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M.I. MAGAZINE

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Gorillas, guerrillas, werewolves, and excitable boys are but a few of **Warren Zevon's** musical concerns. The popular singer/songwriter shoots it out with **Bruce Pilato** in a revealing interview.



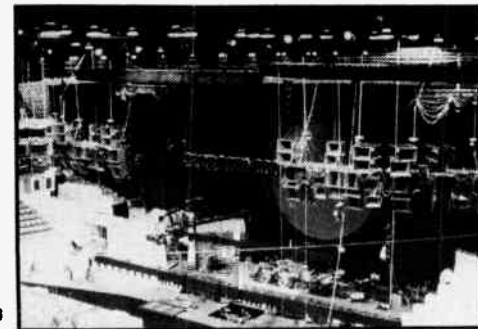
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"Stomp boxes" were never considered something that could be turned into a major part of the music industry. **MXR** has helped change all that. **Kirk Austin** offers an inside look at how.

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Since his emergence as guitarist with **Return To Forever** at the age of 19, **Al DiMeola** has astounded fellow musicians with his unique sound and exceptional technique. **Melodie Bryant** profiles the multi-faceted guitarist.

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The **New Wave** has produced a whole lotta shakin'—not only on the dance floors but within the record industry as well. **Joy Johnston** examines the rise of independent record companies and ponders the future of the new rock & roll.

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PHOTO: MARK MANDOR

Warren Zevon STRAIGHT FIDDLE

by Bruce C. Pilato

When it comes to the Southern California rock school of stars, Warren Zevon is often referred to as "the songwriter's songwriter." Along with Randy Newman, and not unlike Bruce Springsteen, Zevon has a tremendous skill for creating mini-musical novels, songs stuffed with imagery and propelled by a unique cast of characters. Among the Los Angeles area musicians with whom he has been most closely associated (Jackson Browne and Linda Ronstadt, in particular), Zevon's gonzo interest in mercenary and psychotic violence—expressed in songs such as "Lawyers, Guns and Money" and "Excitable Boy"—and his harder-than-soft-rock rhythms offer a particular attraction to the New Wave audience.

It took Zevon a long time to be noticed. His first album on a small label, *Wanted: Dead Or Alive* [originally on Liberty; reissued in 1979 on Pickwick] was a bomb both artistically and with critics and fans. It wasn't until many years later, after Zevon had travelled, lived in Spain, and done a stint as musical director and pianist for the Everly Brothers, that he began to come into his own as a songwriter and performer.

In 1976 he released his first album on Asylum Records, entitled simply *Warren Zevon* [Asylum, 7E-1060]. Although it sold only moderately, the Jackson Browne-produced LP was well received by the press. It firmly established Zevon as a thoughtful and highly enjoyable singer/songwriter. More importantly for his career, at about the same time Linda Ronstadt began covering Zevon's songs. His "Hasten Down The Wind" became the title track for a best-selling Ronstadt album, and the following

year she recorded several more of Zevon's songs, including "Poor Poor Pitiful Me" on her *Simple Dreams* LP.

Zevon's major breakthrough as a performer occurred in 1978, when he released *Excitable Boy* [Asylum, 6E-118]. Co-produced by Browne and guitarist Waddy Wachtel, the album was considered by many to be one of the finest of the year. It also gave Zevon his first bonafide hit song, the humorous "Werewolves Of London," with the Fleet-

wood Mac rhythm section of John McVie and Mick Fleetwood providing expert backing.

After a lengthy absence from recording and touring, during which Zevon overcame a serious drinking problem, in early 1980 he brought out *Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School* [Asylum, 5E-509]. Co-producing himself for the first time (with engineer Greg Ladanyi), Zevon's most recent offering failed to generate the critical acceptance of his earlier Asylum LPs, though it did feature more strong originals as well as a hit remake of an old Neville Brothers tune by way of the Yardbirds, "A Certain Girl."

Evidence of the high regard with which Zevon is held by the Southern California rock mafia can be seen by the cast of supporting players on *Bad Luck Streak*. Harmonies are leant by Browne, Ronstadt, J.D. Souther, and Eagles Don Henley and Glenn Frey, while fellow Eagles Joe Walsh and Don Felder, plus David Lindley, Browne and Waddy Wachtel, among others, offer instrumental assistance.

M.I.: Nothing is really known about the period just before you joined the Everly Brothers. What did you do then?

Zevon: That's a good point. It's not really talked about much because I really didn't do anything of high career profile. I was in blues bands! It's like I took a decade off to play the blues. I was obsessed with the first Blues Breakers album [John Mayall with Eric Clapton, *Blues Breakers*; London, PS 492], and I was a real passionate John Hammond fan. Mance Lipscomb and Bukka White—I'd go down to see those guys every night.

M.I.: Did you ever get to work with any of them?

Zevon: Yeah, I opened for John Hammond on

the first gig after the first [Asylum] album. It was mindblowing. It was great. I made a real spectacle of myself falling all over him.

M.I.: What about your very first album before you signed with Asylum, *Wanted: Dead Or Alive*?

Zevon: Ah... I did it. Everyone is responsible for their own actions. But there's a quotation by Stravinsky about a piece of his that he didn't like. He said, "Mistakes can be forgotten; not forgiven, but forgotten." Which is really all I can say.

M.I.: You've been a fan of and have studied Stravinsky. How deep is classical music's influence on you and your writing?

Zevon: My interest in classical music, apart from my personal enjoyment of it and my compulsion to write it, is that people not be intimidated by it and not feel that it's a measure of your intelligence or your sophistication. Because it's not. Most of it's boring shit; some of it's terrific. And I consider myself real lucky—not enlightened, just lucky—that I know that I like to play the Clash when I'm brushing my teeth and I like to play Korsakov's 14th String Quartet in the afternoon when the sun's going down.

M.I.: Who are your biggest rock & roll influences?

Zevon: The Beach Boys and the Beatles, of course. And the Yardbirds were one of my favorite bands. That's where I got "A Certain Girl."

M.I.: Did you look for an oldie to re-do with the intention of scoring a hit single when you cut "A Certain Girl"?

Zevon: I did it on the last tour [for *Excitable Boy*], and it was just a lot of fun. And whether you believe me or not, I really don't give too much of a shit about AM hits.

M.I.: Is there a big difference between the songs you write on the piano and the ones you compose on guitar?

Zevon: No, but sometimes I trick myself. I'll write a song on the piano and it evolves into something that rocks a lot more, like in terms of the guitar. The oddest example of tricking myself is a tune called "The French Inhalers," a relatively intricate and formally structured thing. I wrote that as a simple-minded tune on the guitar and transferred the arrangement to the piano. I guess it depends. I wrote "Poor Poor Pitiful Me" on the fiddle.

M.I.: Did you have a tough time with writer's block between *Excitable Boy* and *Bad Luck Streak*?

Zevon: I always have writer's block. The only time I don't have writer's block is the 15 or 20 minutes when I'm actually writing a song. The rest of the time I have writer's block and suffer.

M.I.: Are you like Hemingway and wake up in

ZEVON FROM THE HIP

the middle of the night with ideas and songs in your head?

Zevon: No. Hemingway got up at 5:00 in the morning. I'm not like Hemingway! I guess the only one luxury I have is a lot of little tape recorders always around. There's never one out of arms reach. And I guess somewhere amongst the brain damage I have learned some memory devices. I mentally take my own dictation, if you will.

M.I.: How much of an influence was Jackson Browne on the *Bad Luck Streak* album?

Zevon: Musically, I think his guitar playing, which is very unique to Jackson, is very much a part of "Gorilla, You're a Desperado." I think he plays like Django Reinhardt. He definitely plays uniquely and very well. Other than that, it's just like anything: you assimilate all those things you care about.

M.I.: Is there a particular story behind the song you co-wrote with Bruce Springsteen, "Jeannie Needs A Shooter"?

Zevon: It's a long story, but I tell it a lot because I don't mind. [Long pause] Jon Landau, who produces Bruce and co-produces Jackson Browne and who is just incidentally my guitarist David's brother, was talking to me at the time the court injunction was on Bruce. And he was saying, "The real sad part here is that Bruce is so prolific, he'll write a lot of songs and by the time we finally get in the studio he won't want to record any of them." And then Jon rattled off a bunch of titles kind of to himself. "We'll never do 'Fire,' and we'll never record this and we'll never record that, and we'll never record 'Jeannie Needs A Shooter.'" And I stopped him there and said, "What's 'Jeannie Needs A Shooter'?" And he said [Zevon now does a thick Jersey Springsteen imitation], "Oh... I dunno, just some tune, some tune." And I kept asking him until one time backstage at a Jackson Browne concert he said, "'Jeannie Needs A Shooter'... you like this line, don't you Warren?" I said "Yes! Yes I do." He said, "Then you write it." So I wrote the music and the first verse. I cut the track and put the strings on the track. At this point I realized that I didn't want to, and probably couldn't, go any further without getting some feedback from him. The feedback consisted essentially of me showing up at Asbury Park at 2:00 in the morning and saying, "Hey Bruce, you got five extra verses?" We listened to it and talked about it and his reaction to the arrangement and how we both felt it should go. And then, basically, he wrote the rest of the lyrics.

M.I.: Does your live set vary from night to night, or do you have a well-planned and precise show?

Zevon: It stays pretty much the same. I used to,

in my hazier days, mill around with the band and make existential moves. But I find when I see an act, I like to see someone who keeps it rolling and then loosens up in a couple of places in the set, depending on how communicative the audience is. There are some audiences you really can't talk with because they will yell back at everything you say, and you have to make a choice that I won't make anymore, that you're going to be antagonistic back. That was a trap I fell into when I was drinking.

M.I.: You get most of your best known songs, such as "Werewolves," "Johnny Strikes Up The Band," and "Excitable Boy," out of the way early in the show. Why not save them closer to the end?

Zevon: No, because I don't want to encourage the audience into a state of anticipation for old things. I prefer to say, "Well, if you came for 'Werewolves,' here it is," and move on to newer things.

M.I.: Why the infatuation with guns?

Zevon: O... K... It's gonna be guns. [Long pause.] After I had decided to go through with it and give up drinking, which was one of those problems I had, I took up a whole lot of physical activity. I realized that I was going to have an excessive amount of energy, time nerves... all those things. So, I started doing a lot of things, including shooting, which I was surprised to find I was extraordinarily good at. But apart from that is a personal consideration: I think that it's essentially like a very primitive kind of symbolism. We did the *Excitable Boy* sleeve with the gun on the plate. I guess my job is to get these weird ideas and use what skill I spent 30 years developing to present them in a way that's interesting. I wasn't entirely sure what [the photo of the gun] meant, except that I was entertained by it. So my artistic conscience said, "If this entertains you, then you gotta show it to somebody else." Jimmy Wachtel, Waddy's brother, who does all my art stuff and Jackson's—he doesn't like guns. And he didn't like it. We did a lot of soul searching about using it. I was scared, morally. But then I said, "You only get these ideas as an entertainer; it's not my idea to be a moral politician. It's up to the peo-



PHOTO: MARK MANDOR

ple who see it to evaluate it." So I said, "Well, it's my idea, I thought of it, I think it's funny, I'm gonna put it out." On the second album [with a gun on it, *Bad Luck Streak*], I wanted it on the outside, way upfront, so there was no way you could be misled into thinking it was a ballet or Swan Lake thing. But getting back to what I said, I think it's like a symbol to me. I think everyone has their own way of coping with big absolutes, big scary questions, big inevitables. I'm afraid of people who aren't afraid, who aren't confused, because those people are following the Ayatollah. So, it's like... in the midst of life we are in death. So you see the innocence [of the ballerinas] on the front, and you see the evil on the back. The Ingram [machine gun] on the back is more a suggestion of terrorism, which is what's going on now and which I pray is not a contagious disease of the Eighties.

M.I.: And how about your fascination with the C.I.A. and mercenaries?

Zevon: During the period just before I started recording, a number of my companions in Spain were mercenaries. They're a very colorful people and good for songs.

M.I.: Do you see yourself mostly as a singer, musician, or writer?

Zevon: As primarily a composer who happens to write lyrics.

M.I.: Did you ever say to yourself, "I'm just a songwriter and not a performer," or did you always want the performing thing?

Zevon: No, but there were a lot of other people who said, "You're just a songwriter, you're not a performer." In fact, one guy I was signed with, Bill Wilde, said: "I promise you you'll hang up the guitar after three days if you go out there." He was wrong [laughs].

M.I.



DiMeola's

Dazzling
Dexterity

Ever since his first album with Return To Forever at the age of 19, Al DiMeola has wowed budding young guitar players with his incredible technique. They have religiously followed his career through three LPs with that band, and four more of his own. His combination of lightning fast fingers, a unique emphasis on muting, and a special flair for all things Latin have set standards for others to try to reach.

But that was little help when DiMeola was starting out. Back then, being a technical whiz was the furthest thing from his mind. All he really wanted to do was play Ventures tunes.

In 1957, at the age of five, DiMeola took up the drums, but three years later he changed his mind. "My sister had some friends who were into the Ventures and Elvis," he recalls. "They used to come over to the house and bring their guitars. I picked up the instrument and took a liking to it. So I decided to take lessons and get serious."

With characteristic efficiency, he got himself a serious teacher. "He was a jazz guitarist—a very, very good jazz guitarist," Al stresses. "I was quite impressed with his technique. I learned all my theory and scales while I was still very young."

Around this time, DiMeola also began muting his playing. A method he developed so as not to disturb his family when he was practicing, muting has become a trademark of his style; one he decided to keep because of the clarity it lends to his playing. "I like to play in every register," he says. "You get down low, and if you're playing fast there's no way you're going to get a clear sound. It's harder to do, but I want that clarity."

Unfortunately, knowledge of scales and a good muting technique were not the order of the day; and though DiMeola had more facility than his contemporaries, he was unable to do the very thing which had inspired him to take up the guitar in the first place—play rock & roll. "I was very frustrated during my teenage years," he says, "because my training had been more in the jazz/classical vein. But I was influenced musically more by rock & roll. So at a time when all the guitarists wanted to play like Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, I couldn't do it. And I *tried*. I mean, I *tried* to play bluesy. But most guitarists in that period were playing *riffs*," he says, spitting out the word with disgust. "They didn't know how to play scales. Even today, most rock guitar players don't know how to use their second finger that much. They learn those four or five basic riffs with their first and third fingers and that's all you need, except for your barre chords. Now, I see that kind of playing as being rather limiting. But it was very frustrating at the time, because I

wasn't accepted when it came time to audition for bands."

Turning away from rock, DiMeola sought solace in country music. There he found not only good musicianship but also an unexpected incentive to his technique. "When I went to Berklee," he remembers, "people wanted to know where I got my technique from. Most of the people there had not been playing as long as I had, and didn't have as good a teacher. But it also came from the time I was into bluegrass pickers. I used to listen to Doc Watson records and try to do that stuff. When I finally went to see him play, I saw he was using fingerpicks on some tunes. I had been trying to do all that with a regular flatpick! But it really helped me get better, because I had been attempting something that was next to impossible."

Continuing to play country music, DiMeola began getting into jazz at around age 16, listening to John Coltrane and Miles Davis, and to guitarists like John McLaughlin and Larry Coryell, with whom he later became friends.

With such high standards and such diverse influences, he found himself heads above most guitarists by the time he reached The Berklee School of Music in Boston—not only in technique, but in attitude. Of his time there he now says, "It was a very good experience. I recom-

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DiMeola with Les Paul—Splendido Hotel sessions.

mend going to school very highly. But you have to stay away from the purists. There's a lot to learn from them, but they can be really closed-minded to what's happening outside, in the rest of the world. To them, Wes Montgomery was it and nobody else. And that's just not true."

But DiMeola didn't stick around the purists too long. Soon after he arrived, an audition with Barry Miles landed him a gig out on the road which lasted six months. And not long after he returned, a friend of his (Mike Buyukas), who had a tape of him with Barry Miles, handed it to Chick Corea who at the time was looking for a new guitarist. Chick gave DiMeola a call.

"It was mind-blowing," Al exclaims. "For about two or three years before I joined Return To Forever, that was my favorite group. If there was a dream that I could wish for, it would have been to play with them. I was in my apartment in Boston, broke, down and out, and there I was getting this call from Chick. I didn't believe it. I thought it was a prank. And then he said, 'Listen, I heard a tape of your playing and I was floored. I want you to come down to New York right away and join the band.' Just like that—no audition! And that's too much to believe, you know? Because he was a god in my eyes."

Within two days of Chick's call, DiMeola was playing with the band at Carnegie Hall. The next night, they played in Atlanta to an audience of 40,000; and thereupon began a whirlwind period of two years during which DiMeola played countless gigs (they toured over ten months a year), and recorded three albums, *Where Have I Known You Before?* (Polydor, PD 6509), *No Mystery* (Polydor, PD 6512), and *Romantic Warrior* (Columbia, PC 34076).

During that time he also put the finishing touches on his playing style, and for that—without hesitation—he thanks Corea. "Chick has been a total influence," he offers. "There is no one who has been more influential. I was influenced by him a lot before I ever met him; but playing with him helped develop my style a lot quicker, because when I first got with the band, I didn't recognize the style—he did."

Much of the influence was a Latin one. "Chick is Italian and I'm Italian; but when I heard him play before, I swore he was Latin. He plays rhythms no other keyboard player plays. He's got those rhythms down better than anyone—even the Latin players. And I relate to those rhythms easily."

Since leaving RTF, DiMeola has put out four

Columbia albums of his own: *Land Of The Midnight Sun* (PC 34074), the award winning *Elegant Gypsy* (JC 34461), *Casino* (JC 35277) and *Splendido Hotel* (C2X 36270). Each one has delved further and further into the realm of Latin music, fusing complex rhythms with increasingly modal writing, while continuing to explore the areas of jazz and flamenco guitar.

A guitarist who for seven years has made his reputation on spellbinding technique, DiMeola has been accused by some of being a mechanical player. That criticism surprises him. "Most critics are frustrated musicians anyway," he counters, "so I'm not bothered by that. But you know, playing a steel-stringed instrument like my Ovation is a different kind of feeling than a nylon-string. I think you can put more emotion into a nylon-stringed guitar, but I can't play it as well."

But if critics have found his playing concepts mechanized in the past, they may be a bit surprised by his attitude. Contrary to the impression given by the speed of his fingers, DiMeola does not live his life at a mile a minute. In fact, he was in no hurry to make his latest LP. "We went into the studio a year ago, but there have been a lot of breaks," he explains. "I took a trip to Japan and did a show with Chick and Tony Williams—there were a lot of factors. But I'm really against quantity over quality. So I'll make it when I want to make it. Of course, record companies don't love that attitude, but I'm more interested in the final result. If I don't feel like going in to record one day because I'm not feeling creative, I'm not going to go. Because there are a few songs in there that you really have to be in the right frame of mind for. It's more than just chops."

DiMeola's more relaxed approach to the studio is evident in his latest double album. *Splendido Hotel* is by far his most varied, interesting album yet. It includes not only the kind of blazing guitar work by which he made his name, but also a double-tracked flamenco guitar duet, a duet with Corea, some accessible cuts of light jazz, and a danceable rendition of "Spanish Eyes" played in collaboration with another one of his idols, Les Paul.

"The main reason I wanted to do a double album," explains DiMeola, "is that I wanted to be able to combine—to experiment with vocals and different things. I wanted to have a commercially successful record, but I didn't want to go completely commercial to get it. I just wanted to keep doing what I'm doing, but also include some things that your everyday person can enjoy."

Of those cuts, the everyday person is likely to enjoy "Roller Jubilee" and "I Can Tell," a tune where DiMeola once again takes up drums and also sings lead. But his own favorite is "Isfahan," an eleven-minute piece by Chick Corea featuring a string quartet, a boys choir and—by Corea's own admission—the most exquisite melodic line he has ever written.

"That's the greatest thing on the album," says DiMeola. "We did it live, except for the boys [the Columbus Boychoir]. I sent them the lead sheet, and they rehearsed it for two or three days. They must have rehearsed it intensely, because when they walked in they were totally ready. They had memorized it. And some of those intervals—for

little boys to sing—were really incredible.

"The rest of it was done live," he continues, "with a string quartet in Chick's living room in L.A. Later, I added mandolins to it. But it was a day that had to be over 100° outside; and with the recording equipment, it was about 110, 115. We were sweating to death when we were playing it, and I had jet lag galore. But we rehearsed it that day and did it."

As far as guitar sounds (and sounds in general), this is also DiMeola's most varied album and reflects just how far he's come since his days at Berklee. "When I first joined up with Chick, I knew the sounds I wanted to get," he says, "but I didn't have any time to experiment to get them. We had two days of rehearsal, went over about eleven charts, then played Carnegie Hall, and we were on the road ever since. So I didn't know as much about electronics, amplifiers, and how to achieve a magnificent sound as guys who have been doing it for awhile professionally and have the right equipment. Plus, it was a heavy chair to fill, because [guitarist] Bill Connors sounded real good with the band. And with Stanley going over to Alembic bass, it was pretty hard to mesh my sound in with that."

"Also, Chick has his own theory on making a record, and that's not to spend too much time getting it down. The first two records I ever did with Return To Forever only took four days apiece for the whole thing. So I was never really happy with what I played. But Chick was, and since he was the leader, I went with it. But I thought our third album, *Romantic Warrior*, was the best that I lent to the band."

When he first joined RTF, DiMeola was playing his 1971 black Les Paul through a 1958 Fender Twin Reverb, to which he later added a number of effects—an Edwards volume pedal, a Colorsound wah-wah, and a Taurus synthesizer (made by Moog and operated by a footswitch), which he used to drop notes down an octave. By the time of *Romantic Warrior*, however, he was playing through Marshalls straight, and since then he has lost all interest in effects.

"When I was playing through the Twin," Al details, "I used effects because you can only do so much with those amps—they just don't have that desirable sound. But as time went on, I began to experiment with bigger amps—anything to get that sound. Now I just go straight. I'm not closed-minded to effects, but in seven years I haven't found any that really turn me on that much. Every effect just thins out your sound. Especially since I mute a lot. Effects don't lend themselves to that. I love that thick sustained sound. I can get a few different kinds of sounds with my hand and that's enough."

A guitarist who at one time used a synthesizer, DiMeola is now opposed to them for guitarists. "I don't want to sound like a keyboard player's synthesizer," he says. "It's horrible. I mean, I heard John McLaughlin once experiment with a Moog on stage. He was plugged into a Moog, and he was trading with the Moog player, and I didn't know who was playing what. I didn't know. I want to know that it's a guitar when I hear it. I don't want to have the sound changed."

So rather than use an arsenal of effects, DiMeola prefers to play a variety of guitars. As

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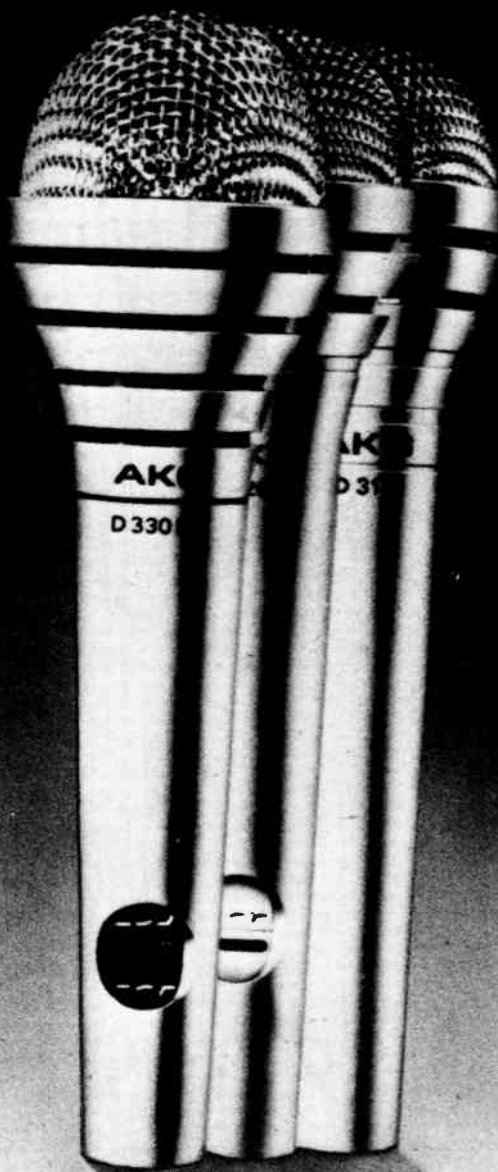
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well as his '71 Les Paul, he also uses a new Les Paul Recording guitar ("I just love that one," he says), and a '58 sunburst Les Paul (used primarily on *Casino* and his newest LP, though he considered it too ugly to put on the cover, and instead used his '66 gold-top Les Paul, now painted white). He also has a 1936 Gibson mandolin, and a Gibson L6-5.

