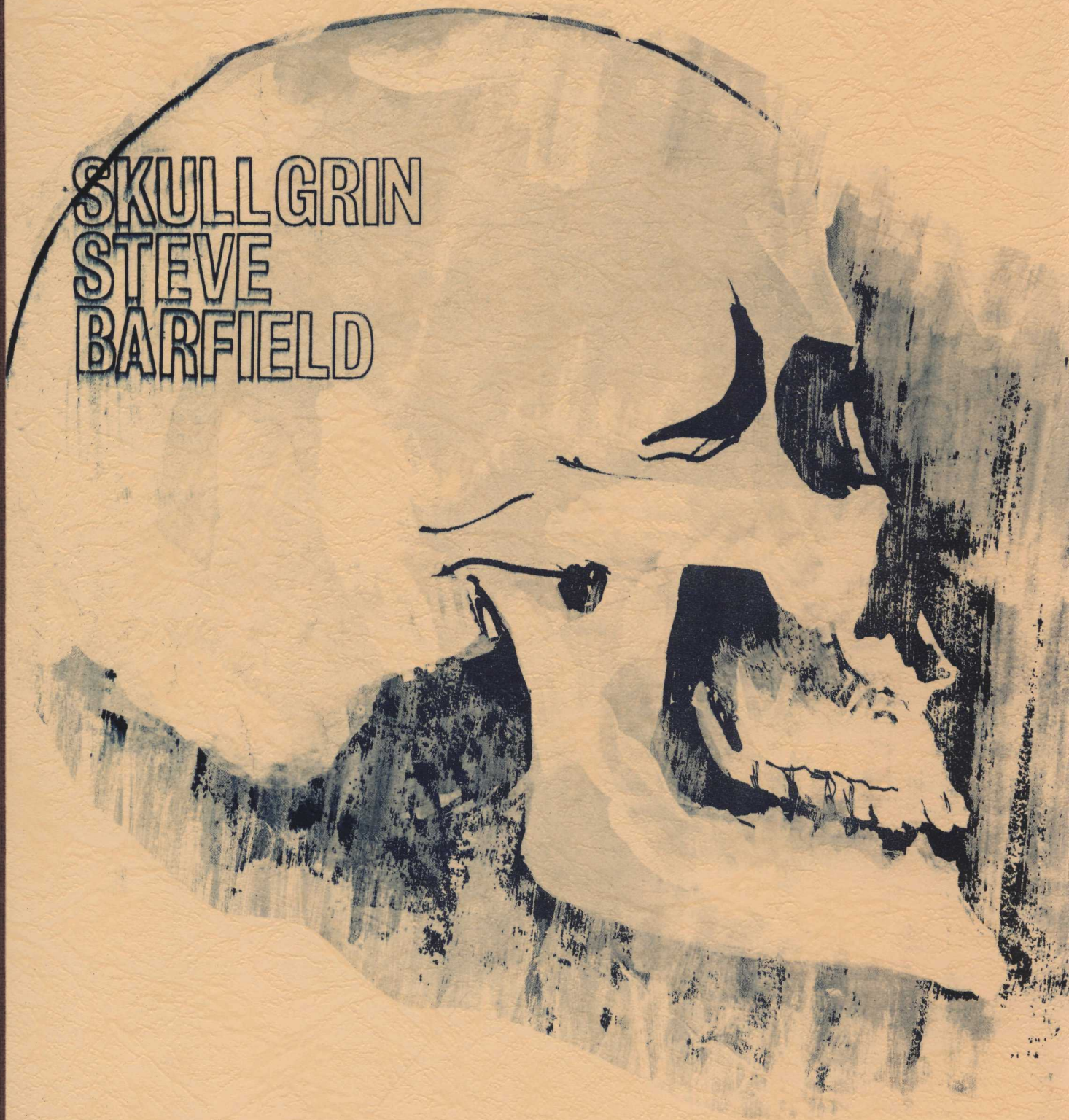


SKULL GRIN  
STEVE  
BARFIELD





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SKULLGRIN

BY

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THE WORDS OF DUANE LOCKE

3

dust  
of butterfly wings  
drops on  
patent leather shoes  
that interrupt  
the cocoon's harbor  
and  
the crested night heron  
near the tree  
of her young  
strokes  
palmetto winds

