MUSICIAN

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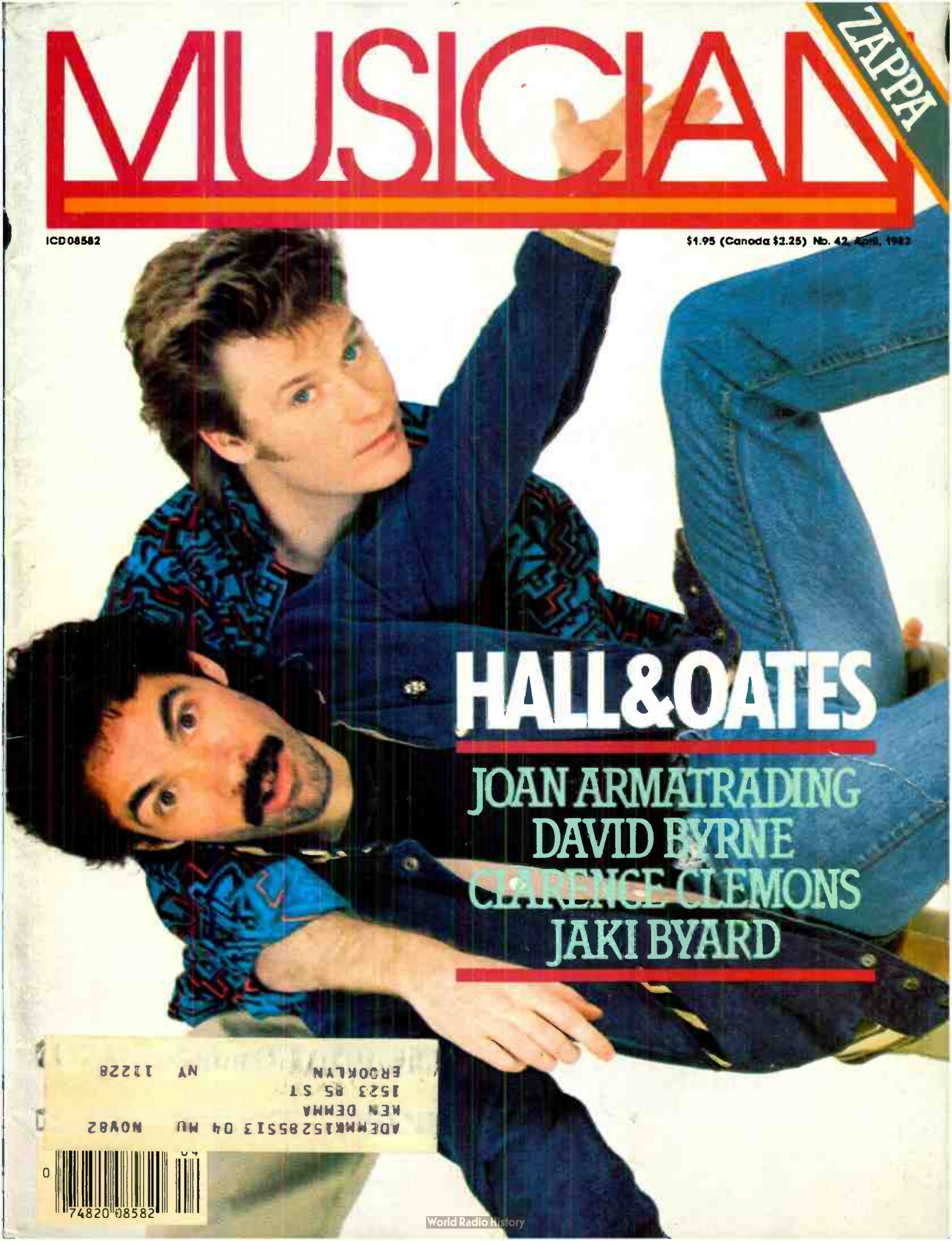

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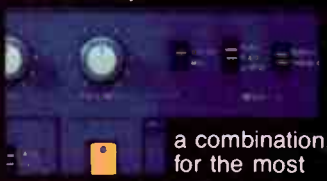

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Roland

We Want You to Understand the Future

MUSICIAN

NO. 42, APRIL, 1982

Frank Zappa has done more in a year and a half than many artists produce in their entire careers, including serious orchestral music, electric guitar schmooze, two anti-pop LPs and his continually inventive tours. Dan Forte gets Frank down to some business basics and some affairs of the heart.

Daryl Hall and John Oates, no strangers to top forty glory, had gone through a few hitless years before taking over the reins and remaking their sound. Virtue is rewarded as their new records go through the chart roof and a refreshing new mix of black and white pop is born.

Clarence Clemons brought his unforgettable rock 'n' roll sax roar to the Springsteen stage and the result was pandemonium. The big man continues that tradition of honest, sweaty fun with his own spare-time band and rock club.

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Steve Gadd
Recording Artist.

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LETTERS

THEY BECAME WHAT THEY BEHELD

I take my flowerpot hat off to you, Kristine McKenna. Finally I've found a Devo interview that refuses to let those smart-assed pseudo-crusaders evade the *real* flaws in their endeavor. Egotistical loudmouths have no place in the limited world of rock music, particularly if they fall to the very levels which they so condescendingly criticize. Devo is guilty of emulating every behavior which they vehemently ridicule on vinyl, screen and on stage. Such apparent self-contradiction leads me to believe that Devo fans aren't so smart as those Akron potatoheads think.
Chris Celio
Worcester, MA

RINGO RAVE

Yaaee Yaaee—Bravo on the Ringo interview! I've been waiting for a talk with one of the buggers that would make me feel like a kid again. You brought out more magic than other interviews I've read with "the boys." When I was a kid, I wrote Ringo off, thinking, "I could do that." Now ten years wiser, I can't deny his innovations and impact. Just listen to "Tomorrow Never Knows." Good job. Oh yes, sorry to hear about Paulie's drinking problem.
Mark Nathanson
Columbus, OH

DEVOLOGY DEFENDED

I have never felt so tense and angry reading an article as I did when reading Kristine McKenna's interview with Devo. She was lucky she wasn't interviewing Van Halen. I admire Bob Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh for remaining polite and for answering her questions through the hell-session she was conducting.

Apparently, Ms. McKenna cannot quite grasp what Devo is saying. She paraphrases their message as "The human race is evolving backwards, etc." As I understand Devo's message, that should read, "The state of the culture is pathetic, so the human race that caused the existing conditions of this society *should* evolve backwards." I thought that what Devo were calling for was a simple and happy brain satisfied with a simple and happy life. I was offended that Ms. McKenna called Devo's audience "trained sheep!" How dare she! Yeah, I wear bluejeans and act silly at Devo concerts. But I also laugh, cry, rebel, dance and cheer on *good music*. I will admit I found myself saluting at Devo's last outstanding concert. But I caught myself and asked myself, "What the hell am I saluting for?" I am not so stupid that I'll do *anything*. Gees. But *I* understand. Ms. McKenna doesn't. If she can't handle Devo, she should stick with some extremely mellow, boring group that has no message—like Steve Miller, or better yet, Fleetwood Mac. It works both ways, honey.
Annie Butler
Denver, CO

CLASS (+DEVO) DISMISSED

I opened up *Musician* No. 40 and...NO ARTICLE BY ROBERT FRIPP!! Whew! It's like showing up for class and finding the prof had a flat tire and can't make it. Don't get me wrong, he's okay, he *even laughed* (in fact, he overdid it a bit) in those pictures with Joe Strummer a while back. He's smart, of course, a great, albeit detached, guitar player, and absolutely no one else in rock 'n' roll looks like him. But wading through his thick, dry essays is too much.

So you took Fripp out and gave us Devo instead. The "spuds with a plan" at least had a formidable opponent in the form of Kristine McKenna, who took 'em on honestly, subtly and without malice. Devo, Fripp, Chris Stein and James White should all be forced to spend two days locked in a room with the stereo playing nothing but Joe "King" Carrasco records. It took Captain Beefheart 3:07 (on "Wild Life") to state what Devo's made a career out of, plus Beefheart's got a caring nature that Devo is too consistently pissed off to ever understand.

By the way, where's Lester Bangs? Have we got to wait for books instead of articles by him? He can get deadly serious too, but at least he has the ability to laugh at himself getting deadly serious.
Robert Johnson
Milford, CT

EXPOSE YOURSELF

John Hall is darn good at what he does, and so are you. But why aren't your writers more careful about what they imply about people. John Hall is an artist and so what if his concern with the welfare of humanity happens to interfere with the plans of some money-hungry businessmen? I didn't know pop-art had cardinal rules. I'm pissed.

But I love this sweet magazine and I'm glad it's come. How else would I learn all those wonderful things about musicians? Exposing myself to every inch of your beautiful magazine gives me more joy and fulfilment than ten special issues of any other one. Keep filling me with your together words, and we can do it again in March.
Myra Broussard
Biloxi, MS
[*Thanks, Myra. It was good for us, too!* Ed.]

SOMETHING DIFFERENT, PLEASE

Another good issue! The two most enlightening articles were the Abdullah Ibrahim interview and the CMS piece. Although I'm not too familiar with Ibrahim's music, I was still fascinated to find someone with such a different conception of music and musicians. Ditto for the CMS article, especially the Doso Roshi segments.

Your article on 60s covers was very perceptive. It seems, though, that not only are groups covering 60s songs, but there are many groups that embody the 60s sound—the Fleshtones, the Raybeats, Panther Burns and Joan Jett ("I Love Rock 'N' Roll" sounds like Grand Funk and Guess Who) to name a few.

A band in New York today has about three choices: avant-funk, hardcore punk or "60s sound." The criteria tying all these together is danceability. This suggests a return to 50s-type values. How 'bout something new for a change?!
Jeremy Shatan
N.Y.C., NY

OLIGOPOLISTIC RAG

Concerning Rob Patterson's "A Plague Of Sixties Cover Songs":

Currently the music industry is in a condition that provides disincentive for innovation; in fact, as Patterson points out, imitation is rewarded. This is the result of extremely high market concentration. In 1979, there were only ten firms with top ten hits; the most successful four of these controlled 71% of the hits. In 1980, four controlled 76%. This is what we call oligopolistic control. Under these conditions, there is no reason to risk anything, therefore no innovation. In fact, the management of these companies can be expectead to fall back on a few trusted decision-makers. This is what we find. In 1979 and 1980, the eight most successful producers were responsible for one third of all hits.

The current market aconcentration is the highest since the early 50s. Cover tunes were a significant proportion of the hits in that period, as were established artists who had been around for fifteen or twenty years. As rock 'n' roll moved in, the market concentration dropped, the established artists had their last hits and disappeared and cover tunes among the top ten ceased. The fact that today we also have decreasing sales, market concentraton, predominance of established performers, conservatism of style and a cover profusion are all evidence that the cycle theory may have some validity.

Let's find out who owns the copyrights to these songs now being covered. What do they own, who owns them, who are they under contract to, who's producing what.... I'll bet there are some very interesting contractual networks.
Eric Rothenbuhler
Department of Communication
Columbus, OH

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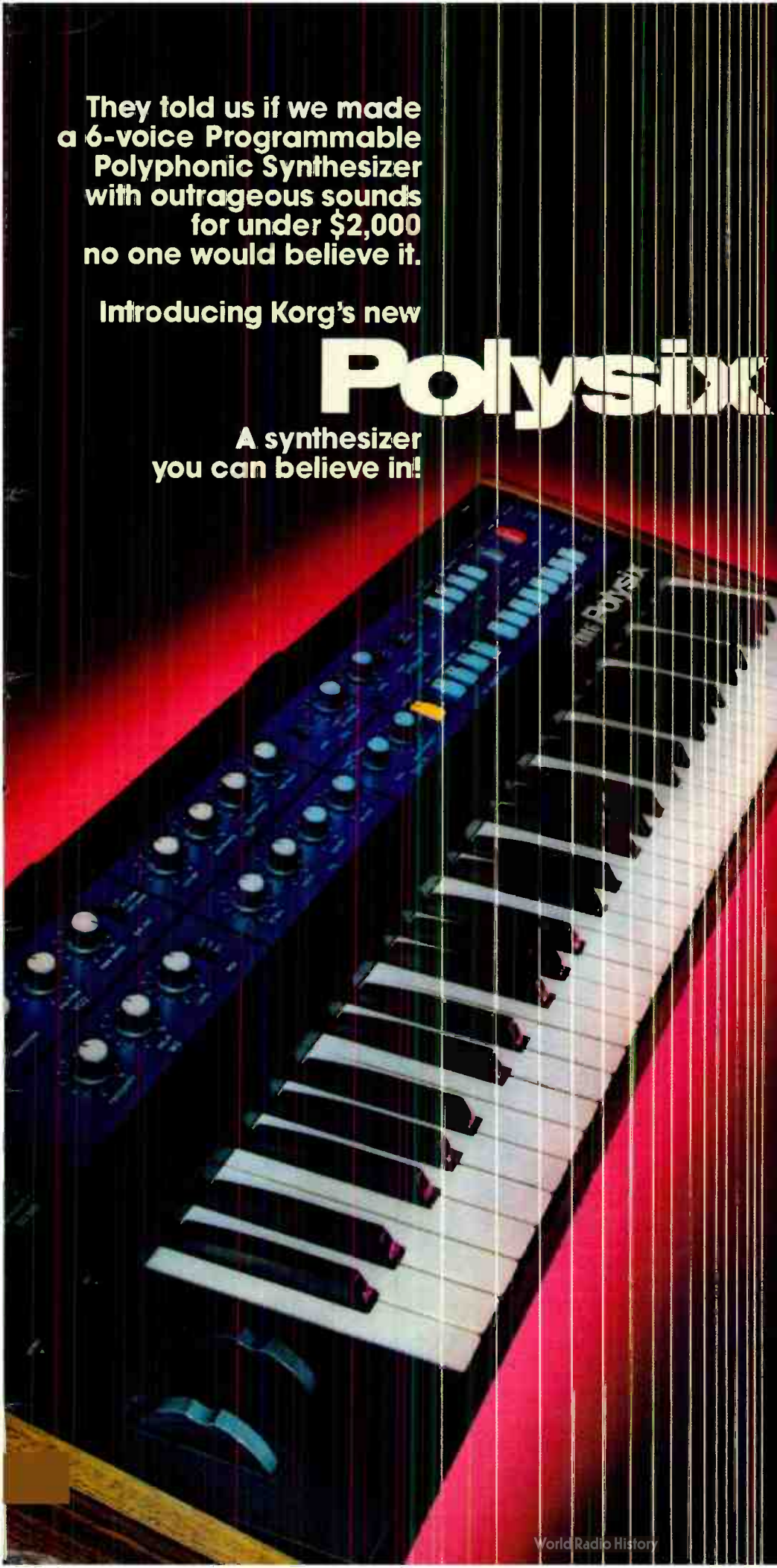

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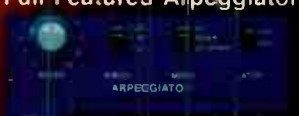

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music industry news

By Roman Kozak and Jock Baird

It was where Debbie Harry was a waitress; where Alice Cooper began his career (and nobody cared) and where the Velvet Underground ended its time together with a memorable live LP. Andy Warhol held court there, where the New York art crowd first met rock 'n' roll musicians. When the New York Dolls, Lou Reed, Wayne County or Patty Smith didn't play, they hung out there. It was new wave when CBGB's was still a bluegrass club. And now Max's Kansas City is no more, a victim of New York club economics, which has made it too expensive for small clubs to operate profitably. The club didn't die with a bang, nor a whimper, but with the shriek and crash of electronic combat. Max's is now a video games arcade. What happened to the safety net for essential social services?

Carmine Appice, formerly of Vanilla Fudge and sideman/co-conspirator with the likes of Rod Stewart and Jeff Beck, is going out on tour with old pal **Ted Nugent** and helping with the Wango Tango Supreme's new LP. "He's a crazy guy," says Appice. "And he doesn't get high. I couldn't believe it. I stayed in his house, and I slept in the room with all the heads and various animal parts stuffed, and on his mantel he has two hundred knives stuck in. But he doesn't do drugs. I had some pot with me and I was afraid to take it out. I felt like I was back home at my parents' house. I went out on the porch, took a toke and blew it out the window.

"I was going to go hunting with him. He was wearing all this camouflage stuff. He said, 'I am going to go outside, lay down on the ground, cover myself with leaves, and wait for this deer to come and then blow his brains out.' I said, 'You know what, Ted, I am going to stay here and watch some videos.' And you know what he had: *Deliverance, Dirty Harry, Death Wish,* all this bloody stuff." Ask us if we're surprised, please....

We ran into **Belinda Carlisle**, lead singer for the **Go-Go's**, and noted somewhat undiplomatically that despite their sexy image, the girls up close looked like they got together because they were the girls who couldn't get dates at Hollywood High. Far from punching us out, however, Belinda confided that three of the band members were stood up the night of their senior proms. Heck, that was always the reason that guys were in bands, so what's the difference?

Pipe dream of the month: to fight record piracy, Nesuhi Ertegun, Ahmet's brother and the head of WEA International, is suggesting that recording artists contribute from $2,000 to $5,000 each to IFPI, the international recording organization, of which he is also the president. The line forms at the left.

The Apollo Theatre in Harlem, a veritable national landmark of soul, is being renovated by a cable TV company, Inner City Broadcasting, which will open it again on April 1.

Barry Manilow's U.K. tour is hardly this month's inflation fighter; a good seat will cost you £20 or $38 American. Despite howls of protest, though the 13-date tour sold out in a matter of hours.... **Billy Joel** manned a telephone during a recent radiothon for Charity Begins at Home, a Long Island charity that Joel and his wife, Elizabeth, founded..... **Paul McCartney** has delivered his last album owed to CBS and now becomes a free agent. Paul Winfield, step aside.... It's about time these "Hooked On..." records found a subject worthy of extreme medleyization: the Duke! That's right, RCA is about to released a "Hooked On Ellington" single....

Chart Action

This month's chart overachiever is the J. Geils Band, who rang the bell not only on the LP charts with their *Freeze-Frame*, but also in the singles race with their everything-but-the-kitchen-sink "Centerfold." Otherwise the long-running chart bullies, Foreigner (who had the top spot for most of the month), Journey and the Stones held their own. Singles success had a lot to do with album recoveries by Hall & Oates, Stevie Nicks, *Hooked On Classics*, the Cars, Dan Fogelberg and Quarterflash. The Police just released "Spirits In The Material World" and Genesis offered "abacab" as singles so their LPs may also make a comeback. The Go-Go's are hovering at the edge of the top ten after a startling nine-point surge. Those less fortunate include Earth, Wind & Fire, Barbra Streisand and AC/DC who each lost seven places, and Rod Stewart. Greatest Hits packages by Rush, Queen and Pink Floyd also couldn't compete, but Grover Washington, Jr. and the dark horse of the month, Joan Jett's *I Love Rock 'N' Roll*, are comers.

