



MICHAEL BLOOMFIELD

Fame isn't worth the work

By DEBORAH OSMENT RYAN

"I make an ass of myself so often that I don't even think about it anymore. I'm used to it," said blues guitarist Michael Bloomfield.

Bloomfield was once a famous guitarist, one of the really big names on the rock music scene. He played with Paul Butterfield, Muddy Waters, started his own group in the late 60s — the Electric Flag and did a Super Session album with Al Kooper and Stephen Stills.

So now he's playing small clubs and recording for obscure labels and he freely admits that he prefers it that way and that it's his own fault.

"The big labels won't sign me because I won't work. I mean I work on the records, I put an incredible amount of work into my records, but . . .

"Well, you see there is this particular road that you're supposed to take — engagements in Vegas and Tahoe, your own television show — and I just can't see myself as Shields & Yarnell or Donnie and Marie, so I just refuse to hustle," said Bloomfield.

He has a disarming and diffident smile and is easy-going. A charming man to talk to, a man who has taken a television on stage so he could watch "Saturday Night Live" while he played: "The audience was a little bit offended," he said, smiling.

Bloomfield has also done such things, he claims, as let other guitarists sit in for him (that's *for* him, not *with* him) and show a videotape of himself playing in his bedroom at a "live" concert.

"I have these friends who do videotaping and I had them tape me playing in my bedroom. I got that idea from Glenn Gould. He's this piano player, classical pianist from Canada, probably the best that lives and he doesn't leave his house. If they want him to play, they bring the radio, TV, or whatever to his house," said Bloomfield.

"I just don't have a real drive to perform. I get my satisfaction out of playing the music for myself and would just as soon stay out of the clubs. Ten years ago, I really worked and I hated it."

"But ten years ago, you were famous," I said.

"Yeah, yeah, I guess I was. But who needs it?"