*Don Juan* may sport her most provocative image. *Joni Goes Solson*: how could it miss?

It couldn't. Between her professional "family" of Roberts, Lewy, Steve Katz, David Geffen and what Billboard calls her "steady legion of fans," Joni's carved a comfortable, serious and significant niche in the barricade-heavy record-biz. Her smoky, folk jazz will always make money for Mitchell and Asylum, even should *Don Juan* take a tailspin in the year of "You Light Up My Life." But what's she like to work with, this *auteurist* who hires orchestras, handles graphics, disdains the press and rarely performs? Is Joni a sublime Barbra Streisand?

"Believe it or not," the studio assistant swears, "she's always running around hugging and kissing everybody between takes. She's real affectionate, isn't temperamental because she surrounds herself with friends, and pros. There's always David Crosby hanging out, and Henry Lewy getting skinny. Joni doesn't have to be 'demanding,' either, because she always knows exactly what she wants." Pause. "And she always gets it."

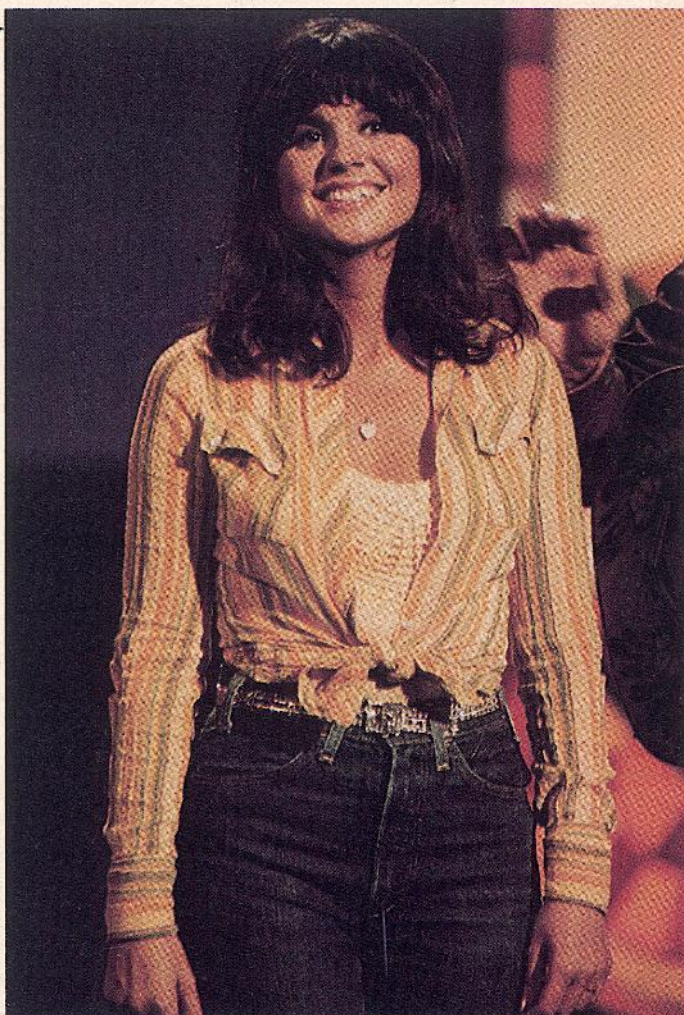
Contributing to this article were:  
Bruce Meyer (Chicago),  
and Stan Soacher (New York).

Mitchell chose Tom Scott and the LA Express for sideman accompaniment and inspiration, beginning with 1974's jazz-influenced "Court and Spark."



