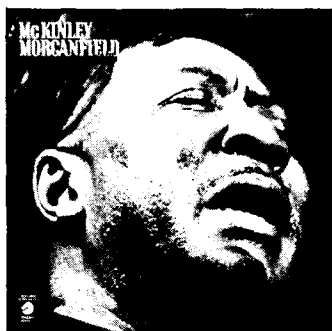




McKINLEY MORGANFIELD
A.K.A. MUDDY WATERS
 [Chess 2CH60006];
THE LONDON HOWLIN' WOLF
SESSIONS [Chess CH60008]



THE REFLECTION OF THE common consciousness in music is really amazing; you're left wondering whether it's art imitating life or the other way around. Look at what's taken place over the past decade or so:

There were the beatniks having their last days, and with them the last days of anything significant happening in jazz, the last days of jazz as a dynamic force, of new statements being made and of anyone listening beyond a small circle of faddist initiates. After which jazz became a living fossil, not unlike baroque music, practiced by small numbers of involuted and largely backward-looking fans.

Along came rock and roll—not neatly butted end-to-end with the previous era, of course, but full of energy that had been building in the 1950s with Elvis and Chuck, Bo Diddley and Jerry Lee Lewis, Ruth Brown and LaVern Baker and the Everly Brothers. Rock and roll came from the country, where it had sprung from the fertile soil of blues, and like blues before it rock and

roll migrated to the cities, from the rural South to the urban North, and there it was, reflecting a youth culture that had a hard time defining what it wanted but that knew that it did *not* want the official Americulture of *I Love Lucy*, chlorophyll dog hash and tailfin automobiles, of Vice President Nixon then President Lyndon Johnson. (Was there someone in between?)

The point of that rock and roll, other than being something to listen to and enjoy, was that kids used to groove on it together; it was a unifying force which they used, even unconsciously, to express their rejection of the foregoing values and to project, or at least to try to project, their dedication to the achievement of something new.

What it was, was the problem, and an answer came when rock and roll went to England, picked up some more of its old blues component (how strange to get that in England!), did a lot of dope, and came back to America as rock, as acid rock, and burst forth in glorious psychedelic array in the Haight, in the East Village, in what we have come to know as the youth ghettos but what were just a few years ago the bright communities of the flower children.

Peace.

Love.

Spare change?

Everybody knows what happened then, and as the hippies withdrew their energy from the cities and began building the ideal of the *rural* community, again the music changed with and helped to change the consciousness of the counterculture. Lennon and McCartney had wanted to turn us on, and did they ever succeed—but now we were back, even the magical mystery tour had ended and the real world was unchanged.

And the consciousness was withdrawn from the urban centers which are the foci of modern society. Our music took us instead to the Blue Canadian Rockies to find our Country Girl in Shady Grove after the Boonville Massacre. We would take her with us and live the Christian Life forever in (of course!) Woodstock eating Country Pie. Desolation Row goodbye!

Hare Krishna!

Ohio!

Didn't anybody know better? If the

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psychedelic wonderland had been a brief, beautiful dream, it had been at least an excellent learning experience for millions of people. (Sure, there were flunkouts and there were drop-outs. The former went to live in needle park, the latter in the plastic suburbs.)

THE COUNTRY DREAM IS FADED, country music is still moving ahead but its impetus is all momentum now, not fresh drive, and the countercultural consciousness is expressing itself increasingly in blues. Well, we should have known. That's where it all came from, and when the excressences drop away that's what remains, a rich, black, loamy, fecund bed of life.

Muddy Waters has been playing and singing blues for decades—he says that he switched from harmonica to guitar in 1932, heard the legendary Robert Johnson in person, crossed paths and worked with Son House. He is still active and, in my opinion, better than ever. For a man approaching sixty years of age, his energy level may be less than it once was, but his expression and technique are incredible.

The last time he travelled from his Chicago home to play in San Francisco I sat transfixed in a small club listening to him play guitar. What bowled me over was most of all the clarity of statement. There have been hundreds of lead guitar players in the past few years working in clubs and halls and releasing thousands of records, each with his strong point, whether speed, tone, attack . . . but none has matched Muddy Waters in speaking to his listeners with his guitar.

Chess Records has put together a double album of material recorded over a great many years. The earliest tracks on *McKinley Morganfield* date from 1948 through '51. Others are scattered from later years up to 1964. The sound quality varies greatly, and one can express gratitude that old 78 RPM singles have been remastered but *not* doctored to try to remove surface noise, simulate stereo or do other tricks.

Instrumentation varies from simple acoustic duets and trios through full electric bands, and Muddy sounds as accomplished and as comfortable in "live" concert tracks with full bands

as in studio sessions with tiny instrumentation.

The album is a landmark.

The London Sessions is a more unconventional but equally successful album. Howlin' Wolf and his steady sideman Hubert Sumlin in a studio with a dozen of the leading white blues-rock musicians in England: Clapton, Winwood, Wyman and Watts (and Jagger in a somewhat shadowy role), Ringo Starr, Klaus Voormann. . . .

The material is classic, five tracks of Howlin' Wolf's own songs, five more by Willie Dixon and just two more. On first listening, dazzled by names in the credits, there is a tendency to be a little disappointed. Hell, it's just a Howlin' Wolf album with some new sidemen.

