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**Kottke &
Redbone**

Our shores were recently blessed with a tour by a most unusual and intriguing double billing — Leo Kottke and Leon Redbone — both masters in their own right.

The following interviews were conducted in a hotel house bar, amidst a relentless backdrop of whining vacuum cleaners and clanking dishes. The patience of the respective artists is to be admired. Redbone goes first:

You're accompanied by Jonathon Dornblum on tuba for the New Zealand tour. Are you still playing with a band in the States?

"No, I'm essentially a solo performer. I have played with banjo, trombone and tuba players at various gigs, but that's as close as I get to a band format. I play solo or with Jonathon."

Has there been any seminal influence on your guitar style, and how would you describe it?

"The guitar style is consistent with the music of the period. The major influences have been the black guitarists of the 20s — Blind Blake and Lonnie Johnson."

On the credits to *On The Track* you make special mention of Jelly Roll Morton and Jimmy Rodgers. Has their music been significant in shaping your ideas?

"I see Jelly Roll Morton as the top man from the beginning. He had the most marvellous ideas."

The country artists, such as Rodgers and Austin, gained a lot of inspiration from black jazz and from white minstrels with black faces. It all comes together."

You have a reputation as an interpreter and arranger of old tunes. When can we expect a Redbone original?

"I have no plans to write a song and record it. In the field that I am working, it would either be presumptuous, a money-making exploit, or that I had run out of tunes to record."

Much of your material comprises songs from obscurities, as well as legends of the past. Do you see your role as a chronicler of American music?

"No, that is not my approach. No crusades. I work within the



Leon Redbone



Leo Kottke

confines of acceptable interpretations, adding a few embellishments here and there.

I'm crazy about Latin music, especially the Tango. I love to tango. For inspiration I listen to the top-of-the-line tenors — Caruso, such a big voice."

Would you describe yourself as a romantic?

"I started off as a romantic, but I've become a cynic as well. If you remain a romantic, you become a drunkard."

How would you describe yourself?

"I'm not a musician. I think of a musician as someone who accompanies someone else. I'm an entertainer, prepared to throw in a few tablespoons of humour, where appropriate."

Redbone has nothing new recorded, describing himself as a professional procrastinator. He may well have found his niche on the small Emerald City label.

Leo Kottke's turn now:

Why so few vocals on your later work?

"I guess it comes down to confidence. I have found it difficult singing in the studio environment. However, you can expect a number of vocal tracks on the next album."

Your latest album, *Guitar Music*, seems to parallel your earlier work, being your first solo guitar record since then.

"I felt a need to re-define and reassess where I was going. All sorts of problems occurred in the recording of *Balance*, the previous

studio album. I was working with a rhythm section in a totally unarranged situation, something I intend to avoid on the next album."

Guitar Music is a reassessment. I'm not entirely happy with it."

Have you flexibility in your present contract with Chrysalis?

"I have complete freedom to record what I want to, irrespective of commercial considerations. At times they have been a bit disappointed, the *Burnt Lips* record being a case in point. On that album we strived to produce a recording using the old split technique stereo. It was a case of good intentions that didn't work out."

Which album are you most satisfied with?

"Surprisingly, one of my more obscure records, *Dreams And All That Stuff*, recorded in the late Capitol period. I particularly like the duet 'Mona Ray' I recorded with Mike Johnson. I don't have a record I could be totally enthusiastic about."

What avenues are open to solo guitar performers working in a

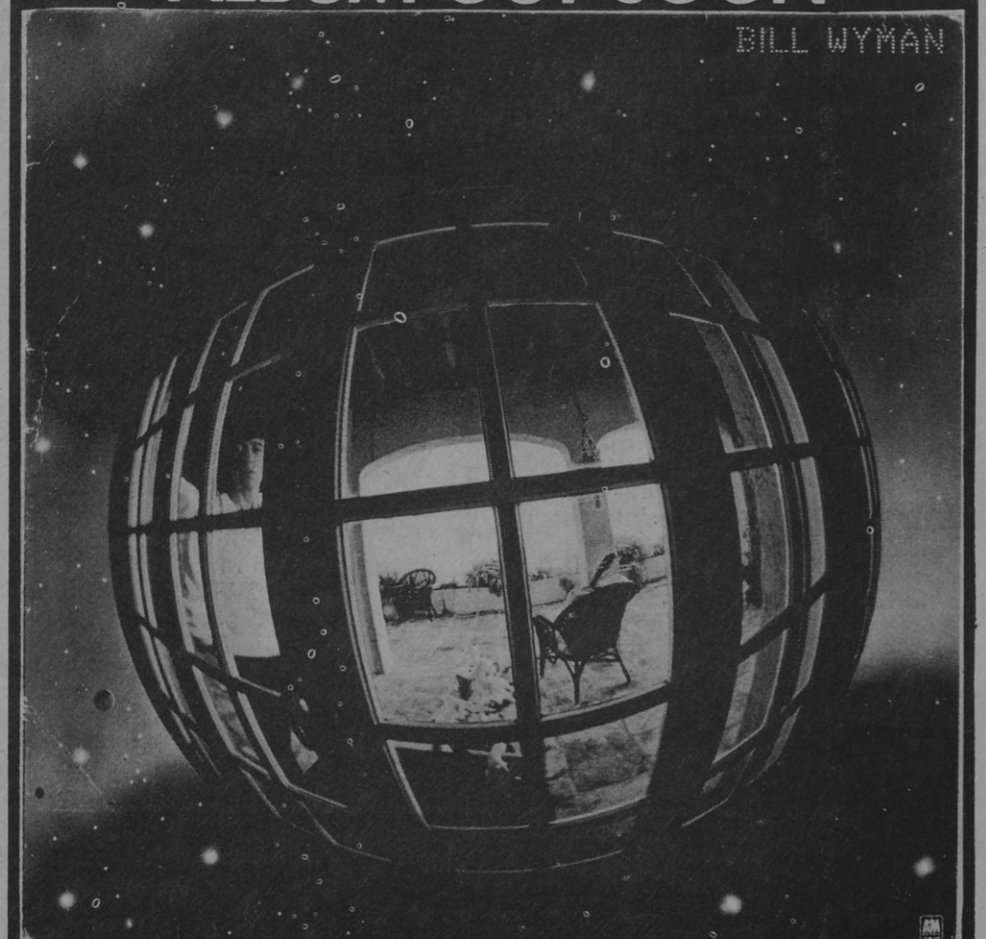
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