

GROOVES

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► ALBUM TALK

FIRST ROCK BOOTLEGGERS COMES CLEAN

BY LARRY JAFFEE

Underwhelmed by the mellow country rock of *Nashville Skyline*, two **Bob Dylan** fans in the summer of 1969 in southern California unwittingly gave birth to the rock bootleg industry.

Ken Douglas reveals to *Goldmine* nearly a half century later the story behind the original double album, dubbed **Great White Wonder** (GWW), the first of hundreds of unauthorized records of major acts that he and his partner produced (initially together and later separately) while playing a cat-and-mouse game with the authorities over the next decade and a half.

But imitation is the sincerest form of flattery—or exploitation—as bootleggers started bootlegging bootleggers, and scores of GWW variations filled the underground economy. There's even a Facebook group whose members dissect every GWW variance.

In a mid-July phone call from his home in Reno, Nevada, where he operates a wedding photography business with his wife Vesta, Douglas says his only regret is not having his records anymore to sell and take advantage of vinyl's recent rebirth and frenzy that drives prices into hundreds of dollars, as eBay listings now attest.

Back in 1969, Douglas looked like a longhaired hippie, a former Marine who avoided Vietnam. His dad Jack owned a record "one-stop" distribution company called Saturn Records, where he and his pal, Michael "Dub" Taylor, worked. Dub was into audio gadgetry. Dub's dad worked at the post office, which later proved helpful to the clandestine operation.

Viewing themselves as modern-day Robin Hoods, the duo thought fans should hear revelatory Dylan music. According to



The "Great White Wonder" (GWW) on display (clockwise, from upper left): The original 2-LP bootleg on vinyl, variations of the GWW stamps on bootleg jackets, the christened boat and the GWW record label.

Douglas, Dub recorded off an L.A. radio station, seven songs from *The Basement Tapes* recorded in Saugerties, NY, by Dylan and The Band, including "I Shall Be Released," "This Wheel's On Fire," "The Mighty Quinn" and "Tears of Rage," among them. In August 1967, Dylan's music publisher Dwarf and manager Albert Grossman started circulating acetates and tapes of 14 demos recorded in the hope that other artists would record the songs.

Dub also came across a tape of Dylan in 1961 playing in a Minneapolis hotel room, and an early radio broadcast. Douglas taped Dylan's "Living the Blues" off The Johnny Cash Show, televised by ABC on June 7, 1969.

The compilation added up to 26 tracks, including a few spoken-word raps, over two LPs. Douglas didn't have any problem finding a mastering facility or pressing plant in the Los Angeles area because there were many willing to take his cash to manufacture the GWW acetates, plates and records.

"Pete at the pressing plant asked, 'What do you want for a label?' and I said I didn't care, because we were just making them

for ourselves," Douglas recalls. That's how the unsuspecting 'Rocolian Records artist Dupre and the Miracle Sound,' *Volume 1* ended up on the first run of 400 copies of GWW. Critical to the operation, a friend of Dub's sold the records to local record stores, keeping Douglas anonymous. After the first batch sold out, they reordered a run of 1,000 with just a blank label.

Packaged in a white folded over jacket, it was hand-stamped in blue ink, GREAT WHITE WONDER. *Rolling Stone* magazine gave it a rave review.

Ken's father knew all along what his son was doing, and coming from a family of lawyers, "I wouldn't have had to pay any legal fees if I was arrested," says Douglas. He also had a bail bondsman on standby.

Douglas and Dub released four more Dylan collections, including *Stealin'*, comprised of outtakes, circa 1965. The partners then diversified with concert LPs of The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and Jethro Tull. Dub convinced Douglas they needed to establish a brand, which ended up being a cigar-smoking pig logo circled by the tagline "Trademark of Quality" (TMOQ).

Although pissed off that they were being ripped off themselves, the partners for obvious reasons chose not to pursue legal remedies against other parties that ran off their own versions of GWW.

Columbia Records won an injunction in December 1969 against a pressing plant called S&R, Dub and “Norty and Ben,” two record-store owners who were friends of Douglas’ father.

“They were the first people to copy it, making a whole sh*t pot of money. I used to see them every day and we’d talk about the *Great White Wonder*. They didn’t know (we made the first one),” Douglas says.

The authorities “got pretty close to Dub,” says Douglas, who was served by a private investigator working for Columbia. The only problem was the subpoena was for Dub, not him, and the police told him to tear it up and ignore it.

“I never heard about it again,” explains Douglas.

Asked why he wasn’t named as a defendant himself in the Columbia legal action, Douglas replies, “You can’t sue people you don’t know.” He thinks employees at Columbia and Capitol knew he was responsible, but kept it a secret. Despite Columbia winning in court, GWW vinyl bootlegs in the 1970s proliferated the record supply chain across the U.S. and overseas.

A few of Douglas’ bootlegging buddies eventually went to jail, and when such activity became a felony, Douglas decided he had enough cheating the law one too many times.

