



**GRONDO
JOHN**

Brian Finch, left, and
Kenny Henson . . .
working against the
pace set by Trevor
Rabin's Rabbitt
development.

Please save us from fantasies

THIS'LL stir it up. After several months I've decided to take the time to review the Brian Finch-Kenny Henson debut album, "Playgrounds in Paradise". Don't ask me why, it's the biggest exercise in self-indulgence I've ever heard from a local studio.

In the autumn of their flower-child years, Henson and Finch seem to be working against the pace set by Trevor Rabin's Rabbitt development.

And the major drawback with this album is that these two very experienced club artists should-never have been allowed into the control room of Satbel's main studio. I have rarely heard such abuse of echo, phasing and electronic effects — resulting in a sound that consistently appears to be strained through a long, steel tube.

Name of music

Please save us from adolescent fantasies in the name of music. Probably the thought that they were working on the very desk, in the very studio, that Rabin virtually produced his Rabbitt breakthrough, coloured this debut with ego-combat.

One song all but says it. In "Some People", Finch drops in a highly ambivalent challenge. Following the opening lines whimpering: "Some people have got a lot/ But they don't want to share . . .", he is poised for the

sideswipe. The chorus opens: "But you're like some rabbit running/ When you see me coming down the hall/ It don't matter anyway/ I'll catch up to you one day my friend".

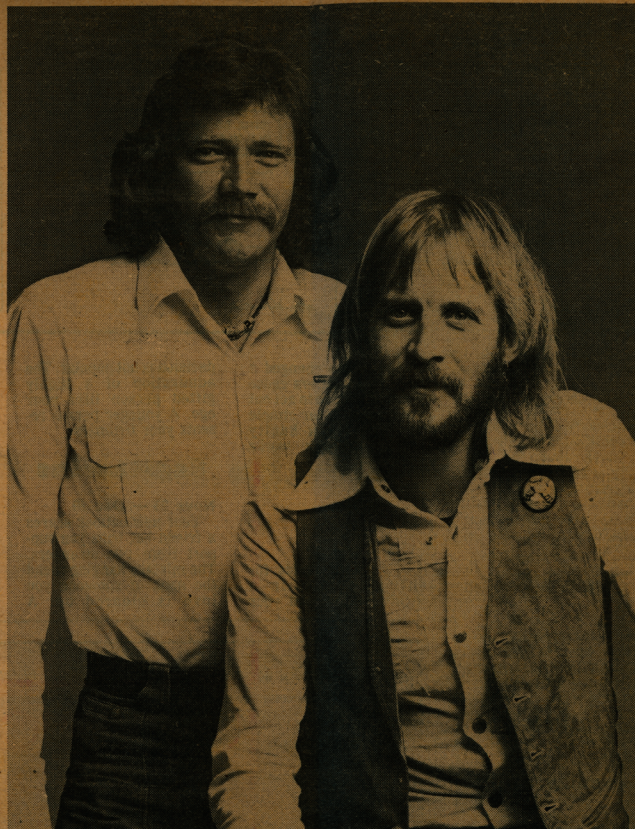
Now that Trevor has left, they have a chance. But even Patric van Blerk's gaudy and musically-inarticulate production is a strong edge over this hype. Rabbits only run, incidentally, when you think you're chasing them. If the insult is not calculated, the verb is "hop".

Sense of lyrics

One thing van Blerk does have is a sense of lyrics, the throwaway words on Laxton's "All I Need" excepted. On Finch's 1974 "Good Times" album, I thought he was the most promising writer we had: on this LP, his writing and delivery is contrived and clumsy.

Upront, his constant references to blue skies, horizons, fairy glens and rainbows are sugary, outdated and — with the social commentary available in this country — unreal.

It is 1977. And this album is about as far from any form of contemporary rock as possible. It is in fact folk music dressed in roxy denims. Folk followed Dylan, McGuinn and Stills-Young into country when American youth dropped peace for the ghosts of their identity 10 years ago.



This material proves the point. The best vocal arrangement is of country-singer Charlie Daniels's "Long Haired Country Boy" — a simple, funny dope song which bursts like a belly-laugh through the simpering original compositions.

With my head in a paper bag, I give you "Plans for Tomorrow": "I can feel a touch of love/ In the early morning air/ Summer's here again, swallows everywhere". Stroll on.

And the less said about Henson's instrumental performance on this recording session, the better. He can play most guitars with expertise, right, but his style is not of this decade. And his arrogance is unbelievable in "The Plainsmen", where the ugly sound balance drowns Finch's drainpipe vocal in clumping, howling guitars.

But finally, and ironically, I can only guess that the reason this album survived is because of that fine engineer, Greg Cutler. The Rabbitt engineer.