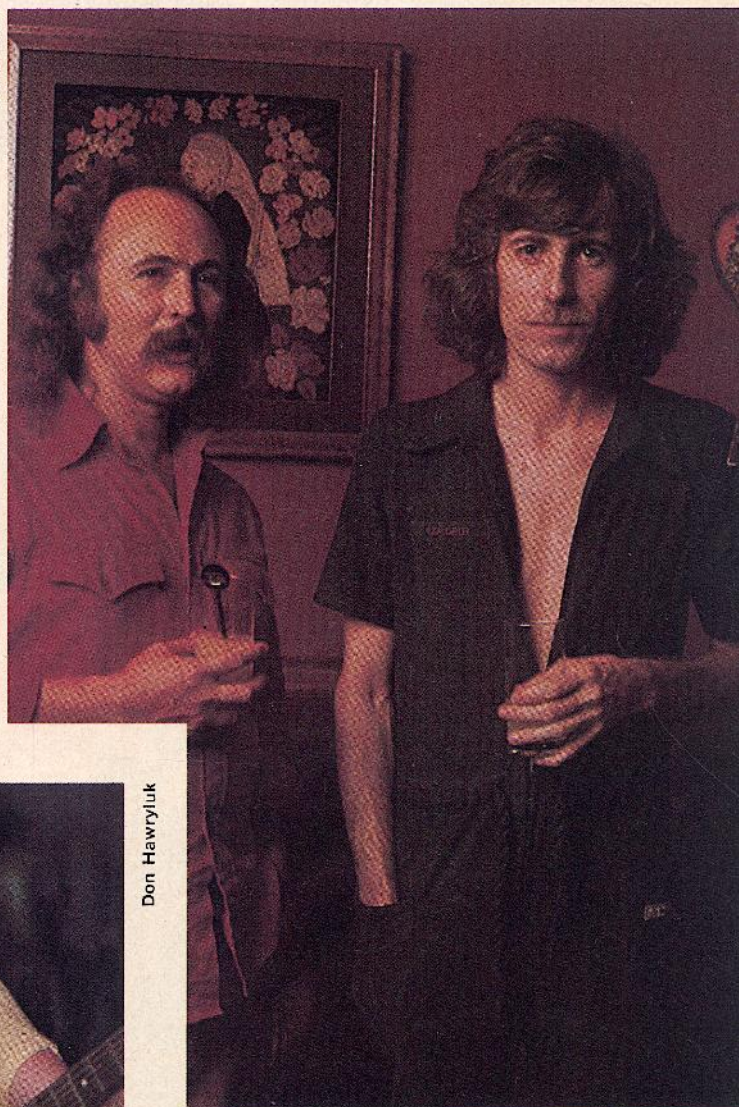


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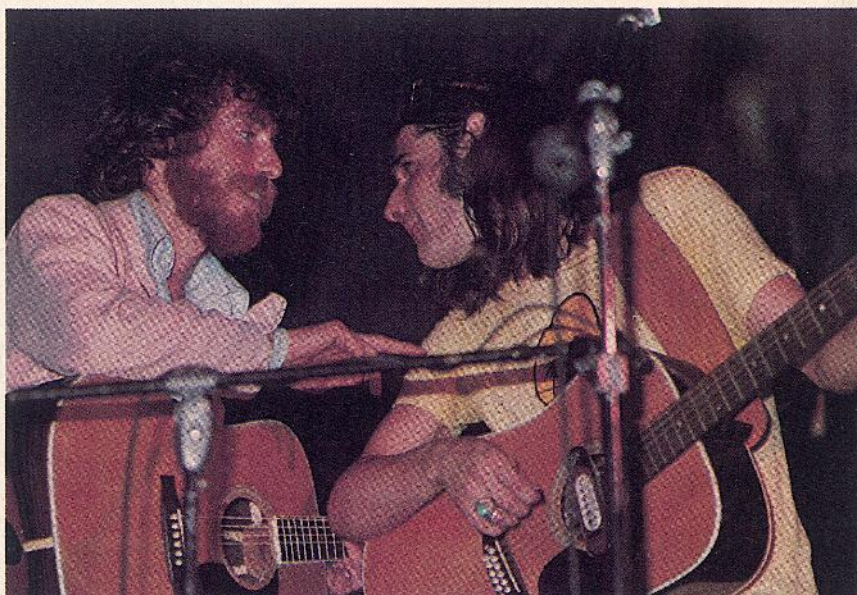


*The circle ever widens. California's gain was Arizona's loss when Linda Ronstadt moved from Tucson to Los Angeles, became a Stone Poney, an Eagle associate, and finally, a member of the David Geffen Asylum choir. Twice selected Female Singer of the Year by CIRCUS readers, Ronstadt has been known to sing a Jackson Browne song or two.*

Peter Mazel



Don Hawryluk



*David Crosby and Graham Nash (above). Crosby was in the original (1964) Byrds and teamed up with Nash and Stephen Stills in 1968. Their debut LP on Atlantic appeared in 1969, before they were joined by the freelancing Neil Young for their second, 'Deja Vu.'*

*John David Souther and the Eagles' Glenn Frey. Souther has collaborated with the Eagles ("Take It to the Limit") and written songs for Bonnie Raitt, Linda Ronstadt, the Souther-Hillman-Fury Band, and other LA friends.*



