

TWIN BILL: ALESSI IS MORE

WEST HEMPSTEAD, N.Y.— Packs of lean kids skateboard in tight formation along the Hempstead Turnpike, their salamander green boards jumping the curb outside the movie theater with the great triple feature (*Killer Elite*, *Death Collector* and *The Violent Professionals*). The traffic grinds along in a steady grey line past the car lots and shopping centers that litter this part of Long Island. This is a Battle-of-the-Bands turf. Teenagers with sculpted hair charge around the Island playing rock 'n roll, buying new amps, building local fame. One of the best was Barnaby Bye. They even leaked down the east coast with a couple of Atlantic lps. The band was led by two identical teen-dreams—the Alessi brothers.

Twins. On their A&M album cover the jagged/handsome faces seem like different moods of the same person, time lapse. Or as if some record exec had decided that one Alessi wasn't enough and cloned another—there *must* be harmony. At home, in their mad scientist studio/basement, personalities slip into place, nuances become important. Bobby Alessi takes control of the interview. Billy adds bits, dropping in overlooked points. The two have come from tennis, tanned in second-skin T-shirts and Adidas. "We live in Marina Del Rey in California now," Bobby smiles brightly. He points to his "I'd Rather Be Sailing" shirt and says, "It's beautiful out there. We take a bunch of friends sailing in our boat to Catalina Island. Camp out overnight, play music." Billy steps in: "But A&M also gave us this free studio time—at 9:00 in the morning—and if we want to record we can be there."

They woke early a lot of



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mornings. Thirty songs were written and recorded for the debut lp, *Alessi*. Only ten were needed, but the brothers love the studio; they are technicians, self-made engineers. Their basement is a jungle of new equipment: mini-moogs, tape machines, two organs. Pictures of the brothers in the Broadway cast of *Hair* and of Bobby's ex-girlfriend are stuck to the

walls. A barber chair sits near the board. The Alessis move around this place like bats in a cave. Each plug, every loop of tape is familiar. Bobby glances around the studio and says, "I miss this place. We built it 'cause we write on tape. We put all our ideas, everything down in the studio and they never disappear. You can always go back and work with something. We

Photograph by Moshe Brahm

need access to a studio. Which is why A&M agreed to give us time if we moved out there." Bobby smiles again. "They got their money's worth."

The *Alessi* lp was a tribute to melody. The brothers' voices blended in satisfying eclairs of sound. Billy's synthesizer disappeared into Bobby's creamy vocals on "Too Long to Forget." "Seabird," clean and soft as a late afternoon, was a moving off-tempo ballad. A professional, evocative debut. The Alessis' raw studio talent was shaped by veteran producer Bones Howe. Billy says, "Little things, tricks we had picked up down here, we brought to the 24-track. We knew things we had picked up down here, we brought to the 24-track. We knew things that would work with our voices, and we tried them all. Bones controlled and helped choose what worked best."

The richness of the album, with its shifting vocal layers, is all the more impressive considering the Alessis possess one good set of ears between them. "That's right," Billy nods. "We're about 85% deaf in one ear. When we're mixing in the studio we sit with our good ears on the outside and when we sing we keep them inside, close to each other."

Alessi, sleek and soulful, almost shipped without them on the cover at all. "Kip Cohen [A&M] didn't wanna turn off the progressive stations," Bobby laughs. "We didn't wanna come off like two David Cassidys." Talent will prevent that. As songwriters already covered by solid-gold Frankie Vallie, an creators of a lush album in the finest Beach Boy tradition, the Alessis can afford to flash fave smiles. This spring they'll take their bouncy harmonies on the road . . . the crowds will follow.

Besides they always have each other. "We live together, practically spend every day together," Bobby explains. Billy laughs and pushes his twin. "I guess it's almost like being married."

—Mitch Glazer

SIDESTREETS

The difficulties of "The Last Waltz." While Bill Graham crated his turkeys, *The Band* was figuring out ways to complete their Capitol commitment. The contract called for one last album, the group didn't want it to be the precious star-studded *Last Waltz*, so they rushed their studio lp to completion. Or so they said. Actually they snuck into Shangri-La and Village Recorder studios after the final concert and finished the Last Capitol Album. In the works for the boys is an lp with friends *Bob Dylan* and *Neil Diamond* sitting in . . . Another Malibu Man, *Neil Young*, has signed with super-agent Sue Mengers. She will handle his hoped-for movie career . . . *Jackson Browne* to appear on NET's "Soundstage," as will violinists *Itzak Perleman*, *Jean-Luc Ponty* . . . *Bob Dylan* is reportedly interested in writing the soundtrack for "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" to be shot next fall . . . A 40-foot pink pig floated over London's Heathrow airport grounding planes recently. The pig was a prop used on the new *Pink Floyd* lp and had escaped from a nearby roof . . . *Marilyn Chambers* has cut a single "Little Flower" b/w "You Can Do What You Want with Me" for Roulette Records . . . A live *Beatles* lp is now a possibility. A tape made on New Year's Eve 1962 at the infamous Hamburg Star Club has surfaced in New York. It includes the earliest known "I Saw Her Standing There," a Little Anthony tune and 26 other classics; among them one sung with a waiter named Horst. . . .