But it is in his acoustics that he has the most variety. They include mostly Ovation—among them, his old Ovation Balladeer acoustic/electric—and six Fylde guitars (four 6-strings, a 12-string, and a mandocello).

While that may seem like an excessively large collection, as far as DiMeola is concerned each one has its function. He explains: "The Fyldes have a sustaining quality that the Ovation could never have—a quality of highs and an evenness. But they're not as easy to play anything technically difficult because of the way they're set up. And I love the sound of the Ovation, so for anything that's technically difficult, I'll use them. I use them both and I endorse them both.

"Frankly, I don't know any guitarist today who uses just one guitar. It's 1980, you know? It's variety now. There's no drummer who uses one kind of drums. If they say they do, they're lying. Especially if you're a professional who has influence over a very large number of people. You have companies coming up to you all the time with new products; and if you don't want to try them, you're crazy. It doesn't mean you have to stop playing the other guitars."

If variety is DiMeola's watchword, so is pacing. A phenomenal guitarist who raced rather than climbed to stardom, he has become more relaxed and sure of himself over the past couple of years.

"You've got to learn how to pace yourself," he feels. "I've been trying to do that the last couple of years, and it can be done. It's a problem, especially if you're out there doin' it all the time; because you can't only do it, you have to live it. I've learned a lot about my instrument in the last few years, not from practicing—I don't practice that much anymore—but from living. It's not that I don't want to practice. But there's a lot more to life."



PHOTO: TOM COPI

With chops out of the way and recognition established, DiMeola is looking forward to exploring new aspects of music. "Chick is not a pop writer. He doesn't write anything ABA. He writes more in the classical vein, and that interests me, because the music takes me somewhere. That's what I want to do. It's a great showcase for any instrument, and you can build into different moods in different sections. I've always been inspired by classical music. I haven't done any experimenting with sonata form yet, but I'll be getting into it. And, in fact, I'll probably be doing a record with John Williams in the future. Boy, that would be a dream. Phenomenal."

But DiMeola has not forgotten the inspiration that got him started. And now, with the advantage of pacing, the desire to expand, and a generally more relaxed attitude, it might not be too long before he takes another shot at rock & roll. "I still love the Ventures," he admits. "I gotta do a Ventures record. Maybe an updated version of 'Walk Don't Run.'" **M.I.**

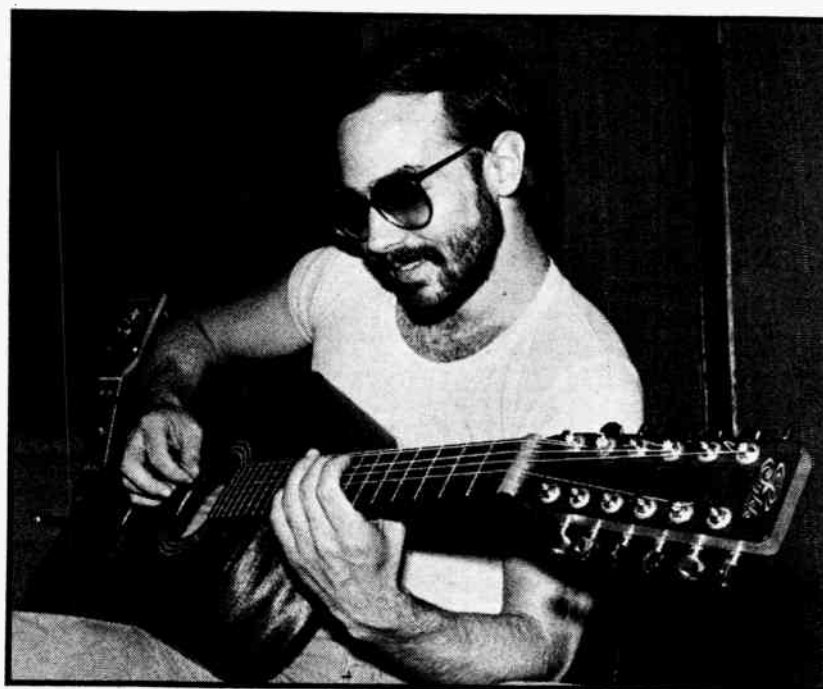


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NEW WAVE

Penetrates Major Markets

by Joy Johnston

A boom in independently produced records and small labels has been one of the more interesting by-products of the New Wave explosion. Independent records are certainly not new, nor are they confined to punk/New Wave music, but the punks' staunch D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) philosophy, along with major labels' reluctance to invest heavily in an unproven commodity, has made this alternative particularly attractive. What's more, the progress of punk provides the perfect microcosm for observing trends within the music industry at large, for if the majors continue their economic direction, we can look for independent recording to become increasingly critical to the development of new artists and new musical styles.

Major labels, to be sure, have achieved some degree of success with the more commercial proponents of the New Wave: Columbia with Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe, Epic with The Clash, A&M with Joe Jackson and the Police, and Warner Bros. with DEVO and the B-52's. But none of these artists even come close to the multi-platinum status sought by the majors and achieved by the superstars of the Seventies. The chances of a new band landing a major recording contract are more remote now than ever, particularly for those whose music shows little promise of breaking the Top 40.

The reasons, of course, are primarily economic. Major labels at one time worked successfully with the "buckshot approach": sign a lot, break a few. The winners more than paid for the losers, and there was no end of fresh fodder on the doorstep. But times have changed. The soaring costs of producing and marketing records, as well as the astronomical overhead of major labels, has placed the break even point for most albums in excess of 150,000 units. Artists who cannot sell at least 200,000 units of their second album are frequently dropped from the label, an ironic situation when you realize that 500,000 units—a gold record—was once recognized by the industry as an extraordinary achievement.

When the top priority is the bottom line, quality artists are no longer good enough; A & R people must sign "hit artists," pick up on "the next big thing," and that's very tricky business. Key decision-makers have shown a greater preoccupation with business concerns and become



"X" Billy Zoom, John Doe, Exene, Don Bonebrake

increasingly removed from street-level reality where new trends are born and nurtured. Former United Artists chief, Artie Mogull, succinctly summarized this situation at last March's N.A.R.M. (National Association of Record Merchandisers) convention: "The deal became more important than the music. Now the guy in the record company who'll listen to tapes has no authority, and the guy who has the authority won't listen to tapes."

Whatever the reasons, it has become increasingly clear that major record labels are abandoning the low-volume end of the business which has frequently been the domain of our most interesting, innovative and, ultimately, influential music. Small independent labels and enterprising self-produced artists are attempting to fill this vacuum. Their ability to do so successfully will, to a great extent, determine the future of new music in this country.

The task of any record company is to find quality talent (A & R), capture that quality on vinyl (production), make that product available to potential buyers (distribution), and create a demand for it in the marketplace (promotion). A major label, as defined in this article, is one that is financed by a major corporation and/or owns its own distribution network. An independent label is privately owned by its key personnel and financed and distributed outside of these corporate systems. A comparison between major record companies and small independent labels reveals advantages and disadvantages to both, and the difference, by and large, boils down to a

question of creative priorities and economic scale.

While independent label chiefs and self-produced artists certainly understand the necessity of showing some profit if they are to survive, fast bucks and overnight success are the last things on their minds. Most of them are undercapitalized, minimally staffed and run by sheer will. Often at the heart of their professional commitment is an intense love of the music they produce and the acute realization that, without their efforts, this music will go unheard and unappreciated. Howie Klein, co-founder of San Francisco's 415 Records, is typical of many small entrepreneurs in his business motivations: "To tell the truth, the reason we started 415 was because we thought it a tremendous crime that the Nuns weren't getting signed and their music wasn't going to be preserved. And here was a band that we felt, at the time, was great and had captured the imagination, certainly, of this area [S.F.] and they weren't getting recorded. And we thought, 'Well, they tried, we tried to help them, nothing's happened, we'll just do it ourselves.' And that's exactly the reason why 415 got started—nothing more, nothing less."

Since its inception with the Nuns in 1978, 415 Records has gone on to release singles by the Offs, Pearl Harbor & the Explosions, the Mutants, the Readymades, SVT, the Units and the Pushups, as well as a compilation album featuring eleven of San Francisco's leading bands. To this day, Klein and his two partners have yet to draw money from their label.

Because of their strong belief in the artists and their music, independents usually give artists a large degree of artistic freedom and creative control, long a bone of contention for those on major labels. Small labels also have no huge capital investment to protect and therefore have no need to dictate aesthetics to guarantee mass sales.

The aesthetic freedom offered by small labels is made possible by their ability to operate on a shoestring. Independently produced LP's can usually turn a profit at 5,000 units or less. Necessity is the mother of invention, it is said, and the independents' lack of capital has made them resourceful, even ingenious, and at the very least careful about expenditures in the studio and marketplace. When asked what constituted a profitable record for his label, Miles Copeland, chief of the International Records Syndicate, shot back, "One that costs nothing to put out."

Indeed, "indies" frequently avoid front-end costs altogether through speculation deals with recording studios or releasing finished masters produced by the artists themselves. By keeping costs down, they avoid losses, turn profits at low volumes, and can experiment and succeed with projects that would surely spell disaster for a major record company. "Any band can be economically viable if the production is scaled to suit the market," explains Bob Biggs of Slash Records in Los Angeles, "even the most esoteric jazz band. The whole market has become so fragmented that no major record company can exist on any one fragment. Generally what they do is get a crossover-pop type of audience. What we do is get a fragment and work it. We find a band we really believe in, let them do their music, and then go out and find a market."

So far, Biggs has released LP's by the Germs and X, both Los Angeles-based punk bands with strong followings. His philosophy of economic viability is reflected in the production budgets for these records: the Germs' LP cost about \$5,500 to record and has sold around 6,000 copies, while the X album, which cost \$10,500, has sold nearly 30,000 copies, a smash hit by independent standards. Both albums have turned profits for Slash.

The indies' ability to stretch their money is further demonstrated in promoting their product. Instead of pouring big bucks into expensive mass media—national consumer and trade publications, radio and TV—they concentrate their efforts on the grass-roots level. Bob Biggs explains his strategy: "Because we're so tied up with the magazine [*Slash*, L.A.'s leading punk publication] and our street credibility is so good, we deal mostly with the street. We've found that people in 'the business' are so removed from a street awareness and so jaded, they tend to deal with what they can sell based on demographics and abstract rules. That doesn't really work in this age. They don't know how to be site specific or people specific, and that's what we are—very small, very attentive and very specific." Paid advertising for small labels is generally limited to underground publications, while posters, flyers and disarmingly simple press mailings constitute the primary means of getting the word out. Most independent product is not geared to a mass audience anyway, so these methods tend to work quite effectively, especially for the amount of cash outlay.



Greg Shaw

For all the opportunities offered by independently produced and distributed labels, every one of them is plagued by the same critical problem: their inability to sell large volumes of records. "Any decent New Wave album ought to be able to sell 20,000 to 30,000 units," states Greg Shaw, head of Bomp Records in Los Angeles. "When the major labels put them out, even the worst groups manage to sell 25,000 units, because they can get into the stores. Small labels don't have access to that. The average sales for small labels on a single or an album is 3,000 to 6,000. It's very hard to get beyond that."

Bomp, for instance, released early singles by DEVO, the Romantics, 20/20, and the Shoes, among others, all of which sold under 10,000 units. Each of these artists has gone on to major label deals and sales of 50,000 to 100,000 units or more, an increase typical for artists making this transition. With such dismal sales for independents, one can only conclude that either everyone involved is incompetent, or else they are being held back by some very real problems. An examination of distribution and promotion within the American marketplace, especially when compared to Great Britain, reveals obstacles that are almost insurmountable.

Distribution is very difficult for independents. The vast size of this country, with its numerous urban and suburban markets, precludes the practice of loading up the car with records and hitting the stores, as is frequently done in the U.K. Professional distributors are necessary but not easy to come by, because all of them are interested primarily in big volume records. Most major labels own their own distribution networks, while those large companies which do not (A&M, United Artists, etc.) have deserted independent distribution in recent years and aligned themselves with the majors, a move that has driven many distributors out of business (Record Merchandising out of Los Angeles), caused others to be absorbed by larger firms (MS Distributing of San Francisco was bought by Pickwick), and limited the creative range and capabilities of those that remain.

"Without the volume of some majors," explained Ken Kushnick of Sire Records, "independent distributors cannot afford to make the payments on the warehousing and trucks to

be there for Tomato Records. All the little guys in the world don't solve their problem, because what they need is one record that can do a half a million pieces in two weeks." Most distributors won't handle one-off labels at all, and even 415, Bomp, Ralph and other small labels are lucky to get distribution at all, let alone priority.

By far the most receptive and consistent outlet for new and unusual music has been Jem Records, a leading national independent record distributor. (Most distributors are regional.) Jem distributes Slash Records and the bulk of one-off labels and punk singles released in recent years, but the rising volume of independent product is taxing their ability to deliver. "It used to be that I would distribute any sort of independently produced single that was any good at all that I could get my hands on, because I felt that it wasn't my position to play A & R man here. I was just trying to make these records available to the public," explains Rick Lawler, general manager and chief buyer for Jem. "The number of releases that are now being sent to me are far beyond Jem's capability to distribute all of them. I wish I could distribute all of them, but unfortunately it's just not feasible."

Cash flow and retail credit terms also pose formidable problems for independent labels. Jem and other independent distributors generally pay on a 90-day credit basis, which means that small labels must wait at least three months to be paid on product sold. The situation is even worse when dealing directly with major retail chains like Tower Records, Peaches, Warehouse Records, Record Factory, and Licorice Pizza, the corporate counterparts to the major labels, which rely on the majors for their big volume business and don't really need anyone else. The few small labels able to ride with a 90-day credit arrangement risk not being paid at all by major retailers, since many retailers are in a shaky cash position themselves and pay only those accounts that have the clout to shut off their critical flow of hit product. As a result, most independents do not sell to major chains at all. By comparison, the only financial terms available for retail suppliers in England is seven-days-cash, so cash flow is workable and independent product is available in all the stores.

Without the ability to make their records available to a broad range of stores, it's little wonder that independent labels are unable to sell in volume. "Corporate rock doesn't all sound alike, but it thinks alike," comments Ken Kushnick. "What we really do need is an alternative method of distribution in this country so that some alternative music can get distributed by people who are not saying, 'Call me when you go platinum.'"

The adverse attitudes and resistance met by independents in obtaining distribution is even more evident in their promotional efforts—most notably in radio. Every independent polled agreed that the recalcitrance of radio is the single biggest obstacle to selling and breaking records in America. Playlists have shrunk and tightened to such an extent that even major labels are having difficulty obtaining airplay for new artists; for independents, it is virtually impossible.

Radio, you see, is not in the music business. Radio is in the business of selling advertised pro-

ducts using music as bait. There's a difference. Because 100 percent of radio revenues come from advertising dollars, their goal is obtaining a large listenership by playing mass-oriented music (hits), quantifying that listenership through surveys (Arbitron, Source, Pulse, etc.), and generating maximum dollars from local and national advertisers on the basis of that listenership. Programming more diversified, innovative, specific music is considered counter-productive to the financial goals of radio.

In order to guarantee "big numbers," radio stations have become increasingly dependent on call-out research, sales statistics, and the opinions of highly paid programming consultants to tell them what to play. Gone are the days when programmers with good taste and a genuine love of music would listen to records and play what they liked. A few still do, like KLBJ-FM in Austin or WBCN-FM in Boston, both very highly rated stations in their respective markets, interestingly enough. But they are the exception that proves the rule. Most programmers play "follow the leader." Bruce Kirkland, general manager of Stiff-America, said it best: "American radio, in the final analysis, as far as we're concerned, is bankrupt."

Radio's reliance on sales statistics presents a Catch-22 for independents already handicapped by distribution problems. Even strong sales do not always guarantee critical radio exposure for an artist. Jay Boberg of the International Records Syndicate cited the example of a recent John Cale album that sold 10,000 to 12,000 records in markets where it received no commercial airplay whatsoever. "The main thing that we're finding out with radio," he notes, "is that excessive retail action or extremely strong demand on the part of the consumer, shown through buying records, does not necessarily dictate that radio will play it. You can virtually show them that their demographics point to playing the record, and they will still turn around and say, 'So? We're not going to play it!'"

The salvation of New Wave has been non-commercial and college radio stations, many of which are hampered by weak signals and sporadic scheduling. "The problem with a lot of college stations," observes Howie Klein bemusedly, "is that you turn on the radio and you either get the Slits or you get Armenian folk dancing. But many are tremendously effective."

Particularly problematic for the New Wave are blocks of key commercial stations programmed by consultants who are unable to relate to the genre, especially since records are broken by a chain reaction domino effect. The lack of support from one or two consultants can virtually kill a potential hit. "The Abrams-Burkhardt people [the nation's leading programming consultants] have such a hold on that domino effect," notes Howie Klein, "that nothing can happen without them. They've got sixty AOR [album-oriented rock] stations, and that block is enough to totally make or break any record. It's a disaster." Lee Abrams made a trip to England several years ago to check out punk music, and upon his return announced in his newsletter that it would never happen in this country. Klein, for one, has placed innumerable phone calls and sent letters and promotional copies of 415's records to Abrams and his staff. From what he has been told by representatives



Chris Knab, Howie Klein of 415 Records

PHOTO: RICHARD McCAFFREE

at Abrams-Burkhardt stations, the consultants have never even listened to the records, nor has Klein ever received a reply, a return phone call, or one note of airplay.

Whether it's the money, the opportunity to communicate their music to the broadest possible audience, or simply the desire to succeed for its own sake, musicians want desperately to crack the American record market. And they realize that it's not likely to happen on a small, independent label. As a result, most artists are reluctant to remain tied to a small label once a major beckons. Three of England's most radical bands, for example, are signed to giants in the U.S.: the Clash to Epic/CBS, and Public Image Ltd. and the Gang of Four to Warner Bros. Their disagreements and dissatisfaction with their labels may be legend, but there they are, nonetheless, and they're not alone. "Really, I can't blame musicians for playing the traditional game and wanting the traditional rewards," notes Andy Schwartz of the New York Rocker, "when the alternative is, in a sense, a ghost—when the alternative system in this country of recording, distribution, promotion and financing for rock & roll is so pitifully weak, and, in many ways, ineffective."

Independent labels, to be sure, have tremendous difficulty procuring long-term agreements with artists. 415's deals, so far, have been exclusively one-offs, while Bomp Records holds long-term options on the Dead Boys and one or two others only, agreements with built-in guarantees regarding methods of distribution and projected sales levels. X and the Germs have long-term agreements with Slash Records, as do Tuxedo-moon and MX-80 Sound with Ralph Records, but these artists are so non-commercial that a major label deal was practically precluded from the start. In light of this last problem, independents are faced with a very serious dilemma, for without the opportunity to share in the payoff from the groundwork laid in establishing new artists, where are they going to get the money, power and prestige to change their dismal standing in the record industry at large? And, without that, how can they improve their ability to deliver substantial results for their artists?

Something's got to give, not only for the sake of small independent labels and aspiring musicians, but in order to assure the

change, growth and enrichment of the music itself through the influence of new styles and trends. Some alternatives must be found so that music not geared to the American Top 40 can still be heard and appreciated by a potential audience far greater than sales statistics would lead one to believe.

One solution lies in major labels opening their distribution and promotion networks through custom label deals, licensing agreements and other types of affiliation. CBS and MCA have announced plans to offer pressing and distribution services to established labels that are financially autonomous and promotionally self-sufficient, a practice that has worked successfully in England in recent years. While these deals are now being offered only to those executives with track records—Neil Bogart's Boardwalk Records and Ron Alexenburg's Handshake Records, for instance—they represent a move in the right direction and, with success, could filter down to the real independent level.

British labels like Stiff, Virgin, Island, and I.R.S. (known as Faulty Products in the U.K.) have procured U.S. distribution through licensing agreements with major labels—CBS, Atlantic, Warner Bros., and A&M, respectively—but these affiliations, while considered successful by the parties involved, are far from a panacea. In each case, the smaller label is still privately owned and financially autonomous, but relies on the major for its promotion and distribution. Most of these majors, however, have the right to pass on any given album, and the smaller label must be prepared in such cases to function independently in the American marketplace and generate profits on sales of 50,000 albums or less. Most are ready and even enthusiastic.

Probably the New Wave's most successful custom label is Sire, an American company co-owned by Warner Bros. and therefore no longer technically an independent. Through the marriage of small company creativity and large company clout, these labels are beginning to fill the no-man's land of sales statistics with some of the most interesting rock & roll to come along in years: the Ramones, Talking Heads, XTC, Lene Lovich, Rachel Sweet, Ian Dury, the Buzzcocks, John Cale, and the Pretenders. Each of these artists has sold between 50,000 and 400,000 units (the Pretenders are approaching 1,000,000) of albums that cost far less than most major label LP's. But this is only a beginning. Other solutions are required as well.

Musically speaking, the future looks good. Everyone quoted in this article agrees that we are headed for tremendous creative diversity, and that the viability of the American music industry is dependent on its ability to be responsive to the changing tide. "If you look at the scene today in terms of an infinite number of bands, any one of which could sell 50,000 to 100,000 albums," notes Greg Shaw, "and if you sing them and record them and market them in such a way that you can make a profit on those kinds of sales, which can be done, then you have a very healthy situation that is a lot more economical, efficient, and really in tune with the direction of history at this point. The only revolution," he concludes, "is to change the system so that there is never a handful of people, whoever they may be, who control what we hear and what we buy."

M.I.



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The Duke of Ro

It is 5:15 in the afternoon and the large auditorium that's empty with audience is filled with chaos. Everywhere you look there are roadies in T-shirts and jeans scurrying in every direction, looking for cables, adjusting lights, moving this, moving that. Security men stake out their territory, while someone from the promoter's office is wondering where the hell the caterer is with dinner for 54. Through the monitors blare vocal checks, while two drummers, out of sync, pound away out of the mains. And in the midst of all this insanity, behind a barrage of keyboards, sits Tony Banks with headphones on, calmly trying to tune one of his synthesizers.

Aside from being one of the premier progressive rock keyboardists, Banks is also one-third of Genesis, one of the most popular and noteworthy groups on either side of the Atlantic. For Tony, this soundcheck will be one of the last for the year. The group is about to finish up four months of solid touring in Europe, Canada and the United States and that will be it, until 1981.

Hot on the heels of their newest album, *Duke* (Atlantic, SD 16014), Genesis has covered nearly 40 cities with a generous and exciting two and a half hour live show featuring some of the most innovative music and musicianship offered in a long while.

It has been an exhausting jaunt for the group, which in addition to Banks includes vocalist/drummer Phil Collins, bassist/guitarist Michael Rutherford, as well as their two regular support musicians, drummer Chester Thompson and guitarist Daryll Stuermer. With the exception of the Vancouver gig, which was cancelled because Collins had laryngitis, the tour has gone as smooth as silk, even though you'd never know it from watching the soundcheck.

But when the lights go down in each city a little after 8:00 PM, the magic of Genesis captures the stage and from then on it's clear sailing. Despite their intricate melodies and solos, their songs are unusually accessible. The outstanding stage presentation, along with the charisma of frontman Collins, makes the Genesis show one of the most entertaining packages currently on the rock scene.