On the singles charts, Olivia Newton-John nearly set a new record for consecutive weeks at *numero uno*, eleven, but had to settle for a tie, sharing ten-week honors with Guy Mitchell's "Singin' The Blues" from '57 and Debby Boone's Greatest Hit, "You Light Up My Life." You may recall that "Endless Love," Diana Ross and Lionel Richie's ode to teen-time, nearly got there with nine weeks at #1 earlier this year. Maurice White's heart was similarly broken as Earth, Wind & Fire's "Let's Groove" did eight straight weeks atop the soul charts but failed to do nine. Only Al Green's "Let's Stay Together" and the Four Tops' "I Can't Help Myself" have accomplished that.

Hall & Oates did better scaling the record books as their single (*you* know the title) hit #1 on both mainline *and* soul charts, the first white act to do that since '77. They are also tied with Blondie for most #1 singles in the 80s. Other non-epic but still up 'n' coming singles include George Benson's "Turn Your Love Around" and Juice Newton's third single from her debut album, "The Sweetest Thing." Stevie Wonder's new "That Girl," which bears absolutely no resemblance to Marlo Thomas, is definitely not long for the mid-twenties.

New faces on the soul charts include Skyy, whose "Call Me" bumped Maurice and Daryl and John, and whose album, *Skyyline* is #3. Bobby Womack's *The Poet*, Kool & the Gang, Teddy Pendergrass, Peabo Bryson and the Whispers' latest all hang tough. The ultimate crossover tune title is Tom Browne's "Fungi Mama/Bebopafunkadiscolypso." Got it?

natural elements

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Band names have mirrored the aspirations and excesses of the times. A definitive field guide to the epic trends and gonzo greats of rock nomenclature.

By John Mendelssohn

In their earliest days, they called themselves the Quarrymen and later Johnny & the Moondogs, and got nowhere. If they'd continued to get nowhere even after renaming themselves the Beatles, it's conceivable that they might have become The Beatle in 1967, Nicolai Lenin the next year, and Lennon, McCartney, Harrison & Starr the year after that, only to rechristen themselves Beat at the dawn of the 70s. Had they resolved to try their luck in America around the middle of the decade, they would surely have become Beater, and then the Beaten after returning to England and catching punk fever in 1977's Summer of Hate. Most recently, in an attempt to evoke the innocence of the era in which they began, they probably would have got back to the Beatles.

Clearly, the more things have changed insofar as what rock groups call themselves, the more they've remained the same—up until a couple of months ago, when a rash of new acts with bizarre and wonderful monikers like the Teardrop Explodes and Hornets Attack Victor Mature appeared out of the blue, the hippest names were those that were most like the ones of a decade and a half ago. In between, styles in group names have changed nearly as often as styles of dress.

Consider that in the early 60s, having a name that took less than fifteen seconds to say was considered the sign of a barren imagination. Embarrassed to call themselves just Beatles, John, Paul, George and Pete (Best) felt compelled to stick Silver in front, while their arch-rivals-to-be down in London billed themselves as nothing less than Brian Jones & the Rolling Stones, Featuring Mick Jagger. When Brian Epstein renamed the lead singer of one of the lesser groups of Merseyside stars, he wasn't content with Billy Kramer, but felt it necessary to shove in a J.

Only a few years hence, it was all the rage to have a name of but one bold syllable, like Free, or Wings, or Sweet, and even such denizens of the middle of the road as the Carpenters and the Lettermen lopped off their definite articles in desperate—if futile—attempts to appear with-it.

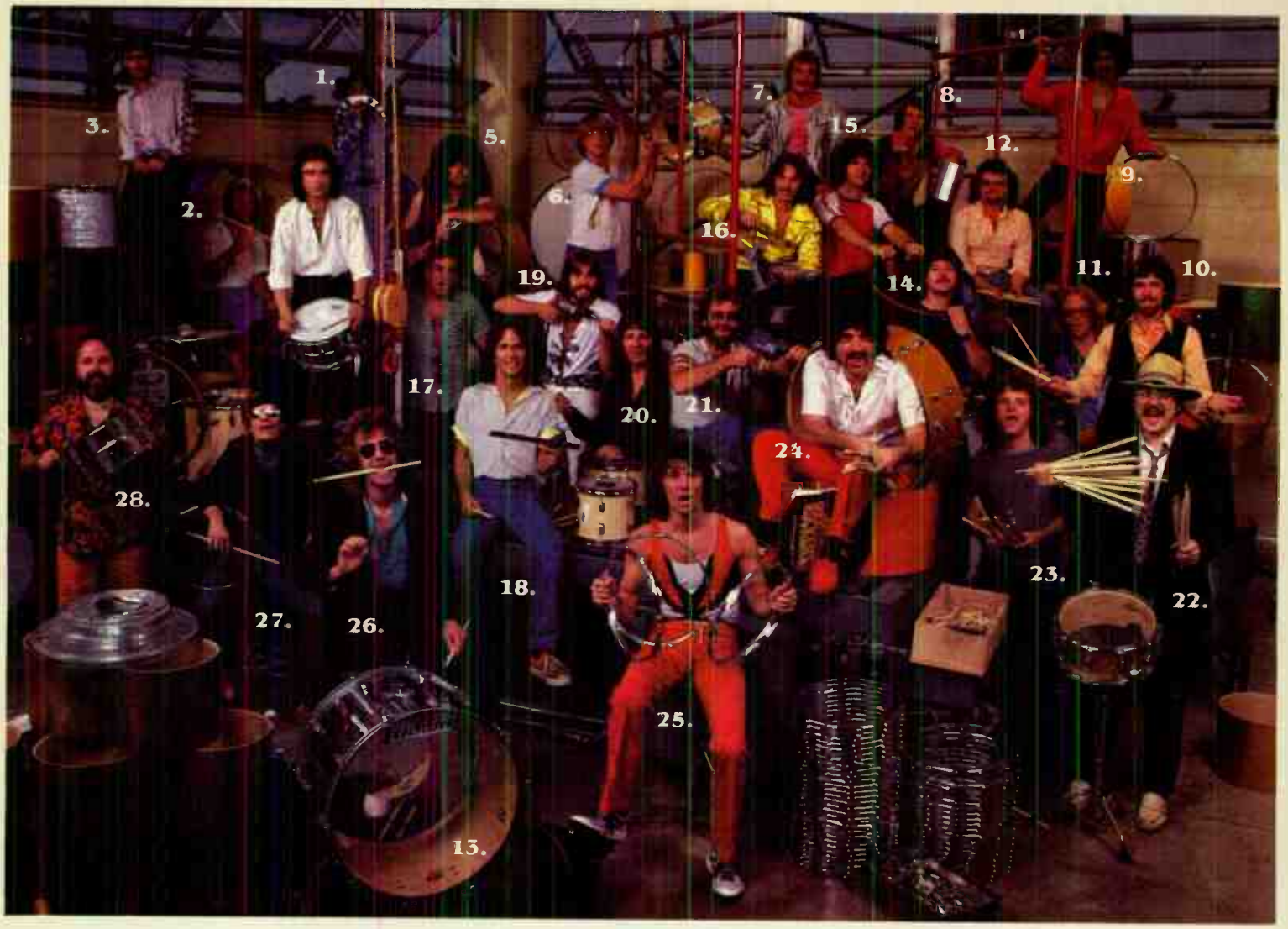
For a while in the very late 60s, it was very chic for an entire group to call itself after a single historical or mythical personage, such as Jethro Tull, a British agrarian who invented some sort of plow, or Alice Cooper, or King Crimson, or Mott the Hoople. This trend, perhaps the best known modern example of which is Molly Hatchet, was made possible by the advent of Jefferson Airplane. Marty Balin's decision to call his group after a mythical bluesmonger in the manner of Blind Lemon Jefferson rather than the Jefferson Airplanes or the Jefferson Airplane Band ranks as the most momentous in the annals of pop group-naming, for it paved the way for countless hundreds of thousands who heretofore wouldn't have dared dream of giving their own flocks singular names. (Mentioning the Lovin' Spoonful only parenthetically implies no underestimation of their own considerable influence in this regard, but accrues to the fact that Spoonful, unlike Airplane, suggests a quantity—in this case, of musicians.) The ramifications of Balin's brainstorm have been felt as far from rock as professional sports, where we now find teams like the Utah Jazz and the Southern California Surf.

Limited only by their imaginations, it's remarkable how many groups have wound up with identical or almost indistinguishable names. If you had a nickel for every group that's dubbed itself the Flames (Fabulous or otherwise), the Spiders (from Mars or elsewhere), the Cats (be they Pole, Stray, or Nu and with a K), or the Boys, you could afford to take me to lunch at my favorite restaurant every weekday through November, and I have expensive taste. There's not only Rush—however fervently many of us wish there weren't—but a (Frank Marino &) Mahogany Rush to boot. In the wake of Three Dog Night, there were the Dogs and Mighty Dog in Los Angeles alone, and Laughing Dogs in New York and London, where, too, there were Racing Cars before Ric Ocasek and chums went platinum as the Cars. Before there was the Queen of that egregious poseur Freddy Mercury, there was a local Queen fronted by Steppenwolf's old bass player and dressed like women. Months before there was Roxy Music, there was Roxy, as heard on Elektra. There was a Gypsy and a U.K. Gypsy, a Squeeze and a U.K. Squeeze. There is a Beat and an English Beat, Player and the Ohio Players, Poodles and Rhinestones and Thunderbirds, all Fabulous.

As the three most influential forces of rock's second generation, the Beatles (named after Buddy Holly's Crickets), the Rolling Stones (named after a Muddy Waters blues tune—as too were the Moody Blues and the Pretty Things), and Bob Dylan (named after an alcoholic Irish poet) have served as role models for countless younger groups. The Shoes are so named because Paul McCartney once offhandedly told a London press conference that the name Beatles had no mystical significance, and might just as well have been Shoes. When the four louts from Queens who reinvented punk in the mid-70s learned that McCartney had billed himself as Paul Ramone in the epoch of Silver Beatles, they appropriated the fictitious surname for their own use. And in every city in the republic there is one group that believes that, if the Beatles once inhabited them, there might be some magic left in the names the Quarrymen and Johnny & the Moondogs.

In the wake of the Stones entitling one of their early albums *December's Children*, no fewer than umpteen jillion garage bands named themselves something or other's Children. Savage Rose was one of several groups who took their names from the liner notes on the first electric Dylan albums, and there have been at least two Blondes on Blonde, the first a pretentious progressive mob, the more recent a pair of cheesecake models turned chanteuses.

Speaking of Dylan, in the Byrds' wake, it sometimes seemed as though a group's license to practice folk-rock would be revoked if they didn't have a *y* in their names, as witness the Myddle



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21. *DARRELL SWEET* Nazarth
22. *BUN E. CARLOS* Cheap Trick
23. *JOEY KRAMER* Aerosmith
24. *CARMINE APPICE* Rod Stewart
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ERIC CARR Kiss
BRUCE CRUMP Molly Hatchet
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Class and the Changin' Tymes. How these groups must have trembled with envy when they got a load, a few years later, of Lynyrd Skynyrd! Even today we see at least one *y* where we shouldn't, in the abominable form of the Babys, which one suspects is more a reflection of impeachable literacy than of homage to the proud tradition of deliberately misspelled names.

And speaking of misspellings, it's intriguing to note that perhaps the only overtly self-effacing name in all of heavy metal belongs to the genre's kings, Led Zeppelin, which sobriquet was originally conceived by Keith Moon as a variation on lead balloon, as in, "Well, *that* went over like a...."

One of the simplest solutions to the problem of picking a name is for a group to ask itself simply, "Where are we?" and then use the answer as their name, as Kansas, Boston, New England and UK have done. (Chicago doesn't count, having begun in the waning days of psychedelia as the Chicago Transit Authority.) Sometimes, of course, as in the case of Japan, who are as British as tepid beer, the question isn't, "Where are we?" but, "Where do we wish we were?" Consider London, the heavy metalmongers who reigned as Kings of the Starwood for about fifteen minutes in 1980. Had they actually visited the city in whose honor they named themselves, their shamelessly outdated Johnny Thunders 1973 psychoshag coiffures would probably have gotten them laughed halfway back across the Atlantic!

In 1966, when Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce mustered the temerity to dub themselves the Cream—as in the cream of British rock musicians—they could little have imagined the ramifications of their egotism (though Ginger Baker always maintained the name was merely a dirty joke). Within a few years, musicians were no longer bothering to think up names at all, but were simply shoving in their own names and those of the other superstars with whom they'd aligned themselves together like so many attorneys.

Which didn't last long, of course, for where was the ego gratification in being one of ELP, or CSN&Y, as the lawyeroid names were invariably shortened to? A wholesale lopping-off of the names of the less heavy egos ensued, with such group names as Argent, Montrose, Santana, and, a little later, Robin Trower, resulting. (The English soon came up with a quaint wrinkle on this trend when they coughed up a troupe of Bay City Rollers clones called Kenny.) This phenomenon remains much in evidence even today, in the likes of Sumner and Van Halen.

Mathematics has long been a source of inspiration, as witness England's Unit

continued on page 79

BOSS

Understanding Technology Series

Subject: Understanding Time Delay Effects

BF-2, CE-2, DM-2

There are a number of devices that produce effects by a time delay circuit. The most common effects are Flanging, Chorus, and Echo Delay. Each of these effects mixes the original instrument signal in with the time delayed signal to produce the effect.

The time delay is the amount of time between the original note played and the note produced by the delay circuitry. These are very short, and are measured in milliseconds (mS – thousandths of a second).

The time delay produced by a flanger is the shortest, usually less than 13 milliseconds. The time delays needed to produce echoes are quite a bit longer, with a maximum at around 300 milliseconds. The time delays of a chorus fall in between the two, the longest being about 25 milliseconds.

BOSS makes three effect pedals that employ time delay circuitry. Each of these are designed to perform their effects with controls and features suited to the particular time delay application.

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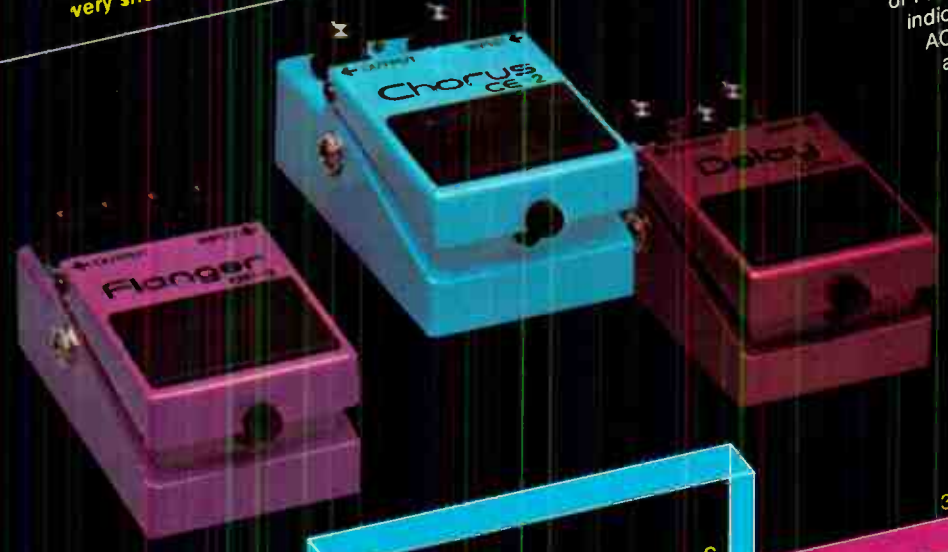

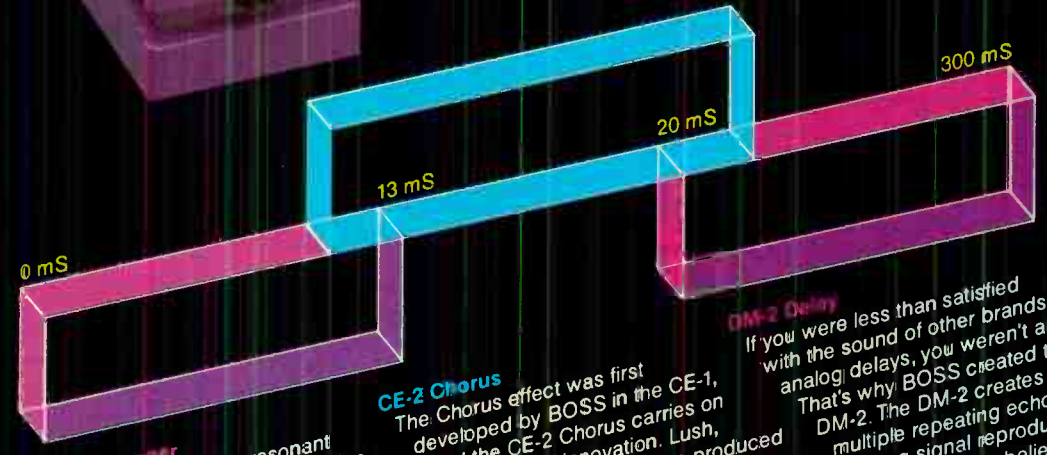

BF-2 Flanger
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CE-2 Chorus
The Chorus effect was first developed by BOSS in the CE-1, and the CE-2 Chorus carries on that spirit of innovation. Lush, thick Chorus effects are produced with control over both rate and depth for personal fine tuning.

DM-2 Delay
If you were less than satisfied with the sound of other brands of analog delays, you weren't alone. That's why BOSS created the DM-2. The DM-2 creates single or multiple repeating echoes with strong signal reproduction quality and literally unbelievably low noise. This is accomplished through the use of a custom delay chip used exclusively by BOSS. Just trying the DM-2 will make a believer of you.

BOSS

We Want You To Understand The Future

THE STRANGE RIDE OF RICHARD THOMPSON

The one-time mainstay of Fairport Convention has since been refining his mythic use of English traditional sounds into his own fiercely imaginative style.

By Brian Cullman

"You know, you could all be seeing Tal Farlow tonight." Richard Thompson, guitarist extraordinaire, writer of some of the most stunning (and mostly unheard) songs of the past twenty years, and former member of Fairport Convention, is performing solo at the Bottom Line and is looking at the sold-out house with a mixture of awe and bemusement. It's been ten years since he's performed in New York (in 1971 with Fairport, and in 1972, accompanying Sandy Denny); his records have been erratically released, largely unpromoted, and rarely available in stores for more than a half hour or so; and he has never had a single released in America, much less been played on the radio. Still, the crowd at the Bottom Line (which includes Brian Eno, Terre Roche, Loudon Wainwright III, Wendy Waldman, producer Joe Boyd, and three quarters of New York's music press) treats him with the sort of love, reverence and unbridled admiration usually reserved for people like Van Morrison, the Band, or (at one point in time) Dylan.

Fairport Convention was a British folk-rock group whose personnel changed, seemingly, by the week, but whose best work was recorded in 1968 and 1969 when Thompson and singer Sandy Denny led the band. Though they began inauspiciously enough as an imitation of the Byrds, they seemed to transform themselves overnight into treasurers of a national and collective past (in many of the ways that the Band took on that role here at the same time). Their past was one that was continually available, continually present—it was a past that had never ended, and it imbued their songs with a textural and a spiritual richness bordering on alchemy.

