

SHOWCASE

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Ex-Hoople Hunter won't play what insults him

"Whatever happened to integrity?" - from "You Nearly Did Me In," a song on Ian Hunter's 1976 album *All American Alien Boy*.

By KARLA TIPTON
Assistant Showcase Editor

During his 20-year career in rock, Ian Hunter has been known to suddenly walk away from situations he didn't like.

In 1975, he walked away from Mott the Hoople, the English glitter-rock band with whom he first made his mark with the classic rock songs, "All the Way from Memphis" and "All the Young Dudes."

And more recently, he walked

Rock

away from CBS Records - not only a major record company, but one he had been with for more than a decade - because he didn't like the way they promoted his 1983 LP, *All of the Good Ones are Taken*. Which, according to Hunter, was not at all.

"I thought they made a terrible mess of that," he said in a phone interview from Toronto, where he was rehearsing with fellow guitarist Mick Ronson in anticipation of a nine-week tour which brings them tonight to the Palace (1735 North Vine St.,

Hollywood, (213) 462-3000). "CBS asked me to do another one immediately after *All the Good Ones* and I thought, 'Well, there's really not much point.'"

Hunter's reasoning - in this instance as well as others - was simple: "I walked away from a lot of stuff because it just offended my intelligence. I just thought it was stupid. This isn't what I wanted."

"I don't look at music from the point of view of 16 magazine," he said emphatically. "I look at it from the point of getting better."

His decision to take to the road now - with nine new songs in a set of 16 - came just shortly

after hooking up again with guitarist/producer Mick Ronson, perhaps best known for playing guitar on David Bowie's classic album, *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.

The two have been musically associated since Ronson joined Mott the Hoople just months before Hunter decided to leave. Ronson also left when the lead singer departed the band, and since then, the two guitarists have worked together both on vinyl and on the road. The last time was seven years ago.

Besides tonight's Palace show, the Hunter-Ronson Band will be performing in Southern California for the next week, including dates at the Terrace Theatre in Ventura (Oct. 9), Bogart's in Long Beach (Oct. 10), the Coach House in San Juan Capistrano (Oct. 11 and 13) and the Bacchanal in San Diego (Oct. 12).

The decision to reform the Hunter-Ronson Band occurred as recently as this summer. And even then, nothing was certain.

"When we worked together in July, the first two or three nights, it just wasn't there," said Hunter. "It just sounded like a group. But then the X-factor sort of kicked in about the fourth night, much to our relief."

"It just feels great."

According to Hunter, it feels so great, the band may follow up the U.S. tour with a European one, then an album.

On the tour - apart from new numbers which include "American Music," (possibly Hunter's next single) and the autobiographical "The Loner" - the band will probably be performing some material from Hunter's solo albums, which include *Ian Hunter*, *All American Alien Boy*, *You're Never Alone with a Schizophrenic* and *Short Back n' Sides*.

With the exception of Ronson, the band is composed of Pat Kilbride (bass), Sean Eisenberg (drums) and Howard Helm (keyboards) whom Hunter discovered while working in Canada. He had gone to Ontario "to learn more about how to sing" from vocalist Roy Young, "who has an amazing voice," Hunter said.

Besides taking voice lessons, he was far from idle during his sabbatical from recording.

After he decided to leave CBS, Hunter bided his time waiting

for the limitations clause in his contract to run out by building a 16-track studio in the country. (He's a New York resident.) While ignoring the record company's request for demos, he began to educate himself in studio techniques.

"I had produced records," he said. "But I never really knew the nature of sound - how you got it, what you did, all the intricate little things that go on in studios."

"I was a couple of years finding that all out."

Hunter also needed some time



IAN HUNTER

to get over a writer's block, which lasted from about 1981-86 "when I kind of went silly."

Generally an autobiographical songwriter, Hunter once suggested that half his writing possibilities were gone because he was happily married (to his wife, Trudy, for 17 years to date). When he moved out to the country, the rest of his subject matter dried up as well. He had to move back to the city before "I started writing properly again."

"It seems as if I have to be surrounded by urban filth before I can produce anything," he said. "It's in the lap of the gods, writing songs."

As to plans for a Mott the Hoople reunion, Hunter stressed, "No, no, no, no - not for me, anyway."

"Now, here, right now, I'm setting up something that's infinitely better."