The audio quality of the Genesis show is among the finest of all touring rock bands. They're loud, yet never excessive. Unlike most highly technical bands, their soundman never loses sight of the fact that the vocals are the key. Collins and the harmonics were always crystal clear and mixed upfront. Gone are the mirrors and extravagant lasers from previous tours. This time the group used only stage lights and indulged only occasionally in their smoke machines.

Offstage, Tony Banks is much like he is onstage—quiet and serious. He is a very pleasant Englishman and, fortunately, void of any of the attitude problems that most rock & roll millionaires seem to live on.

"We're trying to change the balance a little bit," said Banks earlier in the tour from his hotel room in Houston. He was speaking of the group's plans to gradually curtail their touring activities and concentrate more and more on their studio

work. "We're trying to change the emphasis. We've got a routine that we've been in for about the last seven years where we'd spend six to nine months a year on the road touring and then about three months rehearsing and doing an album." Pausing slightly to emphasize his point, he concludes, "We're going to change that now."

Banks also seemed pleased by the group's regression towards a much simpler live visual presentation. "I think we just got fed up with it," he said of the lasers and mirrors the band had used previously. "Actually, there were several reasons. All these extra effects tend to be unreliable and that is very frustrating for us, for when things go wrong it has an adverse effect on the music. And one is irrelevant and the other matters a lot. The other thing is, it was time to do something different. We really like to make each tour different and we feel there is an awful lot that can be done just with lights."

Along with the others in the band, Banks takes his work very seriously. A workaholic by most rock & roll standards, when Banks and the band aren't touring they're probably recording, writing or rehearsing for more tours.

"It's mainly getting the lighting rigs together," he said of preparing and rehearsing for a Genesis tour. "We work on the design, but once we get to a place a lot of it is changed." For the most recent tour the band rehearsed for two weeks with Stuermer and Thompson to break them into the new material and then for an additional three weeks, working on the entire show.

And after seeing the band live, it seems as

though the rehearsals are most important to Banks. His intricate keyboard work, along with Collins' distinct vocals, are the essence of the band's music. In fact, when Genesis became a trio in 1977, it seemed as though all the pressure was placed on Banks to carry the melody as well as a good portion of the soloing.

But Banks doesn't see himself working any harder onstage or off. "Well no," he said matter-of-factly, "no more than the other two. I think Genesis has always been a co-operative band, so the fewer the people in the band the more the rest of us have got to do; but nevertheless we find, in fact, that it gets easier. With five [people] sometimes it's harder to get what you want, because there's more people writing and wanting to play on tracks. When there's only three of you, the greatest thing, let's say, of having a bassist who also plays guitar is that it's easy not to have guitar on a track. Because he's content to just play bass. Also, in my case, I can play guitar on a track that might not have too many keyboards on it."

At a time when Emerson, Lake & Palmer, King Crimson, Strawbs, U.K., Yes, Jethro Tull, and other British progressive rock bands have either disbanded or are merely living off the fat of their past glories, Genesis has become an oddity. When it seems as though techno-art rock is waning in popularity, Genesis keeps getting bigger and bigger, without compromising.

And with Rick Wakeman, Keith Emerson, and Eddie Jobson out of the limelight, Banks remains one of the last surviving British keyboard kings. Yet he doesn't see it that way. "I don't think of myself as a keyboard player in that kind of way;



TONY BANKS

by Bruce C. Pilato

ck Keyboardists



PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER

I think of myself as more a band member and a writer." Banks added that he foresees Emerson and Wakeman returning to the rock scene before long.

Banks, however, has all the elements of the others: a lengthy training in classical piano, a love for rock & roll that developed as a teenager, an avid interest in synthesizers, and a career with a progressive rock/theatrical band. But according to Banks, all that means nothing.

"I did have classical training until I was 17, but to be honest I never really got very good at it. Although there was a period where I hated it, I did end up enjoying it." Banks says he was mostly influenced by pop songs he would hear on the radio. The songs he liked he would learn by ear on the piano.

Banks first got seriously interested in rock & roll back in 1966 when he attended England's exclusive Charterhouse School. Among his classmates were three other music minded chaps named Peter Gabriel, Michael Rutherford, and Anthony Phillips. The four eventually got together. Their original aim was not to be a band, but rather a songwriting team.

"Yeah, we definitely were [songwriters]. I mean, Peter and I wrote songs together and Michael and Anthony wrote songs together, and we decided to make tapes together. Really, just as an idea to sell our songs. We couldn't get anyone interested and a lot of people said the best way to get people interested was to form a band and maybe get yourself some gigs. So, we started doing that and we made one record, *From Genesis To Revelation* [out of print] in 1968. And we

were really trying to sound like everyone else in some ways so we might get someone interested in one of our songs. But that didn't work, so in 1970 two members of the band [Michael and Anthony] wanted to go professional and so Peter and I carried on playing with them."

The *Genesis To Revelation* LP was produced by British pop-whiz Jonathan King and featured the four teenage members, along with drummer John Silver. That album was a dud (only to be revived after the band had hit it big) and Silver was replaced by drummer John Mayhew.

After a two-year hiatus, the group re-emerged with *Trespass* (ABC Records, ABCX-816), the first album to feature the original style that would soon be recognized throughout the world as the sound of Genesis. At this point, however, the band had a format that was as much acoustic as it was electric, and although Gabriel had already made himself the focal point of the group, Banks and Phillips traded off as the band's chief instrumentalists.

Three months after the release of the record, Phillips and Mayhew departed and the band nearly folded. Gabriel, Rutherford and Banks, however, realized they had worked too hard and come too far to just throw it all away. They recruited guitarist Steve Hackett and drummer/vocalist and ex-child actor, Phil Collins.

In September of 1971, the band in its new lineup released *Nursery Cryme* [re-released with *Foxtrot*, Charisma, CA-2-2701], the album that would begin their steady popularity climb in the U.S. Although the album didn't break any sales records at first, the group did gather a loyal cult

following that eventually became a mass of admirers. They also started to develop their intricate lyrical and musical style, and even more importantly, Gabriel initiated the band's lavish stage presentation, one that would soon become as central as the music.

The following year they released *Foxtrot*, an album that took up where *Nursery Cryme* left off. By now the group had a stable of classics, which included "Watcher Of The Skies," "Supper's Ready," and "The Musical Box." Through heavy FM airplay alone, they made their U.S. debut headlining a sold out Philharmonic Hall concert in New York. Because of their involved stage show, the band was forced to play all their gigs without being (or having) a support act. A live album followed later that year.

In 1973 Genesis put out *Selling England By The Pound* [Charisma, FC6060], and also became linked to Atlantic Records through a distribution deal with their label, Charisma. Atlantic gave the band a healthy promotional push and soon afterward the band became superstars.

By this point, Banks' synthesizer work was among the musical highlights of the group. His innovative keyboard runs ranked second in the group's identity, behind only Gabriel's unique vocals and lyrical concepts.

Banks looks back on the period from 1970 to 1973 as a time when Genesis worked hard to succeed, but never really had to overcome any major obstacles: "By the time we came to the U.S., we were already playing the bigger theaters and we were always playing shows on our own. We always thought we were quite lucky. I mean, some places we played had large audiences right from the word go. Whereas in England, we would play for three or five people some nights; when we first started off there was no one there. It was very frustrating. But in America it had always been more organized. We came over in 1972 after being on the road for three years already. It sort of has become a steady circuit; each time you come back you just play bigger and bigger halls to more and more people."

Genesis' next release, the mammoth and thoughtful double LP *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* [Atco, SD2-401], aside from being one of the definitive concept albums, was their most sophisticated work to date. Although it remained in the typical Genesis mold when it came to music, lyrically the *Lamb* LP was a distinct departure. Previously, most of their songs revolved around odd characters in a fantasy universe setting. This LP, however, dealt with the bleak reality of New York City.

The band toured feverishly to promote the album, and from November 1974 until May 1975 they performed the entire album 102 times. Although the band had become even more instrumentally oriented onstage, they also expanded their visual presentation to include a huge screen which sat behind them, on which over 2,000 slides were projected during their show.

For critics and fans, their extraordinary live show seemed more theatrical than musical, and the constant focus on Gabriel eventually took its toll on the other members of the band. "I suppose it did a bit, yeah," admits Banks. "The band, you see, was always a very co-operative

thing. Everyone thought that they were equally responsible in terms of the lyrics, music and presentation, because we all worked on it. And obviously, Peter became the figurehead. But on *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* tour, the rest of the band was hardly ever mentioned in any of the reviews that we read, which was a bit strange for us. But I think that kind of balance would have changed a bit as we got better known; people would have gotten more interested in other people in the group."

In August 1975, the rock world was stunned by Peter Gabriel's announcement that he was leaving Genesis. Many thought that this was truly the end for the band; it was as if Mick Jagger had left the Rolling Stones.

The band, however, was told by Gabriel of his upcoming departure in December of the previous year. According to Banks, they were saddened by his decision, but by no means crushed. "I tried to persuade him not to [go], but once he had decided to go and the rest of us decided to carry on, that was it, really. We'd been through it before with people leaving. To everyone outside the band, Peter leaving seemed to be the most serious thing, but for me the most serious departure was that of Anthony Phillips back in 1970. At that stage we had only been going a very short time and we really felt the nucleus of the four of us was very important."

The band rebounded in March of 1976 with what has become their most successful album to date, *A Trick Of The Tail* [Atco, SD38-101]. Filling Gabriel's spot was drummer Phil Collins, who, ironically enough, had more of the elements of Gabriel's voice than any of the many vocalists they auditioned. The group, now a foursome with Chester Thompson added on drums for live gigs, did a worldwide SRO tour to support the album. "The point was that *Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, in terms of sales, was a bit of a failure compared to *Selling England By The Pound*. But with *Trick Of The Tail*, we were very confident with that album. We thought it was pretty good."

In between their incessant touring, the band found time to record and release *Wind & Wuthering* [Atco, SD36-144] in 1977. Although not as big a seller as *Trick*, it did further propel the group's popularity.

Then came another live LP, and another double album, this one entitled *Seconds Out* [Atlantic, SD2-9002]. After touring to support that album, the group was shocked with another departure—this time guitarist Steve Hackett. The remaining three members decided to "simply carry on" and went right to work on their next album, entitled *And Then There Were Three* [Atlantic, SD-19173], released in 1978. With that album Genesis scored their first bona-fide worldwide hit, "Follow You, Follow Me." The group toured heavily throughout that entire year, using their current line-up.

The three members used 1979 to relax and work on solo projects. Michael Rutherford did a solo album called *Smallcreep's Day* [Charisma, CMA1-2212], Phil Collins recorded and toured with a jazz fusion band called Brand X, and Banks released a solo LP entitled *A Curious Feeling*, [Charisma, CMA1-220].



PHOTO: JON SIEVERT

"After we finished doing *And Then There Were Three*, I was writing material but I didn't know what it was going to be for. I was saving it for another Genesis album, although I had thought vaguely of doing a solo album. And then Phil had to sort out a few personal problems in the beginning of '79, and that left time for Mike and I to put together our solo albums. I began to put the stuff in a certain order and began working on lyrical concepts to link all the pieces of music. Then I made some demos and decided on a story line. And I don't know quite why I decided on what I did."

For *A Curious Feeling*, Banks played all the instruments himself, with the exception of drums and vocals. Tony seemed to have no problem getting his one man band together. "Well," he said in a modest tone, "I've played rhythm guitar with Genesis all through the years, so in that area I didn't have too much of a problem. I only played a little lead guitar on the album and that was more difficult because I'd never done that before. And the other thing, the bass guitar, I'd played it before a bit but never really done it on an album. But it wasn't that big of a challenge; I really got into that. Also, I could fall back on the electronic bass, such as on a keyboard... bass pedals and what not."

Before he knew it, Banks was back at work with Genesis. Upon the release of their solo albums, the band regrouped and began writing for their newest LP, *Duke*. Half the album was written by the band as individuals and the rest they wrote collectively. After six weeks of rehearsals, they went into the studio with long-time producer David Hecthel and cut the record.

For Banks there is no conflict in writing for himself and the band. "I couldn't make an album where I sort of 'kept back' stuff, unless I was writing for a specific project. We did have a song, however, that worked the other way, with some of the material we ended up not using on the solo albums. There is one song on the new Genesis album, a compilation of one bit of Mike's and one bit of mine, which we'd actually rejected for our solo albums. But that turned out to be one of the best tracks on the album, so that just goes to show you..."

Duke, to no one's surprise, has become one of 1980's monster releases. It has no particular concept ("It's just a collection of songs"), and two of the tracks, "Misunderstanding" and "Turn It On" have become the group's newest hits.

Although some critics feel the band is getting too commercial, Banks doesn't see it that way at all: "No, not really. It's just that with *And Then There Were Three* we decided that we liked shorter songs. That was the only decision [in that direction] that we made, because there were three songs that we couldn't include on *Wind & Wuthering* because other songs were too long. We felt the album would've been better balanced had those three songs been on. So when we came to *And Then There Were Three* we tried to keep the song lengths down a bit and get the variety. I don't know with this album; once we got into it we started keeping the songs shorter. It just sort of turned out that way, you know? It's quite possible that on the next album we won't have any. It's not sort of planned to keep getting singles, and anyway, I'm getting fed up with singles! You start worrying about what's happening with your single and that's not what I'm in this business for, I prefer not to think about them; I think about the album."

As a matter of fact, Banks prefers to think of one thing at a time. At this point in his life, all he is concerned with is the current tour and his responsibilities to it, among them, his equipment. Banks has far more to keep him occupied onstage than the other members; therefore he needs a keyboard setup which allows him to be in total control of the sound.

"Onstage," he says, speaking enthusiastically about his gear, "I'm still using the Yamaha CP-70 electric piano. And I'm still using a Hammond 3 organ, but other than that, the other instruments are all different [than on the last tour]. I'm using a Prophet, an ARP Quadra, and also a Roland Vocoder."

"For all albums, I use anything that comes to hand. The main synthesizer on the new album, in fact, is the Yamaha CS-80, but I don't like taking that on the road; it's too bulky. I can't fit it into my setup, and the change of tone is not as easy as the Prophet, which is also a great bass instrument. So I just decided when we started rehearsing that I'd like to use the Prophet. I use an ARP Quadra because you can get tones similar to ones I got on the 2600. Actually, you can trigger the 2600 using the Quadra. Originally I thought that's what I was going to do onstage, but in the end I decided it wasn't really worthwhile. I decided to use the Quadra on its own."

For Tony Banks and the rest of Genesis, their future is not so much unorganized as it is laid back. "At this point," says Banks, seeming like it makes no difference to him at all, "I have no idea what the next album is going to sound like. When we get back, Phil's gonna do an album on his own and Mike and I are going to continue writing. And then we'll all get together again late in the fall."

He makes it sound as if the band has finally settled into its current line-up, and with all its personnel changes behind them, can now concentrate 100 percent on its music. "And there's always an audience for it; I mean, Genesis' popularity always grows." As for the band's continual acceptance by the masses when intricate music like this is being strangled by the likes of Ted Nugent and New Wave? "Well," says Banks with a slight chuckle, "our competition is dying off!"

M.J.

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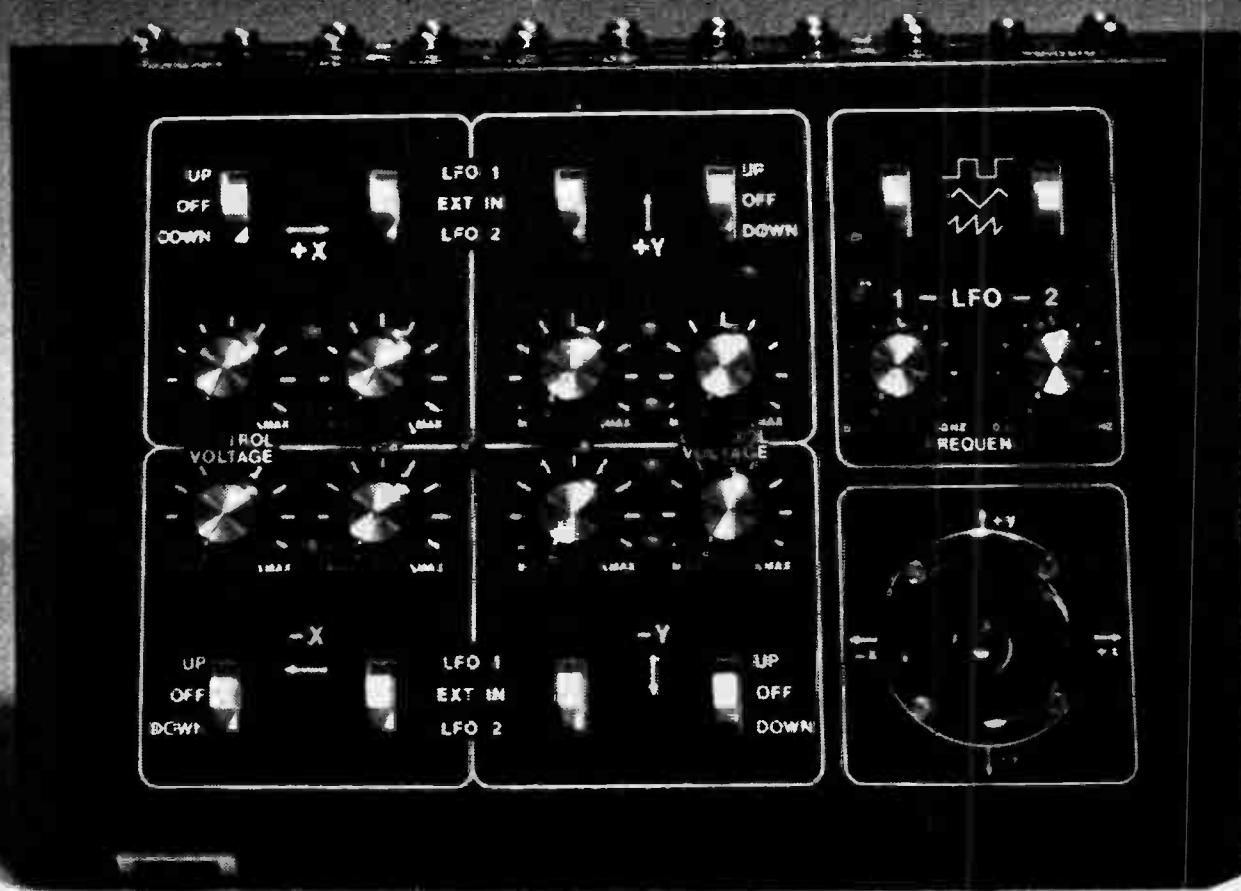
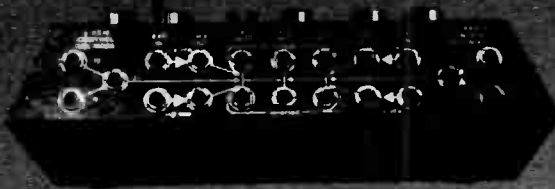
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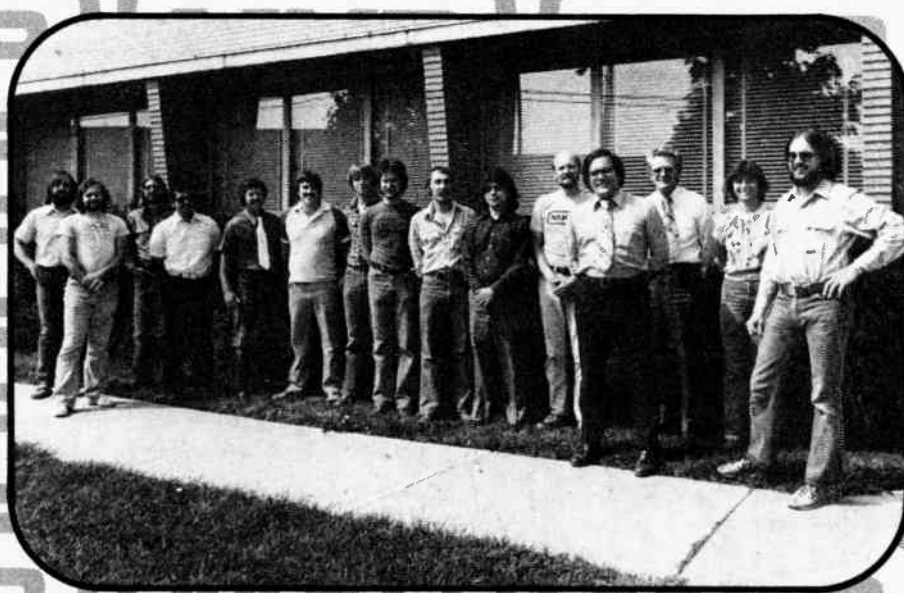
INSIDE

MXR

MXR



Terry Sherwood Secretary-Treasurer
Richard Neatrou Chief Engineer
Phil Betette General Manager



DESIGN & ENGINEERING

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by Kirk Austin

Having trouble lately being able to tell a guitar from a synthesizer? On many current albums the sounds produced by these two instruments are so similar that it takes a trained ear to hear the difference (and even the trained ear can be fooled sometimes). During the Sixties it was easy to identify an electric guitar, but since the mid-Seventies it has become increasingly difficult. One of the biggest reasons that this has happened is a company called MXR Innovations, Inc. They produce a complete line of effects boxes that alter, enhance, color, or otherwise modify the sound of electric instruments.

Of course, there were fuzz tones and wah-wah pedals before MXR came along, but, by and large, they were thought of as gimmicks by most musicians, and many of these devices lacked high quality design and production techniques because they were "just for guitar players anyway." As time went by, though, it became apparent that guitar players required as much quality and durability as the finest studio equipment. Anything could happen to electronic equipment that was subjected to the abuses of being on the road. Guitar players needed equipment that could be run over by a truck or soaked with beer and still operate. There is nothing more frustrating than having a piece of equipment fail during a live performance in front of an audience.

Two people who became aware of these problems were MXR's President, Keith Barr, and Secretary/Treasurer, Terry Sherwood. They met each other at Rush-Henrietta High School in Rochester, New York, and both of them were interested in music at that time. After high school, in 1971, they formed an audio equipment repair company called Audio Services and began to realize that the fuzz tones and other devices brought in for repair were not as durable as they could be. Two years later, Sherwood and Barr formed MXR and

began producing phase shifters in their basement. At first they built just fifty of them. The business eventually snowballed into what is now a company employing over 170 people.

MXR's first product was called the Phase 90, and it brought a new standard of reliability to the effects market. There were other phase shifters on the market, but the Phase 90 was small enough to fit in a guitar case, sturdy enough to withstand severe abuse, simple to operate, and cost effective. It was a very big seller, and soon phase-shifted guitar sounds were heard on a large number of recordings. It became "the guitar sound" of the mid-Seventies much like the wah-wah pedal had dominated the late Sixties.

More importantly, the Phase 90 changed the way people looked at effects boxes. According to Terry Sherwood, "By providing the musician with studio quality sound effect devices that were not only cost effective, but highly reliable, we feel that we've helped bring credibility to an industry that was once thought of as gimmicks and toys." Another interesting thing about the Phase 90 was the fact that it fit into many different styles of music. Rock, jazz, and country musicians alike were making use of this new sound, and continue to today.

With the success of the Phase 90, MXR had to expand. And in doing so they hired their first employee—Richard Neatrou. Richard originally worked for Barr and Sherwood when they operated Audio Services, and he later became the Chief Engineer for MXR. Neatrou, like Barr, had a background in both electronics and guitar playing, and is intent on making products that have practical value for the working musician. "A basic part of our philosophy," says Neatrou, "is that our designers be constantly aware that our musical and professional products are used as tools by musicians and sound engineers to free up their creativity, and to more easily and

repeatedly produce audio images." The fact that the engineers at MXR are also musicians might explain why all of their products have been well accepted.

This "musical engineering" that created MXR in the beginning is still going on today. Along with Senior Engineer Tony Gambacurta, Neatrou is continuing the MXR tradition. "When designing, we constantly update our knowledge of not only the circuitry, but also the end user's real needs," says Neatrou. "We use positive-action switches instead of the silent type, because you can feel when the effect is in or out. You won't find useless controls on our products." This philosophy has led to a musical product line of over a dozen different musical "effects boxes" that are easy to understand and useable with any electric instrument (electric piano, synthesizer, and bass as well as guitar). The controls are kept to a minimum in order to avoid confusion, and most of the musical products are still small enough to fit in a guitar case. Also, when designing new products the present users are never forgotten. The power supply/battery eliminator is a new product that interfaces with all of the previously manufactured units.