Greil Marcus wrote in the *Village Voice* in 1977, "...Fairport, like the Band, in those days, had three or four writers, traded vocals effortlessly, and sought the sound of a true group rather than the showcasing of virtuoso instrumentalists. But what the two groups most had in common was their almost magical ability (it feels like magic) to bring the past to life in the present. The difference between the Band and Fairport was a matter of place. The British Isles...are not America, and Fairport never sounded anything but British, even when they sang in French. But the decisive difference is one of time. The Band, after all, had only a few hundred years to work from; their evocations of the past rested on concrete items of cultural memory. The frontier, even in 1969, was hardly spectral. Fairport, though, had thousands of years to draw on—and that meant that when Fairport summoned up the past they were, more often than not, dealing less with history than with mystery."

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Richard Thompson the cynic, the ironist, the holy lunatic.

When Sandy Denny and Richard Thompson left Fairport (in fairly rapid succession—Denny in 1970, Thompson in 1971), the band was left a poor shadow of its former self, coasting for years on a huge backlog of good will and on violinist Dave Swarbrick's showmanship; the ultimate oldies band (oldies here being measured in centuries), reeling off versions of "Matty Groves" and "Sir Patrick Spens" that were long on virtuosity but short on magic. Despite more spin-offs than any group since the Byrds (Steeleye Span, Fotheringay, the Albion Country Band, Matthews Southern Comfort, and Trader Horn all evolved from Fairport), it's been Thompson more than anyone who seems to have assimilated all that was best about Fairport and advanced and extended those boundaries.

He is a guitarist of fierce imagination and almost unimaginable delicacy whose only real peer is Robbie Robertson (though you can sometimes hear bits of Amos Garrett's liquid ease and James Burton's punch in his style). He is as much a colorist and texturalist as he is a lead player, often playing cat-and-mouse with a solo and playing "around" the notes rather than straight through them, taking the long way home. On

continued on page 32

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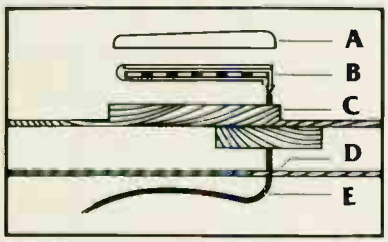

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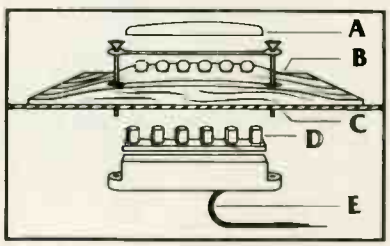

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THE NEW JAZZ MAJORS

The major labels are launching a new jazz offensive, as Elektra Musician, Island's Black & Gold and PolyGram's Enja broaden their horizons and go after the audience once served only by independents.

By Don Palmer

Through wars, recording bans, economic recessions and economic recoveries, jazz musicians have survived. And somehow, they have recorded. And somehow, these recordings have been conveyed to the buying public at some profit (or loss) arrangement with a record company. But there have been high times and hard times for jazz albums, especially for the independent labels who chose not to follow the majors' corporate climb to all that is big, efficient, homogeneous, predictable and capable of quick profits. Fortunately, we may be entering a brighter period for jazz recordings, marked by a renewed interest by the major labels in the market. Three executives, Bruce Lundvall, Ron Goldstein and Barry Feldman, are now matching the muscle of the majors with the artistic possibilities of the independents.

Of course, when the biggies failed to be interested in the past, it was always left to the indies to keep the music alive. Even during the Great Depression, Billie Holiday was able to reach the hearts and minds of America through a series of cheap 78s. After the collapse of the many "race record" labels, blues artists continued to release records on shoestring labels. Then the majors got involved, as clever talent scouts like John Hammond combed the clubs and live radio broadcasts for more Basies, Christians, Youngs, etc. Then, as now, the musicians were left to the mercy of forces beyond their control, like investment decisions, pop market fallout, tax law changes, entrepreneurial whim, background racism and managerial unreliability. Then, as now, musicians complained: never saw all the advance money, never saw the royalties, never heard the record, never gonna record again.

Yet after World War II came the golden age of jazz recording. Independents like Verve, Savoy, Chess, Vee-Jay, Prestige, Blue Note, Riverside, Atlantic and Contemporary actually rivaled the majors in influence and sales of jazz records. Of course, the fact that the market was largely decided by white teenage girls did not bode well for music that was progressive, creative, eclectic or too real, but it did help certain artists who parlayed their bohemian and rebellious qualities into the mystery and sex-

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

While he was president of CBS Records, Bruce Lundvall brought aboard quality jazz, but he always dreamed of his own label for music outside the mainstream.

uality demanded by intellectual and youthful consumers. These were adopted by the majors. For others, the independents performed a vital function. They evolved according to the music, where it was and where it was going. They represented more than the taste of one individual or social group and developed catalogs that far exceeded the often meager offerings of today's beleaguered indies.

But the personalities who built these classic labels aged, got tired and discouraged, sold out, and left a large gap. Their successors, new houses that sprang up after 1964, labels like ESP, Nessa, Strata-East, JCOA, India Navigation, Delmark and Artist's House, were unable to replace them in distribution influence, album budgets, and general quality control. So the jazz industry became schizophrenic: either big labels with big money and big potential, or small labels with specialty markets, poor distribution and little or no money.

This extreme disparity grew to epic proportions in the 70s, and produced the great fusion profusion. The major labels, overflowing with spare cash, threw money like popcorn at commercial jazz groups. There were great attorneys, great promises, great advances, great

At presstime we found that Island's Black & Gold name was not copyright clear and that the jazz signings will go on to the Antilles label. Same artists, same concept, different name.

promotion and ridiculous studio time and costs that smothered the creative fires of some of the brightest artists.

Bruce Lundvall, who was president of CBS Records for five years and largely responsible for the development of the most thorough jazz roster at a major label, reflected on the fusion profusion: "It was a mixed blessing. A number of jazz artists blended rock and R&B into their music and began to see that they could sell a lot of records. But then everyone began making fusion records. Record companies, as a result of a few artists selling a lot of records, were signing these artists for more than they should have. Some of the records were mediocre. Record companies began to look at their so-called jazz roster and they could see that they had one or two artists that were really making money and a whole lot of others that were making records in the studio that were costing $150,000 to record and the records were selling thirty thousand units. We just can't do that any more. We've got to keep costs down."

The owner of a small indie label, who prefers to go unnamed, was hardly as generous as he griped, "The large companies were just taking a flyer on the whim of the staff or an individual. As a result the musicians got paid too much and brought about losses. They just can't market jazz like pop because jazz is a specialty product and the musicians need the proper environment to record so that the music maintains its spontaneity. On a much less attractive level, Muse Records does more for jazz than WEA has done in twenty years. I tend to resent this sort of intrusion because it never is sustained. They've ruined the market for us."

Of course, it isn't just the proliferation of fusion or the major labels making some pernicious attempt to undermine jazz or small jazz labels. The majors, too, are woeful about the state of the recording industry. Record sales took a ghastly decline in 1979 and the word from most insiders is still grim. The factors that worked in favor of record sales in the past twenty-five years are now working against them. All those young eager buyers from the baby boom got older and at least stopped buying what they used to buy and they haven't been producing babies at any sort of record clip. There is also greater competition for leisure dollars with the onslaught of cable television, video and video games. The advancement of the tape player allows people to tape a friend's record at a great savings. And, in case you missed the news, the economy is lousy. Thus big investments on jazz are waning as the returns from the pop sector are decreasing.

Now this may all sound like there soon won't be anything but headsplitting rock 'n' roll in the stores and on the radio. But the opposite is about to come true, as two major labels—WEA and PolyGram—and one mid-size—Island—are embarking on ambitious jazz series.

The WEA venture is actually a branch label of Elektra that is headed by Bruce Lundvall, who left CBS to start Elektra Musician. He describes the label as "something that has been a dream of mine for most of my adult life—a label that would be principally devoted to the art of jazz and conceptually would combine the musical arts with the visual arts and also involve the written and spoken word. What I mean by that is we've created a label that's devoted to serious musicians. That's why we have the name Musician [what a tasteful choice-Ed].

"I decided I wanted the cover art to be principally involved with fine gallery art as opposed to commercial art, or fine photography as opposed to commercial photography. There are a couple of albums that take on a bit more commercial direction, in terms of cover art, because the music is more broadly commercial."

Other features on Elektra Musician's albums will be liner notes written solely by the musician, and an occasional spot at the end of side two where the musician talks about the music. For easier identification in record store browsers, the artist's name and album title also will be printed on the top edge of the album jacket. That may not seem like much, but it is insidiously designed to be recognized in just the sort of record bins jazz LPs inhabit.

Black & Gold's Ron Goldstein signed jazz artists from Ornette to Gil Evans.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

The first batch of releases—Charlie Parker, *One Night In Washington*; Red Rodney and Ira Sullivan, *The Spirit Within*; Lee Rittenour, *Rittenour In Rio*; Freddie Hubbard, *Ride Like The Wind*; Eric Gale, *Blue Horizon*; Chick Corea, Hubbard, Stanley Clarke, Lennie White and Joe Henderson, *Griffith Park Collection*; Material, *Memory Serves*; John McLaughlin, *My Goals Beyond*—were due out on February 12. From Lundvall's generous descriptions of each album, the set sounds rather amorphous which is how he would like it.

"The idea is not to have the label identified with anything other than quality. We're not going in a specific musical direction within jazz. It's not going to be a fusion label or a bebop label or a free jazz label, but it's going to be all those things. It is basically a label that will embrace music outside of the pop mainstream. But primarily it will be a jazz label."

Lundvall spoke of signing Dexter Gordon, recording a reggae or blues album, releasing albums by Billy Cobham, Bud Powell, Mose Allison, Clifford Brown/Max Roach in April and in the future releasing albums by Chico Freeman and Joe Albany. Not surprisingly this doesn't sound very distinct from Columbia's jazz output. There's a little for everyone, which I suppose is the burden of a conglomerate label.

Lundvall presents his case saying, "I've been very careful to try and take things that have a more broadly commercial perspective. I found it always worked at CBS. Because you had Bob James, Weather Report, Herbie Hancock, Hubert Laws, Al DiMeola you could also sign acoustic players who were in the mainstream tradition and do a little better job with them. Your salesmen would go in and say, look, this is an important part of our entire jazz roster—the leading jazz roster. You can probably start off with a better distribution base."

But when asked why there were complaints about the field staff at CBS not really catering to the needs of the individual artists, he pleads innocence. "At CBS I was running the entire operation and I was being spread over a lot of different areas. I don't have to worry about that here. I am doing exactly what I want to do." Lundvall feels that there is a greater commitment to making the jazz label work at Elektra. Everyone from the art department to the top brass is concerned or even knowledgeable about jazz. He also has the advantage of plugging Elektra Musician into Warner's already established distribution network for ECM. Only time will tell. But given Bruce Lundvall's earnest interest in jazz, his winsome smile as he sits flanked by pictures of Miles, Lester Young, Clifford Brown and Eubie Blake and the obvious enthusiasm of the other people in the office, how can I doubt him?

Resolve to sell jazz records is also in the air at Island Records. The jazz line is called Black and Gold and the first eight albums—Joanne Brackeen, *Special Identity*; Bireli Legrene, *Roots To Django*; Ornette Coleman, *Of Human Feelings*; Heath Brothers, *Brotherly Love*; Ben Sidran, *Old Songs For The New Depression*; Anthony Braxton, *Six Compositions Quartet*; untitled albums by Air and Phil Woods—are scheduled to come out in March and April. They have just inked Gil Evans. The label is the brainchild of Ron Goldstein (president of Island, North American) with encouragement from Chris Blackwell (president of Island) and advice from Steve Backer (formerly with Arista Novus). Needless to say, Black and Gold has a heavy Novus flair in its lineup but it is a mixed bag, as Goldstein prefers.

"I don't want to be restricted in what I'm doing. When you go from a Heath Brothers to Ornette to this Bereli Legrene, it's like a wide spectrum. The only thing that I'm not looking at right now is any kind of fusion music.

"All these deals are not one-offs. They are all artist signings and they're ongoing situations. I want to emphasize that because there's such a glut of product coming out all over the place. A lot of it's just catalog reissues and records that pop up from here and there.

"I'm going to let this thing settle without dictating right at the beginning what the music, or what the packaging is like. As time goes on, if something develops, something organic happens from either my tastes or the people that are attracted here, then I may go off in a certain direction, a certain look, a certain feel."

The Black and Gold label, though clearly more dedicated to contemporary jazz as opposed to the more commercial elements of Elektra Musician, is still pursuing the same paths as EM for reaching the market. High quality, expressive and individualistic packaging is stressed by Goldstein as well as high quality music; both the Brackeen and Ornette Coleman (his long-awaited and celebrated unreleased LP) releases are digital. Black and Gold artists maintain control of their sessions (although they may get advice). Musicians are encouraged to "make a record within a couple of days and mix within a couple of days." This keeps the music focused and the cost down.

Goldstein stresses the small size and personal atmosphere at Island because they'll have the time to devote to albums that can't move a hundred thousand units. He also emphasizes the maverick image of Island—they brought the world reggae and are currently pushing "1+1 tape" in an attempt to recoup losses to the blank tape industry.

"We feel that through the experience of promoting and marketing reggae that we can do the same thing with jazz. We have an ongoing catalog that sells well. We've searched out the public, the stores and the radio stations that support reggae music. We want to do the same thing with jazz."

Over at PolyGram another specific kind of marketing expertise is being used to benefit their jazz lines—Enja, Verve, Mercury and Limelight—as Barry Feldman, the manager of PolyGram jazz series explains: "In the classical environment, over here, we're in an area where they're willing to work with jazz. They are not looking at it to cross over. They're looking at it to be out there, to be jazz records and to reach a jazz audience. We'd like to see pieces sell in the eighty thousands if we can do it, but we can live with a five thousand selling album. If we're going to put out Stockhausen records, and we can live with the expectations of those records, we can live with the expectations of jazz."

Actually the only active elements of PolyGram are the new issues of Enja. PolyGram is merely acting as an American distributor for Enja and the other labels are catalog reissues. They are, by the way, the company that distributed ECM before ECM went to Warner Bros. Previously, Enja was distributed by Inner City. The Enja releases are being cut in the ECM vein (they are pressed at Deutche Grammophon which is where

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ECM's Manfred Eicher once worked) and the old style black and white covers are now full color shots. Musically, the Enja dates range from bop to neo-bop with a taste of yesteryear's avant-garde, with no fusion. Unfortunately Feldman didn't know if Enja had plans to record any of the younger musicians. PolyGram seems very oriented to "getting the ones and twos into record stores" as they have classicism on their side and the always saleable Verve catalog should carry them even if the enthusiasm wanes.

Even if the costs for releasing jazz albums can be paid at the royalty end rather than as advance money, will the sales satisfy the company's needs? Goldstein says, "I don't have to sell fifty thousand units to make a profit with anybody." Later however, he confessed, "Look, it's a struggle. But, if we could sell twenty-five, thirty or forty thousand on Ornette's first album and then build from there, we're doing something."

Lundvall has both higher and lower expectations as he sees the more commercial projects as capable of breaking the hundred thousand unit mark while some of the other albums may only sell ten thousand units. But the sales won't matter as long as the musicians are satisfied to be paid with higher commissions on sales. I don't think they will, but they may have little choice. Musicians I spoke with preferred to have the money in hand for cutting a record because they claim that royalties have a way of disappearing. The truth of the matter is that, in the past, high advances consumed what royalties there were if the album sold enough copies to cover costs.

Musically, the labels are not taking any great risks; they are unlikely to discover new talent. That will still be left to the many struggling independents who have a smitten audience that will seek out their releases, left to a new breed of entrepreneurs like Matthias Winckelmann who Feldman calls "a cat who'll close the office and go out for beers with the musicians."

As an anonymous small label owner quipped, "I know this is going to be hell for us. We're already having problems with sales. The problem is that these labels always wind up with records in the cut-out bins which hurts us even more. How can I put out a record when that group has three albums sitting there for three dollars? But I hope they make it, because if they don't, we're not going to be able to pay those musicians what they're getting now from EM, Black and Gold and PolyGram/Enja."

For all the major labels' suspect intentions and past fickleness, this may be the most enduring contribution of these new jazz labels: getting the jazz artists used to the treatment they deserve. After all, it's hard to keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen *Paree*. M

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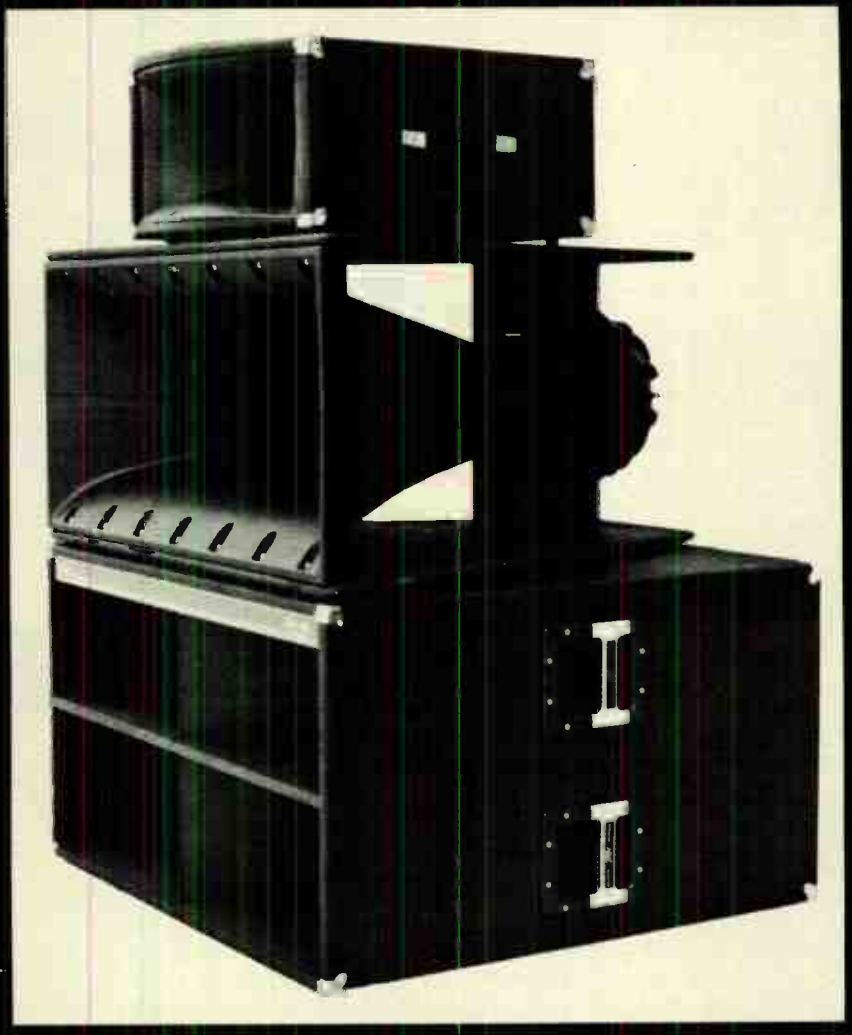

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Joan Armatrading has bartered her acoustic folk roots into a gutsy, punk maelstrom; her new album,* Walk Under Ladders, *crackles with aggressive electricity and sensual delicacy.

