



FIRST VIBRATION

A collage album of 14 songs:

- The Beatles—*Nowhere Man*
- Donovan—*Sunshine Superman*
- Jefferson Airplane—*Somebody to Love*
- Canned Heat—*Amphetamine Annie*
- Hoyt Axton—*The Pusher*
- The Byrds—*Artificial Energy*
- Jimi Hendrix—*Red House*
- Buffalo Springfield—*Flying on the Ground is Wrong*
- Ravi Shankar—*Dhun*
- Chad and Jeremy—*Progress Suite, Movement 3*
- Genesis—*The Long Road*
- Eric Burdon and the Animals—*When I Was Young*
- Peanut Butter Conspiracy—*Roses Gone*
- Things to Come—*Dancer*

Do It Now Foundation, \$3.00

Reviewed by Scot Morris

We all take drugs. We swallow them in little capsules to get to sleep or to become tranquil. We take them with cream and sugar to help us get going in the morning. We take them over ice or from pop-top cans to become more sociable or confident. We inhale them after coming out of a long movie to get rid of that gnawing in the chest.

Once you accept the idea that you

could change how you feel right now, that *you could feel better* if you had some of this or that chemical, you begin to share America's growing drug consciousness. It is little wonder that young people, surrounded by such attitudes, are experimenting seriously with amphetamines. In little doses to help curb appetite these drugs are called *diet pills*. Some people pop dozens of pills a day for the stimulating effect, or they sniff the pure crystal, or inject it into their veins. For these people amphetamines are known as *speed*.

Full realization of the dangers of speed has become widespread only in the last few years. It tends to be addictive; users need more and more of it and continued use can lead to severe malnutrition, depression, irritability and psychotic symptoms.

But it does little good for a parent or teacher or government voice to explain these dangers to young people if they don't listen. Kids continue to experiment with speed, shooting it into their veins, exalting in the "rush," increasing the dosage, rapping for hours about trivia, becoming suspicious of everyone, and sometimes dying.

If young people don't trust and won't listen to the over-30 authorities, whom *will* they listen to? An active West Coast group of ex-drug users and concerned long-hairs who understand the media are trying to get the message across in the voices that young people apparently trust—other young people, experienced drug-takers and rock music stars.

This group, the Do It Now Foundation, has put together an album of songs by some of the biggest names in popular music—The Beatles, Donovan, Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, Ravi Shankar, The Byrds, Buffalo

Springfield and others. All the songs on the *First Vibration* album were donated by the artists to spread the word that **SPEED KILLS**.

First Vibration is a major breakthrough not only in drug education but in the music industry as well. It is the first collage album ever produced through the cooperation of competing record companies. The musicians volunteered to donate their work to the Do It Now cause, and then persuaded their record companies and publishers to release the songs.

Behind the beat of these songs is a message that warns about speed. It is one thing to read about the well-researched and substantiated side-effects of amphetamines; it is another to hear Bob "The Bear" Hite, lead singer of Canned Heat, give the sickening description of *Amphetamine Annie*:

*But Annie kept on speeding, her health was getting poor.
 Saw things at the window, she heard things at the door.
 Her mind was like a grinding-mill, her lips were cracked and sore.
 Her skin was turning yellow, I just couldn't take it no more.*

Annie's visions at the window are typical of the paranoid ideation that develops in the speed-freak. Delusions of reference ("Are they talking about me?") and persecution ("They're out to get me") make him suspicious, headstrong and blind.