MXR was instrumental in bringing effects boxes to a point where they could be judged by the same criteria that other audio equipment are judged. According to Neatrou, "All products are designed to provide low power consumption, low noise, low distortion, wide bandwidth, easy interfacing with other equipment, low upkeep and maintenance, and long life in the field. We are also involved in the setting of standards of electrical parameters to insure compatibility among electrical manufacturers. All of the above requirements are considered before we manufacture a new product, because we want the audio craftsmen using our products to have not only a useful effect now, but also equipment with lasting value."



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SOME OF THE CREW

Although MXR started out only manufacturing musical equipment, they began to realize that studio engineers and audio enthusiasts are also interested in products that enhance sound. This led to the development of two other product lines—the professional products and the consumer products. The professional products are rack-mountable studio-oriented effects that include the Digital Delay, the 15- and 31-band equalizers, the Pitch Transposer, and the Flanger/Doubler. These differ from the musical products in that they are AC-powered units with XLR connections, and operate at line levels (some of the musical products also operate at these levels).

Since MXR was already making effects that were being used by studios, it was a natural progression for the company to begin a line of products that were specifically intended for studio use. Again, the musical value of the products was the main concern, and the first entry into this field, the Digital Delay, proved to be extremely useful. Not only was it capable of long echoes, but it also created flanging (positive and negative), vibrato, infinite hold, and automatic double tracking (doubling) at a price that was well below competitive digital delays which were much less versatile.

By the late Seventies, the flanging and automatic double tracking effects had become so popular that they were appearing on almost every record. The doubling effect was especially popular, because it enhanced or fattened the sound without making it appear overly "processed." In order to provide a means for creating these effects without the investment of a Digital Delay, MXR introduced the Flanger/Doubler. This is a device that combines these most used effects in one package with easy to understand controls and remote capability. Although this duplication of effects may seem redundant to

some, the reality is that some manner of these sounds could be used on every track of a recording. When Gary Numan toured the United States this Spring, he brought with him almost every MXR Digital Delay that was available in England in order to duplicate the sounds of his recordings.

The latest addition to the professional products group is another device that manipulates time—the Pitch Transposer. This device utilizes a unique application of the Doppler effect (the reason a car horn changes in pitch as it moves towards you or away from you) to change the pitch of an instrument or a vocal line. This opens up a whole new range of possibilities to performing musicians and studios alike. In live performance, it will allow musicians to sing harmony with themselves or to raise or lower the pitch of instruments. In the studio, it will enable engineers to fix a flat note in an otherwise perfect track, or to add pitch bend to instruments like acoustic piano.

When the people at MXR began noticing that home stereo equipment was getting more sophisticated, the consumer products line was started in order to meet the needs of the serious audio enthusiast. Graphic equalizers (10-, 15- and 31-band) and Compander noise reduction systems are two of the products in this rapidly growing line. With their entry into this field, MXR has completed the chain of equipment from making music to recording it to playing it back.

Another innovation from MXR has been in marketing. According to Advertising Coordinator Jerry Brown, "When MXR first started there was nobody else around that was mass marketing effects like they should have been. The market that we're looking for is the professional and the semi-professional, or the discriminating musician who wants the very best instruments." In order to reach this market MXR has set up a

network of international distributors on a scale that has never been approached by effects manufacturers. Thirty percent of MXR's products are exported to other countries, and you're just as likely to find a Phase 90 in Barbados or Australia as New York.

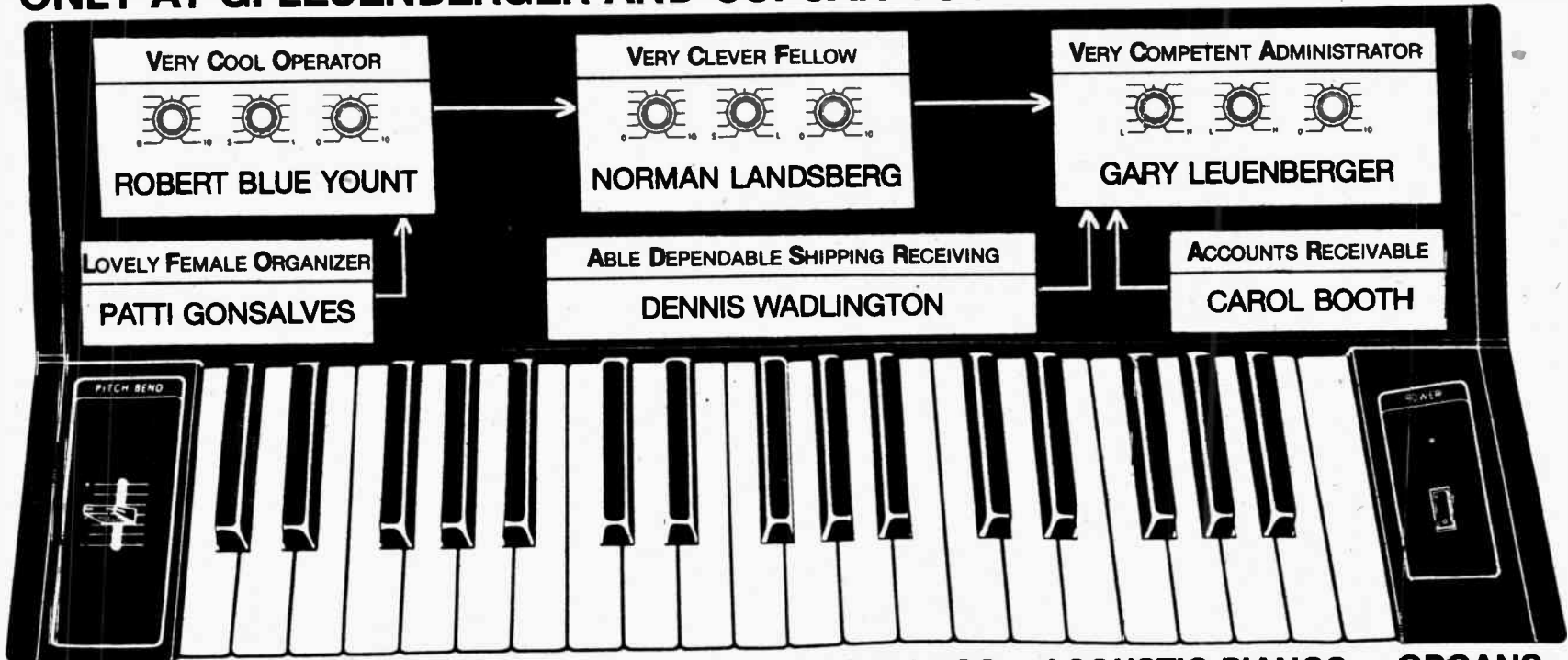
The international popularity of MXR's products is partially due to its customer service department. Customer Service Manager Joel Silverman claims that "the percent of returns is well below the industry standard, and most of the returns received by customer service are due to user malfunction as opposed to unit malfunction. Very often effects boxes are returned that have nothing wrong with them. The users just forgot to replace the battery." The units that do have genuine breakdowns are analyzed to find the cause, and the resulting information is used to redesign a more reliable product. Reliability is a high priority at MXR, and each musical and professional product carries a full one-year warranty that covers both parts and labor. Equipment that is received by customer service is typically repaired and returned in less than four days. The customer service department is also available for applications advice, and this service includes an informative newsletter called *Discussion +* (available on request), which is published quarterly.

What's in the future for MXR? "We're going to do our best to keep all of the people involved in music—the musicians, engineers, and listeners—as innovative as we can," says Jerry Brown. This means keeping abreast of the changing needs of musicians and being able to respond to those changes by producing cost effective, musically versatile electronic equipment. The growing number of MXR product users may make it harder for some listeners to tell which instrument is doing what, but it is also freeing the creativity of musicians.

M.I.

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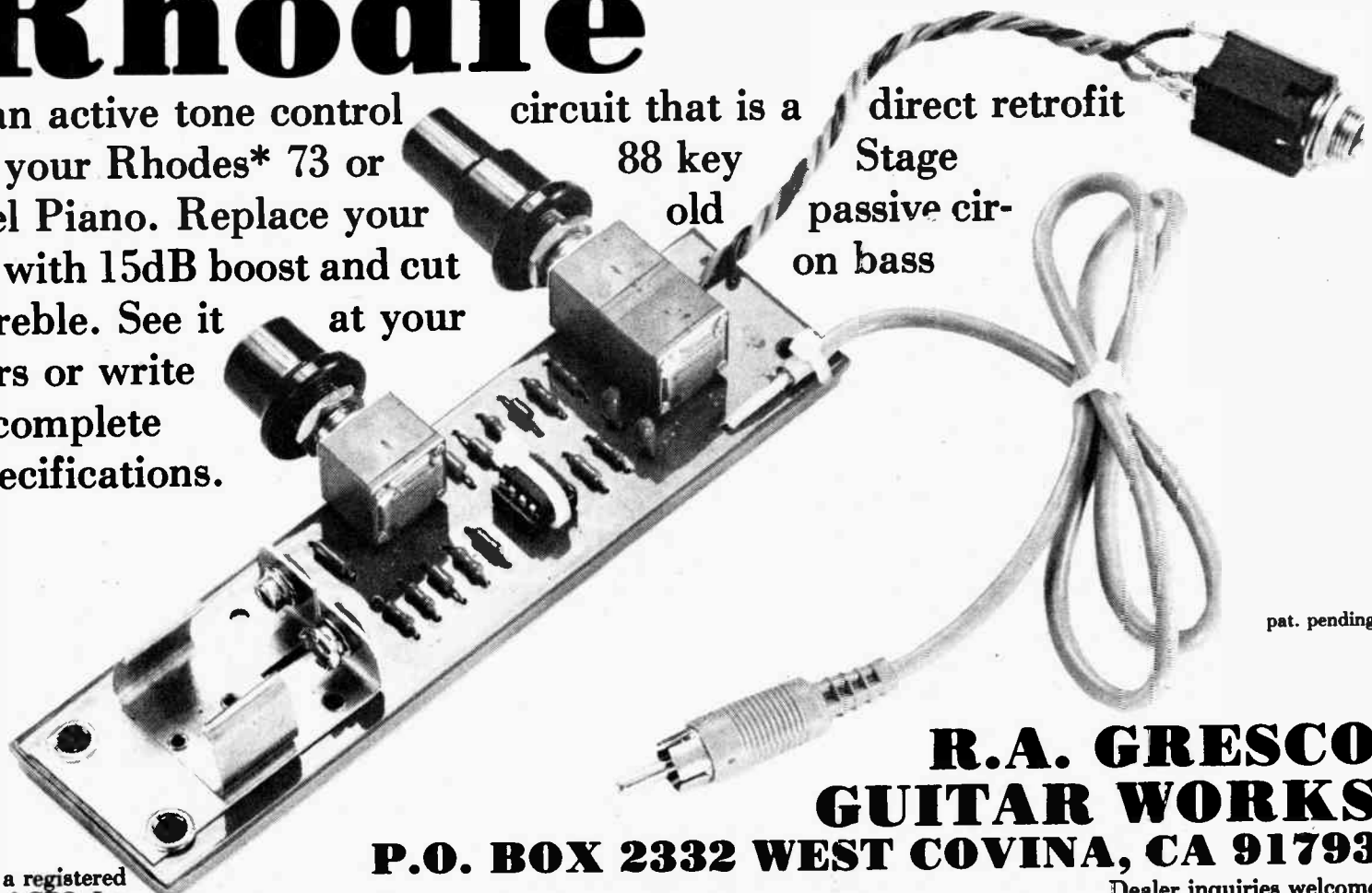
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STILL REIGNING



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Ten years after his death, Jimi Hendrix remains the most important force in rock guitar

"ALL RIGHT!... Now dig this, baby... You don't care for me, I don't care about that. You got a new fool, ha!. I like it like that... I have only one burning desire: Let me stand next to your fire."

When I first heard Jimi Hendrix on the radio, in the summer of '67, my reaction was probably not unlike that of nearly every other listener. "Who is that? Where did he come from? Is that a guitar? How does he play like that?"

In a summer of peace, love, and flower children, this black guitarist from Seattle came out of England with an aggressive, sensory-overload barrage of psychedelic blues that made one and all take notice. He asked, "Are you experienced?" and, judging by what we were hearing, most of us had to admit that we apparently were not.

Listening to Hendrix today, ten years after his death, he sounds just as timely as he did then, and just as impressive. Surprisingly, in ten years time, no one has come onto the scene who has made as strong an impression on rock guitar, or

the electric guitar in general. And although new gadgets are introduced every day, no one has approached Hendrix's mastery of electronics. When *Musician, Player & Listener* magazine conducted a poll, of musicians and critics only, asking what artists had exerted the greatest impact on the music of the Seventies, Hendrix was the hands-down winner in the category of Rock Guitar, even though he was around for only the first nine months of the decade.

Hendrix didn't just play the guitar, he played with it. He played it with his teeth, behind his head, between his legs, behind his back. But all of the theatrics were secondary to what was streaming out of his stack of Marshall amps. Feedback and distortion the likes of which had never been heard; "multiple" guitar parts coming from a single Strat; screams, howls, even laughs; bombs bursting in air, and rockets' red glare. And, along with all of the pyrotechnics, Hendrix above all knew the meaning of subtlety. Ballads like "Little Wing" and "Wind Cries Mary" displayed a poetic vision and sense of

melody seldom associated with rock & roll. (The "prettier" songs were also apparently among Jimi's personal favorites; I once saw him play "Little Wing" three times in one night just because he liked it so much.) And, of course, Hendrix could play the blues—whether it was the standard 12-bar variety or his own space-age derivations.

Books and articles have been written and films produced about Hendrix (with more on the way), but very little is known about the man, whose career (from his American debut at the Monterey International Pop Festival in 1967 till his death in 1970) lasted barely three years. The most revealing aspect of *A Film About Jimi Hendrix* is that with dozens of interviews with people who supposedly knew Jimi, each seems to contradict the other. Hendrix was a different person to as many different people, and no one really seems to know who was the "real" Jimi Hendrix.

Hendrix's guitar playing has been exhaustively analyzed, but misconceptions still abound. For instance, many reports still state that he played guitar left-handed and upside down, when in fact he played right-handed model guitars with the strings reversed so as to be standard for a lefty. As John Morthland concluded in his chapter on Hendrix in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, "Meanwhile, guitarists continue trying to figure out how he did what he did."

"Still Reigning" is not meant to tell the complete story of Jimi Hendrix, or even to attempt to. Rather, it is our tribute to and remembrance of the man and his music. The section includes a retrospective look at the albums we feel are the most essential in the Hendrix catalog; an interview with Alan Douglas, who was the last producer to work with Jimi, and who oversaw production of many of the posthumously released Hendrix albums; and several spectacular and revealing photos, by Jim Marshall and Tom Copi, of one of the most dynamic performers in the history of rock & roll.

—Dan Forte

Are You Experienced?

Reprise, 6261

Are You Experienced? transformed a total unknown into the almost universally accepted "king of rock guitar," a title previously reserved for Eric Clapton. Coming out of nowhere as it did, this LP had a greater impact on pop music than any of Jimi Hendrix's follow-up albums possibly could. Jimi's debut was at once original, far reaching, and stunning.

Hendrix has often been categorized as a blues guitarist, which is rather like calling Bob Dylan a folk singer. Eric Clapton was a blues guitarist; Jimi Hendrix was much more. By 1967, when *Experienced* was released, Jimi had already learned and absorbed the blues. Combining the earthy and the spacey, Hendrix sometimes used the blues as the basis of his playing (the solos on "Hey Joe," "May This Be Love" and "Foxy Lady") and at other times entered entirely uncharted territory ("Third Stone From The Sun" and the title song, with its backward guitar solo).

It's risky to speculate as to how Hendrix achieved his various guitar sounds, because he was capable of so much with just his two hands, an amp, a Stratocaster, and extreme volume. For example, he may have overdubbed two guitars to accomplish the feedback riding over the guitar chords at the beginning of "Love Or Confusion," but onstage he managed to do both at once, as evidenced by his version of this song in the film *Jimi Plays Berkeley*.

Hendrix's overwhelming mastery of the fretboard and electronics notwithstanding, probably the most impressive aspect of his debut album is its consistency. There is simply not a weak cut on it. And, let's face it, during that period the only way most psychedelic groups could come up with an album's worth of material was to include at least one interminable jam. Jimi only indulged in this briefly, with "Third Stone From The Sun," and, although it is without doubt the least serious cut on the album, Hendrix used it as a tour de force of electronic guitar-induced sound effects, played over a hypnotic melody.

Unfortunately, the American edition of *Experienced* omits three equally strong selections from the original English disc which are not found anywhere else in Hendrix's American catalog. These are the driving "Can You See Me?"; "Red House," one of the most searing yet concise slow blues ever recorded; and the Fifties-ish "Remember," which was regrettably not up to the recorded quality of the rest of the LP. They were replaced on the American issue with Jimi's English singles—"Purple Haze," "Hey Joe" and "Wind Cries Mary." By buying *Smash Hits* (Reprise, 2025), which includes the singles, and the English version of *Are You Experienced?* on Polydor, one can get a more complete view of the Experience's early days. "Red House" alone is more than worth the extra expense.

—D.F.

Axis: Bold As Love
Reprise, 6281

Axis: Bold As Love was made at a time when Hendrix seemed most enthusiastic about his music and his life. He had just finished his first American tour, and his popularity in England was greater than it had ever been. His musical ideas seemed to flow effortlessly and it was one of his most prolific periods. *Axis* appeared at a time when Hendrix was into fantasy lyrics and futuristic sounds (the UFO of radio station EXP is even more timely today) before he was convinced by political activists to get back to his roots. It is an album of true fusion music combining the R&B past of Hendrix (especially apparent in his vocal arrangements) with the English rock influences of Mitch Mitchell (drums) and Noel Redding (bass).

While English guitarists like Clapton and Beck were trying to duplicate the work of American blues artists, Hendrix took the music one step further. He had completely absorbed the blues tradition and was able to produce a new style that had its base in blues, but went far beyond it. When Hendrix's talent and background were combined with the new guitar sounds produced by technician Roger Mayer and the recording expertise of engineer Eddie Kramer the result was a visionary album. The overdriven-sustaining guitar, the animated panning effects, and the flanging sounds on the title cut have all become accepted standards of contemporary production.

When I listen to *Axis* today, it sounds as though it could have been made in 1980 instead

of 1967. A true classic. In addition to the revolutionary sounds, the material is diverse and intriguing, and the musicianship is flawless. The delicate beauty of "Little Wing" and "One Rainy Wish" complement the drive of cuts like "Spanish Castle Magic" and "You've Got Me Floatin'." And, while everyone else was using the wah-wah in a monotonous rhythmic fashion (sorry, Eric) Hendrix used it in a more fluid, melodic type of phrasing. The tune "Up From The Skies" is an example of this technique, and the nature of the song itself is an interesting combination of rock and jazz. It is another case of Hendrix being able to fuse elements of many different styles into a sound that was uniquely his own.

—Kirk Austin

Electric Ladyland
Reprise, 6307

Besides being one of the classic rock albums of all time, *Electric Ladyland* was much more. It was an important vehicle with which Hendrix made a musical metamorphosis. It was the end of his association with the Jimi Hendrix Experience and with conventional pop songs, and the beginning of a new, more instrumentally progressive direction than he was headed in.

Electric Ladyland was one of the earliest albums to prove that the recording studio, itself, was an instrument. It was also Jimi's only self-produced LP.

With *Are You Experienced* being the sensational debut that it was, and with *Axis: Bold As Love* a quick follow-up in the same progressive-pop style, *Electric Ladyland* was the first real test of time for Hendrix.

The double album gave Hendrix the room to move that his other conventional albums didn't. He had the freedom to jam, which most people who worked with him agree was an essential part of his playing. But more than anything, for Jimi Hendrix it was the only real complete musical statement he ever got to make.

There are several reasons why this album is so unique and such a mainstay of the Hendrix legacy. It incorporated all the musical directions that Hendrix was known for. There's the infectious and funky "Crosstown Traffic," clocking in on AM playlists at a perfect 2:14. There's the extended blues "Voodoo Chile," one of the finest tributes Hendrix ever made to his musical roots. And, of course, there were tastes of Jimi's other loves such as jazz ("Rainy Day, Dream Away"), R&B (Earl King's "Come On"), and experimental progressive rock ("1983: A Merman I Should Turn To Be").

Considering the diverse musical styles featured, the album has remarkable consistency. The segues, especially on sides one and three are among the smoothest in rock history, with possibly only *Sgt. Pepper's* and *The White Album* being finer.

One of the main reasons Hendrix commanded such a large white following, aside from playing rock & roll, was his outright sexuality. "Crosstown Traffic," the LP's AM single, was, along with "Foxy Lady," among his most aggressive songs ("Tire tracks all across your back, I can see you've had your fun"). The ten-minute version of "Voodoo Chile," as mentioned earlier, is among Hendrix's finest blues recordings, and the tasteful organ of Stevie Winwood adds to the color of the music. Again, with songs and guest appearances like this one, Hendrix was able to break away, temporarily, from the re-

strictive mold of the Experience and what was expected of him musically. "Voodoo Chile" also had some of the most remarkable lyrics and imagery found in a blues—with lines like: "My arrows are made of desire, from as far away as Jupiter's sulfur mines."

Side Two, more than any other section of the album, is closest to the style he debuted with on



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Are You Experienced? It is filled with five short tracks, all of which are drenched in the frantic guitar solos that Hendrix is best remembered for. "Long Hot Summer Night" with Al Kooper's piano and "Come On (Part I)" with Jimi's manic solo are among the highlights of the side. The album's only real sore spot is the over-produced and (even at that time) dated "Burning Of The Midnight Lamp." It was recorded fifteen months before the rest of the album and was a throw-away single that had some success in Europe. However, on this album, it is, in Jimi's own words, "such a drag."

Side Three is almost total experimentation. Opening with the jazzy-funky "Rainy Day, Dream Away" with Jimmy Smith-styled organ from Mike Finnigan and drumming by Buddy Miles (fresh out of the Electric Flag), this side, I might guess, was probably Jimi's favorite. The first half is a jam and the second ("1983... A Merman I Should Turn To Be") is among the most interesting and progressive tracks Hendrix ever recorded, with its lush sounds and swirling production.

The album closes with the hard-edged Side Four, with cuts such as the powerful "House Burning Down" which some say was Hendrix's response to the Black Panthers movement ("Try learning instead of burning, hear what I said").

Hendrix was a die-hard Dylan fan, so it was only natural for him to cover a song from his favorite Dylan disc, *John Wesley Harding*. Although he also cut "Drifter's Escape," that song was re-



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jected in favor of "All Along The Watch Tower" which became Jimi's biggest hit single.

And finally, the album closes with a wild jam and slight return of "Voodoo Chile." With its instantly recognizable wah-wah pedal intro, the song was often used by Hendrix to close his live show. On the album, it also serves as an appropriate way to finish such a startling musical statement. As Jimi tells us at the end of the song: "If I don't see you no more in this world, I'll meet you in the next one, and don't be late."

—Bruce Pilato

**Hendrix
Band Of Gypsies**
Capitol, STAO-472

Whereas one could argue successfully that any of the above LP's was Hendrix's "best," *Hendrix* by the Band Of Gypsies surely stands out as his most lackluster. Although recorded live on New Year's Eve, 1969, at Fillmore East, the performances sound uninspired and, most of all, unexciting. Regarding the album (which was owed to PPX Productions and released on Capitol as part of an out-of-court settlement stemming from a breach of contract suit), Jimi once stated: "It was a real drag. My guitar was out of tune all night."

This was a Hendrix far removed from "Purple Haze" and "Little Wing." Gone were lyrics about "a thousand smiles" and traveling by dragonfly. Instead, Hendrix sang, "Machine gun, tearing my body all apart." This coming from the same man who had declared, "I'm gonna wave my freak flag high."