By Carol Cooper

ALLAN TANNENBAUM

JOAN ARMATRADING

Angel of Intrigue

Perched high in the red plush velvet balcony of Seattle's Paramount theater during soundcheck, I watched a short, black female bandleader take five men through their paces. They begin with a nameless jam more funky than anything in the actual set, as Joan's face opens in conspiratorial pleasure when she and her guitarist trade a series of complex lead riffs before settling into the expected position.

With Gary Sanford on guitar, Jeremy Meek on bass, Julian Diggle on percussion, Justin Hildreth on drums and Dean Klavate on keyboards, Armatrading has assembled a sophisticated rock sextet—harmoniously eclectic. As one mind they swing into "Is It Tomorrow Yet", and when her percussionist was just above and to the left of the desired register on clavinet, she swiftly brought him down, then tightened the entire band's pace with a compellingly metronomic cowbell.

A modular bio-chromatic strobe unit designed for Joan by Alan Goldberg especially for the current assault on Europe and the States signals the emotional spectrum of her work. Yellow: excitement; crimson: rancor; orange: doubt; azure: surcease. Pausing in the empty theater, Joan suddenly pulls her band into the opening chords of "Tall In The Saddle"—Armatrading's very own "Ball And Chain"—case-specific blues with ultraviolet vocals made almost unbearably intense by the pulsing color and the sensual delicacy Joan has inspired in her musicians. Both she and they have transcended the presumed limitations of sexual identification; exploring the intrinsic femininity in males and the invaluable masculine aspects of women. Stereotypes be damned; Joan Armatrading was a born rocker, and to prove it she offers directions and possibilities always innate in the genre, yet seldom brought to fruition by artists lacking her instinctive certitudes. By defying the categories and carving her professional niche in the world of white male rock stars, Armatrading has remained invisible to much of the mass audience that could be hers. But she's in no hurry to widen the cult into a fandom, and if it takes a few more tours or one more album to make the blind, the hard nosed and the biased admire her distinctive musical strut—she'll hang tough.

A&M has dubbed the American campaign "Free Joan Armatrading." This promotional effort is replete with a major airplay push, a discounted seven-album catalog, media support and boxes of a seven-inch sampler EP for retailers to give away. The company has made a commitment. They don't want *Walk Under Ladders* to slip quietly under the bridge like the previous *Me Myself I* did with its equally splendid companion EP *How Cruel*.

"Joan sells millions in Europe. What's wrong in the states?" This is a litany I've heard before, always voiced in the same ingenuous tones by industry folk pretending not to know the value of strategically purchased TV and radio ads. In '81 it was said about Marley; this year Joan Armatrading. Common denominator? Black. Common affliction? Adamant individuality. Armatrading had no formal music training. Her family of West Indian strivers had a piano in the house, but the guitar was off-limits to anyone but papa. Joan was able to experiment on the former and covet the latter until she'd bought her own guitar and developed a repertoire of original rhythms and phrasings. A stated affection for Van Morrison, a vocal quality somewhere between Nina Simone and Buffy Saint-Marie, and a passing resemblance in her songs to the confessionary attitudes of Elton John, Cat Stevens and Joni Mitchell reveal her noteworthy influences.

By age fifteen she had written enough quality material for her brother to suggest she sing in public, but it took a move from Birmingham to London in 1970, a brief stint in the British production of *Hair*, and a string of tiny local club dates to launch her professional career.

Her first album on A&M was a collaboration with poet Pam Nestor called *Whatever's For Us*. Nestor contributed many of the lyrics, but it was Armatrading's vocals and signature guitar and piano arrangements that boosted the album above the ordinary—and made

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SIDE TWO: LEE RITENOUR – "RAINBOW" • FREDDIE HUBBARD – "THIS IS IT" • ERIC GALE – "MAKO D'AMOUR" • MATERIAL – "I PRIVER"

the partnership with Nestor a brief one. Joan says: "I carried on writing alone because (the partnership) was not something I needed to do, I just sort of fell into it." Could she see collaborating with anyone again in the future? "I don't think so," then firmly, "no."

All her early songs and albums, *Back To The Night, Joan Armatrading, Show Some Emotion, To The Limit* demonstrate a consistent musical evolution away from folkie roots and toward a harder (less vulnerably plaintive) jazz-rock. Her themes were equally consistent in their homogeneity: variations on the issue of rebellion against false values and a false authority. Armatrading admits to being a watcher, a loner, a bit of a surly anarchist. As a woman she stresses the sexual ambiguity of her voice and lyrics, to weave in and out of difficult situations, to learn, teach, maybe trade a few licks, and move on. In her sets the tenderness of a song like "Willow" may be shoved back to belly against the goodnatured rollicking randiness of "When You Kisses Me," where the singer assures her present lover, "I may look over my shoulder/But I will never leave your side." How is one to react to such a gutsy, seemingly unflappable hoyden?

Touring with her last two albums, fronting tight, white male bands, Armatrading has become a premier lady rocker. The polyphonic arrangements that were apparent even in her earliest solo work on a twelve-string acoustic she now parses out to her band with calm expertise and revels in the freedom of letting loose vocally within the bright, fixed constellation of her music. When composing at home, Joan is a competent multi-instrumentalist, preparing master-ready demos on her own tape deck using a Prophet 5, a Rhythm Ace, a bass, a piano and a battery of electric and acoustic guitars. Her demo version of "Eating The Bear" (included on a separate interview album A&M made for *Walk Under Ladders*) is only slightly enhanced by the final studio production, and Armatrading praises producer Steve Lillywhite for accurately preserving her "live" sound on record.

In point of fact, Armatrading has always been blessed with generically sympathetic producers, from Gus Dudgeon, to Glyn Johns; Richard Gottehrer to Steve Lillywhite. Each had the prudence and grace to leave her original conception intact, and it was no accident that her company offered her men who'd dealt with the likes of the Rolling Stones and Blondie. Natural rocker or no, Joan's characteristic idiosyncracies needed to be framed by a few rock conventions like drum hooks and guitar solos that occasionally dissolved neatly back into the melody.

The new album is quintessential Joan: quirky water-pipe rhythms with organs and horns or synthesizer careening about in a barely controlled emotional maelstrom. The guitar and the bass usually alternate as melodic anchors for any given piece.

Two ballads, the only two ballads, are stunning. Never has the marriage of words and music been finer than in "Only One" and "The Weakness In Me." As usual, they work equally well for man or woman, AC or DC; and through a simplicity that is direct while avoiding the awkward and blunt, she delineates the ecstasy of love's possession in the one, and the uncertain pain of an imminent *menage a trois* in the other.

Armatrading remains volatile even during her ballads. Now that she's the driving force and focus of a hardy collection of Lene Lovich, Joe Jackson and Live Wire sidemen, the slower songs


ALLAN TANNENBAUM

"Some days the bear will eat you. Some days you eat the bear."

come like virtuosic pauses for breath by a great diva during a difficult aria. When the diminutive figure in modest white civvies introduced her band at the Paramount, her audience (primarily collegiate post-folkies newly converted to new wave) presented her with a scrap of red bandana and a bouquet. Grinning, she accepted these with the regal, restrained gestures of a top athlete: the amazon as pop star.

Armatrading loses none of that tensile, athletic stance offstage. Notoriously shy of interviews, she approaches them with the cool, assessing aggression of a chess master. A game I love.

MUSICIAN: *How did your piano and guitar technique become so individualized?*

ARMATRADING: When I started on the acoustic, I knew there was a bass player, and a drummer and a rhythm guitarist and a lead sometimes, and I tried to do all those things when I played on my own. It was very busy. It sounded pretty good to me on my own, but when I came to do the first album I had a lot of problems because I tended to get in the way of everyone else's playing. It's a little messy when you're playing like that with a band.

MUSICIAN: *Then you were thinking polyphonically long before the sophisticated equipment was being designed for it.*

ARMATRADING: Yes...the songs I'd arrange in my head were, anyway.

MUSICIAN: *Would you at anytime go back and do a solo guitar or piano album?*

ARMATRADING: Solo guitar more likely, because I've thought of that quite a few times.

MUSICIAN: *Would it change the nature of the songs you'd present in that kind of format?*

ARMATRADING: Yes, because it would get back more to the way I started when I was playing everything, because when you're on your own, making the acoustic real busy like that, it seems to work very well.

MUSICIAN: *Do you compose from the impulse of a particular scene or moment?*

ARMATRADING: Most of the songs are generally from looking at other people, and you get the impulse of the moment when you see the situation. But you don't necessarily run out and write the song then, you sort of save the impulse for a week or so later. But then you try to conjure up that same emotional atmosphere, that feeling, *what* you're trying to get across.

MUSICIAN: *Does the music or the lyric come first? And what aspect of the perceived situation hits you first: the emotional empathy or the intellectual turmoil?*

ARMATRADING: Well, I would think it would depend on the song, eh? Which way 'round you are. In "Down To Zero," that was a song where I was seeing lots of people I knew splitting up or divorcing, and all the women were having the same reaction. They were all sort of thinking, "Well, it's the way I look." None of them were thinking rationally, none of them thought: "Well, maybe I can't cook, or maybe I'm too lazy," it was all suddenly down to how they looked. And I could really understand that. I *knew* they were wrong, but I also knew that if it were me in the same situation, I'd probably feel and think exactly the same. So in that case, I wrote the words first, then got the tune on the piano. It ended up on the guitar, but it was composed on the piano.

MUSICIAN: *Do you get a chance to check out other bands much?*

ARMATRADING: Usually no, 'cause when you're working, they're working too. But the last band I caught was just before Christmas—the Pretenders.

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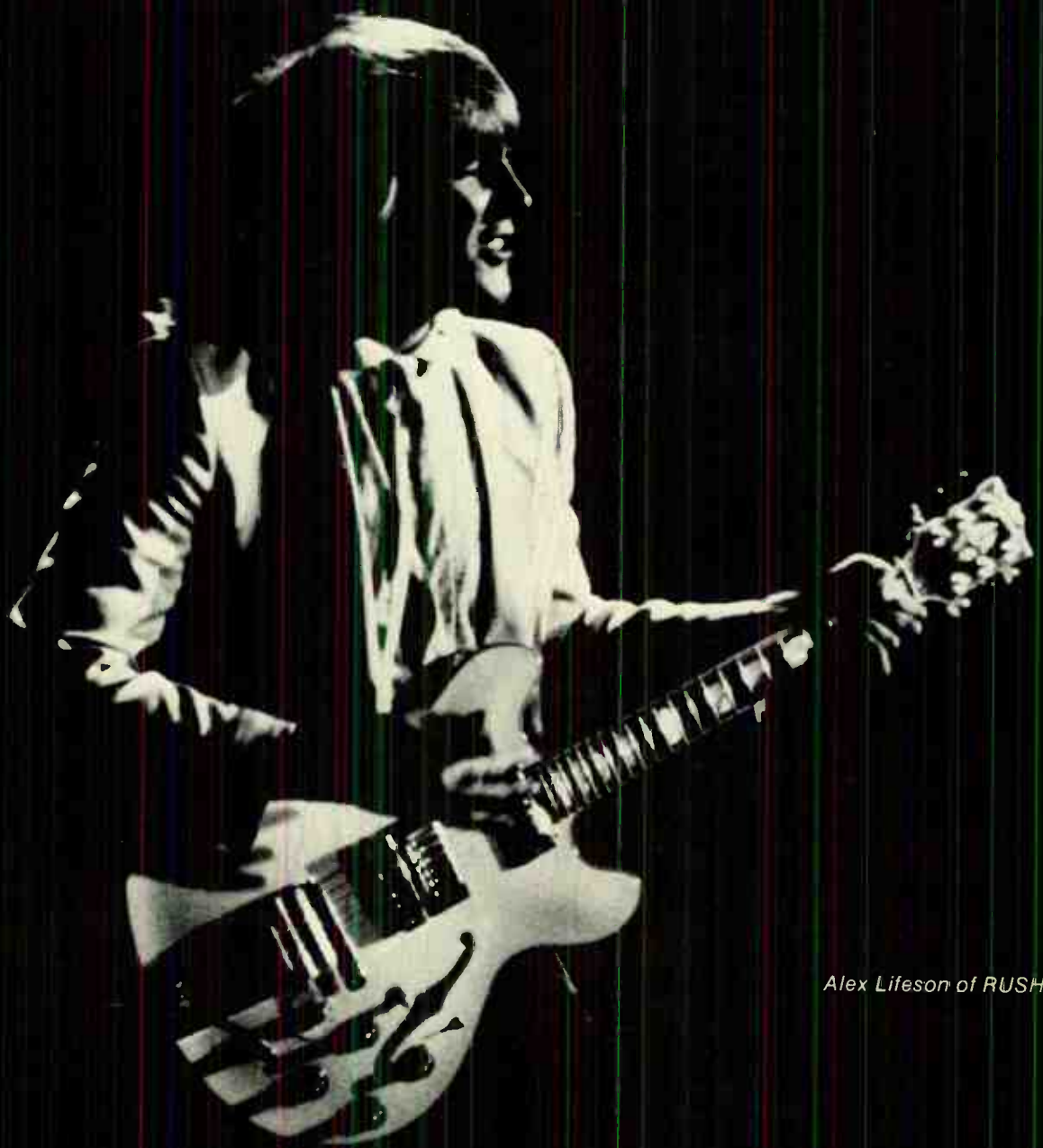

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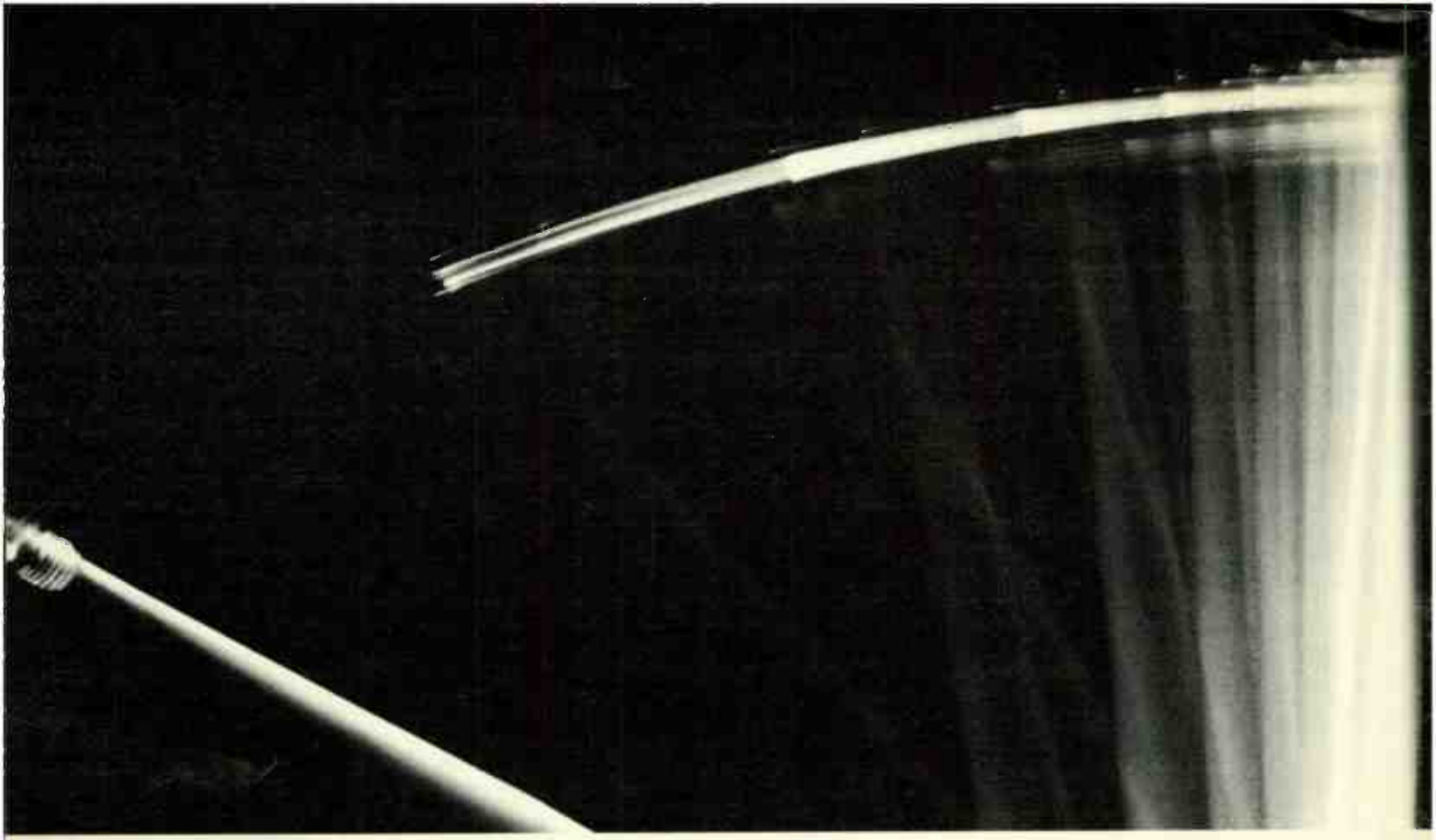

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Chrissie Hynde...I think she's really good.

MUSICIAN: *I was going to ask if you'd seen her and had any sense of recognition; seen any parallels between what she does with the band when performing her own compositions and what you do.*

ARMATRADING: When I go see someone perform, I don't go to work or compare. But what I might do, more than think in terms of *me*, is I'd look at the musicians and think, "Do I like the musicians?" I'd liked the band and thought they'd done pretty well with the songs on record. But it wasn't until I saw them live that I knew I really liked the guitarist and realized he's as good as he was.

MUSICIAN: *There were two other singer/songwriters I wanted your opinion of: Pauline Black of the erstwhile Selector, and Poly Styrene.*

ARMATRADING: I don't know much about either of those two, less about the Selector although I've seen them on TV and heard a few tunes on the radio. But I bought that first one by Poly Styrene, *Germ Free Adolescents*, and I liked what she did. But in the end, all the fancy, different words were basically saying the same thing everybody else is saying. Like if you listen to Gary Numan's "Are Friends Electric" and you take those strange words, which I think are still great lyrics, and all he's saying is, "I've lost a friend, can you help me to fix up the relationship?" So everyone's still saying the same things, although in different ways—it's not too way out. A lot of the punk thing was so contrived that you could only come up with the thing once. You really had to search about, talking about Woolworth clerks turning into street punks, or "I am a poseur...". It was *there*, but you really had to look for the outrageous, and in the end, when you have to go past it, what do you do?

MUSICIAN: *One can't really sustain that kind of intensity....*

ARMATRADING: Yes, and if you try you really become contrived and it gets sort of obnoxious.

MUSICIAN: *I tend to feel that way even about all this so-called "new romantic" thing like Adam & the Ants and Bow Wow Wow.*

ARMATRADING: I have to tell you now...Adam is one of my favorites.

MUSICIAN: *Okay. Why?*

ARMATRADING: He's just fun. There's nothing deep—I don't know how he sees his music, but that's how I see him—and it's just fun music. I have the *Prince Charming* album in my bag. It's not new, there's nothing new about him; it's Ralph Harris, it's "Weemoweh" and Gary Glitter, and all that stuff. But I like his image, I like the way he dresses on stage, and his face...he's pretty.

