

ROCK NEWS & NOTES

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Collaboration with Hubbard led Winter to 'Earth'



Initially labeled a blues-rock singer, Edgar Winter went on to record popular hard-rock albums like "Frankenstein,"

"They Only Come Out at Night" and "Shock Treatment" during the 1970s.

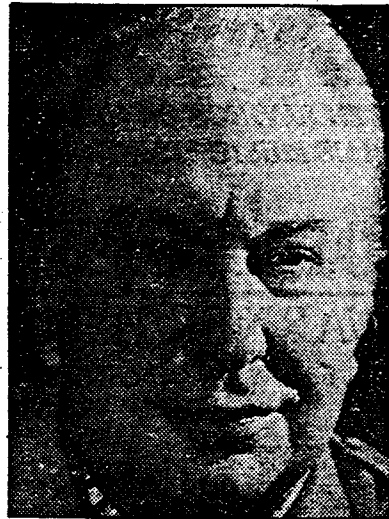
Winter has been out of the spotlight lately, but he has kept busy touring with former Doobie Brothers singer Michael McDonald as well as singer-songwriter Leon Russell. He also performed on David Lee Roth's rendition of Winter's 1974 hit "Easy Street."

Recently Winter returned to the recording studio to record an album titled "Mission Earth." His collaborator on the Rhino Records album is none other than author and Scientology mastermind the late L. Ron Hubbard.

"Mission Earth" is actually a 10-book social satire that provides an alien's-eye view of planet Earth. Winter said the album is both a return to his rock and experimental roots.

"I was sort of a pioneer in the synthesizer field, and (synthesizers) tied in perfectly with the futuristic theme," the singer explained. "The project really interested me."

Plans for the album were first drawn up in 1985, when Hubbard, an old fan of Winter's music, approached the singer with



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the idea for the album. Intrigued, Winter read unedited drafts of the "Mission Earth" series. The singer was so impressed, he agreed to collaborate with Hubbard.

Hubbard began sending cassettes to Winter containing skeletal melodies played on synthesizers. Winter would then return the revised music and lyrics to Hubbard for his approval. The two never met throughout the recording of the album.

"When I agreed to do the



project, I had hoped we would meet," Winter admitted. "But there was no real necessity in our meeting. The cassettes Ron sent me were really detailed, and, in some ways, I think it was better accomplished this way. Had he been there looking over my shoulder, I might not have had the freedom to fully inject my input."

Hubbard died in January 1986.

Winter, who said he wrote about 75 percent of the music

and 25 percent of the lyrics, said his goal was to make the album as accessible as possible.

"I tried to make the album in such a way that there was a wide variety of stuff," Winter said. "That way the album would stand on its own without people never having to read any of the books."

Promoting Harry: Readers may recall the classic "Saturday Night Live" skit in which Dan Aykroyd, imitating a television snake-oil salesman, hawked a

foam that was both a dessert topping and floor wax.

Pity Columbia Records marketing executives, faced with a similar dilemma over Harry Connick Jr., a dashing handsome, 21 year-old pianist and singer who has caused quite a stir in jazz circles. Connick is featured on the soundtrack to Rob Reiner's forthcoming romantic comedy, "When Harry Met Sally . . ." starring Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan.

Columbia Records has high hopes for the soundtrack, which features Connick performing jazzy 1940s standards like "Stompin' at the Savoy," "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "It Had to Be You." But there is confusion as to how best to promote the album. Would the company be better-served by hyping the disc to jazz purists, or should they target their efforts toward the pop crowd?

Having a hit with a classic pop album isn't really a far-fetched notion, especially when the album features a young Adonis. The 1987 film "Good Morning, Vietnam" resulted in a hit single for the late Louie Armstrong, "What a Wonderful World."

Though Columbia Records vice president of creative development Bobby Colomby said Armstrong's hit was a fluke, he and his comrades at Columbia still have high hopes for Connick's soundtrack.

"The job we have here is to try and make Harry visible, so that the retailer and customer have an opportunity to judge," Colomby said. "I don't believe young people are as limited as most people