

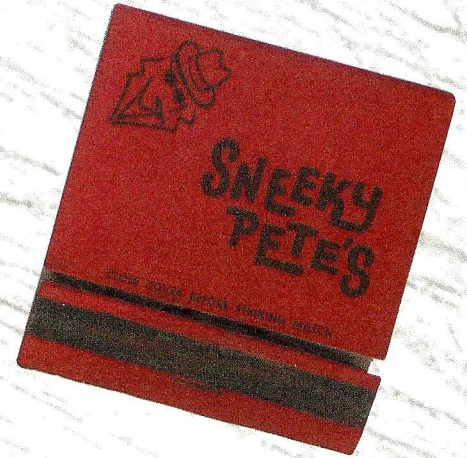
"CANYON OF DREAMS," The Magic and the Music of Laurel Canyon

By Harvey Kubernik, Sterling Publishing



Libbie Jo Snyder

In the mid-'70s and through the remainder of the decade, there was a Laurel Canyon musical community that revolved around Libbie Jo Snyder, a flutist, singer, actress, and dancer. Snyder performed with jazz artists like Paul Horn, Jane Getz, Shawn Phillips, and Buddy Collette. She played flute on films scored by Elmer Bernstein, Jack Nitzsche, David Amram, and Bruce Langhorne. Snyder



brought her music to clubs all around Hollywood, from the Troubadour to Sneaky Pete's. This was a new Laurel Canyon sound, one that owed its appeal to the sensual contours of breath and finesse—a mixture she playfully termed “pop bop.”

Laurel Canyon was a magical place for Snyder. She lived in a cottage on the grounds of what was known as the Oakstone mansion, owned by the founders of the Renaissance Faire. “Sometimes I’d get up early in the morning and take walks,” she remembers. “The mist would be rising from our swimming pool—does that sound like Hollywood?—and you could smell the pines. That sense of having an outdoor canyon life inside the city pervaded, and it still does to some extent. Bruce Langhorne [‘Mr. Tambourine Man’ of the Dylan song, and one of Dylan’s musicians] lived down the street on Lookout Mountain.

I already knew Bruce because, at the time, I was the flute instructor at Immaculate Heart High School and College. One of the singers Bruce worked with, Janice Hendon (a talented singer-guitarist-writer from Detroit), had sent her daughter to study flute with me, and I ended up playing in her band. She lived on Mama Cass’ estate on Woodrow Wilson at the time and I used to go up there and rehearse a lot.”

Snyder eventually did session work for Bruce Langhorne. “I played flute on at least one of the early Peter Fonda films that he scored. I remember Peter used to come around from time to time. And we did a lot of playing for fun—jamming! I think Jackson Browne came by, and Red Shea, Gordon Lightfoot’s great lead guitar player, and the actor Lou Gossett (most people don’t know that Lou played and sang), and Billy James

lived nearby. I also did some recording at Bruce’s studio for David Ackles and producer and film writer Douglas Graham.”

Snyder also performed in clubs on the Sunset Strip at that time, including Sneaky Pete’s with pianist Joanne Grauer, and places like the Ice House in Pasadena with “Hirth from Earth” Martinez. “I remember playing the Palladium for a Latin music festival with Joe Loco, the great Latin piano player who earlier had put a Latin beat to ‘Autumn Leaves.’ During that period I did a lot of duo gigs with guitarist Chuck Collazzi from Andy Williams’ orchestra. We performed at house concerts, private parties, clubs—anywhere people could find a little corner to put two musicians. There were plenty of parties in Laurel Canyon—gas was cheap, food was cheap, and marijuana was everywhere.”