MUSICIAN: *Well, my negative take on Adam and Bow Wow Wow started with the McLaren hype. If they're saying, "If there's no work, then let's all party," I*

can't accept that.

ARMATRADING: But it means nothing. It's just an image, it gets you noticed. It doesn't mean anything.

MUSICIAN: *So you don't think that kind of hedonistic defeatism has any lasting effect on kids or anything?*

ARMATRADING: No. Only for the moment. The kids'll like it for a year, then they'll grow up. Because everybody grows up. I'm surprised at what you hear when you talk to the punkers now. They're twenty, twenty-five, and when you hear them talk they listen to all sorts, not just the Sex Pistols, but Bowie, the Beatles, Ella Fitzgerald. In the end everybody tries to find good music, and images are just a way of making money.

MUSICIAN: *What about reggae music as a way of not only propagandizing, but getting information out that would otherwise be repressed or filtered out?*

ARMATRADING: I think it's the music that's doing it, not the words. 'Cause I can't name...what's a reggae political song? "No Woman No Cry" isn't....

MUSICIAN: *"Zimbabwe," "Babylon System," "Work," "Armigideon Time," in neo ska, "Ghost Town."*

ARMATRADING: But which is most popular? People can be made to be aware, but they can't be made concerned. You say well, this is what's happening back in Jamaica, but they can't get that close to it.

MUSICIAN: *But on smaller labels effective localized statements appear to be being made.*

ARMATRADING: Well anyway, I just get so fed up with these Rasta guys is why I'm saying it. Political songs *did* work in the 60s, Country Joe's "Vietnam Rag," Bob Dylan and Joan Baez with all their stuff, and people were listening. Even people in England could feel involved in it and they were one. But I don't know. That seemed to be a whole "youth awareness time" and I didn't get too involved in that hippie stage. I just sat back and watched and thought it was silly. But all the people I knew were *well* into it; communes, and going barefoot, festivals and wearing stars on their faces. I didn't feel left out, because it was nice just to be looking at it...but you sort of wondered at it. Could all this peace and love and light be real? 'Cause if there were four people in a room and one left, the other three would have *something* to say! (laughs)

MUSICIAN: *That's where your work begins! The intrigues.*

ARMATRADING: But they did seem to *want* to get together, and to want this or that political song because it brought them closer together. But with the reggae thing, and the Rasta thing, it's not the words, it's just this rhythm bringing them together. The words are too far away, so there's nothing to pull them together and make them feel that they've got that one thing, that they can all stand up and fight against.

MUSICIAN: *And win. Then you believe that the only real politics is emotional politics? How people interact on the level of motivation?*

ARMATRADING: (laughs) Are you talking about politics or *politics*? I was going to say music shouldn't be political, but I guess it becomes political even in terms of who likes rock and who likes folk. But true politics is power in most cases, and the people who have it don't want to lose it. And sometimes you see them doing things to keep people down. I get very annoyed with this "save energy" bit because I know when I "save energy" I'm not saving energy, I'm saving profit. They'll say there's a milk shortage and they're throwing away four hundred gallons of the stuff every day! "Conserve this," when they're wasting it! Well, I'm sorry to say I'm not a conserver of energy because I know that all the things they say aren't there, are there, and in huge quantities. When there's a "shortage," the price goes up, then if nobody buys, suddenly you can get ten in one day instead of a half. So they're lying.

MUSICIAN: *Would you ever write a song saying that in so many words?*

ARMATRADING: I might. I haven't yet; but I might. Ⓜ

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Thompson *from pg. 16*

record (at least until recently), he's lacked Robertson's fire and directness, opting for more restraint and ensemble playing than might be necessary. Then again, most of his albums have been recorded "live" in the studio with a bare minimum of overdubs; when, on *Pour Down Like Silver*'s brilliant "Night Comes In" he finally steps into an extended solo, there is no rhythm guitarist to cover for him while he's playing.

Thompson's songs are as striking and as original as his playing, and they seem so natural and so unlabored that I can only imagine that instead of crafting songs, Thompson has crafted himself until songs simply move through him. He seems incapable of writing a false or a hollow line, and his best songs are both highly personal and highly accessible, all emotionally available. Aside from Elvis Costello (a relative newcomer and a writer who avoids metaphysics), there simply aren't any other writers whose work has been as consistently memorable, intelligent, literate and giving.

After a gracefully eccentric solo album (*Henry The Human Fly*, released by Warner Bros. in 1972 and promptly deleted), Thompson began a musical collaboration with his wife, the former Linda Peters, letting her take on the combined role of both Sandy Denny and Ian Matthews (from his Fairport days), with her encompassing the loveliness of Denny's voice and the cheerful pop triviality of Matthews. She plays straight man (straight person?) to Thompson the cynic, Thompson the ironist, and Thompson the holy lunatic, singing in a duskily plaintive voice that is so guileless and so straightforward that it often belies the desperation of the lyrics without ever trivializing them or capsizing them. Although she always sounds like she knows what she's singing, there is still a sense of hope or hopefulness in her voice that simply isn't written in the words. "What one hears in Thompson's songs," (Greil Marcus wrote in that same *Village Voice* piece) "is a hatred of the rich and a distrust of the poor; nothing is ever sentimentalized except perhaps pessimism itself."

Back with Fairport, Thompson's voice was serviceable, ambulatory—the sort of voice you could send around the block for a paper and a pack of cigarettes on Sunday—but by 1975's *Pour Down Like Silver* (probably Richard and Linda's best and best-loved album), it had ripened into a rich and emotional instrument. Like fellow traveler John Martyn, his lower range has expanded so that he often slips down to the basement for key words or phrases (contrary to popular fashion, which constantly urges the vocals higher and higher in pitch to coincide with emotional intensity). He has a habit of alternately clipping words precisely (as if he were biting off only as much of each word as he needed) and expanding the endings of lines in a Middle-Eastern style reminiscent of the late Om Khalsoum (Dylan tried this style—to far lesser effect—on songs like "One More Cup Of Coffee" on the *Desire* album). Live, he is an even stronger and more emotional singer than on record, though he has a self-deprecating way of beginning his vocals just behind the beat, as if, after all those years of accompanying Sandy Denny and his wife Linda, he is waiting for someone else to begin singing, only realizing his mistake at the last instant.

After *Pour Down Like Silver*, the Thompsons recorded two records for Chrysalis (*First Light* and *Sunnyvista*—only the first of which was released in the States). Both contained good songs (one of which—"Don't Let A Thief Steal Into Your Heart"—was covered by the Pointer Sisters), but both were more crafted, stiffer, and not as warm as previous albums. ("They gave us too much money," Thompson explains, "and we felt that we had to use it all. We got lost on the overdubs.") After they opened for Gerry Rafferty on a European tour last year, Rafferty decided he wanted to produce them and brought them into the studio, making, what Thompson calls "the most expensive demo in history." Nothing happened with the tapes, and partly to alleviate the frustration and

continued on page 73

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FACES


HOWARD ROSENBERG

The Blasters

ROBIN WILLIAMSON

"Traditional music is a really important thing," stresses Robin Williamson, "because if you can look back and see what something came from, you can then see what hasn't been done yet, so you can have really progressive music. You can't have progressive music in the absence of traditional, because you don't know what's been done before, so what are you progressing from?"

"I think what I do is totally traditional," argues Williamson, although the singer/songwriter/poet/multi-instrumentalist/historian/enchanter is probably considered more an iconoclast by many folk purists.

Throughout his career—more than ten years as part of the Incredible String Band, almost four as leader of Robin Williamson and his Merry Band, and recently performing solo—the 37-year-old Scotsman has held strong ties to his native Celtic music while blending that tradition with exotic musics from all over the world and, most importantly, writing new acoustic music in the Celtic idiom. "It's been the main thread all the way," he says of his Scottish heritage, "but I'm back to it more now. What I'd like to see happen is to have it develop into a sort of genre, where a number of people are writing new Celtic music."

Williamson's original Celtic music is not so much an updating of the form (which is what groups like Steeleye Span, influenced by ISB, were doing in the late 60s), as it is a continuation of those musical ideals. Robin's Merry Band set his compositions to such odd instrumentation as harp, fiddle, flute and mandocello (sort of a Celtic version of a string quartet), and released three fine albums for Flying Fish before disbanding in December of 1979, because, in Williamson's words, *A Glint At The Kindling*, their third group LP, "completed what that band was about." Since that time, Robin has toured alone, accompanying his soaring vocals with such unlikely solo instruments as cittern, penny whistle, accordion, Celtic harp and Scottish border pipes, as well as guitar, fiddle and mandolin. "There's no one to take a solo," he admits, "but on the other hand you get a certain focus of attention."

Focus is probably the best word to describe Williamson's evolution from bandleader to solo artist. He has refined and edited his presentation down to its most basic and essential elements—at times just sitting there telling a story. In concert Williamson weaves tall tales of Vikings and Druids, wizards and giants, becoming each of the characters himself. And after 45 minutes the audience seems reluctant to come back to the real world. Robin's first recorded story, "Five Denials On Merlin's Grave," was integrated with music by the Merry Band and included on *A Glint*; his first in a series of spoken word cassettes, *The Fisherman's Son And The Gruagach Of Tricks*, is available through Pig's Whisker Music (Box 27522, Los Angeles. CA 90027).

Songs Of Love And Parting, his first solo album since 1972, features Robin overdubbed in group configurations of harp, guitar and bagpipes, or cittern, penny whistle and harmonium. The strongest cuts, however, feature Williamson's voice accompanied only by guitar, or harp, or cittern. The most moving song in Williamson's current repertoire, "Lady With The Book," is as yet unrecorded. In it, Robin tells a true story of the conflict in Ireland, backed only by Celtic harp. It is probably the best example of Williamson's ability to blend the traditional and the current.

— Dan Forte

Robin Williamson


JANET WILLIAMSON

THE BLASTERS

With their hair greased back into pompadours, their shirtsleeves rolled up and cigarettes dangling from their lower lips, Phil Alvin and his younger brother Dave look like the kind of grease monkeys you'd expect to find under a couple of decade-old Chevys on a hot summer's day as a portable AM radio blasts hits from the past like "Pipeline" and "Lodi."

But even when you find them onstage in some club leading their band, the Blasters, through a 100-mile-an-hour set of jumping Chicago blues, Go-Cat-Go rockabilly and the odd C&W tune, the Alvins exude a no-nonsense, humble but proud, working class attitude. Hell, Dave actually worked as a fry cook at some two-bit diner before the band formed and they both used to back blues singers like Big Joe Turner and T-Bone Walker at black bars in Watts.

Formed in 1979 after the Alvins heard the Sex Pistols and decided that the new wave audience in L.A. might be receptive to the kind of music they'd been playing for years, the Blasters—Bill Bateman, drums; John Bazz, bass; Gene Taylor, piano; Dave Alvin, lead guitar; and Phil Alvin, rhythm guitar, harp and vocals—recorded a crude but critically favored debut album, *American Music*, for the small, L.A.-based independent label, Rollin' Rock. Last year they signed with the slightly larger Slash label (also responsible for the two X LPs) and recorded *The Blasters*, a superbly produced record that, like the Blasters' live performances, mixes authentic sounding originals penned by Dave Alvin like "Marie Marie" ("One of the best Chuck Berry songs that Chuck didn't write," wrote one critic), "American Music" and the incredible "Border Radio" (the sad tale of a woman whose man left her years ago, who sits up late at night listening to oldies broadcast from Mexico, dreaming of his return), with obscure gems like Jimmy Rodgers' "Never No More Blues" and Little Willie John's "I'm Shakin'." Now major labels including Warner Bros. and Columbia are wooing the band, though Dave Alvin insists that they are only interested in a distribution deal with a major.

Live, the Blasters, who seem to appeal to everyone from long-haired post-hippie types to blues and rockabilly aficionados as well as the punks, come off like a wild and raw (but expert) blues band. Taylor pounds out rolling honky tonk piano; Bazz and Bateman are a steady driving rhythm machine. Crouching over his guitar Dave Alvin lets fire reams of Chuck Berry riffs during "No Other Girl" (about a two-timing man sitting in a bar trying to build up the courage to go back home to his steady girl) and "Marie Marie," then gets low down for the big beat blues of "I'm Shakin'." But it's Phil Alvin you can't take your eyes off. A big-boned man with a forehead that seems a mile high, Alvin tenses every muscle in his face as he sings: his eyes are squeezed shut, his forehead furrowed and his mouth stretched to a pained grimace. His voice, something of a cross between Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters, mostly sounds like Phil Alvin.

The Blasters have been compared to Creedence Clearwater Revival, a band that also drew on American roots music. The comparison is apt, but only to a point. Yes, both bands feature guitar playing brothers. And yes, Dave Alvin does have a talent for capturing

Americana in his songs. But while Creedence might have recorded for Sun Records with their early rock 'n' roll influenced sound, the Blasters would have been more at home on Chess, the great blues label. Still, Dave Alvin brings up Creedence when talking about the Blasters' potential for mass success. "You take a band like Creedence," says Dave. "At the same time that *Sgt. Pepper's* came out and psychedelic rock was popular, you could have said to Creedence, 'Is there a market for what you're doing?' And in 1967 you probably would say, 'Well, probably not, man.' But in 1968, lookout! There sure was." — *Michael Goldberg*

JAMES NEWTON

James Newton is a flute player who can stand toe-to-toe with blaring saxophonists and hyper-amphetamine drummers, without sacrificing linear invention or succumbing to lame breathless mutations of the Herbie Mann/Rashann Roland Kirk soul-tinged toot-toot. Unlike most flute players, Newton isn't doubling, so his improvisations have weight and fluttering clarity. He punctuates his long lines with stuttering percussive accents, and multiphonic parallel harmonies and counterpoint, seeming to suggest Frank Wess' elegant restraint and supple control; Eric Dolphy's swarming, sky-diving lyricism; Rashann Roland Kirk's breathy percussive whimsy; and Jimi Hendrix's (just ask James) amoebic screams and cries (as if Newton had stepped on a pedal marked fuzz flute).

Newton has also pursued some new ideas about composition improvisation and extended form in groups co-led with Anthony Davis. Occasionally they wear their formal aspirations like straightjackets, and the music can be self-conscious, stiff and detached for all its complexity, but more often than not they've reached new levels of kinetic, ordered interplay (buy a copy of *Hidden Voices* on India Navigation).

Obviously, the development of a formal orchestral language is just as vital to jazz in the 80s as dance-oriented harmolodics, and I'm open to the new music, but Ellington looms over it all like Beethoven, and it's going to take more than funny intervals and time signatures to equal that level of mythic story-telling power. Newton's mixed wind quintet on *The Mystery School* (India Navigation) isn't yet in that class, but his writing shows an impressive sense of relaxation and scope, and the world premiere of his Flute Quartet was one of the highlights of the cutting, inquisitive jazz series Nancy Weiss has staged at the Shakespeare Festival's Public Theatre.

Newton, *Mr.* Frank Wess, Lloyd McNeill and Henry Threadgill (one of jazz's greatest orchestrators) took full advantage of the Anspacher Theatre's lofty ceilings and sonorous acoustics, playing the sound of the room as much as the notes, filling the room like a church organ. There's just

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

James Newton

something about the flute that Dolby-izes even the most frenetic vigor, and Newton and Threadgill's superb compositions used this texture as a thematic element, a melodic pedal tone—making the music breathe. The performance (particularly Threadgill's "Air Song") demonstrated a very high level of ensemble interplay, with bass, alto and folk instruments providing bass lines, harmonies, contrasting colors and percussive textures; emphasizing the flute's ancient tradition, and this folk/ritual quality characterized much of their counterpoint. Above it all James soared on his new gold flute, and if the upcoming ECM solo album shows as much compositional range as the Public Theatre concert, Newton will open up a lot of people's ears to jazz's orchestral possibilities — *Chip Stern*

PRINCE

Dry ice smoke drifted across the darkened stage of Washington's Warner Theater, as an unreleased tape played of Prince singing the double orgasm lyrics of "The Second Coming" in a rich gospel choir arrangement. Three black teenage girls held up a poster of a nearly nude Prince taking a shower under a wall crucifix. A row of white rock critics stood up expectantly. As the lights came up, they revealed Prince standing above his band on the second tier of a three-tiered set of venetian blinds backdrops. Prince slid down a pole and bounced up to the mike as his band broke into the fractured new wave funk of "Sexuality." Two synthesizers churned up a fat electronic pulse beat; the two guitars gave it a metallic undergirding; the singers gave out foreplay cries: "Ai-up!" Prince wore a glittery zoot suit and a Presley-ish coif that drooped in his eyes. When he curled his lip into a seductive sneer and cried: "Sexuality! It's all I ever need," he personified his subject.

On the next song, "Why You Wanna Treat Me So Bad," he proved that he was a guitar hero too. He duplicated the record's vocal: a breathy but strong falsetto as intoxicating as Eddie Kendricks or Smokey Robinson's. He then went beyond the soul-oriented record for a long, spectacular guitar solo that showed precise control even as it produced an assault of electronic effects. For the tune's finale, he climbed atop one of the P.A. cabinets and dropped to his knees for a blistering solo that inevitably recalled Hendrix.

It was fitting that he should recall Hendrix, for Prince (himself of mixed parentage and leader of a superb interracial sextet) straddles the boundary between white rock and black soul better than anyone has since Hendrix and Sly Stone starred at the Woodstock Music Festival in 1969. Like Stevie Wonder, Prince is an amazingly versatile performer at a very young age. At 21, this Minneapolis native has already released four fine albums which he wrote, arranged, produced, sang and played all by himself.

It was difficult to tell which aspect of the concert was more dazzling: Prince's raw musical talent or his explicit sexuality. It was clear that he could never have gotten away with the latter without the former. Even more so than on his records, his stunning array of talents were obvious in concert where the longer, looser songs allowed for more improvisation and rock flavors. He writes shimmering synthesizer lines and gets a fat, thudding drum sound for an irresistible dance beat. He can sing at length in his lion-purring falsetto and then drop effortlessly into an authoritative baritone for a parenthetical comment. On guitar, he moves just as easily from clipped James Brown rhythms to eloquent Robbie Robertson solos.

What separates Prince from all predecessors, though, is his frank eroticism. With the slinky, jitterbugging stage presence of a Mick Jagger, he would be a sexual presence anyway. He goes beyond the implied eroticism of all good rock 'n' roll to spell it out as never before. During his stage version of "Head," he led the crowd in a chant of "Do you get enough head?" His long, climactic guitar solo was accompanied by an elaborate masturbation mime; with the guitar planted between his legs, he stroked and licked the neck. The lyrics of the songs like "Jack U Off" and "Soft And Wet" leave little to the imagination.

This is the risk he's taking: by spelling everything out, he might exclude the listener's imagination and thus much of the listener's pleasure. It's for just this danger that rock 'n' roll has long avoided film's headlong plunge into the quickly boring details of sexual technique. Double entendres and veiled suggestions work as metaphors and thus have a poetic power. Prince gets away with his gamble, because he doesn't simply describe physical functions or report on a detached sexual encounter as bad sex flicks do. His lyrics advocate specific sexual pleasures and then throw out the unsettling taunt, "Are you ready to help me?" Thus he prevents the listener from becoming a voyeur and forces disturbing choices and possibilities for the imagination. Even this wouldn't work if the music weren't so overwhelmingly seductive and intoxicating that it draws the listener in and forces one to consider the possibilities.

