

The Pop Life

Fireworks by Fans

By IAN DOVE

Johnny Winter stopped his Madison Square Garden show last Saturday to upbraid the audience for throwing things at him—cardboard hotdog holders, items of clothing and the like. Alice Cooper was hit and hurt at his Garden concert by a neatly aimed love token from the audience. Led Zeppelin (which winds up its current tour with three dates at the Garden next month) stopped its show at Tampa, Fla., because identified flying objects got in the way of the real action—the music.

Steve Paul, manager of Johnny Winter, call all the flying debris "an emotional release for the kids." Shep Gordon, Alice Cooper's manager, says: "In a sense, it's part of the show." Neither likes it at all because it makes the artists very vulnerable to damage.

Gordon admits that Cooper had "blood drawn" during a ball-park concert, and Paul worries about the fireworks let off inside the Garden on Saturday (probably a seasonal phenomenon so close to July 4) and the possibility of short circuits and fire in the amplification equipment.

Both managers are reluctant to speak out about this unruly form of fan behavior because they fear that publicity will promote escalation. "Like skyjacking," says Paul.

Winter freaks are apparently the most varied in their airborne appreciation. Paul reports that postconcert litter includes flowers, hats, blouses, shirts — "favored articles of clothing," he comments—letters and messages. Cooper people prefer just jewelry, paper airplanes "and the occasional bottle," says Gordon.

Gordon has toyed with the idea of a really elevated stage so that any missiles would be "low intensity" by the time they reached the group, and even a plastic dome covering the stage. "But then it would no longer be live entertainment," he says. "And that's what the excitement at a rock concert is all about."

Artists such as Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck, who sing in more restrained environments, are also exposed to low-level bombing. In their cases, it is more intimate items of female apparel and hotel keys. Melanie, on the other hand, gets the audi-

ence thrown at her. Invariably at the end of her concert, like lemmings, they will troop silently on stage, holding lighted candles, to sit surrounding their guru.

George Harrison had an album released a couple of weeks ago—his first in nearly three years. Last month, Johnny Winter came out with his new recording—his first since July, 1970. Led Zeppelin took 17 months to give birth to its current album. Sly and the Family Stone: new album last week, previous release in October, 1971. There has not been a new Roberta Flack album in more than a year, and the last Rolling Stones LP came out in

It appears that nearly every major rock artist takes his time and keeps the fans impatient about getting his new material in the marketplace.

Probably there are several reasons: The "concept album" is in vogue (no longer is an album just a collection of repackaged hit single recordings), and record-chart success is not considered the only criterion; with the enormous money an album can earn, pressures mount and fear often delays. Then again, with all the money from the album, a group doesn't need to put out more than one a year.

In 1961, a Detroit group had a hit single, "That's What Girls Are Made For," and also played its first gig under the name of the Spinners. That first date was at Harlem's Apollo Theater, which is exactly where the group finds itself tonight. And right now the Spinners are probably among the hottest black soul groups, having just earned two certified, million-selling gold singles.

The Spinners, with remarkable lack of ego, place a lot of credit on Tom Bell, who is their producer as well as the writer of the two songs. "He really tailored them for us," said Pervis Jackson. "He taped our individual voices, and then went back and got the song and the arrangement so they really fit us."

The group also praises its former producer when it was with Motown Records—it is now signed with Atlantic. He was Stevie Wonder, himself no slouch when it comes to performing.