

Once again the trans-Atlantic lines were busy as I talked with Ten Years After's drummer Ric Lee. Ric took a bit of time off from his extremely hectic American tour to tell me what it's all about.

"I think the reason why British groups, especially the blues-based ones, are so popular in America is the awareness of the people," Ric said. "Another possibility is the fact there are so many more people. In England, people tend to keep to the established scene — I mean the out and out pop scene, and they don't really look at the new things. This is possibly why so many progressive groups are labeled 'underground'. In the States, the people know all about you before you arrive at a gig. They go out and buy your LP's as soon as they're released."

Ten Years After return to England very soon from their third American tour and I asked Ric if he noticed any trend in pop music in the States.

"The main thing is that there are a lot more bands playing blues," Ric replied. "Last year for example, there was a big craze for psychedelic music and flower power. Now it's all down to the popularity of the blues."

Many people in this country have been very impressed by the work of Blood, Sweat and Tears. Had Ric come across them in the States?

"Yes," was the answer. "They are a cross between soul and jazz," Ric continued. "In fact they're better on record than they are live. We did a concert opposite them and really blew them off the stage — we stole the audience from them. One of the troubles is that Blood, Sweat and Tears don't have any dynamics on stage."

What were other differences between the States and England?

"The main thing is the method of travelling," Ric informed me. "In the States you go everywhere by air. Because gigs are so far from each other. Another thing is that the places you play in are much bigger than those in England — they're like aircraft hangers. You get about two thousand people in at the clubs."

"I think the pop scene in America is more stable than in England. Groups are still the big thing. You wouldn't find the kids going to see someone like Donald Peers for example. The groups are so big that someone of O. C. Smith's stature you might find playing a bar with hardly anyone there."

"There is also a big difference between ballrooms and auditoriums. We normally play the latter. Only the out and out pop groups play the ballrooms. However, the colleges cater for all the different scenes. For example, we did a gig at Sacramento University playing opposite Harpers Bizarre."

Quite a few things have happened to Ten Years After on their recent tour. For a start, they were protected by Hell's Angels in Minneapolis. That can't be bad. Another thing that happened was they were in Boston when the students just about took over the town. Evidently it got so bad that the National Guard were called in . . . happy times.

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