

from insecticides to underwear, and bubblegum music and

The evidence was covered in yellow wrap

Surely there must have been a time at Little Big Horn when General Custer realized there would be no light at the end of the tunnel.

And a time somewhere over the Pacific Ocean when Amelia Earhart exclaimed, "I knew I should have stopped for gas."

These are the times of ultimate resignation. All hope is lost. Time to cash in your chips.

This is one of those times.

The evidence came this week in a yellow envelope that A&M Records paid \$2.73 to get from Terre Haute,



By TOM PRIDDY
of The Greenville News

Pop/rock

Ind., to Greenville. I thought I heard myself give out a tiny gasp as I read the title: "The Ethel Merman Disco Album."

For some reason it seems

cruel to continue... but let's get it over with.

Could this be a watershed album for disco music in America? Are we going to get more of this? Will it ever end?

If this is the way things are going to be, then I won't wait for "Lawrence Welk's Disco Favorites" to appear in my mailbox before I take my stand.

I give in.

Disco music will get no more cheap shots from me. No nasty little remarks thrown in parenthetically; no savage beatings with my typewriter keys. I won't kick an injured mule while he's having convulsions and I'll give disco the same consideration.

After Ethel Merman mangles her classic songs — like "There's No Business Like Show Business" — disco could go one of two ways. It could flourish, as everybody puts out a disco album and uses the profits to buy a new Mercedes; or it could perish as the public gets nauseated. Either way I don't want to have blood on my hands. I'm already guilty of simple assault, and I don't want it to escalate to manslaughter.

Three years ago industry observers were predicting the disco fad would last no more than two years. Those observers are now mail clerks at A&M's Terre Haute plant. A new wave of observers says now that this will be disco's last big year before it gives in to something new. Those observers are sending out resumes.

As for me, I'm going to let somebody else finish the fight.

Waiter! Check please!

Joni's experiment

If I were Charlie Mingus I'd love Joni Mitchell's new album, "Mingus" (Asylum).

But I'm not and I don't.

Mitchell's so-called collaboration with Mingus is a highly personal expression of tribute to the jazz great — like a private birthday greeting card, filled with recordings of his voice and of those he loved. But because of all those taped voices and dialogues it sounds more like a eulogy than a musical collaboration.

As a personal taped message it would have been a fantastic birthday present. The highest tribute one musician could give another. But as a record album, packaged and sold to the public... well, I don't know.

I'm uncomfortable reading other people's mail, and I'm uncomfortable listening to "Mingus." We're intruding into a private experience; eavesdropping on recorded voices that are not easily understood.

Ironically, Mingus himself was not able to personally receive Mitchell's gift. He died just a few months before the album's completion, and was not able to hear the total product, only the preliminary result of Mitchell's lyrics put to his tunes.

If Mitchell had chosen to concentrate only on adding words to Mingus' music or if she had attempted a more complete documentary the outcome might have been different. This way it succeeds as neither. There is not enough documentary to tell a story — you have to already know the Charlie Mingus story — and it's difficult to isolate the music from the dialogue to assess its merits alone.

The songs on "Mingus" continue in the direction of Mitchell's last album, "Don Juan's Reckless Daughter." She is experimenting more and more with different forms of jazz, some successfully, some not. As usual, a melodic bass line is an important ingredient of the moody, sensitive music.

It took weeks for "Don Juan" to sink in, and even when it did it was my least favorite Joni Mitchell album. "Mingus" now takes that distinction.

I gave "Mingus" a similar time period, just waiting for something to happen. Her music eschews the standard pop formula, so you have to allow it to affect you in other ways.

But it still doesn't work for me.

As long as Joni Mitchell continues in this vein I will admire her creativity and support her individuality — but I won't enjoy her albums. And I doubt if many but the hardcore — which I used to be — will, either.

This week's edition