

records

Sheer Novelty

We continue to take our hat off to the enterprise and flexibility of the recording industry.

Novelty was never a substitute for substance or good performance, but the record-makers are still proving themselves media leaders in moving nimbly into new areas with new recording concepts.

For a few valid examples, consider some recent LPs that are making a bit of history:

**The Controversy** (Capitol KAO 2677) is a well-rounded examination of the storm over the death of John F. Kennedy and the Warren Report. Another excellent work in Capitol's "Probe" series, these tapes of the advocates and critics of the report plus nine eye-witnesses to the assassination are all fascinating listening.

**How to Avoid Probate!** (Philips 600-229) takes the essence of Norman F. Dacey's book, which has been hitting all the best-seller charts, and has the author spell it all out for the home listener. Most useful.

**Homosexuality in the American Male** (Capitol ST 2652). Another brave Lawrence Schiller "Probe" LP, this one going where most

documentarists would fear to tread. Courageous and provocative recording.

**Viva La Causa!** (Thunderbird Records, Box 1060, Delano, Calif., \$4.25). The songs and sounds pressed from the grapes of wrath, the grape-pickers strike that has aroused the compassion of the whole country.

**The Jazz Mass** (Columbia 2598) is still another of the bold fusions of traditional religion and innovative music. Rates favorably with previous excursions by Ellington and Paul Horn.

**Colors: Ken Nordine** (Philips 600-224) Curious, but often compelling little word and music essays on a new spectrum.



Kweskin and the Jug Band put kazoo sounds in your ear.

Those Good Old Days

"Winchester Cathedral" was destined to start some nostalgia for the music of the 1920s, and so it has. **Rudy Vallee** (Pickwick 3063) is one of the kings of that era, as these reissues of his "My Time Is Your Time" and the "Maine Stein Song" and seven other old hits will testify.

**The Best of Tommy Dorsey** and **The Best of Artie Shaw** (RCA Victor 3674 and 3675) are electronically reprocessed masters from yesterday by two master bands.

But it's not just resur-

rected hits of the past that are dwelling on old-timey sounds. Try these three LPs for a contemporary reconstruction of the light, joggy spirit between the wars:

**Goodtime Happening** (Epic 24240).

**The Eggplant That Ate Chicago: Dr. West's Medicine Show and Junk Band** (A Go Go 2217002).

**Jim Kweskin and The Jug Band** (Vanguard 79234).

What's Happening Now

Lest you fear, dear reader, that we are getting hung up on yesterdays or day-before-yesterdays, here's a brief checklist of some recent jazz, pop and rock releases that all merit your shopping dollars:

**Cannonball Adderley: Mercy, Mercy** (Capitol ST 2663).

**Cornbread: Father Tom Vaughn** (RCA Victor 3708).

**Donovan: Mellow Yellow** (Epic 2423).

**The Doors** (Elektra 74007).

**Love: Da Capo** (Elektra 74005).

**Guitar Freakout: The Ventures** (Dolton 2050).

**More of the Monkees** (Columbia 102).

**Face to Face: Kinks** (Reprise 6228).

**Buffalo Springfield** (Atco 33-200).

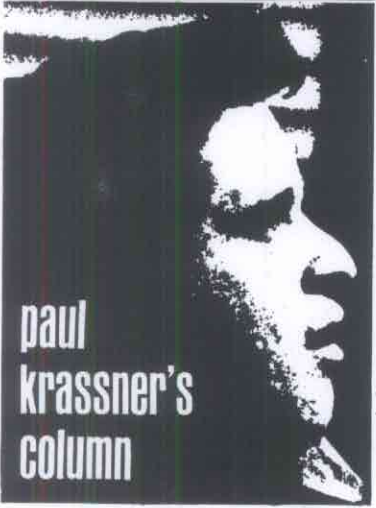
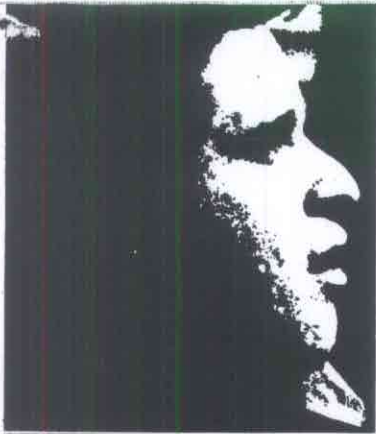
**The Siegel-Schwall Band** (Vanguard 9235).