Where can he go from there? He seems to have pushed the sex issue as far in this limit-testing direction as he can. He is already building himself a door out of the box he has built for himself. His newest album, *Controversy*, is full of political references to the conflicts between his vision of free sexuality and the violent, repressive society we all live in. As he sharpens his descriptions of that conflict, his career may very well move into a new, even more powerful phase. — *Geoffrey Himes*

Prince

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

FRANK ZAPPA

Ladies and gentlemen... Pat Benatar!"

Frank Zappa lowers his baton and the band strums one last power chord as their mustachioed bandleader/MC weaves a gut-wrenching blues guitar cadenza. But it's a far cry from "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" or anything else in the Pat Benatar/top ten catalog. Rock music's premier satirist—who in the past has lampooned everyone from the Beatles to Peter Frampton—has just pulled off perhaps his best spoof ever by playing rock 'n' roll's most requested song, "Whipping Post." But the joke this time is more on the audience than on the Allman Brothers, because Zappa and his virtuoso seven-piece band played the Southern boogie anthem straightfaced, sincere, even inspired.

Why? Well, in Frank's words, "Why not?"

At 41, Zappa has just ended a three-month U.S. tour, which he describes as one of his roughest but most enjoyable ever. One of the reasons Zappa was so satisfied with the road show was the band that accompanied him this time out—guitarists Ray White and Steve Vai, bassist Scott Thunes, drummer Chad Wackerman, percussionist Ed Mann and keyboardists Tommy Mars and Bobby Martin (who doubles on sax). Another reason the experience was more pleasurable, Zappa tells the interviewer, was that Frank did only a few selected interviews as opposed to the five-a-day schedule he once kept.

A view into the fiendish, prolific mind of America's baddest Mother, who just wants to hear his compositions recorded, have fun with his band and get a little airplay. Is that too much to ask?

By Dan Forte

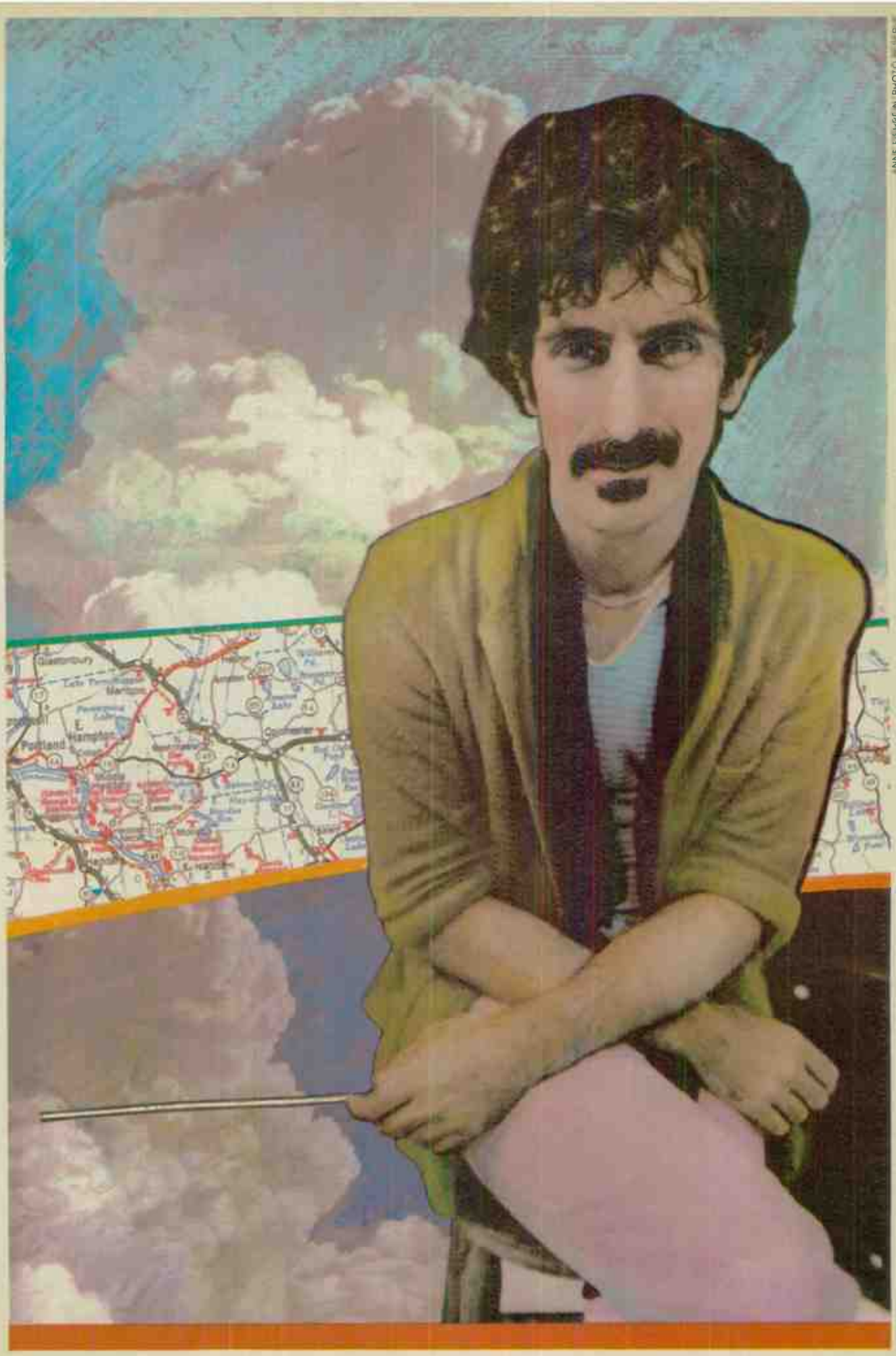
When *Musician* last profiled Zappa (in the August '79 issue) his double album *Sheik Yerbouti* (on his own Zappa Records) was selling better than anything he'd ever released, thanks in part to his first bona fide hit single since "Don't Eat The Yellow Snow," his disco send-up, "Dancing Fool." That album also included the infamous "Jewish Princess," which probably garnered Frank more media coverage than his Grammy-nominated single, thanks to an edict issued by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Zappa was also about to take his former label, Warner Brothers, to court, because, according to FZ, he delivered the remaining albums to fulfill his contract with them but was never paid—even though those albums (*Zappa In New York, Sleep Dirt, Studio Tan* and *Orchestral Favorites*) were all released by Warners in rapid succession. As of this writing, the case is still "about to go to trial."

"So tell me, Frank, what have you been up to since the last time I interviewed you?"

I had to ask, didn't I?

In the past two and a half years (just think for a minute what the average rocker's output is in that space of time) Zappa has done the following:

Released *Joe's Garage, Act I* (a single LP) and *Joe's Garage, Acts II and III* (a double set) on Zappa Records, which



was then distributed by Phonogram. This rock opera, which came out at the height of the crisis in Iran, addressed the possibility of music being banned by the government in the foreseeable future. It also included the answer to "Jewish Princess"—"Catholic Girls."

When President Carter reinstated the draft, Zappa countered with a single entitled "I Don't Want To Get Drafted." When an executive at Phonogram refused to release the record, Zappa Records released (and distributed) it themselves and subsequently signed a press-and-distribute contract with CBS.

Zappa's first release on his newly named Barking Pumpkin Records was *Tinsel Town Rebellion*, a double set of live material ranging in content from an onstage dance contest to a blues shuffle called "Bamboozled By Love," a remake of "Brown Shoes Don't Make It," and the title song, about the insincerity of L.A. punk groups. (In case anyone's wondering about the Barking Pumpkin logo, it features a jack-o-lantern saying "Arf!" next to a terrified cat saying something in Japanese. The cat is saying, "Holy shit!")

Simultaneously released with *Tinsel Town* were three (count 'em—three) all-instrumental LPs, available by mail order only. These first three volumes of what Zappa says will be a continuing series, are entitled *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar, Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More,* and *Return Of The Son Of Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar*, and feature Zappa's much-underrated, always surprising guitar work at its best. (For information on availability, write to: Barking Pumpkin, Box 5510, Terre Haute, IN 47805.)

You Are What You Is (yet another two-record set) contains 21 songs—all vocals except for the third movement from Zappa's ballet, "Sinister Footwear"—strung together without pauses, in much the same way that Zappa's band performs live.

And that, in addition to his concert tours, is only the part of Zappa that the public sees. Lately he has also: completed work on his own studio attached to his home, which is now fully operational; composed music to be performed by one of his early classical influences, twelve-tone composer Pierre Boulez; emceed a New York concert featuring the music of his "boyhood idol," Edgar Varese; and started work on a book, which will be "a compilation of all the things I've done dealing with the written word—all the song lyrics, essays and stories."

The "Hardest Working Man In Show Business"? Ask James Brown or Bruce Springsteen what they've done in the past couple of years.

MUSICIAN: *At this point in your career, do you now, or have you ever, thought of retiring or staying off the road?*

ZAPPA: No, I get pissed off at a lot of aspects of the business, but the idea of stopping writing or playing music has never occurred to me. As far as touring goes, there have been times on a tour where I said, "Good god, who booked this thing?" Because the scheduling was just so murderous. But the curious thing about that attitude is, those feelings all occurred during the times I was doing interviews. See, before I stopped doing print interviews a year ago, I would go on a tour and do an average of five interviews a day, either by phone or in person. And on days off, you just want to lay down and relax, because you want to save your energy to do a good job for the show. But when you have to sit there and answer questions, it gets you pissed off after a while. So after that one particular tour, where they just had me talking my ass off, the clipping service sent me this bundle of clippings that resulted from all the work I had done on the tour...and it was *pathetic*. I mean, I couldn't believe how I was misquoted, and all the crap that was in the papers, and I said, "Do I need this? No way." So I decided I'm not going to do it anymore. And I stopped, did another tour with *no interviews*...I had the time of my life. I said, "Why have I been busting my ass for sixteen years doing all this stuff to net two pounds of paper at the end of the tour?" I had a great time on this tour too, because I only did a few interviews. And this is the longest and probably roughest tour we ever did in the United States—it still was pretty fun.

MUSICIAN: *Does it get harder and harder to go out and do one two-hour show after another now that you're forty?*

ZAPPA: If you like music and you like to play, that's the easy part; that's no problem. The traveling is boring—waiting in airports, waiting in line and stuff—that's a little bit of a pain in the ass. But I've gotten used to it, I've been doing it for so long. I'm not ill at ease in a hotel at all. I really know how to live out of a suitcase, and when to eat, and what to eat, and what not to eat, and what to do if you get sick. I know how to do this job, and it's actually easier now, in a lot of ways, than it was when I first started out, when theoretically, I should have been so young and fresh. I was kind of young and stupid and didn't know how to conserve my energy. I definitely know de ropes (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *Why did you start doing interviews again?*

ZAPPA: I started doing them again on this tour, because I think that the album (*You Are What You Is*) really suffered from neglect from the radio stations. And when the album suffered from neglect so did the concert attendance, so something had to be done to draw people's attention to the fact that there was a really good album out there. But it didn't do any good; the album's a total stiff. Didn't sell, and it didn't get played on the radio. I think only two stations in the United States played it—one in Connecticut, the other in New York City. It's one of the best albums I ever made and it's one of the worst received.

MUSICIAN: *I would've thought it would lend itself to radio airplay pretty well—short songs, mostly vocals, certainly no language as offensive as on, say,* Joe's Garage.

ZAPPA: Well, we're in the age of non-content here, and there's just too many ideas on that record that they didn't want to have on the air, I suppose.

MUSICIAN: *Is it possible for an artist like yourself to survive in this business without granting interviews?*

ZAPPA: Yes. It is possible.

MUSICIAN: *Even when your albums don't get any radio play, and your sales are only "respectable," and your name isn't in magazines?*

Record companies today don't go for building artists' careers, because everything is deemed to be disposable. They're looking for the short-run, high yield on any group. Let's go out, get as much dope as we can, get laid every fifteen minutes, and that's it.

ZAPPA: Well, I never lived to have my name in a magazine. The thing that bothers me, though, is that the people who control broadcasting—and it's only just a handful that do—have so much of a stranglehold on what people get to hear. You know, I think what I'm doing is really excellent and it's worth being heard and is as useful as pop music consumption as any other type of music that's being produced today, and I'm just hoping to have my fair share of the audience. I have made pragmatic decisions about how to try and induce people to play the records so that people will hear them—that's one of the reasons why I started talking to reporters again. I was always doing radio and television interviews, but I started doing some print again because it just helps to get the word around that there's a product, there's a tour, and that I'm still alive. But other than that, I don't care. It's not a matter of wanting to be famous; it's a matter of making sure that the people who like to consume what I do are notified that it's there. A lot of people don't even know it's out there. The only way you can let them know is by buying very large quantities of advertising space, which I can't often afford to do.

MUSICIAN: *Back to radio, is there any recourse for an artist whose stuff won't get played because of the powers that be? Can you fight them, or maybe trick them into playing your music?*

ZAPPA: No. Not if your name is Frank Zappa.

MUSICIAN: *You could put out "Mary Had A Little Lamb" and*

they probably wouldn't play it.

ZAPPA: They'd be looking for the mysterious secret meaning between the words, because by raising my eyebrows or changing the tone of my voice I can make the Lord's Prayer sound like the most obscene thing you ever heard. They're scared of that. But the real problem is not the broadcasters, the real problem is with lazy people who listen to the radio. If you believe that saying *fuck* is okay, if you believe that saying *shit* is okay, if you believe that nobody ever went to hell because they heard a dirty word, then you should let your opinion be heard by the broadcasters, because the only people who ever call the stations are the fundamentalists or weirdos. It's the only type of input that the broadcaster gets. He's only interested in his advertising revenue, so he responds accordingly. If the bulk of the people in the community, who talk like that and who live that way and who could care less whether or not somebody gets right to the point when they're delivering a song, would let the broadcasters know that that's the way they feel, that's what they want to hear, and they would prefer it that way, then things would change. But regular, normal people never call the station and talk about stuff like that; it's only these aggrieved, fundamentalist, bizarro types who get on the phone and write letters. It's the taste of this tiny minority that rules the taste of what the bulk of the population gets to hear.

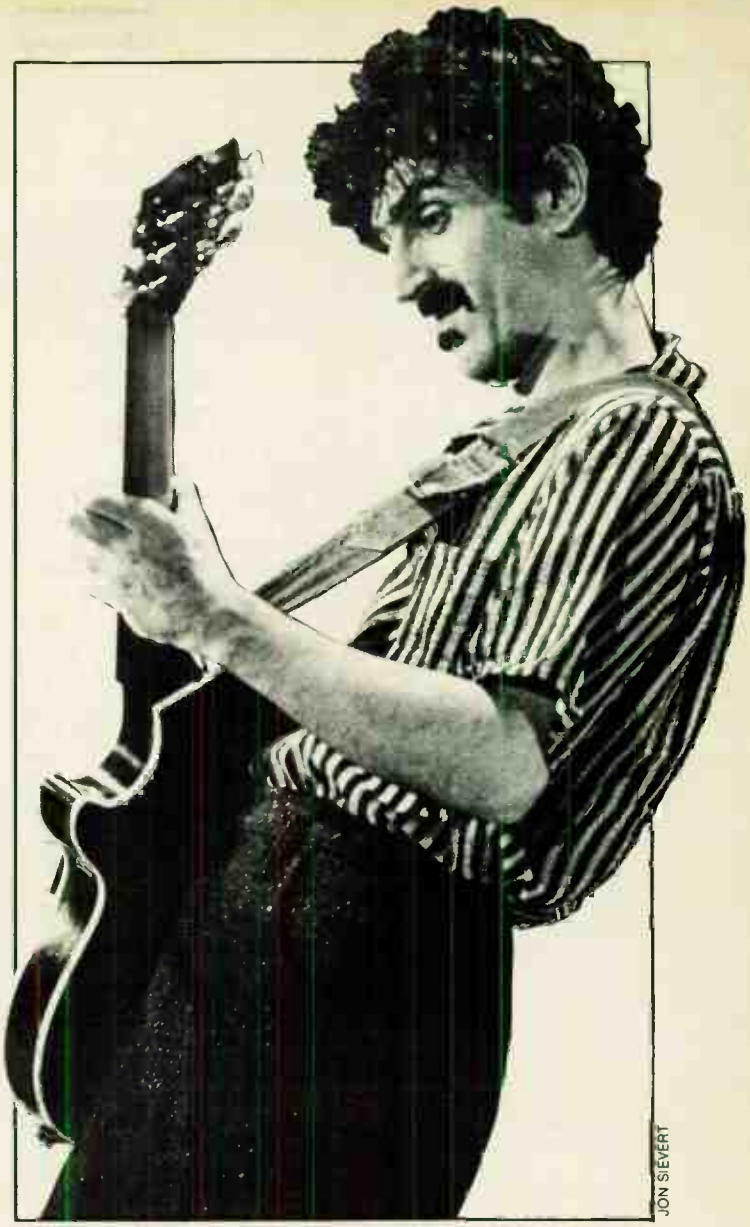
MUSICIAN: *You said before that your audience seems to be getting bigger and younger every year. I would imagine you're pleased that it's getting bigger; do you have any thoughts on the fact that it's getting younger?*

ZAPPA: The reason why older people don't come to concerts as much is because of the places we have to work. An older person with average intelligence does not want to sit in such an environment, and he doesn't have the social pressure to go to a concert; he'd rather stay at home and listen to a record or watch TV or do something else. He doesn't want to have some fifteen-year-old vomiting on his shoes.

In this one section where the bass player has a 16-bar rest, he invents something new. One night he ate three bananas—just crammed them into his mouth. Random acts; I have nothing to do with this. The other night he covered his body in mayonnaise in 16 bars.

MUSICIAN: *Those same people are of the age group that's being bombarded by Styx, REO, Foreigner and such. Do you think your audience, being within that age group, is an entirely different audience than, say, Foreigner's? How much overlap do you think there is?*

ZAPPA: Well, you can't judge a person because of their age, okay? That's age discrimination. Saying that a person is fifteen years old, therefore they're not equipped to make rational assessments of what they like—that's not right. People have different types of intellectual equipment at different ages. What we're talking about is the ability to discern between Styx and REO Speedwagon. And there are people, even fifteen years old, who can tell the difference and can also say, "Well, I don't like either, and I would prefer something else." I am not averse to Styx, REO Speedwagon, Journey, Foreigner; the thing I don't like is when that's all you ever get to hear on any station. That does a disservice to everybody else who's making music who never gets heard. It's not just me; I mean, think of all the other new wave groups that never get on, think of all the things from the past that are really good music that don't get played. It's too monochromatic. It's a combination of what the radio doesn't play and the fact that in the record store they can only stock so many albums and they don't let you listen to anything before you buy it. All the decisions are based on what the cover looks like or what people hear on the radio—those are the important sales tools. It's also based on who's got the biggest display that week at the local record store. It's also based on how much money there is in the consumer's pocket to spend on something like an album for entertainment.


