

SOUNDS IN THE SUN

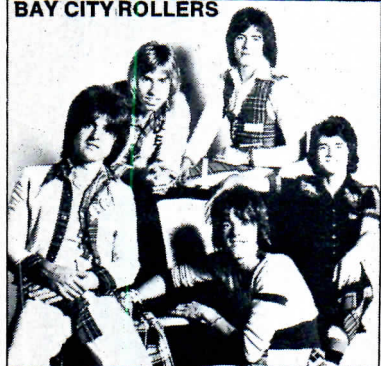
BY MARY MOOK

Supernova: Sha-lalalala — shooby doo. Here's a new group that may introduce you to pre-Beatle rock 'n' roll. Their names are Eric, Derek, Alan, Woody, and Les; their hometown—Edinburgh, Scotland. Together they call themselves the Bay City Rollers. In England this mop-top quintet has become almost a national obsession.

They receive 18,000 letters each day. Each single they release makes the charts. Their concerts are occasions for a sort of good-natured hysteria—Rollermania is the name for it. Thousands of girls scream nonstop from the minute the Rollers bounce on stage until the last note has been played. An average of 200 fans a performance faint from the excitement. In Mallory Park, England, where outdoor festivals are sometimes held, the audience stormed the group and the Rollers had to be airlifted by helicopter to an island in the middle of the lake. Undaunted, nearly 100 admirers plunged into the icy water and started swimming toward their idols.

What is the secret of the Rollers' ap-

BAY CITY ROLLERS



peal? Probably a combination of the colorful plaids they wear and the warm vibes they send out across the footlights. "Hello, Polly; I love you, Mary," lead vocalist Les McKeown calls out between numbers. Guitarist Eric Faulkner, bass player Alan Longmuir, and piano player Stuart "Woody" Wood follow suit. Drummer Derek Longmuir waves. One or two young ladies are usually invited on the stage for a kiss.

Hours before a show, concert-goers (mostly girls aged 12 to 15) line the streets, decked out in attire resembling that of the musicians. Their cutoff denim jeans are cuffed mid-calf, with the outside seams lined in Stuart plaid. Tartan scarves, suspenders, cummerbunds, striped football socks, and tennis shoes complete the outfit.

If truth be known, Roller rock is mostly

reworked golden oldies. Their hit single, "Bye, Bye, Baby," for instance, is a recycled Four Seasons song. Lyrics run to "Let's go huggin' and kissin' in the moonlight; I know you and I together are so right." If you see the Rollers on television this fall or on their U.S. concert tour next spring, you might want a copy of their Arista LP, *The Bay City Rollers*; however, you may discover that on records, their basic four-chord rock 'n' roll can become tedious. But each generation likes to choose its own heroes, and the comparison between the Rollers and the Beatles has already been made. Get set for another British invasion, gang!

Rising Star: Not long ago, Mirabai (pronounced meer-a-bye) was singing on New York Greenwich Village street corners. Swansong Records Vice President Danny Goldberg, 24, happened by, liked what he heard, and arranged some small club dates for her. The Chicago-born singer/songwriter developed a coffeehouse following. Her first LP *Mirabai* (Atlantic) is produced by Robert Johnston, who has also worked with Bob Dylan, Simon & Garfunkel, and Johnny Cash. Leon Pendarvis, Aretha Franklin's keyboard player, and Willie Hall, Isaac Hayes' drummer, are in the band. When a "heavy" producer like Johnston and a group of super-pro instrumentalists team up in a recording studio with an unknown singer, red flags go up in the music industry—something important is going on.

That it did. Mirabai, 22, has a sizable voice as well as the emotional agility that takes her from no-frills folk music to a powerful jazz sound. Her tones are not always pure. There is a raw edge to them that gives her voice character, a searing human quality that strikes deep.

It is hard to sing in an accent. Nevertheless, Mirabai briefly parodies a stuffy Englishwoman on "Exactly What You Are," a cheerful but self-mocking autobiographical ballad. "Determination," splintered by Joplin-like wails that softly dissolve, is a gospel-style rocker with a blues intensity. Mirabai said she got so excited while she was recording it that she snapped four guitar strings!

Mirabai borrowed her name from the Indian princess who devoted her life to writing hymns for the Hindu god Krishna. When the great folk singer Odetta heard Mirabai sing, she told her that she possesses a magic that can't be beaten out of her. Like her royal namesake, Mirabai is amazing.

Coming: Bruce Springsteen: Shades of Dylan and Jagger.

Do you have any favorite musicians you'd like to hear about? Write Mary Mook, CO-ED, 902 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.