Sound Principles?

Enoch Light is a knowledgeable, highly respected figure in recording. He has been developing a new line of LPs, Project 3, for some time now. It's a label that features "total sound" by recording on 35-mm magnetic film. The sound is indeed opulent, one of the best jobs of fidelity to come out of an LP. But there Mr. Light's sound principles flag. The first four LPs on the new label are of little interest to the sophisticated record-buyer. Perhaps one, The

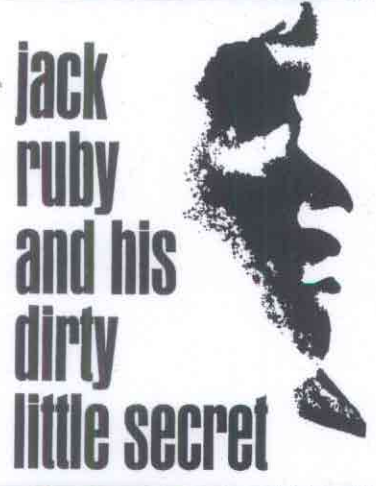
PROBE producer Lawrence Schiller (left) and writer of THE CONTROVERSY narration, Richard Lewis, on bridge overlooking the Dealey Plaza in Dallas.





paul  
krassner's  
column

20



jack  
ruby  
and his  
dirty  
little secret



Lenny Bruce once told me how all the night club comics used to gossip about Jack Ruby's "tattoo of a lady's *schmutzik* (translate: pussy) in his armpit." If it wasn't a fact, I'm quite willing to settle for an apocryphal allusion which nevertheless crystallized the entire personality of that alleged murderer who wanted so very much to be liked.

I say *alleged* because upon Ruby's own death, Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade said he would dismiss the murder charge against him, a promise which has since been kept, although no such posthumous grace was ever officially bestowed on Lee Harvey Oswald. See, they grant you retroactive innocence only in the face of innumerable witnesses who were present at the actual event through the miracle of inadvertent televised coverage.

Jack Leon Rubenstein was born in Chicago in 1911, the fourth of eight children. His father was a carpenter who basked in the remembered adventures of the time he was in the Russian Army — into which he had been drafted, and from which he had deserted. Jack, a scrapper, was his "little Cossack."

Brought up in the slums, the Rubenstein kids made their own toys out of old roller skates and discarded baby buggies; balls were fashioned out of hundreds of scavenged rubberbands. Jack and his sister Ev bought shopping bags for two and a half cents each and sold them for a dime.

The parents separated, and the court sent the children away to foster homes. Jack stayed on a farm for two unhappy years. Then his mother sent for the kids. At Chicago Stadium they'd ask people for extra tickets — the youngest boy, Earl, was dressed as a ragamuffin to elicit maximum sympathy — and then they'd sell the tickets at 100 percent profit.

While he was in his early twenties, Jack's mother had a breakdown and was committed for insanity to a hospital where she stayed for a year. At twenty-six, in San Francisco, he fell in love with a girl named Virginia but she was out of his class. She came from a wealthy family, and he was a newspaper subscription salesman helping to support his sister and her son. He chickened out and returned to Chicago. Alone.

His depression coincided with the nation's.

In Chicago, over lunch with an old friend, attorney Leon Cooke, he decided to organize a scrap iron and junk handlers union. Cooke's family had become rich from their junk yards and he felt the scrap handlers were getting rooked. They were making ten to fifteen cents an hour.

Labor columnist Victor Riesel wrote: "Ruby played it straight. He did not

have his hand out. He did not reach for a shake. He had no close connection with organized crime — at a time when the syndicate was deep in everything from food to movies."

The Warren Commission states: "There is no evidence that Ruby's union activities were connected with Chicago's criminal element. Several longtime members of the union reported that it had a good reputation when Ruby was affiliated with it and employers who negotiated with it have given no indication that it had criminal connections."

