

# Getting stranger all the time

bhbs byline

Over the past eight months I have submitted to my fearless editor articles that have dealt with my infatuation with a certain female piano player and my personal views on the value of certain types of music. These articles have included newly created works, and have been verbose, rambling, illegible and biased. However, this week's column may set new standards in strangeness. The job of music critic on this paper is primarily designed to provide weekly commentary on recent albums and concerts. This time I will break convention and review an album very few people have heard. It is thirteen years old and was so far ahead of its time that only now is it truly appreciated.

The album is "The Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus", and the group that created this masterwork is Spirit. You may well ask who are

(were) these guys? In 1968 drummer Ed Cassidy, guitarist Randy California, keyboardist John Locke, bassist Mark Andes and vocalist Jay Ferguson decided to place on vinyl their own concept of music, a form we presently call jazz/rock. When released, the album bombed abysmally, and the record languished in the discount bins of many a record store. The reason for such a failure was in part due to the revolutionary music of the group, and in part due to the poor packaging with which the record company blessed the album. But before you rush out and gobble up all the available copies, some comments on the musical contents.

Although very few albums made in the late sixties stand up today, this record does, primarily because of the production of David Briggs. Many devices which are commonplace today were pioneered by Briggs, and indeed the success

of the album lies in the genius of the group and the producer combined. Two particularly fine tunes are "Natures Way" and "Life has Just Begun". Predating the Eagles, the group gives us a taste of acoustic guitar work blended with solid harmonies. Fans of the Steve Miller Band will be delighted to hear some synthesizer licks on "Love Has Found A Way" very similar to those found on "Book of Dreams." "Animal Zoo" may seem a trifle dated, but the humorous method of presentation more than compensates for the inherent tastlessness. Perhaps one of the major achievements of the album was the synthesis of horns and conventional rock instrumentation. Although the Beatles often incorporated a horn section, Spirit is the first group that allows the horns to solo in a jazz

style, paving the way for groups such as Chicago, Blood Sweat & Tears and The Electric Flag. The instrumental track, "Space Child" is a very strong song, as it weaves in and out of rock configurations it finally settles unexpectedly in a jazz waltz.

Listening to the album you can see clearly how it has influenced groups as wide ranging as Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Eagles, Chicago. In reality it must be placed up on the level of Sgt. Peppers as one of the most influential albums of the late sixties.

I advise anyone to go down to Sam's with \$4.99 and invest in "The Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus". It truly will change the way you listen to current albums. p.s. Just as an afterthought this seems to be my last column of the year (Thank God) and even though it is miserably March outside, I wish you all a good summer.

Coal Miners Daughter  
-Bernard Schwartz, Producer.  
Michael Apted, Director.

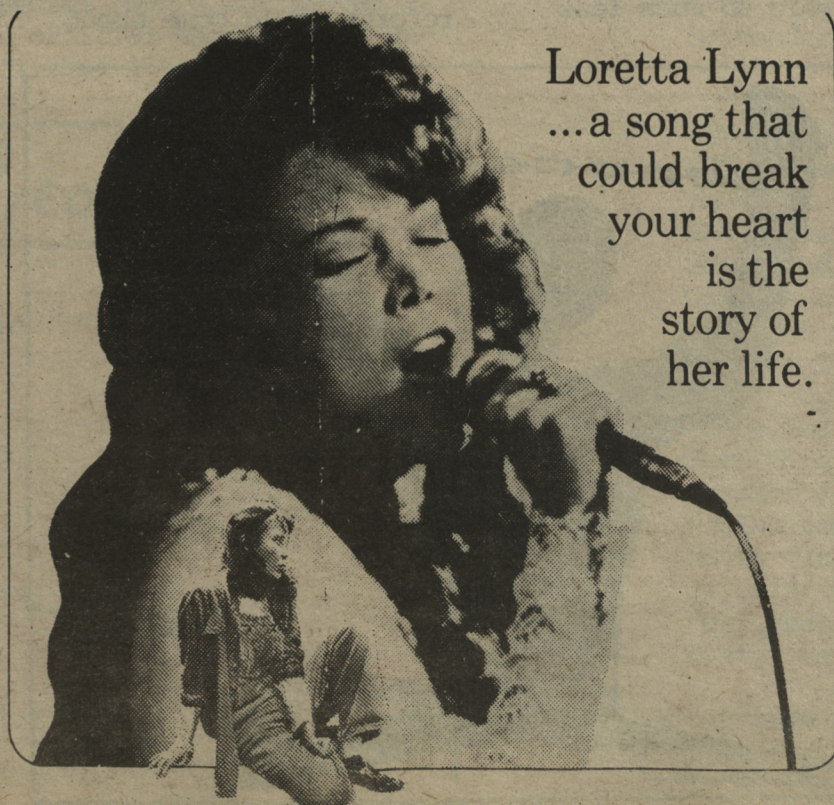
The screenplay for Coal Miners Daughter was written by Tom Richman based on the autobiography of country and western songstress, Loretta Lynn. The story follows Lynn (Sissy Spacek) from her backwood Kentucky birthplace through her marriage to her pushy agent husband, (Tommy Lee Jones), and through country music stardom.

As the oldest of eight children, Loretta is the pride and joy of her hard-working, poor, but loving daddy Ted Webb, ably played by Levon Helm. He feels robbed (and rightly so) when his little girl, aged 13, marries a young man just back from WW2. After some early differences in their marriage, which never do completely vanish. They move to Washington. With four children of her own at the age of 20, we have to agree with Loretta that life is moving too fast for her (or more appropriately, her husband).

Mooney Lynn, her husband, decides he likes the way Loretta sings so he buys her a guitar for their anniversary. Although she's much rather a



wedding ring she keeps the guitar and practices day and night. Mooney persuades her to perform in the honky tonks around home until he decides it's time for her to make a record. She does and they drive around the country promoting it. Loretta makes it to number 14 nationwide with that record and even gets to perform at the Grand Ole Opry. She becomes acquainted with Patsy Cline (Beverly D'Angelo) and they begin to tour together. Now that Loretta has made it big Mooney must cope with the fact that he is merely a tax deduction. However, Loretta has been living in the fast lane too long and it takes its toll on her as well.



Loretta Lynn  
...a song that  
could break  
your heart  
is the  
story of  
her life.

The first half of the film is interesting watching Loretta one minute arguing with her little brothers and the next getting married and having a baby of her own. Once she finally makes it big, however, it seems we follow her through every concert she ever did.

The movie should get full marks for the authenticity of time and style recreation. Also noteworthy was the fact that all songs were actually performed by Sissy Spacek and Beverly D'Angelo. Although Coal Miners Daughter has a general appeal for almost everyone it is truly a country and western fans delight.