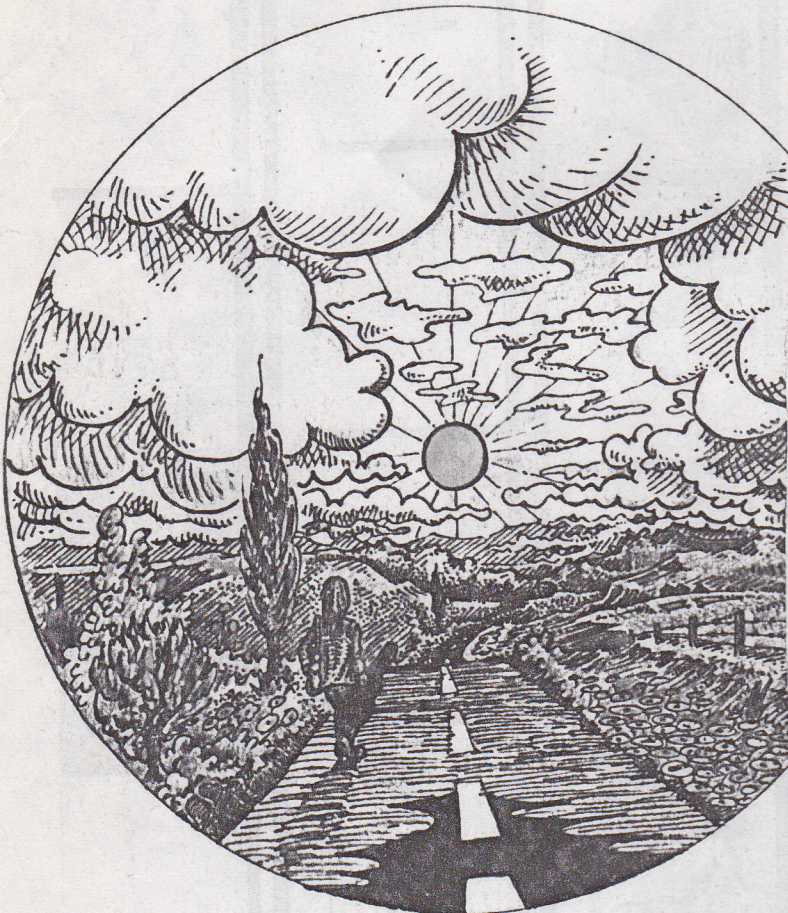


Edging round the whiplash



IF YOU'VE got ideas for South African white youth you better open a boutique or a disco, produce a picture book story, a gun movie, or an album.

From radio and consumer magazines white kids are invited to believe that all is cool and honey-dipped. They don't see relevant live theatre because they're at the disco, and they're the movie generation so they don't read the poetry, essays, and novels which might discuss the realities of life south of the equator.

Roger Lucey's got ideas, and he's made them into a devastating rock 'n roll album. Now the kids got a problem; they're gonna have to try and edge around the whiplash of the lyrics, while at the same time raking off the creamy topping of rough 'n ready rock that Lucey makes. Or they're gonna have to bite tight on the whole mixture.

It's a confrontation, and for that reason this album — "The Road is Much Longer" — could turn out to be a project of immense social importance — something which even top imported rock seldom aspires to.

Roger Lucey's musical persona is that of the freewheeling rock 'n roll poet. His sound is traditional rock — strong guitars and bass, occasional walls from a sax, and a female back-up vocal that puts a distant rockface echo on his raw voice.

If Lucey was simply a commentator looking for a platform, the album would not work. But he has rock 'n roll running thicker than the Orange River in his veins, and if you're in any way susceptible, it's gonna get you. After that, you're on your own.

The title track is a tale of Lucey's own road days — lifts taken in trucks and lifts not offered in limosines. It's the kind of unleashed rock that Springsteen and Bob Seeger do.

"Lungile Tabalaza" has been self-censored from the local copies on legal advice. For the same reason I won't quote any of the lyrics here, but it is the strongest indictment of detention without trial I have ever heard or read.

Lucey's lament for pre-

MAILBEAT

Patrick Lee

Roger Lucey:

The Road is Much Longer

Koornhof Crossroads will make your hair rustle. His voice is part despair, part last ditch defiance; part broken, part sweet:

"and now all of these people twenty thousand or more they're gonna have their houses bulldozed right down to the floor and in Constantia and in Houghton while Nanny brings in tea they'll say 'Shame, well that's life, but it's got nothing to do with me...'"

That's the kind of thing that burns out the drive motors on the SABC turntables.

The ballad for "Thabane" is exquisite in its simplicity and chilling in its display of how evil contrives to look like life as usual.

This album drips one-liners that snap a succession of struggling subjects under the spotlight... "you only need to say nothing to have nothing at all to say"... "You've got one, foot in the homelands and one toe in the town"... "when you hear the dogs bark you know they're coming near..."

White kids, I suspect, might be inclined to dismiss these scenarios with the old "It's not my problem" cop-out. But there's a line on the album which is just as true for the average white as it is for blacks: "You're either under firm control, or you're under attack..." That's what it is. Crossroads may be the extreme example, but we can all have the shaggy carpet pulled from under the TV set without warning. It's a situation, as Neil Young puts it, of being "poisoned with protection."

All this would normally be a little heavy on the dreamy rock 'n roller. Except "The Road is Much Longer" is one hundred octane rock 'n roll. Glug this album.