Around 1980 Douglas packed up his family to live in France and Spain. They later sailed on his boat, christened the *Great White Wonder*, to the Caribbean and even as far as New Zealand. They returned to the U.S. after 9/11.

“I got rid of 30 copies of everything I’d done for a buck and a half each, bought by a collector because I needed money,” Douglas now laments. “I wish I didn’t sell them.”

However, he’s embarrassed how much money he made from a few unique items on eBay merely because he touched them.

“One woman gave me (around) \$20,000 for one record if my son could get me to sign it, and I did.” Another woman paid \$15,000 just for two Dylan photos that were used on two of Douglas’ boxed sets. “She had a museum dedicated to TMOQ.”

Based on those transactions, Douglas thinks had he not sold those other records so cheaply he could have lived a “life of luxury.”

While sailing around the world, Douglas started writing for sailing magazines, and then he reinvented himself as a fiction

writer. One of those horror novels, *Ragged Man*, describes four major record bootleggers and the only one who survives was the Dylan bootlegger, “not the Stones or Zeppelin guys. That was my revenge,” he chuckles.

Two years ago, Douglas received a message from Dub.

Dub had read his bootleg memories on www.kendouglas.org and “thought they were funny.” It was the first time they were in touch since the early ‘70s.

Douglas sometimes has a recurring nightmare of Bob Dylan showing up at his door with goons to mess him up. He thinks a real incident with Elektra Records inspired the dream.

Does Douglas think he deserves a commission from the revenue stream of Columbia’s official unreleased “Bootleg Series” that has been going strong for over a quarter century, and this fall reportedly will debut Vol. 14, an alternative version of *Blood On The Tracks*? “That would be nice,” he laughs.

Larry Jaffee is the co-founder of makingvinyl.com. His writing about music has been published by Long Live Vinyl, Wax Poetics, Billboard, The Audiophile Voice, among numerous other publications. A selection of his articles are on rockbackpages.com.

“To live outside the law, you must be honest,” says one of rock’s first bootleggers.

ASK THE EXPERT

A MEANINGFUL BLACK SABBATH



Q I have a copy of Black Sabbath’s first album, pressed on side two is the album *Paranoid*’s side two. What’s the story?

– AJ LaRue, via Facebook

A Congratulations! From deep within the apparently bottomless pit of meaningless LP mispressings that most record collectors file under “curio,” you have extracted one that is both genuinely fascinating, and surely of interest to most Black Sabbath completists.

There is no way of being certain precisely how this mispressing came to pass – in most cases, consecutive (or thereabouts) catalog numbers are the most obvious suspect. But that is clearly not the case here – Sabbath’s first, eponymous, album was #1871; the follow-up, *Paranoid*, was #1887. More likely, it occurred during one of many repressings of the catalog undertaken post-1973.

Either way, it is definitely a score, and one that would be of interest to a far wider cross section of Sabbath collectors than the usual mispressings, involving two utterly unrelated artists, that we usually hear about in these pages.

Well found!

– Dave Thompson

Author of the *Goldmine Record Album Price Guide*, 9th Ed..

» NEW RELEASES

SEPTEMBER 2018 America, *Hits [40th Anniversary Edition]*, Gonzo ● **Aretha Franklin**, *The Atlantic Singles Collection, 1967-1970*, Rhino ● **Billy Gibbons**, *The Big Bad Blues*, Concord ● **Bob Seger & the Last Heard**, *Heavy Music: The Complete Cameo Recordings, 1966-1967*, ABKCO ● **Buddy Guy**, *Live: The Real Deal*, Sony ● **Daryl Hall & John Oates**, *12 Inch Collection*, Sony ● **David Bowie/Nine Inch Nails**, *Under Pressure*, Zip City ● **David Gilmour**, *The Stockholm Syndrome*, Zip City ● **Derek Trucks**, *Out of the Madness*, Sony ● **Duke Ellington**, *The Armory Concert*,



Paul McCartney

Squatty Roo ● **Earth Wind & Fire**, *The Greatest Hits*, Sony ● **Eric Clapton**, *Transmission Impossible*, Eat To The Beat ● **Eric Clapton**, *Journeymen*, Rhino ● **Funkadelic**, *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow*, 4 Men with Beards ● **Glenn Hughes**, *Songs in the Key of Rock*, Rock Classics ● **Glenn Hughes**, *Burning Japan: Live*, Rock Classics ● **Grateful Dead**, *Portland Memorial Coliseum: Portland, OR, 5/19/74*, Rhino ● **Grateful Dead**, *Pacific Northwest '73-'74: Believe It if You Need It*, Grateful Dead/Rhino ● **Grateful Dead**, *'73-'74: Believe It if You Need It*, Rhino ● **Grateful Dead**, *Shakedown New York*, Sutra ● **Grateful Dead**, *Road Trips*,