Along with the more heavy-handed, militant lyrics Jimi switched to an equally heavy-handed rhythm section. Whereas the Experience's English rhythm section of Redding and Mitchell darted unexpectedly from place to place, their black American counterparts, Billy Cox and Buddy Miles, plodded along sluggishly. And while Hendrix at times coaxed some powerful, driving drumming out of Miles, the latter too often indulged in background vocals bordering on the obnoxious. Hendrix, on the other hand, brought an inventiveness to his backups seldom found in rock & roll, making an otherwise run-of-the-mill song like Miles' "Changes" into a stunning yet

tasteful display of the art of accompaniment. By playing only what is essential to the tune, Hendrix gives the illusion of several instruments—instead of a lone guitar.

Easily the most dramatic selection from this concert is "Machine Gun," with Hendrix supplying combat sound effects with his guitar. But at twelve and a half minutes it becomes almost an ordeal. "Message Of Love" is the only song showing a direct link to Hendrix's earlier material, with its thick yet bouncy guitar textures. This was an album Hendrix inevitably had to record; it seemed to get a lot of things out of his system. While some of his later recordings continued in a political vein ("Freedom," "Straight Ahead") the attitude was less bitter and more optimistic.

—D.F.

**Historic Performances Recorded at the
Monterey International Pop Festival**
Reprise, 2029

When the Jimi Hendrix Experience appeared at the Monterey Pop Festival in June of 1967 it was the first time that the band had played in the United States. The recorded product of that set takes up one side of this album, with Otis Redding's remarkable show on the other side.

Hendrix was in great form. He was constantly smiling, and when I've studied the film footage from that show he appears to be at a raised consciousness level (so to speak). According to David Henderson (in his biography of Hendrix) Jimi was on LSD for this particular performance. The music was totally different from anything else there at Monterey, but Jimi worked the audience like a snake charmer. At times his inimitable showmanship made for some sloppy playing, but, like Miles Davis, there is a certain amount of sloppiness that is a part of Hendrix's style. This is not meant to imply that Hendrix lacked good guitar technique; it just means that the overall effect of the music/performance was often more important than executing a letter perfect fingering. This was the case with "Like A Rolling Stone" which is the first cut on the album. His interpretation of the classic Dylan song seems rather casual and off-hand at first, but ends up being a meaningful statement from

someone who lived the New York street life.

"Rock Me Baby" bears very little resemblance to the B. B. King version. In fact, it was different enough to later be made into an original composition called "Lover Man," which was written for Billy Cox. The only original song on this album is the electrifying "Can You See Me," and it really smokes. The pulsing rhythms and wailing guitar brought a new kind of music to the flower generation.

Hendrix then announced that he was closing the show with what he called the combined English and American national anthems. It consisted of "Wild Thing" with "Strangers in the Night" quoted during the solo. This one song contained all of the showstopping antics of Jimi Hendrix. He played the guitar behind his back; with his teeth; with one hand; and finished by smashing his guitar and setting it on fire. This song, including feedback and guitar generated sound effects, set new levels of live performance. Rock music has never been the same.

—K.A.

The Cry Of Love
Reprise, MS 2034

The tracks for the last great, unfinished Hendrix studio album were recorded in the guitarist's newly constructed Electric Lady studios. Although a few strong cuts from these c. 1970 sessions appear on *War Heroes* and *Rainbow Bridge*, most of them make up *The Cry Of Love*. Some obvious filler notwithstanding (in particular, "Astro Man," which is based on the Mighty Mouse theme song), there is little doubt that this important album, the first to be released posthumously, accurately reflects the musical and political direction in which Hendrix was heading at the time of his death.

"Freedom" and "Straight Ahead" express most explicitly Hendrix's growing interest in black liberation and resistance, themes which first appeared on the *Band of Gypsies* album. The opening track, "Freedom," is positively ferocious—both vocally and instrumentally. With the Ghetto Fighters singing backup, Hendrix sounds as if he really means it when he shouts "Get off my back/If you want to get out of here alive." Mitchell's drumming changes pace frequently, often in dynamic polyrhythmic contrast to Hendrix's heavy chording and Cox's similar bass lines. Although Hendrix's vocal on "Straight Ahead" isn't as strong (unfortunate given the superior quality of the lyric, which is reprinted on the back cover), his stunning wah-wah intro and mid-song break speaks with its own tremendous eloquence.

Two other hard rockers, "Ezy Rider" and "In From The Storm," also rely on rapid wah-wah leads on top of heavy rhythms. The latter cut is perhaps the definitive heavy metal song, featuring a strong unison riff by Cox and Hendrix, while "Ezy Rider," the only track with Miles instead of Mitchell on drums, stands out because of the many layers of guitar used by Hendrix and the ascending climax on bass and guitar.

Of the two soft and pretty songs on the LP, "Angel" and "Drifting," the latter is most interesting. Hendrix effectively evokes a "drifting" mood, conveying a sense of floating in air or on water. Abetted by Mitchell's light touch on cymbals and the tasteful use of what sounds like a guitar played backwards (with Hendrix it is hazardous to guess how he produces anything!),

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"Drifting's" mellow tones may remind a listener of "Frippertronics," though this was recorded several years before the first Robert Fripp/Brian Eno collaborations.

Both sides of the album close with oddities, songs whose distinctiveness among Hendrix's work is all the more startling because of their

proximity to his death. "My Friend" is reminiscent of Dylan's "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35": the setting is a party, with glasses tinkling and conversations in the background. Yet in a room full of people partying, Hendrix sings/talks to a slow blues about how his only friend is the one in the mirror. Similarly, on "Belly Button Win-

dow," in which Hendrix sings softly, accompanied solely by two guitar tracks, he seems isolated and alienated, the last line going "... and I wonder if they want me around."

Based on this album and the unforgettable recordings that are his legacy, it's a tragedy that Hendrix didn't know better. —B.D.

ALAN DOUGLAS: an exclusive interview

by Bruce Pilato

Alan Douglas was the last person to work personally with Jimi Hendrix on his music. He became associated with Hendrix about a year before his death, and in that short period made several new career decisions with Jimi, as well as supervising over 400 hours of recording.

When Hendrix died unexpectedly in September, 1970, Douglas abandoned the work he had done with Jimi. It wasn't until three years later that he resumed work on the Hendrix recordings, at the request of Warner Bros. and the Hendrix Estate.

In the last five years Douglas has come under severe criticism from the press and fans for producing two albums (*Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning*) that feature guitar and vocal tracks by Hendrix remixed with new bass, drum, and other tracks by musicians who never even met Jimi.

At present Douglas and his production company have done five Hendrix albums (including two anthologies of *The Essential Jimi Hendrix*) and are currently working on a full length fea-

PHOTO: TOM COPI



ture film on Jimi's career. Prior to his association with Hendrix, Douglas participated in a myriad of multi-media projects which included Timothy Leary, the Last Poets and Lenny Bruce. He is best known, however, for his work as a jazz producer. During the early Sixties, he recorded Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus, Max Roach, Bill Evans, Jim Hall, Eric Dolphy, and others.

In 1965 he started FM Records, a small label that catered strictly to the newly emerging FM pop music stations. He then moved to head of Special Projects for United Artists, whereupon he got into television, film and other media. In the late Sixties, he formed Douglas Records, which introduced John McLaughlin.

In this rare in-depth interview, Douglas spoke of his personal and business relationship with Hendrix, the man many have called the greatest rock guitarist who ever lived.

M.I.: How did you come to produce the posthumous Hendrix albums for Warner Bros. beginning in 1974?

Douglas: Without going too deep into the background, I started to produce the Band Of Gypsys in the fall of 1969. Jimi had called me in and we were real good friends. He asked me to help him finish the album that he was doing. He had just formed the Band Of Gypsys. So I recorded a whole lot of those things that came out in *Cry Of Love* and subsequently those sessions. And Don Schnitzerle [of Warner Bros.] had known that. In 1973 Don Schnitzerle was offered the album called *Loose Ends* [Released in Europe in 1973; Polydor, 2310 301]: They rejected it on the basis of poor quality and that the material wasn't up to the standards of Jimi. He just couldn't believe that that was the end of the Jimi Hendrix legacy, and he remembered that I had done a lot of recording. So he called me and asked if I thought there was more material than what was out, and I said yes. I knew about "Crash Landing" and all of those things. So he said, "Do you think you can get at it?" and I said, "I don't know. Why don't you call the estate?" So finally he called Leo Branton [lawyer for the Hendrix Estate], and they both asked me to go through all of the tapes that were stored in the warehouse. I had a lot of tapes of mine on Jimi at Media Sound. So I took all of my tapes and all of their tapes up to Stockbridge, Massachusetts and worked it all out. But it was all initiated by Don Schnitzerle, because he felt there was more material.

M.I.: How did you first meet Jimi?

Douglas: He had a girlfriend named Devon who was a close friend of my wife. She brought him

to me sometime in 1968. I had done a lot of jazz and had a reputation. We then had a multi-media company called Douglas Communications, doing books, records and films. We did all the Timothy Leary stuff, Allen Ginsburg and Lenny Bruce. We did *El Topo*, the movie. Jimi was just very interested in moving into multi-media himself. He had a script for a film he wanted to do. And he just wanted to get away from doing a lot of little songs and performing on one stage. He wanted to get bigger. He was coming to the McLaughlin sessions I was doing, and during that time he asked me to come in and do the Band Of Gypsys.

M.I.: Did you do all the initial recordings that eventually became *War Heroes*, *Rainbow Bridge* and the like?

Douglas: Well, I did all the Band Of Gypsys, at least basic tracks, like "Stepping Stone" and "Isabella" [*War Heroes*]. That was Jimi, Buddy Miles and Billy Cox. I think Mitch Mitchell was overdubbed on some of those later on.

M.I.: Was Hendrix's management afraid that you were taking him away from rock and directing him into less commercial jazz directions?

Douglas: Yeah, of course. They were concerned with that. And when he became associated with me, who was completely on the other side of the pop business, they really got scared.

M.I.: Didn't Hendrix have other problems with his management?

Douglas: Jimi and Buddy [Miles] had a problem. Jimi's management didn't want Buddy there either, because he was pulling Jimi in other directions. They had a very successful, lucrative situation with Mitch and Noel, and anything but that bothered them. They didn't understand that the times were changing and Jimi was tired of it all. It was always a constant fight between everyone. So Buddy was one problem, I was another problem, and so was everyone Jimi associated himself with outside of the pop field.

M.I.: Why didn't he fire his management?

Douglas: He was about to. He hadn't seen them for two months before he died. And he wouldn't see them. I was in London the week he died (I came home the day before) and his manager tried to see him that week and Jimi wouldn't see him. We had talked about it and we were making plans for new administration of his career and all of that. But unfortunately it never came off.

M.I.: Could you explain some of your feelings and motives behind *Crash Landing*, *Midnight Lightning* and the other albums you've done?

Douglas: I tell you this from being with, talking and working with him a lot, and working from his notes — if you distilled all the records that came out after he died, the essence or the best of them all would have been the double record set that would have been produced at that time. And I knew all the tunes. When he died his management, who didn't know about all these other tunes that were sitting there, went out right away and put out *Cry Of Love*, *War Heroes* and all those things. They spread the tunes out. They took the best tunes and put some here and some there. Subsequently, they made all the albums

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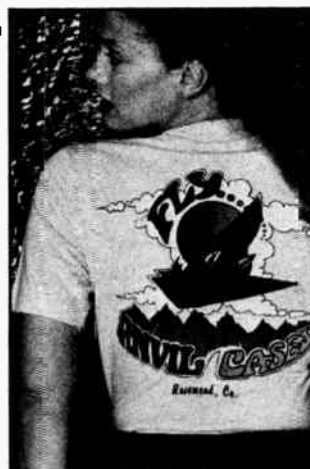
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except *Cry Of Love*, which is pretty good. And it just destroyed his legend. The sales began to go down and there was just not as much interest in Hendrix. And that's when Don Schnitzerle and everybody got in. When they called me, I said, "Yes, there are these tracks." And my basic premise on all these tracks was this: there was a final rhythm track by Hendrix, a final solo by Hendrix and a final vocal track by Hendrix. Now those were the only tracks I would use, because I knew Jimi well enough to know that he would've changed those other tracks himself—some of the bass tracks, the drum tracks and so on. I worked with his notes and essentially did the same thing—put in what I thought were more efficient musicians than were on the originals. We kept the spirit of the whole thing.

The reason was because his father was broke. That's really why we did it. And the management had been so confused and so broke that there was just no money in the estate at all. So at the request of his father and Leo Branton, who was head of the estate, that's what we did.

M.I.: So the real reason you did *Crash Landing* was because the Hendrix estate asked you?

Douglas: Exactly.

[Ed. Note: M.I. contacted Leo Branton, lawyer for the Hendrix Estate, for information regarding the estate and the release of the posthumous albums. Mr. Branton supplied the following information: "When Jimi died and I took over the management of the estate, he was, in effect, broke. He had only about \$21,000 in cash assets. And I marshalled the assets, which included not only the making of *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning*—because those didn't make him whole again—but also his publishing rights, his catalog of prior recordings, etc. As a result, the estate became solvent. Hendrix's father would have recovered from the circumstances of Jimi's death without those two releases, so the motive for doing the albums wasn't because the estate was broke. Warner Bros. had already rejected the tapes, so we went to Alan Douglas, because he had worked with Jimi and he was very ingenious in recording. As a matter of fact, it wasn't Jimi's father that asked Alan to do that at all. Mr. Hendrix, by this time, had made a deal with another corporation for an annuitant in return for those tapes. It was this other corporation, PMSA, that asked Douglas to do it; it wasn't Mr. Hendrix at all. The estate got absolutely nothing out of those records, because the estate had sold its rights to PMSA by this time. They were the ones who put up the investment—they invested several hundred thousand dollars in what Alan did. Douglas may very well have thought when I was talking to him about these albums that I was speaking on behalf of Mr. Hendrix. But the fact of the matter is, I wore several hats. I made a deal with PMSA for the tapes—which could not have been made into records, as they existed, without a substantial investment. Those two albums cost over \$300,000 to master. The estate not only didn't have that kind of money to invest, but it would have been improper for the estate to invest that kind of money, because an estate cannot enter into a speculative venture. And the record industry is highly speculative. Therefore, wanting to protect the estate, on behalf of the estate, I made a deal with PMSA that they would buy these tapes from Mr. Hendrix



in return for a long-time annuity contract, in which he would be guaranteed a certain income for the rest of his life. And they took the gamble of investing the money in the tapes to make records. Because PMSA is a foreign corporation, it cannot do business in the United States. So PMSA then sublicensed those albums to a British Virgin Islands corporation, which again then sublicensed those to a New York corporation named Depaja, Ltd., which was given the right to make a multi-record deal with Warner Bros., and PMSA made a deal with Polydor for distribution outside the U.S. It's a highly complex business transaction and both were on a 3-record deal."

M.I.: Were you surprised by the success of *Crash Landing*?

Douglas: Not at all. [It sold] about 800,000. I mean, they were great tunes. I thought that they were well done. You have to understand that Hendrix had laid out all the arrangements. We didn't do any new arrangements. Another thing, if you listen to the multiple track tapes, aside from the finished rhythm track and the finished solo guitar track that I worked with, there are always little tracks that are indications of how something should play. And if you listen to his rhythm track you always get the arrangement. He always keeps going in and out of the arrangement. Literally, I thought he could've been sitting there listening with us when we did the thing, man. That's how I felt about that album [*Crash Landing*]. The next album [*Midnight Lightning*] I would rather not have put out. I was obligated to put it out. The estate had taken money on it, and I had to go through with it. I would have put out *Crash Landing* and I would have put together the *Essential Jimi Hendrix* LPs the way we did, and that would have been it. But there were obligations with the estate, so we tried to do the best possible thing we could.

M.I.: Was it your idea to put out *The Essential Hendrix Vol. I* and *Vol. II*?

Douglas: Yes.

M.I.: Was anything done to the original records?

Douglas: No, we just programmed it. We put the songs in the order they're in.

M.I.: How about the new album, *Nine To The Universe*?

Douglas: *Nine To The Universe* is just jams. I think I made a tactical mistake by not calling the album that. I should have said that they were jams. We wrote the liner notes on the back, and I stated quite clearly why that record is out. We say on there that they are jams and you should listen to the tunes in that context. There are some things in there that if you're a Hendrix fan

and you want to hear some interesting things, you will hear it. If you listen to that album and compare it to his best pop records, of course it's not gonna stand up. It's not meant to be commercial, but again it was part of the obligation that was taken on at the very beginning of the situation. There was a three-album obligation. And in order to fulfill the financial situation, three albums had to be created.

M.I.: So now the contract is fulfilled?

Douglas: Yes, I'm happy to say.

M.I.: What in particular was it about Hendrix's guitar playing that impressed you the most?

Douglas: It was his inspiration. First place, technically, he was very unorthodox. The one thing that I don't

know if many people realize is that he had huge, huge hands. I mean, he could reach all over the guitar. So he was capable of taking the guitar itself, the instrument, to its capacity. That's the great guitar player part of him. But his inspiration, his motivation, to me, was like a medium who was being used as a vehicle by forces other than his own capacity.

M.I.: Was there a particular pattern that Hendrix followed when recording?

Douglas: The way the session would go down is, he would just come in and start jamming with everyone and get them into the rhythm pattern of a particular tune that he wanted to play. When he felt the groove going he would break into the particular tune. That's where we would cut out the choruses we wanted. Then we would do the overdubs on top of that. Jamming was part of his philosophy or part of his natural work all the time.

M.I.: Some of the posthumous albums, especially *Cry Of Love* and *Hendrix In The West* were not particularly bad albums. Why did Warner Bros. delete them?

Douglas: Because I asked them to. That was the reason for the *Essential/Hendrix, Vols. I and II*. The way we did the *Essential Jimi Hendrix* LPs is we took a poll of 1,000 people—promotion people, radio people, disc jockeys, fans and so on. We put the most popular tunes in that order. That's how those two albums came out.

M.I.: Are you planning any more albums from Jimi's left-over tapes?

Douglas: That's it on music. We're doing a picture now.

M.I.: Could you say more about that?

Douglas: This is a post-production project. All the film is already shot. We're using all the Hendrix concert footage that makes sense and we're weaving it into the story of his career through other films and photographic techniques. The soundtrack itself will be all live. We wrote an original song for it called "Electric Magic Guitar Man" and we're gonna shoot B. B. King singing it onstage. We're doing coverage of artists influenced by Jimi. And there's a young artist named Nona Hatea, who hand-painted 150 photographs which we're doing to "Voodoo Chile." It's gonna be interwoven with a media kind of feeling, but it's all the story of Jimi. It's chronological. We've got all of the English and BBC footage. We're going from America where we've got him with Rev. Kilpatrick playing back-up guitar, and then we're going to go into a Little Richard thing on the road. And the Isley Brothers, and so on. We're gonna tell the whole story. **M.I.**

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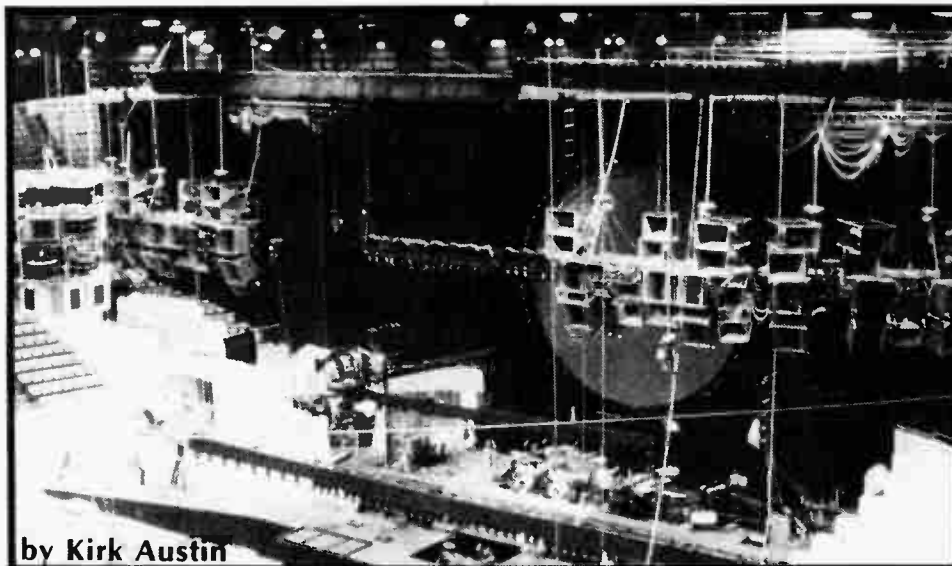
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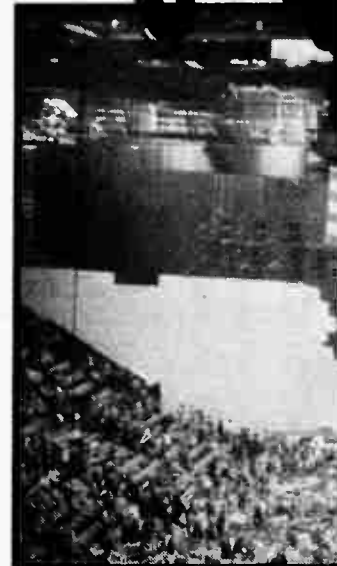
ALTEC CORPORATION

The Sound of



by Kirk Austin

BRITANNIA ROW



The live production of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* must have been the most elaborate undertaking ever attempted by a rock group. Not just a rock concert, *The Wall* involved the use of three movie projectors and associated sound tracks, hundreds of "bricks" and other props, giant inflatable balloons, miniature airplanes, and even a second band. All of this was in addition to the enormous amount of audio gear needed to produce the sound of the two bands, the movie soundtracks, and the sound effects (such as the crashing airplane).

To deal with the problem of moving this equipment to the different locations where *The Wall* has been performed (London, Los Angeles, and New York) Pink Floyd formed Britannia Row Productions to build, maintain, and otherwise oversee the tons of equipment at their disposal. Britannia Row was formed approximately three years ago, with offices in New York and London. The London-based operation is now a group of companies consisting of Britannia Row Audio, Britannia Row Lighting, and Britannia Row Recording, among others. The activities of these separate organizations are all coordinated by Britannia Row Productions Ltd., which also makes arrangements with other bands interested in using the resources of Britannia Row. The New York-based company (Britannia Row Inc.) was originally set up as a rental operation to make use of the lighting and audio equipment that usually lay dormant between Pink Floyd's tours of the U.S. It also serves as a rehearsal studio for Pink Floyd, and as a shop for building and repairing stage equipment.

With a production of this nature the lighting is as complicated and involved as the audio. There are actually two stages, and the eight musicians were constantly moving between the two. There were also moments when members of the band

were located offstage, as when David Gilmore played a guitar solo standing on top of the wall. All of this mobility created a more animated show, but it also placed great demands on the lighting crew. Since its responsibilities are so vast, Britannia Row Lighting is maintained as a separate company from the audio department. They also handle the giant balloons and the staging, including the bricks. Graeme Fleming is the head of Britannia Row Lighting, and is also involved with Britannia Row Productions (the organizational group).

According to Fleming, the actual hardware for the production cost around \$250,000. The bricks were made from a special non-flammable cardboard, and the wall itself was designed specifically around the auditoriums that were to be used. Twenty-eight people were needed to handle the lighting and the building of the wall during the performance. There were five "man lift" platforms behind the wall that enabled the "wallies" to reach the higher levels. Other platforms were also used to elevate members of the band and their equipment.

