

## HEAD EAST

**W**hile *U.S. 1* is Head East's seventh album for A&M, it is in a real sense, the "debut" album of a brand-new Head East band.

Founder songwriter/keyboard wizard Roger Boyd has seen Head East go through major overhauls in the past, but none to equal the sweeping changes that characterize *U.S. 1*. While retaining ace drummer/songwriter Steven Huston, the new Head East includes three gifted new members whose contributions are immediately apparent.

As the band's longtime friend and fan, Dick Richmond of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, sums it up: "*U.S. 1* is by far the most impressive collection of songs Head East has recorded since its gold-plated debut album, *Flat As A Pancake*."

The new lineup includes lead singer Dan Odum, who did a brief stint with an earlier version of the band in late '71 and early '72, until he was drafted into the Army. Odum, 28, is from Danville, Ill. "When I entered the Army, I was made a medic," he recalls. "But in Germany I got into an Army singing chorus and really learned a lot from the experience. When I was discharged, I did a number of things including being a grocery store manager and probationary fireman in Danville. It was exciting, but I figured I had to chose between being a fireman or a musician, and everyone was shocked when I selected music."

When Boyd was revamping his band early this year, he called Odum and found him singing in a bar in Danville. "I couldn't believe it was Roger on the other end of the line. He said, 'O.D., this is Roger Boyd. I want you to be the singer in my band.' For me it was a dream come true." Odum took charge as if he'd been singing with the band without an eight-year hiatus, and onstage with his curly hair, U-moustache, goatee and bone earring, he resembles nothing so much as a Barbary pirate. Like Boyd, he's a natural energy builder which helps account for the wild enthusiasm the new band engenders on stage.

Another new recruit, guitarist Tony Gross, who hails from Rochester, N.Y., met Boyd at a party after a concert and talked him into listening to a demo tape of songs he'd written and recorded in a four-track studio he'd built in his home.

"My father's an engineer with Xerox and teaches production control at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and my mother's the assistant bursar there, so naturally I enrolled when I graduated from high school. For the first quarter I majored in computer sciences, then got into the liberal arts program. I wanted to do everything . . . be a writer, a recording engineer, a performer. That's why I put together this little four-piece band. By the time I got to Roger, I thought we had a pretty good product."

Boyd agreed and signed Gross up. Though only 19, he feels like the luckiest man alive. "I really didn't try a lot of people on my music, Roger was the first. It was a simple case of being in the right place at the right time with the right product, and I was just plain lucky."

Head East's new bass player, Mark Boatman from St. Louis, is 21. "I'd assigned Mark to one of my publishing companies," says Boyd. "He's an excellent bass player, and I'd already worked with him as a writer. Fortunately, all the new players can sing lead, and Mark is outstanding as a balladeer." Boatman creates a female frenzy onstage with his handsome good looks and searing bass notes every time he steps forward.

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As Head East had built its base in the American heartland with high-octane performances that were a mix of soaring, gritty mainline rock 'n' roll, boundless energy and melodic inventiveness, the question was: What would happen when the new Head East hit the stage? The answer came from Dick Richmond.

"The question of how well they'd entertain was answered when they performed in St. Louis a month before *U.S. 1* was released. Odum took charge as if he'd been singing with Head East for years. As for Boyd, who's never allowed the keyboard to keep him locked in place—all 6-feet 3-inches of him would come leaping off the sound equipment. Now he limits himself to short forays forward with a portable keyboard, but when he grabs the mike to speak, he's like an evangelist ready to whip his congregation into a frenzy . . . Gross has all the zest of a teenager, dashing about, playing guitar with a skill far beyond his years . . . By the end of the concert the crowd had taken up the chant: HEADEAST! HEADEAST! HEADEAST! . . ."

So a born-again Head East is set to barrel down the highway on *U.S. 1* reaffirming the adage that rock 'n' roll will never die.

We'll second that emotion.