JON SIEVERT

MUSICIAN: *Knowing all of that, and being the head of your own label, where does that put you in terms of competing as far as ad space, displays, artwork?*

ZAPPA: I *can't* compete—there's no way. I can only do what I do and try and do as good a job as I can for the people who already like it. And if the audience gets bigger, great; if it doesn't, tough *tuchus*. I am in business to entertain the people who like what I do. That's my audience, and my duty is to take care of their wishes. And also to amuse myself, because I usually feel if I enjoy what I do, those people are going to like it.

MUSICIAN: *Isn't one alternative, in terms of competing with major labels, to sign with a major, instead of having Barking Pumpkin?*

ZAPPA: No, that's not an alternative, because a person who does what I do would be swamped in a major label, because they always choose the path of least resistance, which is the music with the least content, which is the easiest to get on American radio. I would be totally lost on a major label, I'd receive no attention from the promotion department.

MUSICIAN: *But wouldn't your track record and the loyalty of an audience that can fill relatively big venues throughout the country have some bearing?*

ZAPPA: Not enough to be dangerous, because the correspondence between concert ticket sales and what happens on the radio is not really that close. There are some acts who sell

tons of records who will not draw at a concert. We draw at concerts by word of mouth and by the fact that we've been there year after year, and we deliver the goods, we put on a good show, and people come there to see what we're doing new each year. If we signed with a major label I don't think they'd give much credence to our concert capabilities.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think you're becoming more cynical the longer you stay in this business?*

ZAPPA: I don't think I'm getting more cynical, I've just got more evidence to back up my cynicism. Where in the past I might have only guessed that people were horrible, today I can prove it.

MUSICIAN: *Knowing as you do how conservative radio programmers are, and how afraid they are of anything with your name on it, then putting out something like* Joe's Garage *would seem only to reinforce their opinion.*

ZAPPA: I'm not in business to kiss their ass.

MUSICIAN: *You don't think that's being a bit destructive to your own career?*

ZAPPA: I'm still here, aren't I? My goal is to get accurate performances and good recordings of everything I write. That's it. And if someone else wants to hear it, I want to have it available for them.

MUSICIAN: *What's your overall attitude towards what's going on in music right now?*

ZAPPA: It's a manifestation of bottom-lineism, which is probably one of the greater dangers facing society today. Short-term solutions that ultimately erode the quality of life. Record companies today don't go in for building artists' careers, because everything is deemed to be disposable. They're looking for the short-run high yield on any group. Because the chances are good that if a group has a hit and they go out and tour, they're all going to break up anyway at the end of the tour and form other groups. Nobody sticks together, nobody plans on staying in the business for decades. Let's go out and have a hit, get as much dope as we can, get laid every fifteen minutes, and that's it. And the record companies like this, because they know that people who are that stupid are easy to cheat on their royalty statements. They're very much in favor of those kinds of groups. That's the way the business is designed now; it didn't used to be that way.

MUSICIAN: *With it being so hard to compete in the marketplace, is it wise to put out albums as rapidly as you do? Why do you do that?*

ZAPPA: If I put out an album and it pays for itself and gets me enough capital to make the next one, I'm happy, I'm okay. I do what I do because I like music, I have respect for the audience that consumes it, and my theory is that the more of it that's available, the better they like it. So I put 'em out as fast as I can.

MUSICIAN: *On an album like* You Are What You Is, *what do your production costs run to?*

ZAPPA: That one was around $175,000.

MUSICIAN: *Where does all that money go?*

ZAPPA: Musicians, engineers, equipment rental.

MUSICIAN: *At least you don't have to pay studio time now.*

ZAPPA: Oh? Think of what the studio time costs *me*. My electrical bill for that studio is about $2,000 a month! Then the engineer is getting a very healthy salary for working extremely long hours putting a project like that together. Also you have to include in that cost the artist who does the cover, the photographer, the typesetting, the mastering cost—we spend about $30,000 in mastering. I spend money on records to the degree that I can afford to spend it. If something needs to be done I try and do it the right way. It wasn't always possible, because in the early days the first three Mothers albums had budgets of $20,000 for *Freak Out* (a double album), *Absolutely Free* was $11,000, and *Lumpy Gravy* was about $30,000, but it had an orchestra, and *We're Only In It For The Money* was about $25,000. The Bizarre albums had a fixed budget of $27,500. All the Discreet albums had a fixed budget of $60,000.

MUSICIAN: *What about projects that either never came out or were transformed into something else before they did come out? You had an album called* Warts And All, *another called* Crush All Boxes...

ZAPPA: *Crush All Boxes* became *Tinsel Town*. Originally, *Crush All Boxes* was supposed to be called *Fred Zepellin*. I changed the name of that because of one of the guys in Led Zepellin. [The name Fred Zepellin has not gone to waste, however. Zappa later informed us of a band called Fred Zepellin, featuring Frank's twelve-year-old son, Dweezil, on guitar. "That's what he wanted to call it," laughs Dad. "He's twelve, and that sonofabitch can play the guitar. He really is good. I showed him some chords, but all the rest is Stratocaster/whammy bar syndrome that Steve Vai showed him. They do original material—it's totally heavy metal fuzztone au go-go."]

MUSICIAN: *Looking back on your enormous catalog of recordings, can you pick out any albums that stand out in your mind as your favorites or most successful from an artistic standpoint?*

ZAPPA: I don't think any of the albums are a hundred percent; there are certain pieces that I like. I like "Greggery Peccary," *Lumpy Gravy*, "Redunzl," the *We're Only In It For The Money* album, "Watermelon In Easter Hay," I think *You Are What You Is* comes off. I like the song "The Blue Light."

MUSICIAN: *You're the composer, the producer, the bandleader—who's the judge of what goes on the albums and what doesn't? Are you the sole last word?*

ZAPPA: Yes.

MUSICIAN: *Do you ever feel like you should have a third ear?*

ZAPPA: No. I listen to other people's opinions, but I don't usually take them into consideration. They don't know what I'm trying to do with the album, they have no idea, so why should I value their opinion more than mine? I'm the only one who knows what's going on.

MUSICIAN: *Why were the* Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar *LPs released for mail-order only?*

ZAPPA: Because if you put out instrumental music for normal release in America it won't get played on the radio, so it's a waste of time. You know, right now the *Guitar* album has sold more than *Tinsel Town* or *You Are What You Is*. That album went into a profit position two weeks after it was available.

MUSICIAN: *I was a little surprised to see you put out three instrumental guitar albums at this point, because on the last couple of tours you've had several other guitarists in the band and you seemed to be playing guitar less.*

ZAPPA: No, the very least I would play during a show, based on our current lineup, is seven to eight solos per night. And some nights I'll play ten to thirteen solos. It doesn't look like I'm doing as much because I'm not holding a guitar all the time—I always pass the guitar over to the roadie who tunes it while I'm singing. But as far as the actual improvised leads during the show, I play most of them.

MUSICIAN: *It also seems, though, like you're doing less instrumental compositions.*

ZAPPA: That's not true either.

MUSICIAN: *On albums you are.*

ZAPPA: On albums, of course, but in the shows, it's not. As a matter of fact, we've got enough instrumental pieces in our repertoire right now where we could go on stage and not do any vocals and still do a two-and-a-half-hour show.

MUSICIAN: *Why are the albums so vocal-oriented?*

ZAPPA: Well, I've got some lyrics that I think are worth hearing. It's a little bit difficult to make a pointed statement about the Moral Majority with an instrumental.

MUSICIAN: *What's the motivation behind the lyrics? What does it take to get you to sit down and start writing words?*

ZAPPA: Well, my son Ahmet walked around the house one day singing a song that he made up called "Frogs With Dirty Little Lips." The words would change every day, and I'd always try to get him to sing it, you know, because I thought, what a great concept, "Frogs With Dirty Little Lips." But he kind of lost interest in it, so while I was in Detroit I had fifteen mintues before the soundcheck—got out a pen and finished that song. I wrote "Frogs With Dirty Little Lips," and I'm hoping we can get it ready in time to give him a surprise when we play L.A.

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MUSICIAN: *Since* Sheik Yerbouti, *some critics have accused you of playing it safe a little.*

ZAPPA: Those are the same people who say I haven't made a good album since *We're Only In It For The Money.* Those are the people who wish the Garrick Theater was still around. Those are the people who would go see the Grandmothers and think it was a hot show. There's no accounting for taste, but I don't think those people are very well informed.

MUSICIAN: Sheik Yerbouti *is, however, a very slickly produced album, and from that album to the present you seem to be doing more short, catchy songs—compared to works like "Dwarf Nebula."*

ZAPPA: Yeah, look at the time frame, though. "Dwarf Nebula" was in 1969. *Sheik Yerbouti* was 1979. If you compare something from that period with *Sheik Yerbouti*, you're overlooking all the albums in between—which included *Over-nite Sensation, Apostrophe*, and other albums that had sing-along type songs on them. Unless a person can sit there and accurately recall all of my—what?—300 song-like compositions, and can make rational comparisons between all 300 of them, they're not qualified to talk about what I do. There isn't anybody I've met who knows the catalog and has recall of the tunes and can make comparisons between one thing and another. The *Freak Out* album is full of little short songs. I started that way.

MUSICIAN: *You don't see yourself moving in the direction of shorter, catchier songs?*

ZAPPA: No. Look, if in a given year I write five pieces for orchestra, release two double albums and one triple album, start work on a book, do a month and a half work on another album, two months rehearsal—and the only thing the public knows about is the albums that actually went into release, which contain such diverse material as "The Blue Light," certainly not a sing-along song, and "Jumbo Go Away," which is a nice little tune and then goes into something that only a handful of musicians in the United States could play, there's a pretty wide spread of what goes on in my creative output over a period of a year. Especially when you think in terms of minutes of music, there are more minutes of music I made last year that have not been heard than have been heard. There's a lot of music that no one has heard yet.

MUSICIAN: *Will it ever be heard?*

ZAPPA: Depends on the economics.

MUSICIAN: *Doesn't it sadden you that you do write a lot of music that might never be heard, especially the orchestral stuff?*

ZAPPA: It pisses me off; it doesn't sadden me. That's the only reason I write it—*I* want to hear it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think* Sheik Yerbouti *sold well because—*

ZAPPA: It sold because of the picture on it.

MUSICIAN: *But it also had a single ("Dancing Fool") that did pretty well.*

ZAPPA: That helped. But the point of purchase aspect of it was the cover.

MUSICIAN: *That was the first album Adrian Belew appeared in. How did you find him?*

ZAPPA: I was in a bar in Nashville and he was working with this bar band, and he was playing good Stratocaster noises and singing like—who was the guy that did "Leah"?—Roy Orbison. He was doing Roy Orbison imitations. I said, Mmm, here's an interesting guy. I got his phone number, brought him out to audition, he passed the audition and got the job.

MUSICIAN: *You've had a history of discovering some great players. Are these unknowns just abnormally gifted when you find them, or do you work them up to that level, or is it just the environment that you foster that stimulates that sort of creativity?*

ZAPPA: First of all, I go out on the street—and most rock 'n' roll people who have a name do not. I don't go to bars just shopping for musicians, but I know what I like, and I can spot a talent. If I see it, I'll take the guy's name—because if I don't use him I can always recommend him to someone else. People call me looking for musicians. But a lot of groups don't go out and hang around with normal people and go into little dip-shit bars and stuff. I do. And that's where they're at, out there workin', scufflin' along. Then the next thing that happens is when they come into my band they get a chance to work with better equipment, they get some discipline, they get a chance to be seen by hundreds of thousands of people for a period of time, they get mentioned in interviews and stuff—presto chango, they're fantastic musicians. But I don't think that some of the people who've been supposedly discovered by me would ever have been discovered by any of the people they eventually went to work for, because those people don't know where to look.

MUSICIAN: *Considering your knowledge and love of modern classical music, and some of the things you've written in that realm, do you view yourself as something other than rock performer?*

ZAPPA: No. Basically what I am is a composer, but the way I earn my living is performing rock 'n' roll music. So if that's where I'm most visible, then by process of elimination that's what I am.

MUSICIAN: *Are your rock compositions influenced much by people like Varese and Stravinsky and Webern?*

ZAPPA: Well, once I've absorbed an influence and it's part of my fibre, it's there. It's just as influential as Bulgarian music or Indian music or rhythm 'n' blues or whatever. What I write is a product of what I like, and what I like is a product of what I've been exposed to. And fortunately I was exposed to a wide range of stuff.

MUSICIAN: *What did you write for Pierre Boulez?*

ZAPPA: He asked me to write a piece for his ensemble. He has this virtuoso ensemble of about thirty musicians he works with all the time called the Ensemble Intercontemporaine. So he sent me a list of their instrumentation.

MUSICIAN: *That's awfully flattering that Boulez would want to play your music.*

ZAPPA: It's nice—considering that nobody in the United States gives a damn.

MUSICIAN: *There always has been a sort of dichotomy between you performing rock 'n roll in that arena, while having a great love for 50s R&B, and at the same time being a devotee of Edgar Varese, Stravinsky and people like that.*

ZAPPA: So what's the dichotomy? Ever met a person who only wanted to eat fried chicken? I'm sure that there are people who like certain types of things I do that would *hate* the rest of it. I like rhythm 'n' blues, I like the electric music I'm doing onstage now, I like writing orchestra music. I like all that stuff equally well; one thing's as much fun as another. I like producing records, working with videotape, all those things.

MUSICIAN: *Don't you get tired of breaking in new band*

Zappa's Equipment

On his last tour, Zappa's guitar setup was comparatively simple and straightforward. "I was playing through three amps and using two guitars," he details; "a Les Paul and the Hendrix Strat—the one he burned in Miami. I got that from a guy who used to be his roadie. I was using one of those small Acoustic amps with an extension speaker. I think they're transistor with a tube front end—I'm not sure; I've never even looked in the back of it. I like the way it sounds, though. And then there was a Marshall and a Carvin, which is a tube amp. I usually set one of the amps, the Carvin, to be fairly clean, so that it has the attack of the note, then I fuzz out the other two. The Marshall is set for a fuzz around 2K, and I was using the Acoustic for fuzz between 300 and 700 cycles for the midrange.

"The Les Paul has a Dan Armstrong pickup in the fingerboard position and a Carvin in the treble position. The Strat has a Dan Armstrong, a Carvin, and a Seymour Duncan noise-cancelling Strat replacement pickup in the middle position. I was only using three effects on this tour: an Ibanez flanger, a Cry Baby wah-wah pedal, and I was also using an MXR DDL with a little bit of pitch shift on it so that it broadens the sound out. I wasn't going for effects—I've already done that. I was going for another syndrome this time."

JON SIEVERT

Admiral Zappa takes the U.S. Navy band through "Joe's Garage" between planes at San Francisco airport.

members, and going on the road to play the same songs every night? Wouldn't you rather concentrate on writing more?

ZAPPA: That would be fun, but I'm sure I'd miss playing hockey rinks. You don't understand—unless you've been on the road with a band, and have seen what happens over a three-month period of time traveling around with the same guys. It's really great. It's *much* better than going to summer camp. This particular tour, the guys have been great.

MUSICIAN: *A lot of people seem to think that because of your penchant for modern classical music, and also because of the humor you sometimes direct at the music itself, that you don't actually like rock 'n' roll, and that you don't view what you do as rock 'n roll.*

ZAPPA: What kind of rock 'n' roll? There are some types of rock 'n' roll I don't like, there's some types I do. Suppose somebody said to you, "Hey, what's rock 'n' roll?" What are you gonna do, tell them that Joni Mitchell is the same as Black Sabbath? Besides that, I don't give a damn whether I'm certified as rock 'n' roll or not, because the music is what it is, and that's that. Call it whatever you want.

MUSICIAN: *Another criticism some have voiced is that by some of the weird twists in your compositions' musical structure, or with a sort of "toilet humor," you sometimes sabotage an otherwise straight-ahead accessible composition.*

ZAPPA: Well, that misunderstanding basically derives from this fact: people who deal in rock 'n' roll criticism are all part of the machinery that thrives on the idea that the largest number of units sold equals the best music. And if somebody does something without wanting to sell billions of platinum units, then this is incomprehensible to the average rock 'n' roll critic, because they believe that anybody who doesn't play the same game is crazy or dangerous or both. So they can't compute the idea that maybe the concept of the song that they perceive as a perfectly acceptable, viable, nice little rock 'n' roll ditty that they think was sabotaged—maybe the *sabotage* is the actual information in the song, and the rest of the stuff surrounding it is something that will attract the attention of the people who need to hear that other information. It's the carrot on the end of the stick to make you experience that other information. The part in the song that turns out to be weird to those particular critics is the part that's important, and the other stuff is just something to set you up for that little twist that's in there. Without the setup, the twist doesn't work, and oftentimes the compositions are designed to lead you right down the primrose path until you hit the brick wall.

MUSICIAN: *Do you sometimes have a regular, sing-along little rocker, and then think this is too straightforward, let's tweeze it up a bit?*

ZAPPA: No, I've never done that.

MUSICIAN: *In the performance I saw by the Grandmothers, they weren't particularly kind to their former leader in the few comments they made about you.*

ZAPPA: Well, I think they feel that's probably the coolest thing to do. If they want to appeal to the writing public at large, it's easier to get more coverage if you call me an asshole than it is if you say I'm a nice guy. But the fact of the matter is, what they're doing isn't particularly defensible from an artistic standpoint, because it's a ripoff. They're not paying me for the use of my compositions that they're performing onstage, they're using my name and the work that I've done in order to earn income for themselves, and then they present me with the total ingratitude of treating me like an asshole in their performance. If you had been around when they were in the band and you had seen them and seen the kind of performances they gave and the *persona* they exhibited onstage when they were official members of the Mothers of Invention, then compared that to what they are today, you would say, "This is a fraud." Because when a guy is in the band he's got a little something going for him. He's got the security of the band paying his salary, he's got a license to be as weird as he can be onstage because he knows that his ass is covered—because I take the rap for what's going on there, right? That gives them the chance to be something other than what they would be in everyday life. And when a guy leaves the band, he loses that license. He has to take the rap for his own behavior, okay? And a lot of the image that was conveyed by those guys at that time—of the funny, weird, whatever—was purely that: just an image. They *weren't* really that funny, they *weren't* really that weird. But they were placed in a setting where they were allowed to be those kinds of characters. And now, they have to take responsibility for who they actually are. And who and what they actually are is not what they were. So for a person who goes to a performance of that group and expects to relive the golden days of yesteryear, you're not going to get it—because I'm not waving the stick over it.

MUSICIAN: *What do you think of people who do want to relive that era?*

continued on page 98

H A L L &

By Bill Flanagan

Daryl Hall and John Oates got tired of "white soul" AM predictability and rolled the dice, going through some lean times

Daryl Hall and John Oates are so firmly reestablished at the top of the pop charts that it would be easy to forget they'd ever been away. When our conversation was interrupted for the news that their latest single, "I Can't Go For That (No Can Do)," had just gone to number one, Oates and Hall responded with the restrained enthusiasm of a parent who'd just been told his bright child got an "A." That's very nice, now, as I was saying....