*He's as blind as he can be,
 Just sees what he wants to see.
 Nowhere Man, can you see me at all?*

—The Beatles, *Nowhere Man*

In later stages the speed-user becomes self-righteous, convinced that

he knows what's happening and everyone else is mixed up:

*Do you think it's really the truth
that you see?*

*I've got my doubts, it's happened
to me.*

—The Byrds, *Artificial Energy*

Eventually, his obstinacy leads to obnoxiousness and the loss of friends:

*Tears are running, running down
your breast.*

*And your friends treat you like a
guest.*

—Jefferson Airplane,
Somebody to Love

One of the best cuts is by an unknown group, Genesis, who wrote *The Long Road* especially for this album. Under the cross-phasing and feedback, they paint a dismal picture of the rapid deterioration of the speed-freak:

*He had the heart, the eye of an
eagle.*

*His hands were quick and his
mind as well.*

*Now he just quivers and clings to
his needle.*

*He's on the wrong road, the long
road to Hell.*

Speed is a long road, and the natural thing is to stay on it until you come to the end, which is death. Death is an uncomfortable thing to talk about, much less sing about, but rock poets like Hoyt Axton confront it directly: "I seen a lot of people with tombstones in their eyes. If they don't get the hard stuff, you know they're gonna die" (*The Pusher*). Or, as Canned Heat sing about *Amphetamine Annie*: "She wouldn't hear my warnin', Lord, she wouldn't hear what I said. Now she's in the graveyard and she's awfully dead."

Artificial Energy, by Roger McGuinn of The Byrds, is perhaps the most provocative song in the collection. It starts by describing the speed addict as he shoots up: "Sitting all alone now, I take my ticket to ride. Just a matter of time now, 'til I'll be up in the

sky. Comin' up on me now, I'm king for a night." But the compulsion and exaltation of the rush are soon colored by the death theme: "Artificial energy is messing my mind. I've got a strange feeling I'm going to die before my time."

The song ends with a surprising bring-down, a reminder that paranoid thoughts—such as trusting no one and feeling watched and threatened by the most unlikely people—can easily produce insane, frightening behavior. "I'm comin' down off amphetamine," says the speeder at the end of his trip. "And I'm in jail 'cause I killed the Queen."

One treat in the album is Hoyt Axton singing his song, *The Pusher*—this is the only recording available. When Axton sings "God damn the Pusher" he expresses the hostility and frustration that every dope addict must feel toward the peddler who keeps him alive:

*If I were the President of this land
I'd declare total war on the Pusherman.*

*I'd cut him if he stands and I'd
shoot him if he runs,
I'd kill him with my razor and my
Bible and my gun.*

In another verse of *The Pusher* Axton asserts that marijuana should not be classed with opium, heroin or speed. To drug-users, speed is so clearly different from marijuana, gives such a different "head," that suppliers of these drugs are seen as totally different characters, with different names:

*You know the Dealer is a man with
love-grass in his hand,
But the Pusher is a monster and not
a natural man.
The Dealer take a nickel—give you
lots of fine dreams,
But the Pusher take your body and
leave your mind to scream.*

Most of the songs on *First Vibration* do not deal in obvious speed references. Some, like Donovan's *Sunshine Superman* and the Buffalo Springfield's *Flying on the Ground Is Wrong*, may be seen as drug songs only by a stretch of the interpretation. Others, like Jimi Hendrix' *Red House*,

seem to be antispeed only by association with the explicit and implicit antispeed songs that they share album space with. Another example is *Dhun*, composed by sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar especially for Do It Now and this album.

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Among other projects, the not-for-profit Do It Now Foundation, which was run on private donations for two years before this album was released, has been exploring other media for drug education. It operates a 24-hour-a-day hot line in the L.A. area for drug-crisis counseling, and it has plans for a detoxification center for speed abusers. The Foundation also puts out films, pamphlets and radio spots by top rock musicians. (Sample: "This is Frank Zappa from the Mothers of Invention. I would like to suggest that you do not use speed, and here's why: It is going to mess up your heart, mess up your liver, your kidneys, rot out your mind. In general, this drug will make you just like your mother and father.")

First Vibration is available only by mail (for \$3.00; add 40¢ for first-class mail; 85¢ in Canada) from Do It Now Foundation, P.O. Box 3573, Hollywood, California 90028. Shipped with every album is a 16-page booklet that includes antispeed statements by Donovan, Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary.

Scot Morris, an associate editor of *Psychology Today*, will receive a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Southern Illinois University this spring. He has been a rock music fan since the mid-50s.