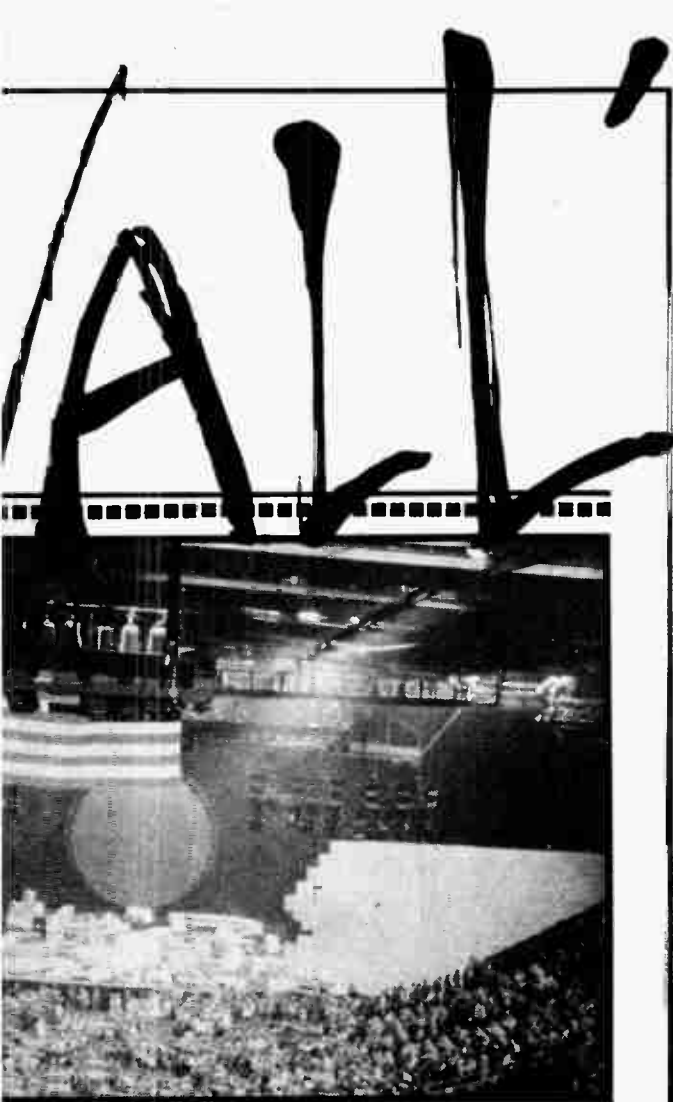
Pink Floyd's sound system was perhaps the largest ever used in a performance of rock music. James Guthrie, who engineered the album, was the main audio engineer and was responsible for the house mix. Two Midas mixing boards were employed along with three extender boards for a total of 106 inputs, which were mixed down to four outputs. This may seem like a lot of inputs, but there were two bands and three eight track tape machines for the film soundtracks. Also, the band played through a rather elaborate stage set-up, and many of the outboard effects used to treat the instruments were controlled by feeding their outputs into a separate input on the mixing board. However, this was true mostly for the drums, vocals and

keyboards, since David Gilmore has a pedal-board set-up that allowed him to switch in his own effects.

It was remarkable that this number of inputs could be mixed with such precision, and it required the team of engineers to be just as well rehearsed as the band. It also required equipment that was reliable and capable of producing repeatable effects. The outboard gear was an awesome collection, including a Lexicon 224, Lexicon Delta-T's, Marshall Time Modulators, Harmonizers, Scamp limiters, dbx 160 and 162 compressors, UREI 1176 LN's, and UREI LA3A's. The compression and limiting was used largely for the vocals, while the delays were used both on the vocals and the instruments.

All this equipment resulted in something that every road engineer dreams of, but few actually achieve—live sound as good as the album. In fact, depending on the kind of stereo you have at home, it may have been better than the album. For one thing, it was mixed down in quad, and another set of speakers (the sub-woofers) were used to reproduce the ultra-low frequencies present in the sound effects. The main speakers were tri-amped and driven with modified Phase Linear 700's, BGW 750's, and Altec 9440's. This is all in addition to the amplifiers that the band members had on stage. The keyboards and bass were both tri-amped on stage, and the guitar was run through a couple of Hi Watt stacks. Then this more than adequate stage sound was mic'd and run into the mixing board.

The main speakers were suspended groups of Stanley Screammers, a joint effort of Altec Lansing and Stanal Sound (a sound service company based in Kearney, Nebraska). Stan Miller, president of Stanal Sound, met the people who handle Pink Floyd's sound (Britannia Row) while he was on tour with Bob Dylan in Europe. Miller



sold Britannia Row the speaker system to do *The Wall*, and rented them additional equipment to do the rear channels. According to Miller, the Stanley Screamers evolved out of a need for durable, road-worthy speaker cabinets. The sub-woofers consisted of two Altec 4218LF 15" speakers in a 25 cubic foot cabinet, and have a separate feed from the console. In order to maintain clarity in a system of this magnitude, only the bass, kick drum, and synthesizer were mixed into the sub-woofers. This allowed the tremendous low frequencies to create the physical vibrations that could only be achieved with high levels without muddying up the musical part of the program.

Since the set-up for *The Wall* consisted of two separate stages, the monitor mix had to be quite elaborate itself. Seth Goldman, who ran the monitor board, had two Midas 24x8 monitor mixers configured to provide 48 inputs and 14 outputs. The monitor speakers were mounted under the stage, and also along the rear of the back stage. With this arrangement, there was a different monitor mix for each of the fourteen different possible places where a musician would stand. The constant movement among the band members made it difficult to provide the right monitor mix at the right time. Stanley Screamers and Martin 15" speakers were used for the monitors, and the signals were processed with Klark-Technik DN27 third-octave equalizers, and B&B audio parametrics to suppress feedback.

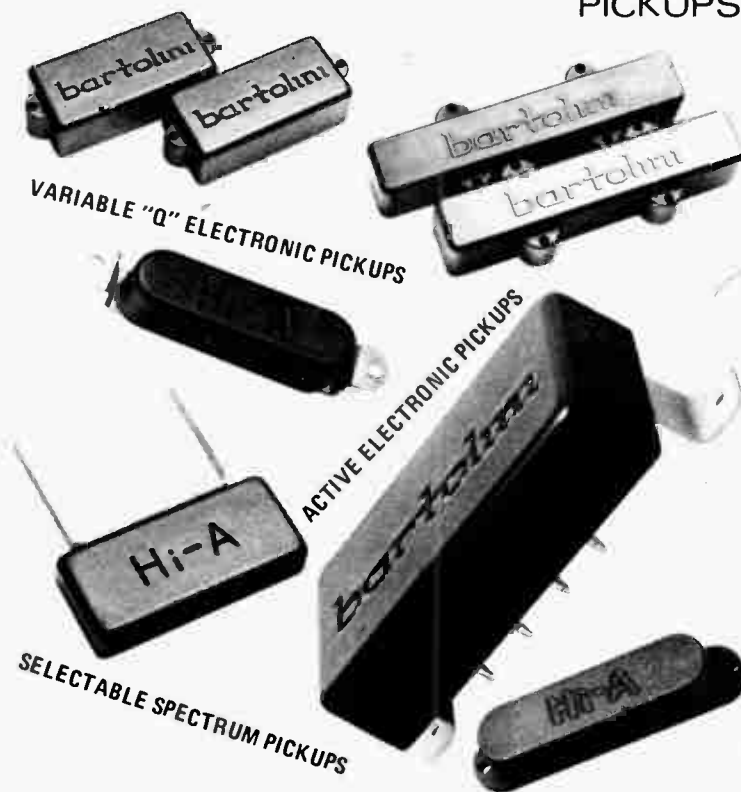
The entire production took about a year and a half from conception to presentation, and the performances consisted of week-long engagements in New York, Los Angeles, and London. If you saw it you know what a massive undertaking it was, and if you missed it—too bad—it won't be back.

M.I.

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SOUND

ON STAGE

audio on a budget

by Jim Coe

In this issue I'm going to join everyone else in talking about money—specifically, how to get more soundsystem for fewer dollars.

Put Your Mind Where Your Money Is

What one "commodity" is the most valuable, portable, efficient and can be given without losing it? Answer... information!

The more you know the more you can do with less. In other words, the best way to save yourself money when you need a soundsystem is to educate yourself. In a future column I'll be talking about audio education and where to find it. For now, let's just list some sources:

- 1) **Magazines.** Remember, just because it's in print doesn't mean it's true. Try things out for yourself.
- 2) **Textbooks.** A more reliable source, but it's hard to find much on concert audio.
- 3) **Consultants.** For a specific problem or to double check your well thought out ideas, ask an expert.

The subjects in which you'll need some knowledge:

- 1) Acoustics
- 2) Electronics
- 3) Audio
- 4) Products and Specs

Before you decide that you have to have more or better equipment, ask yourself if a little more knowledge might not make it possible to use what you have more effectively.

Buy Used

If you are "equipment wise" you can find many good deals. Look at flea markets, pro audio retail stores, the back pages of audio magazines, and newspaper classifieds.

Some examples:
Blown loudspeakers with perfectly good baskets and magnetic structures can often be bought for less than \$20 and reconed for \$40—half the price of new.
Mixing boards using the inferior op amps of a few years ago can be fitted with op amp sockets and upgraded to the latest generation of I.C.'s every few years. I call this "upchipping."

Do It Yourself

With a few hundred dollars worth of elec-

tronic test gear and tools, you can set up your own electronics lab/shop. Given some time and a little trial and tribulation, you can build high quality audio circuits or modify used gear to your purposes.

Integrated circuit "chips" cost from a few cents to a few dollars and can handle almost any circuit chore. You don't have to be an electronic engineer to use them. All you must do is supply the proper voltages at each of the chip pins. Integrated circuit manufacturer's application literature, hobby magazines and various books are filled with diagrams showing how to implement and test all the common audio functions. It can be a lot of fun!

If you don't want to do it yourself, there are electronic services that do just this sort of thing. Just be sure you get an estimate before you turn someone loose on anything that could turn into a "research project." You might want to check the electronic parts stores and junior college engineering departments for students or hobbyists who will build or modify equipment for you. Many of these people would be delighted to help you in exchange for money for their favorite new project.

Some audio gear, especially power amplifiers, are available as kits. The kits often have good circuits but lack ruggedness. You can beef these up mechanically. I call this "road hardening."

Buy Smart

There are good and better ways to shop for audio wares. Here are a few thoughts:

First, you should really know what you need. This knowledge will make it hard for a salesperson to sell you something you don't need and easy for them to help you.

Don't forget to look for used equipment at retail stores. The better stores will give a 30 day warranty on used gear.

Retail stores don't like it much, but some manufacturers (especially small ones) will sell to you directly if you contact them. Why should they refuse a sale and possible future business?

When you can wait, order equipment instead of buying it "off the shelf." In this way you will save the retailer some of the expense involved in stocking and displaying equipment and may earn yourself a savings. Always pay a deposit

when you order (20% to 50%) and the balance when you pick up the gear. If you pay 100% in front there is little incentive for speedy action. If you have an account, paying within 10 days will usually get you a discount.

Develop a long-term relationship with an audio dealer. Retailers have great respect for repeat business. If a dealer knows you'll come back, you will get better service and, in the long run, better prices, even if a few items cost more at that store.

This is not to say you shouldn't be aware of prices elsewhere. Salespersons have a hard time resisting a factual "I really want to buy from you, but can you match the price I can get from X?"

When you shop for an audio retailer, look for knowledgeable people. Avoid discount chain-store types and manufacturer's puppets who just quote advertising copy.

Above all, get to know the difference between the most "cost effective" and the "cheapest." There is an excellent new compression driver on the market. This device costs almost twice as much as most, yet it performs so well that it saves you money. In other words, you would have to spend even more money to get the same performance from other brands. It's the performance level you need that determines the true value. You don't need to spend another \$100 for a power amplifier with .001% harmonic distortion instead of .01% if your speakers are going to have 10% distortion.

Remember the order of importance of the elements of a soundsystem project and spend time, energy, and money in proportion:

- 1) People involved
- 2) Acoustic environment
- 3) Speakersystems
- 4) Microphones
- 5) Recorders
- 6) Electronics

Here are some good books that will help you save money:

- 1) *Audio Handbook*, National Semiconductor Corp., (408) 732-5000, a book of circuits and information. (Out of print.)
- 2) *Linear Applications*, same.
- 3) *I.C. Op Amp Cookbook*, Howard Sams & Co., Indianapolis, 1974.
- 4) *The Incredible Secret Money Machine*, Don Lancaster, same, 1978.

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A MIX PUBLICATION

SPEC CHECK

The Kramer DMZ 6000B BASS



by Kirk Austin

In this column I will be reviewing an electric bass which has been around for about a year or so, the Kramer DMZ 6000B. It has some features that are definitely new while retaining the traditional tones that we have grown accustomed to.

One trend that has become popular recently is the use of materials other than wood for the neck of bass guitars. Specifically, aluminum and graphite have both been used instead of the usual wood design in order to make a bass guitar that has an even response with no dead spots (especially in the critical low octave). The Kramer DMZ 6000B has an aluminum neck, and the response is excellent. The lower notes ring out and sustain with much greater clarity than wood necks provide, and the G string does not overpower the lower strings when played in the finger popping, hammer-on style. The bass comes with round-wound strings as standard and the aluminum neck brings out the harmonics beautifully. At times it can sound like a grand piano string.

The pickups on the Kramer DMZ 6000B make it possible to get the sounds of the two most popular basses—the Fender Precision, and the Fender Jazz. The Kramer has a DiMarzio P-Bass pickup in the traditional (neck) position and a DiMarzio J-Bass in the bridge position. Both are wired with dual-sound switches to give either a big, powerful tone or a clean, articulate bite. The P-Bass pickup gives the heavy bottom sound associated with, say, Duck Dunn while the J-Bass pickup produces a Jaco Pastorius type of tone. Both pickups are humbucking types, so the

noise levels are reasonably low.

The 6000B also uses active circuitry to give a wider range of tone control than what is usually available on a bass guitar. There is a separate volume and tone control for each pickup, and the tone controls provide both a treble cut and boost. In the treble cut position (knob turned to 0) it sounds like a typical tone control, but in the boost position (knob turned to 10) it produces a tremendously crisp, bright sound. This is particularly useful if you are playing out of 15" speakers, as it makes up for the high end that is usually lost with large speakers. The electronics are powered by one 9-volt battery, and also provide a low impedance output to drive long cables (one of the reasons I strongly favor on-board circuitry).

Playing the Kramer bass was a really pleasant experience. The neck is slim and fast, and the action low all the way up the neck. The body is small and lightweight but sturdy enough to make the 6000B a substantial feeling instrument. It's well balanced and quite comfortable to play. The instrument that I tested was made of birdseye maple with walnut stringers, and had a beautiful deep-gloss finish.

This is an excellent working man's bass. The neck and pickups combine to give the 6000B a tone that is recognizable but much improved, and the playing ease makes this instrument a joy to play. Although there are a number of more sophisticated instruments on the market right now (like the 8 and 12-string basses) this model seems to be an excellent choice for someone who just wants a good, solid bass guitar. **M.I.**

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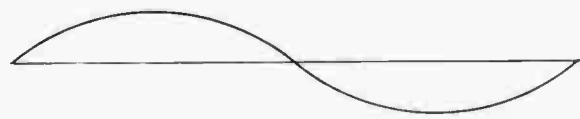
by Seymour Duncan

In this column I'd like to discuss the placement of pickups on a guitar and how it affects the tonal response. First, we should know a little about the string and its vibration characteristics. The points of the string which are at rest, such as the nut and the bridge, are termed "nodes." The points in the strings where maximum string vibration occurs are called "antinodes." The following illustration shows the different ways that a string vibrates to produce the various overtones or harmonics.

Figure 1



FIRST HARMONIC



SECOND HARMONIC



THIRD HARMONIC



FOURTH HARMONIC



FIFTH HARMONIC

In a vibrating string these happen simultaneously.

The string becomes magnetized by the magnet inside the pickup, and as it moves back

and forth through the coil it induces a voltage that is sent to the amplifier and amplified many times. Moving the pickup closer to the bridge increases the high end (treble) and there is a loss in volume. There is little string vibration very close to the bridge, so it is best to place the pickup so that its pole pieces are about the distance between the nut and the first fret away from the bridge.

Companies that angle pickups do so to get a wider tonal response from the low end of the pickup to the high end, as on Telecasters and Stratocasters. Different tonal responses are also obtained by using different types of coils and magnets. A coil wound with 42 gauge wire will sound brighter than a coil would with 43 gauge wire with the same number of turns. The coil wound with 42 gauge wire will also pick up a higher range of harmonics.

Moving the pickup closer to the bridge (as is done with steel guitars) will allow you to get higher pitched harmonics. Steel guitar pickups are wound hotter than standard guitar pickups and they are generally closer to the bridge. By winding them hotter the output is increased and the high end is attenuated somewhat, but by being closer to the bridge they are more sensitive to the harmonics that many steel players get out of their instruments.

It is really important which pickup—bridge or front—you are using for the harmonics to come out, and a lot of experimenting can be done to find new tonal possibilities. The bridge pickup is best for screaming harmonics, and the front pickup is great for mellow chime and bell harmonics. If you are interested in playing harmonics, it is best to pick your string by the bridge pickup, and lightly run your finger down the string towards the nut, carefully listening to all the harmonics that appear. Playing harmonics with the right hand by letting the picked note hit the underside of the thumb is more difficult, but listening to harmonics played by masters like Roy Buchanan, Arlon Roth, Jeff Beck, and Billy Gibbons will open a lot of playing possibilities. I would suggest using a fingerboard chart and marking all the points where the harmonics can be heard. Remember, you will get different harmonics when using the bridge and neck pickups.

For those of you who may be building your own instruments, or in case you're interested, here are measurements taken from leading instrument manufacturers.

Measurements below are distances from the nut, as this measurement will always be consistent. Measurements from the bridge saddles will not work, as the distances can vary. All single-coil pickups measured at center of poles. Humbucker pickups measured at adjustable poles unless otherwise noted.

Distance from nut in inches:

Instrument	Front Pickup	Middle Pickup	Bridge Pickup
Jazz Bass	27 7/8		31 9/16
Rickenbacker 12-string Model 360	18 1/2		23 3/8
Fender Mustang	17 13/16 treble side 17 7/16 bass side		21 1/4 treble side 20 7/8 bass side
Duo Sonic (old)	18 treble side 17 19/32 bass side		21 3/32 treble side 21 3/32 bass side
Telecaster Custom (with Humbucker)	19 13/32 measured at center of pole pieces, bass side		24 1/8 treble side 23 9/16 bass side
Telecaster 1954	19 1/4		23 9/16 bass side 24 1/8 treble side
Guild Blues Bird (1959)	19 3/16		
Firebird	19 measured from center of pickup		23 7/16 measured from center of pickup
Gibson Switchmaster with single coil pickups	19 5/16	21 1/2	23 3/4
1958 Les Paul Goldtop with (P-90 pickups) rare	18 7/8		23 5/16
1956 Les Paul Goldtop	18 13/16		23 1/8
1958 Les Paul Special	18 13/16		23 1/8
1963 S.G. Custom	19 3/8	21 1/8	23 5/8
1963 ES-335 (left hand)	18 3/4		23 1/2
1958 ES-175	18 9/16		23 15/32
Jazzmaster	19 3/4		23 7/8
Mosrite	19 1/16 treble side 19 9/16 bass side		23 3/8 Mosrite front pickup angled opposite than a Telecaster or Stratocaster lead pickup.
Gretsch Falcon	19 1/16		23 1/8
Gretsch Duo Jet 1955	18 21/32		23 1/8
Precision Bass	28 1/16 (E & A strings)		29 3/32 (D & G side)
Les Paul Standard 1958	18 21/32		2 7/16
Stratocaster	19 5/16	21 11/16	24 3/32 treble side 23 23/32 bass side

basic tracks

The Cost of Home Recording

by Hillel Resner

With high-quality recording equipment available at relatively low prices, it has become the dream of almost every serious musician to have some kind of recording setup in his or her home. Thousands of players have managed to make this dream a reality—whether in the form of an inexpensive cassette deck with a single microphone, or a full-fledged home studio with multi-track recorder, mixing board, high-quality monitors and professional mikes.

Unfortunately, many people set out to acquire home recording gear without having a clear idea of what they really need to accomplish their purposes. As a result, some may spend much more money than is necessary, while others may not spend enough and end up disappointed when they are unable to get the sound they were hoping for.

Depending on your objectives, the type and amount of equipment required will vary greatly—as will its cost. Let's consider the main categories of home tapes and what each realistically requires:

Work tapes/rehearsal tapes. For a songwriter working on new compositions with a guitar or piano, or a band that merely wants to get an idea of how it sounds in rehearsal, a fairly simple system should be more than adequate. The two tracks of a stereo tape recorder will enable you to capture reasonably well the two main components of a musical performance: words and music.

For the tape recorder in such a setup, a good quality cassette deck can be obtained for \$300 or less; or, for about \$500 one can have the added flexibility of a quarter-track, reel-to-reel machine with sound-on-sound capabilities. These tape recorders will generally accept two microphones and can be used in conjunction with a home stereo receiver and speakers. For microphones, manufacturers such as Sony, TEAC and Nakamichi have electret condenser mikes that will do the job for about \$80 to \$135 apiece. If more than two mikes are required, small mixers from companies such as Shure can be bought for about \$100. Assuming an investment of around \$700 for receiver and speakers, a complete system for making "work tapes" can be put together for between \$1,150 and \$2,000.

It may be that you feel your music requires greater flexibility than that provided by two tracks, but you haven't the money for a complete 4-track reel-to-reel setup. If so, TEAC has recently introduced the Portastudio, which sells for around \$1,200. According to sellers of recording equipment, this miracle of miniaturization is one of the hottest items on the market, with supply barely keeping up with demand. By incorporating the Portastudio into a simple system, you can secure the blessings of multi-track for a cost of between \$2,300 and \$3,000. (I am including here \$200-\$500 for a 2-channel recorder to make stereo dubs of your master tape.)

As one who learned a great deal about the art of recording with 4-track tape recorders, I will be the first to sing their praises; anyone who can afford one will certainly profit thereby. However, I want to emphasize that once you have acquired recording knowledge and skills, it is not hard to obtain a first-rate tape using only a 2-track machine. A 4-track may be convenient, but it's certainly not essential—especially for work tapes.

Demo tapes: If you are planning to make really high quality demos—tapes you can submit with confidence to producers, publishers and record companies—it may be worth your while to make the investment in a complete 4-track, reel-to-reel setup. Remember, however, that the master tape recorder is only the main ingredient, and that to get the most out of it you will need to spend additional money for other pieces of equipment. Some are more essential than others, but there is a minimum amount needed to make the kind of tape your 4-channel recorder is capable of producing.

Let's look at a typical package for recording a four-person group. First, you will need the 4-track machine, at a cost of around \$1,600; a 2-track recorder for mixdown, at around \$1,200; a pair of accurate monitor speakers, \$700; an efficient power amp to drive them, \$500 to \$800; and, of course, a 6-in by 4-out mixer, such as the TEAC 2A, at a cost of about \$725 if you wish headphone-mixing capabilities.

Microphones are probably the most important item when making budget tapes. At the very least you will require several of the better models of the aforementioned condensers (\$125 each), as well as two or three decent dynamic mikes (such as those made by Shure and Electro-Voice) for use on electric guitar, kick drum, etc. These will cost about \$150 each. Minimum for microphones: \$500.

There are various other items you will need to have: mike stands and booms (\$100); direct box for bass guitar, electric piano, etc. (\$65 each); and headphones (\$50 to \$100). As you can see, these items can add another \$500 to your budget. Total cost for your 4-track system: approximately \$5,800.

Of course, other pieces of equipment will assist you enormously in making professional-sounding tapes with a 4-track. These include a reverb unit, a compressor/limiter, and some sort of outboard equalizer. At a minimum, you should plan to spend about \$1,200 for these items, and it will probably be money well spent.

As you can see by doing a little doodling, it now costs around \$7,000 to put together a basic home 4-track setup—and we haven't talked about construction of a room, wiring, etc. Thus, if you're planning to acquire your own recording equipment, it will pay to do a lot of thinking beforehand about your needs and goals.

By all means consult your audio dealer, because he can help you make the right choices—once he knows what you want to achieve. M.I.

Hyde Street Studios

The Staff of Tewksbury Sound Recorders (Richmond) and Rancho Rivera (San Francisco) is proud to announce the merger of our facilities and the opening of The Hyde Street Studios in the heart of San Francisco.

