

Shake It Up Baby!

going on. At the time, things around were very political. It's not that I was trying to be political – but that was what people were talking about and that's what the songs were about. It turned me off when people labelled me a protest singer. As a matter of fact I thought there were very human things which people could relate to regardless of how they felt politically – I had a feller from the Young Conservatives Party (sic) come up to me after a show (this was one of the nicest compliments I ever got) – he said 'I really wish you were on our side.' I said 'I am, I am!' He didn't understand. He missed the whole show!"

These USA interviews were all done using a cassette recorder, which I'd never bothered with in the UK. Back home it was churn-'em-out and forget 'em, and besides, my note-taking ability and memory, despite periodic assaults on my brain cells, were still good. But Peter bought a Panasonic cassette recorder in New York for the interviewing, citing "authenticity", and I concurred. It was certainly better at catching speech verbatim, but it was tedious transcribing the tapes: it took longer to transcribe the interview than ever it took to write the article. We were also lugging around a fancy Valentine design-winning portable typewriter, so together with the vast amount of free LPs being accumulated, we were toting a considerable stack of gear, especially cumbersome as we were continually moving in and out of this and that apartment, in and out of various Y's – including, in our naivety, the notoriously gay Central Park YMCA, a real eye-opener for me when I went to take a shower one evening.

We caught dozens of gigs: the reorganised Isley Brothers at the Bitter End with Ernie Isley on biting guitar sounding like their old friend Hendrix. They were dynamite, but the blacks in the audience booed their version of Neil Young's "Ohio", and myself, I didn't much care for their "Lay Lady Lay". Nearby at the Village Gate we saw the great LaBelle, and Jimmy & Vella – both WB promo gigs; Rod Stewart and the Faces triumphed at Madison Square Gardens where the audience threw fireworks – mainly bangers – in the air which was kind of worrying; Loudon Wainwright III, Hamilton Camp, both terrific at Max's Kansas City; Slade at the NY Academy

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