But within a few months after the union got started, Leon Cooke had an argument with its president, John Martin. The two of them were alone in the office. Shots were fired. Ruby insisted that Leon was shot in the back; Riesel reported that he "got it in the chest." Either way, he died less than a month later. Martin was freed in a local court on the grounds of self-defense.

Jack adopted Cooke's first name as his own middle name. That's where the Leon came from. He left the union, which proceeded to become corrupt. Almost two decades later, the AFL-CIO investigated it, put it under trusteeship and suspended the man who'd taken Ruby's place.

Ruby went into the illegal punchboard (take-a-chance) business, got drafted, became an Air Force mechanic, went into the manufacturing business (salt and pepper shakers) with his brother, managed a twelve-year-old Negro boy dancer named Sugar Daddy, and was finally persuaded by his sister Ev to come manage her night club in Dallas.

And we all know what happened *there*.

Part of it might never have happened if Jack had married Virginia in San Francisco or if Leon hadn't been killed in Chicago or if Sugar Daddy didn't have two mothers who both claimed his trust fund, but that's show business.

To his death, Ruby swore that he never knew Lee Harvey Oswald, that he wasn't employed by anyone to silence him, that no one helped him do it, nor knew that he was *going* to do it — including himself — and he also denied accusations of being or ever having been: a Communist, a fellow traveler, a Communist sympathizer, a member of any Communist or subversive organization, a member of the extreme right wing, a supporter of any extremist philosophy, a gangster, a racketeer, a hoodlum, an underworld character, a white slaver, a pimp, a homosexual, a sex deviate, a narcotics user.

In that order.

On the evening of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Jack Ruby received a telephone call from Little Linn, a stripper from Fort Worth who worked at his

club and didn't realize that he would be closed that night out of respect to the dead President.

On the morning of the scheduled transfer of Oswald from City Hall to the Dallas County Jail, Little Linn called Ruby again. She needed some money to help pay her rent. He promised to wire it to her.

Four minutes before he shot Lee Harvey Oswald to death, Jack Ruby was in the Western Union office. There was one person in line before him. He waited his turn and sent Little Linn \$25.

I have a photocopy of that telegram. The time stamp says 11:17 a.m. Oswald was supposed to have been moved at 10 o'clock.

But there was still a crowd at City Hall, a block-and-a-half away from the telegraph office. Ruby walked over there in order to satisfy his curiosity and he ended up giving birth to Mark Lane.

And now Jack Ruby is dead himself, a man whose greatest ambition in life was to be the sheriff of Dallas.

Lawrence Schiller — whose production company, Alskog Inc., has gone from photo-journalism to audio-journalism — was busy preparing a series of interviews for a long-playing documentary album about the assassination and its aftermath for Capitol Records. Two-and-a-half weeks before Ruby's death, Schiller placed tape equipment inside a briefcase and stayed in an automobile outside while Earl Ruby and Elmer Gertz, Jack's Chicago attorney, went into the hospital.

A guard, stationed twenty-four hours a day in Jack Ruby's room, stood only a few feet away, unaware that the conversation was being recorded. Earl, no longer the ragamuffin, spoke to Jack in Yiddish: "Talk into the — here, the device mechanical is in here, talk into the case."

And the dialogue began. It lasted for 14 minutes. On the record, the section with Jack Ruby is edited down to only 3 minutes and 55 seconds.

When Ruby died, Capitol Records pre-released the album that very day in a burst of exploitation. I happened to be in Los Angeles at the time and attended the press conference where Alan Livingston, president of Capitol, asserted that the original recording had been placed by him in a bank vault but would be available only to government officials upon request.

I stopped in Chicago on my way back to New York and spoke to Elmer Gertz. He couldn't understand why Livingston was being so mysterious. He admitted that he was surprised at the lack of security procedures in Dallas; he had been thoroughly searched many years before when he'd gone to Cook County jail for his infamous client, Nathan Leopold.

Eventually I was able to obtain a tran-

script of the entire interview. Rather than reveal evidence of any conspiracy, it only serves to strengthen the coincidental role that I believe Ruby played.