Formerly the home of Wally Heider Recording for the past thirteen years, the studio complex consists of three music studios and a media room (for commercial and audio/video production). Hyde Street features Trident and Helios consoles; a new 24 track Otari MTR 90 recorder; Ampex and Studer recorders; an extensive selection of outboard equipment and microphones; five acoustic echo chambers and complete air conditioning and lighting control.

Hyde Street Studios is equipped and staffed to handle the highest levels of professional recording; and is flexible enough for any recording budget (with rates as low as \$25/hr for 16 track, including engineer, and \$40/hr for 24 track).

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Moog Music, 2600 Walden, Buffalo, NY 14225, has introduced a new synthesizer that is worn around the neck with a strap and gives the keyboard player freedom to move around on stage. The "Liberation" combines a polyphonic tone bank with a lead line synthesizer. This allows the playing of chords with the lead synth following the highest note held down. Of course, either lead synth or poly voices may be played separately. The left hand controls consist of a pitch ribbon as well as modulation and filter wheels. The keyboard is pressure sensitive and can also be used to control the amount of modulation. The instrument is self-contained and plugs into a 19" rack-mount power supply/interface. List price is \$1,395.00.



The Link from Ampersand

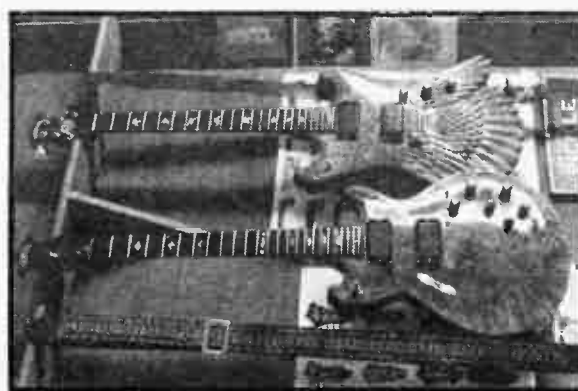
External control of the Prophet 5 synthesizer is now available in a control voltage and gate interface device from **Ampersand**. The Link is installed as a modification into the Prophet, and terminates at a remote box having phone jacks for each of five voices' CV and gate inputs and outputs, and five independent voice select switches are provided. A high quality connector scheme provides reliable quick-connect setup; Prophet circuitry is isolated and buffered for protection. Typical controllers used with the Link are the Emu Systems Microprocessor Keyboard, the Roland Microcomposer, and guitar synthesizers having IV/octave outputs. Price: \$990.00 installed. Write to Ampersand, 9548 E. Zayante Rd., Felton, CA 95018.

Creative Space, a composers pre-production workshop, opened in August. The facility offers seven self-operated recording suites and a real-time copy room designed specifically for the musician/composer who is developing material for future record production. Each suite is complete with all the necessary equipment for the production of a song demo, including the 4-track TEAC 144 Portastudio with Dolby, Yamaha piano, programmable rhythm machine, reverb unit, Auratone speaker monitors, stereo amplifier, tuning device, studio quality 2-track cassette recorder, microphones and headphones. Special features include professional acoustic design and treatment, independent climate control and electronically filtered air in every suite. All rooms are designed for acoustic instruments and vocals. Any electric instruments can be connected directly to the input of the Portastudio, thus eliminating the need to transport heavy speakers from the gig or home. A Creative Space suite is available

PRO file

for \$12.50 an hour, and for the struggling musician/composer, the facility offers a 20% cash discount making suites available for a low \$10.00 an hour. Room and equipment demonstrations will be held twice weekly or by appointment. For further information, contact Janis Thompson (213) 384-3704.

The Music People of West Hartford, Connecticut, have brought out King Cobra, a 1/2" clear lucite guitar stand in a design that accepts all acoustic and most conventionally shaped solid-body electric guitars and basses. The King Cobra is padded with soft neoprene rubber wherever the guitar surface makes contact with the stand. When assembled, two nylon locator pins maintain vertical stability. For use on road tours, it breaks down into two pieces and packs in most traveling cases. As a stage stand, the fiber-optic effect of the crystal clear lucite catches the spotlights to present an impressive luminous effect. For additional information, write The Music People, Inc., Box 648, West Hartford, CT 06107 or call (203) 521-7782 or 521-2248.



Moonstone Guitars

Moonstone Guitars, 112 South G St., Arcata, CA 95521, makes unique guitars out of hardwood burls. Woods include maple, myrtlewood, and walnut for the bodies, with Eastern hardrock maple for the necks. Standard features include two-octave fretboards, double-flex adjustable truss rods, shielded wiring harnesses, and Allen Bradley pots. Options are limited only by the buyer's imagination, and include neck radius, pickups, electronics, and custom finishes.



The "Shok-blok" from Polyfusion

Polyfusion has developed a new product that protects musicians from potentially lethal shocks. The "Shok-Blok" is designed for use with all instruments and microphones, and does not affect the sound quality of the instrument. The unit measures 1.75" x 3" x 4", operates on one 9 volt battery, and sells for \$49.95. The "Shok-Blok" is distributed by BKL International, Box 248, Neptune, NJ 07753.

Hamer Guitars, known for their custom work with people like Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick, have started production on a guitar for the average working musician. The "Special" features two humbucking pickups and a unique tone control that creates the midrange sound associated with bands like Def Leppard and UFO. These guitars are available with Hamer's new candy finishes or the unique transparent colors. For more information, contact Hamer Guitars, 835 West University Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60004.



The Bose Accesories Carry Bag

Bose Corporation has introduced a zippered carrying bag for speaker stands, cables, and other pro sound accessories. This is a basic item, but one that will make transporting the stands for Bose speakers much easier. For more information contact Bose Corporation, 100 The Mountain Rd., Framingham, MA 01701.

After our article on Allan Holdsworth in the May/June M.I., we received a number of inquiries about **Hartley-Thompson**, the amplifier company Holdsworth mentioned. They are located at 198 Brookhill, Sheffield 3, Yorkshire, England. Many different combinations of amplifier and speaker are available, and a typical configuration of a single-channel 100-watt amp with one 12" speaker lists at about 600 pounds sterling. Since there are, as yet, no American distributors, inquiries should be sent directly to the factory.

M.I.

Multivox has introduced two new amplifiers for guitar and bass. The P66 Contender guitar amp features reverb and distortion controls as well as treble, midrange, bass, volume and master volume assuring the musician of total sound control. The P64 Contender bass amp features treble, midrange, bass, volume and master volume controls. A 12" special design high efficiency Multivox speaker is utilized in the P66 and 15" special design bass speaker is in the P64. Both Contender amps are built in sturdy tongue and groove wooden cabinets, covered in heavy duty naugahyde eliminating the need for pampering. Multivox has solved the component part failure due to inadequate heat dissipation in many compact amps by using oversized, state of the art engineered heat dissipation sinks in the Contenders, assuring that all the parts operate well within the prescribed temperature ranges. The Contenders circuit breakers eliminate the need for spare fuses. The P66's 19" x 15" x 10" cabinet weighs 28 lbs., while the P64's 22" x 17" x 10" cabinet weighs 34 lbs. All Multivox products are backed by a full one year warranty. Multivox, 370 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, NY 11787.

The Piccolo Cuica, the latest addition to the LP line of percussion gear. It features a six inch "slunk" head that enables the player to achieve a wide range of both pitch and colors which were previously unavailable. The compact shell (six inches in height) incorporates the same exclusive ribbed shell design as the LP Timbales and Timbalitos and is constructed from the same quality stainless steel. Latin Percussion, Inc., 160 Belmont Ave., Garfield, NJ 07026.

Computone has produced a unique synthesizer controller that can be used with any voltage controlled equipment. The "Humanizer" converts wind pressure into a control voltage that can be used to control timbre, attack, loudness, filter cutoff, etc. There is also a second control voltage that is produced through lip motion that can be used to create vibrato, pulse width modulation, of any other voltage controlled parameter. This leaves the synthesist with both hands free to play the keyboard. Computone, Inc., P.O. Box 488, Norwell, MA 02061.

Two new products have been introduced by MXR recently. The MXR Distortion II, and the MXR Limiter were unveiled at the Chicago NAMM convention. The Distortion II is an AC powered unit that offers more control over the distortion effect than was previously available from MXR. The "Drive" control selects the amount of distortion and sustain, while the "Resonance" control brings in the punch of a heavily driven speaker cabinet. Then, there is a "Filter" control to adjust the amount of high frequency distortion, and, finally, an "Output" control to set the output level. The Distortion II also utilizes solid state switching and an LED effect status indicator. The MXR Limiter has been designed to meet a wide variety of applications, from live performance (guitar, piano) to studio recording (vocals, drums). The controls include "Input," "Attack," "Release" and "Output", all of which are self explanatory. The MXR Limiter is also AC powered; utilizes solid state switching, and features an LED for effect status display. MXR Innovations, Inc., 740 Driving Park Ave., Rochester, NY 14613.

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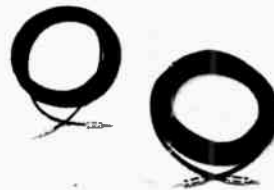
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Off the record



Uprising
Bob Marley & the Wailers
 Island, ILPS 9596

Produced by Bob Marley & the Wailers; engineered by Errol Brown; recorded at Tuff Gong Studio, Kingston, Jamaica.

Uprising and last year's *Survival* could be the most important albums in the illustrious career of Bob Marley & the Wailers. They reversed the downward, overly laid-back trend that characterized *Exodus* and *Kaya*, releases that coincided with Marley's exile from Jamaica following a late 1976 assassination attempt. Most importantly, the two most recent works show that Marley has completely regained the sparkle in both his songwriting and singing that made him and his band the world's premier reggae group.

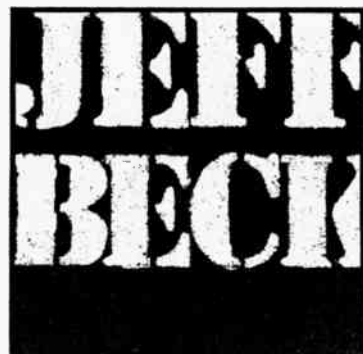
Abetted by the cleanest and clearest production I've ever heard on a reggae album, Marley and the band—Aston Barrett, bass; Carlton Barrett, drums; Alvin Patterson, percussion; Tyrone Downie and Earl Lindo, keyboards; Junior Marvin and Al Anderson, guitars; and Rita Marley, Marcia Griffiths, and Judy Mowatt (the I Threes), backing vocals—continue to move reggae forward in sophistication without succumbing to slickness.

The jumpy "Coming In From The Cold" has a remarkably crisp bass and percussion sound that gives a neat push to the call-and-response vocals between Marley and the I Threes. Even more impressive is "Could You Be Loved," whose triumphant reggae/disco fusion creates an entirely new, distinctive sound whereas previous efforts in this vein by groups like Inner Circle, Third World and Eddy Grant have simply added on undigested disco elements to reggae. As Carlton Barrett's drums somehow manage to capture the particular beats of both genres simultaneously, Clavinets fill percolate around a riveting rhythm provided by the counterpointing bass and stuttering lead guitar. The shimmering melody and concise yet haunting guitar fills of "Work" stand in sharp contrast to the extravagant, acid-rock leads that have marred the guitar breaks in Marley's most recent tours.

One thing that separates the truly great from the merely marvelous is an ability to do the unexpected. After an album's worth of state-of-the-art songs, inspired musicianship, and forthright vocals, Marley closes by singing

"Redemption Song" unaccompanied except by his own acoustic guitar. Simply and with modesty and a feeling so genuine that it is unforgettable, Marley lays out what is essentially his reason for being. "All I ever had is songs of freedom," he sings, and there could be no more beautiful conclusion to an album by a singer and his band at the peak of their creative powers.

—Bruce Dancis



There & Back
Jeff Beck
 Epic 35684

Co-produced by Jeff Beck and Ken Scott.

One thing that I have always liked about Jeff Beck has been his ability to change. Beck always manages to come up with something you never thought was possible with the guitar. He certainly did it with the Yardbirds, and he has continued to do it on each solo album. (I still haven't figured out how he makes the guitar sound like a submarine on "Ice Cream Cakes.")

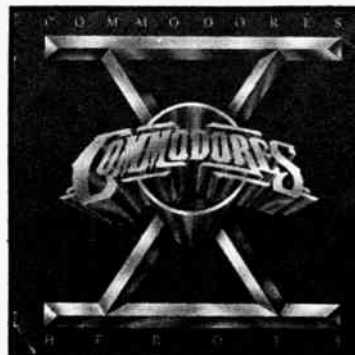
Well, on this new album Beck is still changing, although he hasn't really come up with anything that is very different from his previous LPs. He does have a new band, though, and his playing is as beautiful as ever. He can play a simple melody as it was written and you still know that it's Jeff Beck. (He can play three notes and you know it's Jeff Beck!) His bright, ringing tone and his economical use of bottlenecking are unmistakable.

Jan Hammer wrote the opening three numbers on the album, and they bear a definite resemblance to the material on *Wired*. Hammer, one of the few keyboard players who can actually keep up with Beck on blistering solos, also plays drums on the cuts, which tends to make them sound a bit narrow in scope, but energetic regardless.

The rest of the album features Jeff's new band which consists of Tony Hymas on keyboards, Mo Foster on bass, and the incredible Simon Phillips (of 801 fame) on drums. Hymas and Phillips are responsible for writing the bulk of the material here. Beck always sounds best when he has a strong keyboard backing to allow him the freedom to do what he does best—play lead guitar. And there is some great lead playing on the album, to be

sure, even if it's come to be expected. The album's closer, "The Final Peace," showcases Beck's playing in a Roy Buchanan style and reaffirms his place at the top of the rock guitar pack.

—Kirk Austin



Heroes
The Commodores
 Motown, M8-939M1

Produced by James Anthony Carmichael and the Commodores; engineered and mixed by Cal Harris and Jane Clark.

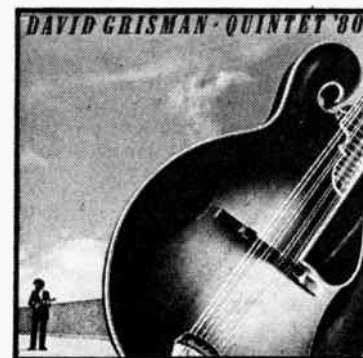
Few bands have achieved the level of consistent success that the Commodores have enjoyed on Motown since their 1974 hit "Machine Gun." The group's 1980 release, *Heroes*, shows them at no loss for material, funk, or soulfulness. Their blend of R&B is recognizable now, and the band is sticking to that formula.

The Commodores' "Mean Machine" horn section have become more involved in the composing here, and the results are positive and promising, without being drastically different. The Commodores have always sung love songs directly to their ladies, and continue to do so here. Milan Williams' tune "Old-Fashion Love" has a classy pop melody, pleading for affections. "All The Way Down" exhorts us to new heights of boogie pleasure with its infectious and sensuous lyric line, and contains an interesting but brief synthesizer solo. There is also a song of broken love here, the irrepressibly funky "Sorry To Say," written by Ronald LaPread and Darrell Jones. Lionel Ritchie, author of such Commodore ballads as "Easy," "Just To Be Close To You," and "Three Times A Lady," explores the same vein in the title track, a song that extols the heroic virtue in all of us "plain ol' people."

Side Two of *Heroes* contains some of the group's best compositions, and is the scene of a switch to more spiritual themes. "Wake Up Children," written by Ritchie and Thomas McClary, is one of the group's strongest efforts, with a timely lyric delivered over a tight and powerful instrumental track. "Mighty Spirit" implores us to "Get up—it's time for you to pray." And Lionel Ritchie's ballad "Jesus Is Love" closes the album with praise and heartfelt joy, a 30-voice choir adding to the spirit of the affair.

James Anthony Carmichael has produced all of the Commodores' albums and he knows the sound they strive for. The bass guitar is clean, with lots of bite. The drums are basically simple and funky (not disco) and are laced with extra percussion. Carmichael's string and brass arrangements add just the proper amount of spice to the package. The Commodores' vocals, distinctive as always with their exaggerated "yowws," "owws," and "wells," are out in front, and in top form. Much thought goes into these vocals, especially the complex background parts that do much to make their sound complete and rarely monotonous.

—Robin Tolleson



Quintet '80
David Grisman
 Warner Bros., BSK 3469

Produced by David Grisman; engineered by Bill Wolf; recorded at 1750 Arch Studios, Berkeley.

The *David Grisman Quintet*, released in 1977, reached unprecedented heights, both artistically and commercially, for an acoustic album on an independent label (Kaleidoscope). 1979's follow-up, *Hot Dawg!* (on Horizon), was without doubt the first mandolin album to ever penetrate *Billboard's* jazz chart, threatening the Top 10 for more than 30 weeks. With his move to Warner Bros., Grisman's unique blend of bluegrass and jazz stands a good chance of achieving the unthinkable—mass acceptance of an all-instrumental, all-acoustic string band.

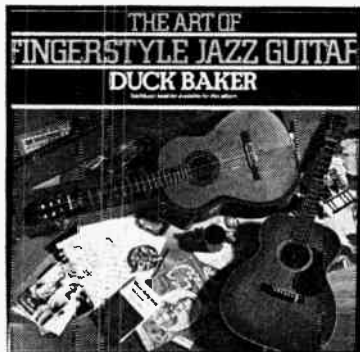
Although the present incarnation of the Grisman Quintet consists, of course, of five members, the versatility of each constitutes a mini-orchestra at the composer's disposal. Violinist Darol Anger (the only charter member left besides Grisman himself) doubles on cello; second mandolinist Mike Marshall also contributes guitar and fiddle parts; Mark O'Connor handles both guitar and fiddle with equal ease and authority; and bassist Rob Wasserman comes up with lines as creative as Grisman's melodies. The instrument swapping proves particularly effective on "Bow Wow," a haunting minor key fiddle tune Grisman wrote for O'Connor's fiddle and Anger's cello.

O'Connor, who turned 18 shortly after this recording was completed, had the formidable task of replacing the legendary Tony Rice as the band's guitarist a year ago. That seat may never be completely filled—especially in terms of Rice's rhythmic strength—but O'Connor has a lot of new sounds to offer. As co-violinist Anger is quick to admit, "Mark is probably the country's leading exponent of old-time Texas-style fiddling."

Quintet '80 seems more of a group effort than the previous *Hot Dawg!*, although Grisman gets his share of the spotlight as well. In particular, his beautifully executed rendering of John Coltrane's "Naima" should make some jazz purists take a longer look at the former bluegrass.

But it is Grisman's compositions that really capture the listener's attention—and all of the virtuosic soloing only serves to enhance David's keen sense of melody and structure. Grisman's swinging "Dawgma," which opens Side One, provides such a versatile setting that it reappears on Side Two as "Dawgmatism," done bossa nova style. The extended "Thailand," a showcase for Anger's violin, passes through bluegrass, jazz, flamenco, and rock sections, with just the right portions of chops and taste. In this song, as in the group itself, the whole is still greater than the sum of its parts.

—Dan Forte



The Art Of Fingerstyle Jazz Guitar Duck Baker

Kicking Mule, KM 156

Produced by Stefan Grossman; engineered by Nic Kinsey and John Verity; recorded at Livingston Studio, London.

Duck Baker is one of the half dozen or so most gifted acoustic guitar players in the world today, not only because of his dazzling technique, but his originality and universality as well. He has been compared to jazz guitar great Jim Hall, and, even though the two work in totally different contexts to arrive at two entirely distinct sounds, it's easy to see why. Each employs qualities such as subtlety, simplicity, and humor to achieve the progressive and unexpected.

With his first Kicking Mule album (*There's Something For Everyone In America*, KM 124), Baker established himself as one of the most unique new voices in folk guitar. Fingerpicking a nylon-string flamenco guitar on ragtime and country tunes, Baker introduced a completely new sound to the school of fingerpicking previously founded by Stefan Grossman, Dave Laibman, Eric Schoenberg and others. And, while arranging has always been one of Baker's strengths, his adaptations of piano rags avoided the academic sterility often associated with other ragtime technicians.

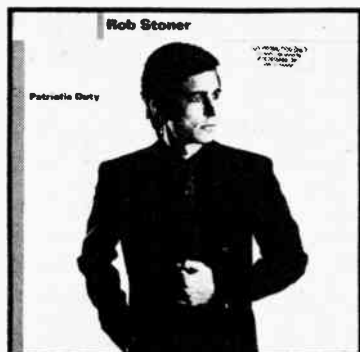
Duck's follow-up (*When You Wore A Tulip*, KM 135) relied primarily on pop and novelty songs, with less successful results, while his third LP (*King Of Bongo Bong*, KM 144) revealed for the first time his twangy yet accessible vocals.

Baker's latest release is by far his most ambitious and most serious. The theme is acoustic jazz—some standard, some obscure, some original—played in Duck's inimitable fingerpicking style. Fingerstyle guitar has rarely been employed in jazz, and, as Baker points out in his liner notes, it has usually been confined to the classical approach (e.g. Charlie Byrd, Laurindo Almeida, and more recently Earl Klugh). Duck's folk-influenced approach proves both innovative and versatile. His arrangement of Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood" is appropriately spare, while "Stompin' At The Savoy" is light and swinging. Two of his most inventive arrangements are his folk-blues treatment of Gershwin's "Summertime" and Billy Strayhorn's "Take The 'A' Train," with its drone bass figure.

Of his original compositions, "White With Foam" is the most avant-garde and impressive. Its jagged, twitching melody is accentuated by the buzzing of the flamenco guitar's low nylon strings. "Everything That Rises Must Converge" places a melody derivative of "It Had To Be You" in a minor key over a steady, almost monotonous rhythm; "Southern Cross" adds Celtic and flamenco touches, along with some jazz chording.

It will be interesting to see if Duck can combine all of the elements of his playing (modal mountain music, blues, swing, progressive jazz, novelty songs, Irish jigs and reels, maybe even vocals) into a cohesive whole on future albums. Whatever he undertakes you can bet the results will be interesting and enjoyable.

—Dan Forte



Patriotic Duty

Rob Stoner

MCA 5118

Produced by Rob Stoner; engineered by Thom Panunzio; recorded at the Record Plant, New York.

Sometimes this sounds like rockabilly, but it isn't. There are strong New Wave influences, but it's not that either. Putting the two together, you might expect something like Dave Edmunds' neo-rockabilly *Repeat When Necessary*. Nope. What we have here is Rob Stoner's personal statement on rock & roll, from Memphis 1956 to New York 1980. Stoner has turned this potentially dangerous self-indulgence into one of the most entertaining debut LPs of the year.

If the name sounds vaguely familiar, you may recall that Stoner (on bass and harmony vocals) served as musical kingpin of Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue. He split with Dylan after *Live At Budokan*, and since then he's been forging his wide range of influences into his own distinctive style—one that plugs 1956-64 sounds into 1980 energy.

The foundation of this album is Stoner's bass playing, always tightly welded to the drumming of Rolling Thunder compatriot Howie Wyeth. The two play with one mind. Their style is sparse and finely woven, with every note and every drumbeat striking for effect. On top of this, Stoner adds his own guitar, piano and vocals. He calls on some help from guitarist Dan Rothstein and reed man Steve Giordano, but mostly it's Stoner playing with Stoner.

Stoner doesn't give the listener time to get bored. The songs punch out one after the other, each with a different subtle twist. The dominant influence is Memphis, 1956. Stoner never descends to blatant Elvis impersonation, yet echoes of the King ooze out of most of his vocals. Stoner's rollicking piano—alas, too often buried in the mix—is 100 proof Jerry Lee Lewis. "Long Legged Girl" even includes the Killer's trademark clacking down of the keyboard cover—or at least a simulation of it.

The songs, mostly written by Stoner with a couple of collaborators, have a delightful way of teasing you with slippery ghosts of the past. Is that Gerry and the Pacemakers filtering through "Your Own Heartbeat"? Was "Hotel 1-2-3" conceived in a Greenwich Village folk club circa 1964? Did the Coasters once record "Flat Tire," or does Stoner just want to make us think that they did? The

mini-masterpiece on the record is "Too Good To Be Wasted (But Too Wasted To Be Any Good)," a ballad that pays homage to those dreadful teen tragedies of the early Sixties.