SONGSCREAM

my eyes  
must not look  
where  
the cat  
is taut  
on the tree  
my hand frolics  
in lead  
with fingernails laced  
my ear stretches  
over my mouth  
where the songscream  
is the cadence

## SUMMER NIGHT

night crawls  
from a crushed beer can  
scraping its ribs  
on white caned eyes  
i pull june  
about my neck  
like a leper  
adjusting his bandages

EAR CARRIES BIRD SKELETONS  
TO SPORTS PAGE BLOWING ACROSS EMPTY PARKING LOT

the wind cups  
my face  
low  
naer the tree's cough  
and  
tells me quiet secrets  
inscribed on  
indian blankets  
learned  
from still rocks  
gathered on  
river bottoms  
where they mate  
with a laughing  
rush



FOR JACKIE

now  
the laugh is different  
her walled nails  
night calliope's libation  
of naked epileptic branch  
inspects  
an empty tomb  
at the wind's insistence  
now  
she sees  
lizard's eye  
in the desert  
flash flood

5

NIGHT HERON

night heron's  
branch  
knows of phosphorous  
leaking laughter  
from the rear of drug stores  
of quiet shrinking coffins  
  
speckled egg  
acknowledges writings  
in earth tracks  
of roots spastically leaning deeper  
seeing ears  
sown to slot machines  
  
they cough colors  
in the spanish moss

## MORNING DOVE

6 morning dove  
knows  
the chain saw's  
whisper  
they smile  
into my broken mask  
when  
the folding leaf  
claws  
to hold  
the river bottom

## THE NATURAL PARTY (WRITTEN IN DUANE LOCKE'S STUDY)

the fledgling mouths  
open slowly  
in their barbed nest  
past careful ashtrays  
into the quiet rug  
and our hands  
are not enough  
to save  
the burning fish  
from the beach  
so  
i squeeze by  
crowded feet  
to stare away



## NIGHT

harsh hundred watt bulbs  
wallow in night virginity  
a thousand wounded bulbs  
each one  
an  
unheard siren

7

## STILL FEET

still feet  
climb  
to the moon's reflection  
that calls to itself  
through sown lips  
near  
the closeted hand

## NIGHT JOURNEY

braced faces press the street  
gratting concrete walls  
reeling on fire hydrants  
slamming light  
searching a blk corner  
solus  
of unmasked tears



RAY NEWTON (IN MEMORIAM)

8

dull fingers  
have slipped  
the ribcage  
from your pen  
that creeps  
from closed books  
behind shelves  
of grammar  
still your pulsating eye  
molds  
the cuckoo's own nest  
from the cities soft bricks  
that now  
dress in glass

THE SKULLGRIN DANCES

the skullgrin dances  
in my rusted bicycle frame  
stepping swiftly  
to the ballad  
of a night spectored sigh  
and gives a hush  
to midnight pine needles



## THE TREE CROUCHES NEAR

the tree crouches near  
fire hydrants  
wrapped thirsty in  
indian blankets

9

breath blots away  
cricket's high mass  
on stiffened water

and  
a sea of spanish sabre  
is the bed  
for my eyes

## MARSH HEN

marsh hen  
carries  
the inoculation knife  
of encircled school yard cry  
to the impeachment river  
coloring the grass with her rush  
to quiet flushing  
of the sand embrasure



## ONLY THE SEAGULL

10

the fronds  
used to laugh  
on the bare footed stairs  
now  
the imposter  
in the mirror  
disbelieves  
the shell's symphony  
and  
only the seagull  
will forgive  
my white throat

## THE LIGHT

the light  
whispers of curtain stains  
i have seen the edge  
of razor blades  
obscure it  
pigeons circle  
head down  
with the still cat  
in their bodies  
the trees breath  
calls the grain  
from the fields  
and only the iron dogs  
see the tree  
where the baby's hand  
is wrapped in cellophane



## YESTERDAY'S CEREMONY

splash aired bird  
leaves  
eye reflecting  
an aluminum  
smooth hand  
breathing  
torn black snakes  
whispering of  
yesterday's ceremony

## STREET LIGHT

street light  
drinks  
night puddles  
where  
dog's nails  
tick  
breath rhythms  
of burning egg sacks  
moon rings chill  
the possum's shy stare