First, here is an excerpt from the edited record:

*Question:* Normally you carried the gun with you, didn't you, Jack?

*Answer:* Yes I did. I always carried a gun because of various altercations I had in my club. And I carried pretty large sums of money at times. The ironic part of this is that if I hadn't made an illegal turn behind the bus to the parking lot, had I gone [to Western Union] the way I was supposed to — straight down Main Street — I'd have never met this fate. Because the difference in meeting this fate was 30 seconds. One way or the other . . .

And now, from the original transcript:

*Question:* Normally you carried a gun with you, didn't you, Jack?

*Answer:* Yes, I did.

*Question:* There was nothing unusual you had with you that day?

*Answer:* No. I always carried a gun because of various altercations I had in my club then. I carried pretty large sums of money at times.

*Question:* You had your dog with you, Sheba?

*Answer:* Yes, I did.

*Question:* Will you tell about Sheba, Jack?

*Answer:* Well, I was fond of Sheba. She brought me a very large litter and I raised the litter by myself in my apartment, and I distributed the dogs to certain friends, but I kept Sheba and another dog called Clipper.

*Question:* She was with you that day?

*Answer:* Yes, I left her in the car. The ironic part of this is had not I made an illegal turn behind the bus to the parking lot, had I gone the way I was supposed to — straight down Main Street — I would have never met this fate because the difference in meeting this fate was 30 seconds one way or the other . . .

The record portion ends on the following anal note:

*Question:* Is there anything else you think that I ought to know, Jack? Are you uncomfortable?

*Answer:* My rectum is — I'm bedridden, you know.

*Question:* You got sores, huh?

*Answer:* It's not sores, it's the pain.

The original transcript continues on, however:

*Question:* Jack, when you left the Western Union office, what made you walk toward the jail house?

*Answer:* Because when I drove by I saw some people down at the ramp and the curiosity had aroused me because of the flash in my mind seeing the people there, before I went to Western Union as I drove by on Main Street.

*Question:* Is there anything else you can think of, Jack, anything else when you were walking by or going down there?

*Answer:* I don't know what to think . . . happened.

*Question:* Well, you are doing very well — just think a minute. Do you remember anything when you reached the bottom of the ramp?

*Answer:* Yeah, I did, like I said, a flash came to me from the point at the bottom of the ramp at the time that I was grappling with the police officers for the gun. Actually, what had happened I don't know at the time . . .

There's just one thing. Jack Ruby was once convinced that Lyndon Johnson was behind a plot to kill President Kennedy, according to a letter Ruby wrote while in his jail cell, one of half a dozen he'd written to a prison trusty, Thomas E. Miller, who is currently living in Dallas.

The letter — purchased from Charles Hamilton Autographs, Inc. by Dill Diehl, a columnist for the *St. Paul Dispatch* — was guaranteed as to accuracy and has been insured for over \$1,000. In it, Ruby claimed that President Johnson "found me as the perfect setup for a frame. Remember, the only one who had all to gain was Johnson himself. Figure that out."

Let us assume that this was merely the rambling of a madman.

A friend of mine, Bernard Gavzer — a feature writer for the Associated Press who has been on the scene — says that Ruby "was tormented by hallucinations in which he imagined that millions of American Jews were being slain in pogroms as punishment because he, a Jew, silenced the alleged killer of a president. Ruby could be rational on certain levels and wholly irrational on others. He might be watching a football game on television and something would touch him off — like a penalty. 'Worse is being done to the Jews,' he would say."

Nevertheless, one wishes that Elmer Gertz had seized upon the opportunity to ask what was meant by that bit of correspondence. At best, we would have been able to see how this victim of circumstances tried to confront the inconsistency of his persecutory delusions.

Now Jack Ruby's dirty little secret has been forever sealed away in his armpit by the hymen of history.

On the day after his death, an underground film called *Chafed Elbows* had its premiere. Producer Bob Downey recalled his suggestion to the ailing Texas Pavilion at the World's Fair two months before it died of starvation: Import Ruby to play checkers with the public from behind bars, at one dollar a head.

Jack would've enjoyed that. He liked people. □