The record does have one major flaw: the brief songs and lack of live interaction keep the music from heating up into sustained excitement. But that, fortunately, doesn't inhibit the fun.

—Sam Borgerson



Music For Parties

Silicon Teens

Sire, SRK 6092

Produced by Larry Least; engineered by Eric Radcliffe and Eric Hine; recorded at Blackwing and Magritte Studios, London.

One aspect of the New Wave movement that has appealed to me most is the abundance of strange cover versions of songs from the Fifties and Sixties. This usually takes one of three forms: faithful recreations of

good, if somewhat obscure, tunes (the Ramones' "Needles & Pins"); butchered re-workings of songs that deserve it (the B-52's singing "Downtown"); and nothing-is-sacred assassinations of classics (such as DEVO's computerized "Satisfaction"). The latter trend probably reached its zenith with the Flying Lizard's mutilation of "Money."

The Silicon Teens introduce a fourth strain to this rock & roll tradition: great cover versions of previously dismal songs. The Teens are just that—four kids from Liverpool, age 17 and 18, who go by only their first names. (Judging by their promo shot I'd say there are two boys and two girls, but I wouldn't stake my reputation on it.) Employing only vocals, synthesizers, and synthesized drums, the Teens manage to transform songs we'd all like to forget (Chris Montez's "Let's Dance," John Fred & the Playboy Band's "Judy In Disguise") into a truly enjoyable garage music for the Computer Age.

Nearly all fourteen songs on their debut LP are covers, with the exception of two promising group compositions and one by producer Larry Least. Oddly enough, the album's only weak spots come when the quartet tries to rearrange what were already classics to begin with ("You Really Got Me," "Do Wah Diddy Diddy," "Oh Boy!").

But at their best moments the Silicon Teens are one of the first entirely electronic groups I've heard that seems to really play from the gut (or, as Keith Richards would say, from the crotch). Listening to the honking tenor sax, Farfisa organ, and perfectly placed drum rolls on "Red River Rock," it's hard to believe that it's all being done with synthesizers. Johnny & the Hurricanes would be proud of these kids.

—Dan Forte

ALTERNATE TAKES

Jamaica's *Soul Syndicate*, one of reggae's foremost instrumental groups, always seems to be the right backup band; no matter what vocalists they work with. Combining their efforts with a fine young singer—**Earl Zero**, *Visions Of Love* (Epiphany Records, ELP 3010; Box 31125, San Francisco, CA 94131)—they demonstrate the compatibility of passion and subtlety. Connoisseurs of reggae guitar will be especially enthralled by Earl "Chinna" Smith's darting leads and Tony Chin's cutting rhythm chops on "Shackles And Chains," both of which add enormous power to Zero's low-key vocal.

—B.D.

Juicy Lucy (Bee Hive, BH 7009) features an all-star jazz quartet led by guitarist **Sal Salvador** on six tunes that embody all that's good about jazz—creativity, interplay, spontaneity, and swing. Sal is supported expertly by pianist Billy Taylor, drummer Joe Morello, and bassist Art David.

—D.F.

If you missed **Mike Berry's** *Rock's In My Head* (Sire, SASD 7524) of four years ago (and most people did), be sure to pick up the Englishman's latest, *I'm A Rocker* (Epic, 36-71). Berry's version of "Don't Fight It (Feel It)" gives a good idea of what Buddy Holly would have sounded like had he lived long enough to turn Sixties soul into rockabilly the way he transformed Fifties R&B.

—D.F.

With their eighth LP (and their fourth record label), *Asleep At The Wheel* continue to make the unfashionable irresistible. The addition of former Hot Lick Maryann Price accentuates the band's jazzier side, while Chris O'Connell (who recently left the group to try a solo career) reminds us of the Wheel's C&W roots. *Framed* (MCA, 5131) is leader/singer/guitarist Ray Benson's best effort as producer thus far, and also includes one of his best originals to date, the bluesy "Lonely Venue Revisited."

—D.F.

Unlike the numerous recent creations of ambitious producers trying to fit unknown women vocalists into a prefabricated sound and image, **Caroline Mas** seems like a natural, genuine hard rocker. All the tracks for her second album, *Hold On* (Mercury, SRN 1-3841), were recorded live in the studio, and with superb keyboardist Charlie Giordano and sax player Cris Cioe leading the way, her music heads straight for Springsteen territory. If Mas' lyrics don't quite make it to Asbury Park—let's say they reach Bayonne instead—they are generally punchy, to the point, and capable of carrying a delicious venom, as in "He's So Cool."

—B.D.

Trumpeter Mark Isham, guitarist Peter Maunu, and ex-Zappa sidemen Patrick O'Hearn (bass) and Terry Bozzio (drums) join forces to create new-age instrumental music that touches on jazz, rock, and classical elements. Heavily electronic and flawlessly produced, **Group 87** (Columbia, NJC 36338) focuses on well-constructed melodies spaced by ethereal keyboard passages, and on ensemble playing rather than individual efforts.

—R.T.

Live:

BROMBERG'S FAREWELL...

by Dan Forte

SAN FRANCISCO

How many touring musicians would (or, for that matter, could) begin a concert with "Da Do Run Run," close it with a medley of Irish fiddle tunes, and play each (and everything in between) with equal expertise not to mention soul? The answer to this carefully worded question, I'm sorry to report, is none. Because, by the time you read this, David Bromberg will have concluded his 1980 "Farewell Tour," and will have embarked on a four-year apprenticeship at violin maker's school.

When I interviewed Bromberg about a year and a half ago at his home in Marin County, he was just beginning to study the art of violin making. He showed me with pride his basement full of disassembled fiddles and talked about repairing and rehairing violin bows. So, while it still came as a bit of a surprise when he announced his retirement as a performing musician earlier this year, I could understand his reasons. As he told the crowd at the Great American Music Hall, August 10, "I just got addicted to building fiddles."

The Music Hall was a fitting place for Bromberg to say goodbye to his San Francisco fans before heading east for his finale in New York's Central Park. David & Co. played to two sold-out houses, as they had so many times in the past.

Bromberg programs his sets like some deranged travel agent planning a trip around the world by spinning a globe and stopping it with their finger. As is his custom, he treated the Music Hall audience to back-to-back renditions of the Chuck Berry-ish "Rock & Roll Millionaire" and the traditional "Battle At Bull Run," and followed the bluegrass "Dark Hollow" with the dixieland-styled "Mrs. Delion's Lament."

But the question about eclecticism is, does it work? In the hands of David Bromberg, it not only works, it becomes hardly noticeable. More importantly, Bromberg never uses his versatility and shotgun repertoire as a gimmick in and of itself. As he once told me: "I don't apologize for my music, and I don't try to explain it. The only significance a piece of music has is right here and now—what it does to you. When we do coun-



PHOTO: MARK MANDER

try music—or blues or bluegrass or anything—we try to do it, not imitate it or give an impression of it. We really do it."

Bromberg has continually surrounded himself with musicians who are just as multi-talented and one-of-a-kind as himself. For his last waltz he was backed by a seven-piece aggregation of long-time veterans and a few new faces, the highlight of which was a four-man horn section that expanded at times to a multi-headed monster capable of playing guitars, mandolins, fiddles, and a variety of reeds and brass. John Firmin sounded both spontaneous and convincing, whether blowing a bluesy tenor solo or skipping through an Irish jig on the penny whistle. Andy Stein (on baritone sax, violin, and mandolin) is an alumnus of Asleep At The Wheel and the Lost Planet Airmen, and, needless to say, knows how to swing. Peter Ecklund traded trumpet and flugelhorn licks with Bromberg's guitar and even spelled David on acoustic when the leader moved to fiddle or mandolin. Curt Lindberg played slide trombone throughout the set, but

somehow managed to adapt the ordinarily cumbersome instrument to whatever Bromberg cued up, whether it was "Dark Hollow" or "Make Me A Pallet On Your Floor."

The band was augmented on a few numbers by a trio of female backup singers, led by David's wife Nancy, who soloed on the ballad "One Good Man At Home." Nancy, who also plays upright bass, sang with authority and displayed almost as much stage presence as her husband. David was, as always, a bundle of nervous energy—constantly smiling, flashing sideways glances into the crowd, and coaxing extended solos from his sidemen.

Instrumentally, Bromberg alternated mainly between his white Fender Telecaster and Martin dreadnought. Though Telecasters are not widely regarded as the most versatile of electrics, Bromberg squeezed a dozen or so tones out of his (which has a humbucking pickup in the bass position), sometimes employing a chrome slide or a phase shifter. At one point Bromberg and Firmin executed a perfectly seamless segue from slide guitar feedback to tenor sax solo.

Bromberg also donned his mandolin, for a medley of bluegrass instrumentals; his Dobro, for the quiet "I'll Keep Moving On"; and his fiddle, for his crowd-pleasing Irish fiddle medley, "Yankee's Revenge," which closed the set. The band returned twice for encores—Bill Broonzy's "Key To The Highway" and a rousing version of Ray Charles' "Hit The Road, Jack"—but, regrettably, Bromberg steered clear of the acoustic guitar solo spots that have been a tradition in the past. But this was, after all, a going away party, and David rarely slowed down the pace.

Maybe it's just wishful thinking, but I can't help believing that we haven't heard the last from David Bromberg. After all, somebody's going to have to road test all those brand new "Bromberg" fiddles David will be making.

In any case, I feel fortunate that I was able to see Bromberg in concert six or seven times in the past few years. The people I really feel for are those who were exposed to Bromberg's live act for perhaps the first time at one of his farewell shows. Because, like the man says, it's addicting. You can never get enough of such a good thing.

M.I.

Live:

DEVO



Mark Mothersbaugh

by Bruce C. Pilato

ROCHESTER

No joke, it had to be 110° inside the Triangle Theatre the night DEVO came to town. A reconstructed 1,000-seat ex-vaudeville palace, the Triangle has become sort of the Fillmore East of the Eighties for upstate New York. Yet despite the sweltering heat, the sold-out crowd waited happily inside for over an hour for the show to start. They didn't care; they knew DEVO would be well worth the wait.

The show was delayed not because the band took their time arriving, but rather because DEVO was concerned over some minor stage problems. The group itself had been at the Triangle since mid-afternoon working on a tedious and lengthy soundcheck. Dressed in normal clothing (in fact, for a long time I thought they were part of the road crew), the five members made effort after effort to get the sound both on and off stage just right. In addition, they discussed at length a very small problem they had with some of the lights.

Their diligent work obviously paid off, because when DEVO finally hit the stage they presented a show that was not only musically exhilarating, but visually stunning. By the end of the first song, no one seemed to mind about the heat or the wait.

To psych up the anxious crowd the band's set was preceded by five self-produced short films,

among them the popular *Truth About De-evolution*, which has been shown on *Saturday Night Live*.

After a short based on the song "Freedom Of Choice," the title of their new album, the band appeared onstage dressed in their newest outfits which consist of matching industrial uniforms and upside down art-deco flower pots worn as hats.

Lead vocalist and keyboardist Mark Mothersbaugh made his entrance from the rear of the stage waving a huge American flag. The flag was there mainly in conjunction with the theme of the newest album, but also represented the American Dream, an ideal the band spent the entire evening making fun of.

DEVO are certainly satirists, but their satirism is so tacky it never becomes too smug. They are entertainers first and satirists second. Their power-packed show contained everything the audience could have hoped for. They played their most popular songs, even though most of them were featured in the opening films, and played them with an enthusiasm and precision that was outstanding.

The group managed to offer the best selections from all three of their albums, including "Planet Earth," "Pink Pussy Cat," "Mongoloid," "Smart Patrol/Mr. DNA," and their infectious new single, "The Girl U Want." The loudest audience response came during their spastic cov-

ers of "Satisfaction" and "Secret Agent Man," as well as their closer, "Jocko Homo (Are We Not Men? We Are DEVO!)."

Aside from their lyrical themes (which talk about people who have been killed by falling space junk, among other things) DEVO's songs are actually quite accessible. Of course, they are spiced up with off-the-wall riffs and angular rhythms, but they all consist of a standard verse-hook-verse pattern and an easily identifiable beat. And in concert the songs sound even more exciting than they do on record.

The band is spearheaded by vocalist Mothersbaugh, who is among the most peculiar yet captivating frontmen since David Bowie. In addition to giving the group most of its stage presence, Mothersbaugh played an enormous bank of keyboards which consisted of synthesizers, electric pianos, an organ, and a string machine.

Mothersbaugh's brother, Bob, is one of the group's two guitarists. Playing a customized Ibanez solid-body, he provided some of the more inspiring solos of the night. He appeared to be some sort of mechanical zombie, obsessed with his instrument.

The group's other axeman, Bob Casale, played a Gibson L-6 and doubled on keyboards and vocals. Casale's brother, bassist Jerry, is the group's chief writer (along with Mark Mothersbaugh) and seemed to be the most concerned with the band's actual execution of their show. (It was he who kept raising questions on how to improve this and that during the soundcheck.) Onstage he was the most energetic, constantly gyrating spastically while playing a custom homemade bass which consisted of a Vox box body, DiMarzio pickups and a Gibson EBO-3 neck. He also switched from time to time to a one-octave bass keyboard.

The group's drummer, Alan Myers, was relentless in his attack. He is a truly exceptional drummer, even if he does look like the nerd that everyone used to beat up in high school.

Although the group has no real soloist, all members take turns at one point or another being the crux of a particular song. Since most of their material is "rhythm" oriented, their real skill as players comes through in the tightness of their chops.

DEVO has a remarkable setup, with no amplification at all onstage. The group plays out of small amps (such as Fender Pro Reverbs) which are positioned in the wings and miked directly to the PA. They work completely off the monitors, which is why the soundcheck was so crucial.

Aside from the ornate lights, the group's stage show centered mainly around the musicians themselves, their odd costumes and robot-like mannerisms. One highlight, however, was during "Satisfaction" when Mark Mothersbaugh played an inspired slide guitar solo on a customized one-stringed Fender Telecaster with seemingly every effect and gadget taped to its body.

They may appear like clones, but they are certainly not clowns. DEVO proved that they are in that rare class of musicians who are both brilliant satirists and excellent players. Like Frank Zappa and the Tubes, DEVO offers a lot to laugh at, but even more to listen to. **M.I.**

PHOTO: ALAN GARDNER

一億総シンセ時代到来!?

何と僅か860gの登場! ウォーク・シンセ

①



エレクトロ・ハーモニックス ミニ・シンセサイザー MODEL EHO400

いやはや、アメリカという国は一体何が飛び出してくるか分からない所だ。世界を破壊に導く原爆が飛んでくるのは困るけれど、ここに紹介する嬉しい楽器なら大歓迎だ。とにかく、このミニ・シンセは本当に本物のシンセサイザーなのである。そのうえ、僅か860gと軽量、スピーカー内蔵、バッテリー作動(DC 9V/006P×2、またはACアダプター)、プリント・キー等々の長があげられる。要するに、手軽に持ち運べ弾く場所を選ばないという事で、海、山、公園は勿論、トイレの中でも、歩きながらでも、寝ながらでも、車の中でも等々と、実に広範囲に渡っているのが嬉しい限り。また、裏面のアウト・プット・ジャックにアンプを接続すればパワフル・サウンドもバッチリで、ギタリスト同様、ステージで派手に動きながらのソロもOK。アウト・ドア、イン・ドアの両方ともOKというから実に泣ける。

では実際に機能性の方はどうであろうか。読者諸君の中にはシンセサイザーといえば、「高価で手が出ないもんね!」とか、「ボク、メカニックには弱いよ!」とか、「先天的に鍵盤楽器は弾けないのだ!」とか誤った先入感を持った人が多いと思うが、このミニ・シンセはそれらのイメージを完全にぶち壊して

しまった。何と云っても、プレイヤー・サイドからみてセルロイド紙にプリントされたキーは驚きであろう。このプリント・キーは電卓の液晶スイッチと同様、タッチ・センスで軽く触れるだけで音が出る仕組みになっている。ゆえに、ピアノの様に肉体的訓練(運指etc)を積まなければダメノという様な事はなく、指でプリント・キーをなぞるだけで既にキーボード歴10年に匹敵しちゃうかもね!?例えば、低音を押さえておき高音部くり返しリリースすれば、いわゆる驚異的なフレージングもバッチリ可能だ。備えている機能はごく簡単であり、カラフルなスライド・スイッチを写真左側より説明してみます。

☆オクターブ

このスイッチによりオクターブの切り換がいとも簡単に出来ちゃうのだ。

☆ピッチ・ベンド・スライダー: その名の通り上下にスライドさせる事によりピッチの調整、そしてリード・ギター顔負けのチョーキング・ニュアンス(ベンド効果)などをかもし出せる。

☆サブ・オクターブ: このバーをスライドさせる事によりオクターブ下の音がブレンドでき、重低音のコントロールが可能。

☆フェイズ&フェイズ・レート: フェイズを

ONにするとコーラス効果が得られ、かかり具合はフェイズ・レートのスライドする事によりOK! また、フェイズをOFFにするとフェイズ・レート・バーがトーン・コントロール・バーに早変わり。

さて、これらのバーはあくまでも音を創るうえでのサポートの役割にすぎないが、これから説明するVCFセクションこそ、このミニ・シンセの切り札ともいえるべき強力な武器なのだ。まず、スウィープ・スタート・フリークエンシーとスウィープ・ストップ・フリークエンシーで決められた音色を、スウィープ・レートでコントロールした時間でスウィープできるユニークさ。という事は、プレイ中スウィープ・ストップ・フリークエンシー・バーを動かせばアタックは決まった音色で始まると同時に、音色の変化を暗くしたり明るくしたりといった芸も可能。さて、スイッチ(ブルー部)の説明をしてみましょう。

☆インパクト・センサー・ON/OFF: このスイッチの切り換によりフィルターにタッチ・センサーが接続される。

☆2X フィルター: 切り換によりVCFにサブ・フィルターが加わり人の声に似た音色が得られる。

☆Q: フィルターのレゾナンス(共鳴)の鋭さ(強弱)を切り換る。

とにかく、コンパクトなボディからは想像出来ない程パワフルな音色が出てくるのでブツまげる。あえて言うなら、オーバー・ハイムに代表される極太の音色とでもいおうか、さすがロックの国アメリカ産ならではの音色だ。最少限のコントロールで最大限の効果が得られる歴史に残る!? このミニ・シンセをどう使いこなすかは君のアイデア次第だ。ちなみに価格の方は¥49,000とメチャ安。

輸入・発売元はユニークなアタッチメントでおなじみのエレクトロ・ハーモニックス社。



New Product Review
By ROCK STEADY, August, 1980
the leading rock & roll magazine in JAPAN

Translated from ROCK STEADY:

ONE MILLION TOTAL SYNTH PERIOD ARRIVE!?

WHAT! ONLY WEIGHING 860G! WALKING SYNTH COMING UP!

Electro-Harmonix, MINISYNTHESIZER Model EH-0400

Nobody predicts what kind of merchandise America produces. They made Atomic bombs to destroy mankind which were not welcome to world. But this is different product. It is pleasure to introduce here a musical instrument.

This is Minisynthesizer anyway this Minisynthesizer is real Synthesizer. However, only weighing 360 g. It has own speaker, batteries operated (DC 9v/006PX2 or AC adaptor) and printed keys are in the board which are special feature of instrument.

MINISYNTHESIZER is easy to carry in-door and out-door such as sea, mountain, park, bathroom, hiking, walking, bedroom and in the car etc. Not only that MINISYNTHESIZER can be played through the outside of amplifier and speaker by connecting the output jack to MINISYNTHESIZER which makes powerful sound as a stage guitarist.

So what is the function of MINISYNTHESIZER? Readers of this article think that MINISYNTHESIZER must be very expensive to purchase or I am weak for mechanic and no musical talent to play. But this is wrong preconception. Nevertheless, this MINISYNTHESIZER broke all such imaginations completely.

From the player side, you will surprise to see printed keys in celluloid paper board. This printed keys are same as electric table liquid crystal (so called touch sense)—just touch lightly—you can hear the sound so it is quite different from heavy piano play as physical exercise or finger exercise. MINISYNTHESIZER is just touch the keys with your fingers then you feel as have played for ten years expert.

For example, press low volume some times press high volume repeat and release, MINI produce colorful sounds—the function is simple but the production of sounds is great like color pictures.

Explanation from left with color slides:

Octave: Depends with switch turning control can be simple.

Pitch Bend Slider: Just like this name—upper and lower slides turning control or lead guitar checking or sound effects etc.

Sub Octave: When slides this bar possibly lower sound can be controlled.

Phase & Phase Lead: When the Phase switch is "ON" can get chorus effects. When Phase switch is "OFF" changes tone speedily.

All these bars are support for production of sound.

The next six controls all affect the MINISYNTHESIZER's filter to change the tone of the sound. The filter can be swept, starting at the frequency set on the SWEEP START control, and stopping at the frequency set on the SWEEP STOP control. SWEEP RATE controls the time it takes for the complete sweep. Higher settings produce longer sweep times. If the two frequency controls are in the same position, there will be no sweep, just a tone change. The tone can be changed when the filter is not sweeping just by moving the SWEEP STOP control.

Impact Sensor ON/OFF: Depends when this switch changes filter touch-sense can be connected.

2X Filter: Turns VCT when change of subfilter add second filter can get similar to a human voice.

How can you imagine this small compacted body can produce such a powerful and colorful sound?

We can say, Rock Country of America produces over harmony and maximum color sound!

MINISYNTHESIZER is minimum control musical instrument and maximum effect which will remain in History?

How you can use this MINISYNTHESIZER? Is up to your idea.

Price is now Y 49,000. Very Cheap
Imported sales at your kindly store.

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Field Mouse

It's the outdoor amp with big sound, small size, and the built-in rechargeable power pack . . . so it won't gobble batteries like a pig. It's small enough to go wherever you go . . . yet The Mouse roars when you get there.

No wonder The Mouse is owned by some of the best musicians in the field.

THE
MOUSE BY
Lectrosnics
Albuquerque, NM 87195 505-831-1010

You don't have to play hard to be heard.

When your amp isn't operating in its optimum power range, it can sound flat and lifeless. At lower volumes, subtleties in your playing get lost.

MXR's Dyna Comp and Distortion+ enable you to add sustain and get the right sound balance with full control over the harmonic character of the sound. So you can cut without being crass. At any volume.

The MXR Dyna Comp is the most popular level-limiting device on the market today. Level-limiting, an effect used extensively in professional recording, will make everything you play come out at an adjustable, pre-set volume. It allows each performer to be heard without overpowering others in the group.

The Dyna Comp also adds distortion-free sustain and punch to give your instrument a professional, studio-quality sound. It's especially useful in stabilizing the sometimes erratic response of an electric guitar or electric piano. The Dyna Comp's Gain control pre-determines its output level. A Sensitivity control increases sustain and attacks and also reduces unnecessary noise in the signal.

MXR's Distortion+ adds controlled harmonic distortion at any volume. Because of the exacting degree of control that it provides, the Distortion+ has become the most popular distortion unit available today. It offers a wide range of useful effects, from warm sounds reminiscent of an overdriven tube amplifier to pronounced "fuzz" sounds with long sustain.

The MXR Dyna Comp and Distortion+ are equipped with positive-action switches, so you can feel when the

effect is In or Out, instead of relying upon a power-consuming LED. Both units have been designed for incredibly long battery life (300-400 hours).

By using the new MXR Power Converter, these units can be converted to A.C. Housed in a rugged, dye-cast case, the Power Converter is capable of directly powering several units at the same time. The Power Converter is now available at your MXR dealer.

The MXR Dyna Comp and Distortion+ are functional, no-nonsense units, ruggedly constructed to handle the tortures of the studio and the road. Like all MXR products, the Dyna Comp and Distortion+ reflect the highest professional standards and have been fully designed and built in the U.S.A.

MXR Innovations, Inc., 740 Driving Park Ave
Rochester, New York 14613. (716) 254-2910

MXR Musical
Products Group