But it's a *superb* Howlin' Wolf album that grows and grows on you with each successive playing. The inclusion of a little two-minute track of Wolf telling Sumlin and Clapton how he wants to do Dixon's "Red Rooster," and of Wyman and producer Norman Dayron joining in until it's worked out, sounds like a silly gimmick but instead works beautifully to project a feeling of the camaraderie.

Don't miss this. —DICK LUPOFF

SPORTS

by Jack Scott

THE DISILLUSIONED RETIREMENT from professional football by several veteran players last fall had the National Football League establishment uptight. Although NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle refrained from responding to Dave Meggyesy's charges that the game was dehumanizing and that racism and drug abuse were rampant throughout the league (Rozelle did not want a repeat of the Jim Bouton-Bowie Kuhn affair where baseball Commissioner Kuhn's criticism of Bouton made him a best-selling author), the late Vince Lombardi did comment on Meggyesy's accusations. Lombardi, revealing a dimension of his personality that seldom surfaced, seriously discussed the mount-

ing criticism of the game, and, although he was far from agreeing with Meggyesy, he did conclude that there might be a need for serious re-evaluation.

Rick Sortun, a teammate of Meggyesy's on the St. Louis Cardinals, and Chip Oliver, a linebacker from the Oakland Raiders, also quit last year for reasons similar to Meggyesy's. But it was Meggyesy and his condemnation of the game that received the most attention by sports writers and the national media. The long-haired, bearded Meggyesy, wearing his cowboy boots, jeans, and tie-dyed shirt, appeared at least once on nearly every national television interview show, turning up twice on the Dick Cavett Show in a few months.

Those people who actually read Meggyesy's book, *Out of Their League*, or listened to him on radio and television interviews discovered that he was an articulate individual who, besides discussing sensitively his own involvement in football, also offered a thoughtful analysis of the role professional football plays in American society. If he accomplished nothing else, Meggyesy dealt a severe blow to the image of the jock as a crew-cutted Neanderthal. Many straight football players seemed to enjoy hearing him run it down, and in spite of a diligent effort on the part of conservative sports writers throughout the country to uncover players who would publicly criticize him, very few players came forward with rebuttals.

When *Out of Their League* first came out, a "friendly" journalist told Meggyesy he thought it was the best book on sports that he'd ever read, but warned that sports writers and the sports establishment would attempt to label him a radical, thus minimizing the impact the book would have on the sports world. Much to the writer's consternation, Meggyesy, who had been active in the movement for years, told him they would have no trouble labeling him a radical for he *was* one and had no intention of denying it.

Not surprisingly, the media had a field day with the book and the author. A small minority of writers such as Pete Axthelm of *Newsweek*, Murray Kempton, Bob Lipsyte of the *New York Times*, and Dave Burgin of the *Washington Evening Star* seriously ex-

amined Meggyesy's ideas. But to the vast majority of writers and commentators Meggyesy was nothing more than a football drop-out, who had helped the game by leaving it. For these writers and their millions of middle-American readers, Meggyesy created no dissonance within their own personal value structure. The only reason most of these people got upset over the Meggyesy affair was because—as Spiro Agnew pointed out in a recent article he did for *Sports Illustrated*—a quitter got so damn much publicity.

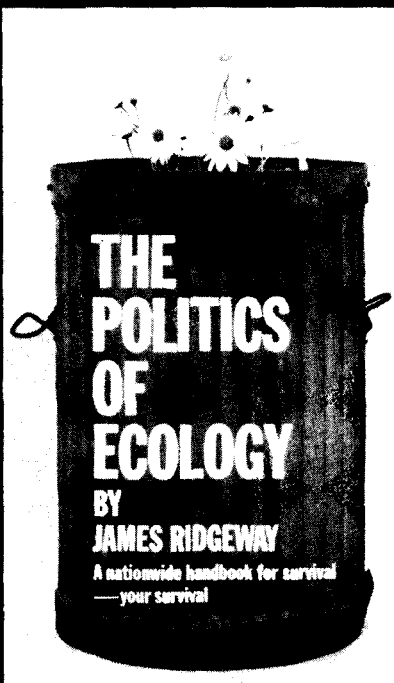
In the media, especially television, the form usually dominates the content, and in Meggyesy's case his form (personal appearance and attitude) often militated against what he was saying. To be sure, Meggyesy did an invaluable service by getting the word out about what professional football was really like, but, except for those who basically agreed with him in the first place, most sports fans simply dismissed Meggyesy as a freak occurrence—a person who was obviously not cut out for the world of sports. If they were surprised at all, it was only because a dope-smoking radical should

have been able to play so well. But they did not have to re-evaluate their attitude toward athletics because of *Out of Their League*. (On the other hand, many straight athletes, because of their respect for Meggyesy's athletic accomplishments, listened to what he said. As a result, he has had a significant impact on many high school and college athletes.)

THIS PAST SPRING, just as the uproar over the Meggyesy affair was dying out, George Sauer, Jr., the New York Jets' All-Pro wide receiver, announced his retirement from professional football for reasons that were in many respects identical to Meggyesy's, but different enough to make the average fan sit up and take note, if only the event had received more news coverage. The fundamental difference between Meggyesy's criticism and Sauer's was that Sauer still saw some worth in playing football—assuming the game was reformed—whereas Meggyesy was not so sure. Sauer was a legitimate super-star in professional football. He still holds the Super Bowl game record for most pass

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John Leonard, *New York Times*



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