Oates and Hall were raised in Philadelphia in the 60s. John had his own bands and recorded for a local label. Daryl was a session musician at Sigma Sound and worked for Gamble and Huff. The Hall & Oates partnership led to three early 70s albums on Atlantic Records that jumped from the acoustic *Whole Oats* to the transitional *Abandoned Luncheonette* (including the R&B standard "She's Gone") to a hard-rocking album called *War Babies*.

Atlantic Records was upset by the team's chameleon-like changes, and when it became obvious that Hall & Oates would not be content to be the label's second Average White Band, the duo headed to RCA.

O A T E S

and taking their lumps before reemerging with a more natural and direct approach that has garnered them plenty of platinum.

Shortly after that switch, in 1975, Hall & Oates began zeroing in on the smooth soul style with which they were, until recently, associated. "Sara Smile" was followed quickly by "Rich Girl," and their place in the top ten seemed secure.

But Hall & Oates did not see themselves as others saw them. Daryl recorded an experimental solo album (*Sacred Songs*) with producer/guitarist Robert Fripp—and RCA wouldn't release it. Hall & Oates refused to return to safe ground and made two LPs (*Along The Red Ledge* and *X-Static*) that attempted to marry a live sounding rock 'n' roll gutsiness to the grace and style of soul music and R&B. Those albums confounded old fans and came near finishing Hall & Oates commercially. But in 1980, determined to move ahead, the team decided to produce themselves. They recorded *Voices* with their road band, and went back to their roots not only in rock and soul, but with 50s doo-wop vocals and close 60s harmonies.

The production style introduced on *Voices* was bold, with a fat bottom kicking the songs along and lots of empty space in the middle. (John and Daryl share credit for this sharpness

with British engineer Neil Kernon, who, they say, takes their taste for the extreme and exaggerates it even more.) That middle space was mostly reserved for the bright, full vocals, but the production proceeded in a linear manner: guitars and keyboards struck their chords in the pauses around the vocals, rather than under them. If a saxophone solo was used, the vocals cut out and the sax came in, just as big and bright, made its statement, and cut out the second the solo was over, just before the vocals jumped back up. *Voices* yielded a string of hit singles ("Kiss On My List," "You Make My Dreams," "How Does It Feel To Be Back," and a cover of "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling") that vindicated everything Hall & Oates had risked, lost and tried to achieve.

Their followup LP, *Private Eyes*, has proved to be an even bigger hit than *Voices*. I met Daryl Hall and John Oates, in the middle of a New York snow storm, at their manager's midtown office. Articulate and polite, the pair nevertheless were startlingly direct in their assessments of their own music and the music of others. Neither musician seems interested in pumping ingratiation. They say what they think with unusual candor, and when they do laugh, the laughter is sincere.

They are also unswerving in their loyalty to each other. "We have a real similarity of vision," Hall maintains. "We're the only ones who come from where we come from. The suburbs of Philadelphia are weird. It's us and Todd Rundgren—we're the only people to come from there musically since Bill Haley & the Comets. It's an odd musical outlook." Hall pauses and then adds, "Not even just musical. It's an odd *world* outlook."

When I pressed to find out if there was *anything* they disagreed on, Hall said, "Shoe sizes" at the same moment that Oates quipped, "Shoe styles." They looked at each other startled for a second and then broke into laughter. "The telepathy," Oates apologized, "is only half working today."

MUSICIAN: *Why did you decide to start producing yourselves?*
OATES: Because we got tired of not being satisfied with the way our music sounded. We figured we'd better take control of our own music and make it sound the way we wanted. And start using our band. It was a long process to get to where we are now. But we're here. We're using our energies to create now, rather than to explain.
HALL: Exactly.
OATES: That's a very important concept, I think. We're in there creating instead of just trying to explain to people what we want to do, and wasting our creative energy in describing our music or our direction.
MUSICIAN: *I understand you've passed on some pretty good production offers, including Diana Ross.*
OATES: Uh, I don't think we've really passed on anything. We haven't really....
HALL: Let's put it this way: when you get popular the leeches come out. The vampires who want to vampirize your sound. All those people that made their careers on other people's work. Some people sucker into that. I don't know. I don't want to be the Bee Gees. I'm not into producing Barbra Streisands or Diana Rosses or those kind of people. Let them find their own sound. We have enough trouble getting hits on our own without giving them away to those kind of people.
MUSICIAN: *To have gone through so many styles—musically and even in terms of image—must require a certain detachment on your part. An ability to stand back and say, "Okay, this album we're going to be like* this."
OATES: Well, that was an excuse. It was something always said to us and we believed it for a long time. It was one of the reasons we used producers. Everyone said we were too close to our own writing and music to be objective. But we look at it a little differently now. Now we see there's strength in being *sub*jective.
HALL: That, to me, was one of the biggest problems with our records. Since we were using other people and other decisions, and especially since we were using studio musicians who are used to hearing a song and taking it where the song *sounds* like it's supposed to go. We'd have songs like, on *Red Ledge*, "I Don't Want To Lose You" and "Don't Blame It On Love." Two seemingly different songs, but not really. Not from where *we're* coming from. But you take a studio musician. He hears "Don't Blame It On Love" and thinks, "Okay, heavy metal rock 'n' roll song." He hears "I Don't Want To Lose You" and thinks, "Oh, Philadelphia song." And he treats the songs like that all the way. So you have two very different directions. Whereas we see those songs as being two phases of the same thing. That's the difference.

I think one of the biggest problems in our records was that people took the differences and made them more different, through their normal attitude toward music. Because they are studio musicians. Whereas our band hears the rock in our soul, the soul in our rock and the combination of everything. That was something we really wanted to overcome. We wanted to make every song sound like it was coming from the same place. From the same part of the body. That's real hard to do.
MUSICIAN: *From 1975 until 1981, Bruce Springsteen made three albums, Paul Simon made two, Steely Dan made four....*
OATES: (laughing) We made four hundred.
MUSICIAN: *You guys released* ten. *(Hall and Oates laugh.) Are you just incredibly prolific? Do you spur each other on? Do you have* contests?
OATES: We're *greedy*.
HALL: I don't know how we did it either, because we were touring through all that time, too. Seemed like we made a lot of records. We can do it, we are prolific. There's two of us, first of all. I'm even more prolific than John, but we both write a lot of music.
OATES: Plus, it's all we do. I don't know what anyone else does. Maybe they decide to take a few months off and go to Hawaii. Maybe they decide to take a few months and produce another artist, which I know Bruce has done. Maybe they decide to record an album and then scrap it and start over again. We don't do any of those things. We write, we know what we're going to do, and then we go in and do it. Maybe that's the part of the reason some of our albums were less successful than they could have been. We weren't really that happy with the *Beauty On A Back Street* album, but we didn't scrap it and start over again. We went out and toured.

The rock people were accusing us of being disco, and the disco people thought we were too weird and not R&B enough. It didn't seem like any segment of the musical population wanted us to do anything.

HALL: We stick it all out there, for good or bad. Whatever we do, like he said, we don't go back and redo. Okay, this was a place in time. Here it is, I hope you like it.
MUSICIAN: *John, when Daryl did his solo ablum (*Sacred Songs*) many people assumed that you would do one, too. Did you refrain from recording a solo album because you felt it might threaten the partnership? Or did you just not care to do one?*
OATES: No, I never thought it threatened the partnership. We didn't think of it that way. I didn't do one because I didn't have an excess of songs and I didn't have a reason to do one. Daryl had a reason.
MUSICIAN: *Which was?*
HALL: It's hard for me to describe it, but I guess it's kind of evident in the subjects of the songs. I just had a different feeling I wanted to express that was outside our shared experience. And I wanted to work with Robert (Fripp).
MUSICIAN: *What held up the release of* Sacred Songs *for so long?*
HALL: It wasn't a Hall & Oates album. It was a very pivotal point in our commercial career from the record company's view. They saw it as a threat to our commerciality. They

EBET ROBERTS

"All it does is make me crazier;" a single-less solo LP made RCA nervous, but changed Daryl and John's sound forever.

We figured we'd better take control of our own music and make it sound the way we wanted. And start using our band. *Voices* and *Private Eyes* sound like we were having a good time doing them. They sound pure, more honest.

thought I was getting weird on them. That's really what it was. They got scared and didn't want to lose their investment. They got real uptight about it.

It didn't sound like Hall & Oates and it wasn't supposed to and they couldn't accept that. I guess it was too unusual for its time. I mean, I don't find it unusual at all. To me it's a pretty straight ahead album. The only thing I find is that it isn't a Hall & Oates album and it's not chock-full of hit singles. I guess that's enough to confuse and frighten people in the business.

OATES: But then again, the Hall & Oates album that was out at the same time, *Beauty On A Back Street,* wasn't exactly chock-full of hit singles either.

HALL: I think they were trying to teach me a lesson. I think they were trying to whip me back into shape.

MUSICIAN: *It didn't work too well.*

HALL: They don't know me very well. All it does is make me crazier.

MUSICIAN: *Why did RCA finally release* Sacred Songs?

HALL: Because Robert and I took it to people. To radio stations, to writers. We were giving out cassettes to anyone who'd listen to it. We just kind of forced it out. Enough people heard it and liked it and kept calling RCA saying, "This is a great album, why don't you put it out?" Finally they decided maybe it was a good album. Maybe it should be put out. That's the only reason I can think of.

I know one of the guys here at the office was pushing Tommy (Mottola), our manager, to kind of reconsider, to help it along. Tommy has a lot of push at RCA. I think that was the final thing, when we really got behind it once again and said, "Look, we want it out." Then they said okay. But it took them two years to figure it out.

MUSICIAN: *There was a perception, after* Sacred Songs, *that now that Daryl Hall has found his real groove, Hall & Oates will become secondary to him."*

HALL: That's a real fallacy. People don't understand. Robert is not my "real groove." Anymore than anything is. What I did find out—one thing that's right about that statement—is that I found the ease of recording, the directness, that I brought back to Hall & Oates. *Sacred Songs* is almost like a prototype of *Voices* and *Private Eyes.* It's a real simple, easy album to deal with.

MUSICIAN: *Mostly the spirit.*

HALL: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. That's something we carried over to *Voices* and *Private Eyes.* It sounds like we had a good time doing it. And it sounds pure, it sounds honest. So in that way, yeah, I did find my real groove. A lot of things about that stuff bother me. I find a lot of underlying... everything from a racist tone in that to a very naive idea that "commercial is bad and avant-garde is good." Which I consider total crap. Like I say, very naive.

MUSICIAN: *Well, let's talk about that, about making pop music. Are you conscious when you're composing and making an album that if you do* this *it will make a song more commercial, more accessible to a lot of people.*

OATES: Not so much when we're composing, but when we're making the album, when the song is formed and we see what kind of song it is, we definitely treat it the way it deserves to be treated. If the song sounds like it needs a certain thing, we'll do it. But not in the writing. The writing's very natural. Whatever happens, happens. And then after the writing's finished we look at it and say, "This sounds like a very commercial song."

HALL: But we're notorious for not knowing what the singles are. Now it's becoming a little more obvious. Because our sound is accepted. We're not trying to fit our singles into what's going on in pop radio. Our sound *is* what's going on in pop radio. Luckily so. It's not quite as difficult anymore.

MUSICIAN: *With these last two LPs people finally have a pretty good idea of who you are. But looking back, in terms of both image and music, do you feel you were presented in ways that were not really you?*

OATES: Yeah.

HALL: That was a big part of it. I don't think people understood at all what we are. I think they're just starting to understand. I

think half the people thought we were like the Little River Band or something like that: real AM, just surface, nothing else there. I still get that. And a lot of people thought we were effete bisexual snobs. I got that vibe. Put that combination together and it's not a very positive image: "Fags who only deal with the surface."

I think that's something we had to really overcome. I don't know why that came, because there's always been a lot of honesty in our music. Well, I see certain reasons but, yeah. That's another reason I wanted to do *Sacred Songs*. I wanted people to realize what both of us, even though I was doing it myself, were all about.

There's intelligence in our music, there's sensitivity, there's honesty. And there's a lot of rawness that in some ways wasn't there before, was being kept out of the music, but in other ways was there all along and just needed to be found.

MUSICIAN: *John, is the pop mainstream necessarily incompatible with the avant-garde?*

OATES: I think the gist of what we're talking about is communicating. If you're involved in the music business and in the *art* of making records, you have to communicate. Hit singles communicate. They reach people. I don't want to place any value judgment on the quality of the listeners or their tastes or anything like that. But when a record is being played and a lot of people enjoy it and sing it and it gives them pleasure, there's something there.

I think we're communicating to people, and not just on the volume of listeners and sales. We're communicating ideas. We're inspiring and giving people something to think about. Our songs can be taken at a number of levels. They can just be taken at a surface level. You can just hum, "Private eyes, they're watching you, they watch your every move," until you go to sleep at night, or you can think about it. You can think about "Kiss On My List." Some people say "Kiss On My *Lips*" because some people don't even listen. But then there are people who do listen, and if you listen to that song you can see that there are more levels going on than what's apparent on the surface. So I think we're giving the people a lot, and we're making the music we want to make on our terms. Add those things together and I think it's all very positive.

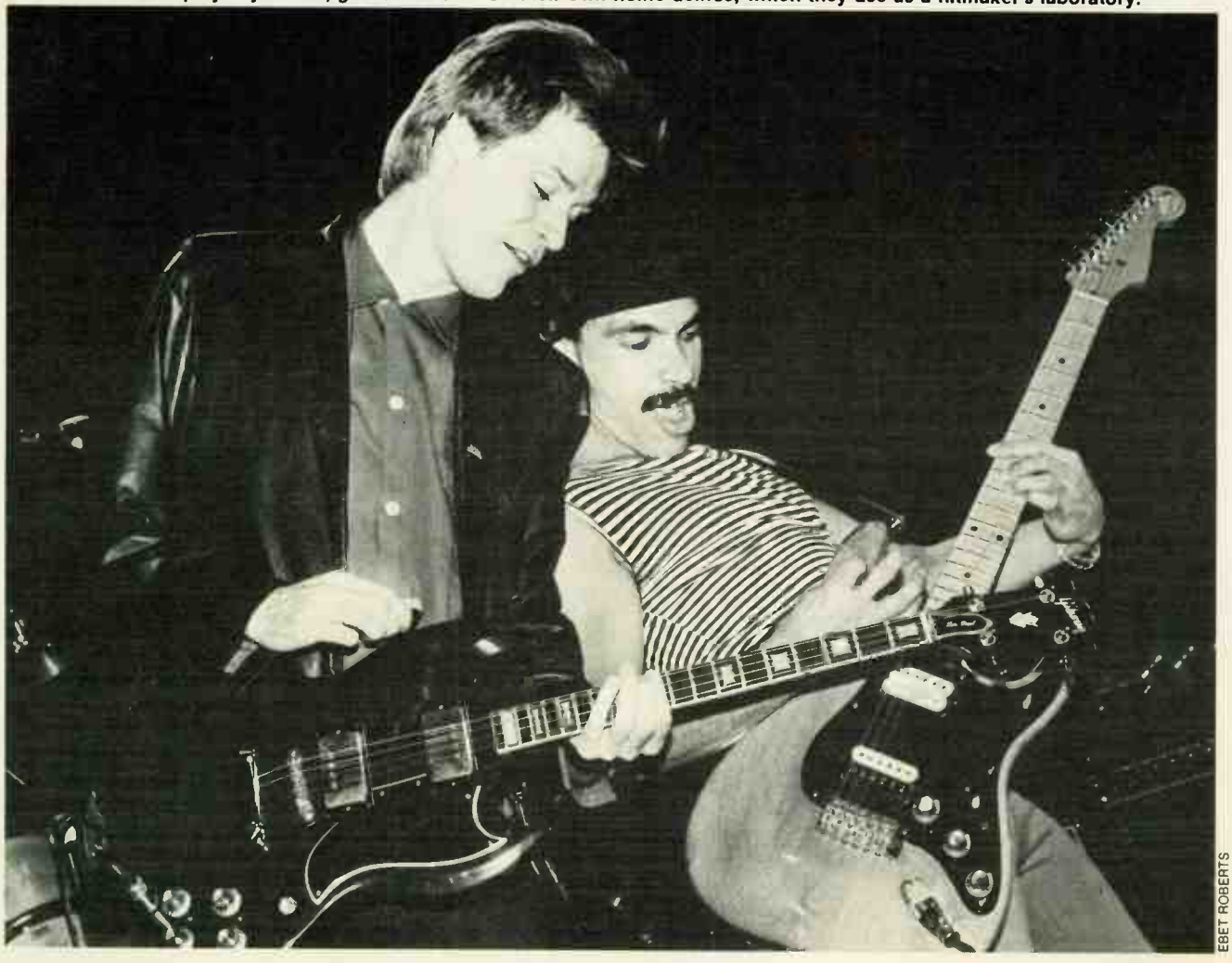
And as far as the avant-garde and being obscure is concerned, I really don't know. I see a lot of people in what is considered the "avant-garde" who are afraid of success. People who go out of their way to be obscure just to be obscure. And it doesn't mean that much to me.

MUSICIAN: *Certainly Fripp's work seems more accessible in the context of something like* Sacred Songs. *Even a piece like "Urban Landscape" benefits from that accessible framework.*

HALL: Robert is capable of good composition. I've heard him do it many times. I think one of his best works was "Lark's Tongue In Aspic" in the old King Crimson. That's an instrumental that's a great piece of composition. I think Robert neglects his composition for other things, technical things. I think he should work with another composer. That's how he communicates the best. Put those amazing ideas that he has into a more compositional sense. I think he's one of the great guitar players.

Half the people thought we were real AM, just surface. I still get that. And a lot of people thought we were effete bisexual snobs. I got that vibe. Put that combination together and it's not a very positive image.

Both Hall & Oates play keyboards, guitar and bass on their own home demos, which they use as a hitmaker's laboratory.



EBET ROBERTS

MUSICIAN: *What about Todd Rundgren (who produced* War Babies *and played on* Along The Red Ledge*)?*
HALL: Todd's always trying to hedge his bets. I've seen him do it. He's an extremely talented person who's so concerned with doing it his way that he doesn't do it anybody's way. I think he writes great religious music. He just doesn't have very many members of his church.

If his particular brand of spiritual thought was more widely accepted and understood, then he would have more significance to people. But since most people don't have any concept of what he's singing about, I think he's basically doing it for himself and the few people who do. He makes great music.
MUSICIAN: *How do you feel about George Benson?*
HALL: I don't like him. Just doesn't appeal to me.
OATES: I don't know anything about him.
MUSICIAN: *Earth, Wind & Fire?* (long pause)
OATES: I think Earth, Wind & Fire have some of the greatest lyrics (glances at Hall and starts to smile) that have ever been written. (laughter) "YOU! AND ME!"
HALL: No, they're good. They're California people, I can't relate to them.
OATES: "Tell my story, morning glory, all about the serpentine fire." Is that it?
MUSICIAN: *I'm interested in your feelings about black music.*

I see a lot of people in what is considered the "avant-garde" who are afraid of success, people who go out of their way to be obscure just to be obscure. You have to communicate. Hit singles communicate.

Obviously it's had a great effect on you, and I wonder if the direction that black music has taken since your most obvious influences were dominant disturbs you.
HALL: We were not influenced that much, believe it or not, by black music *per se*. We were influenced by early rock 'n' roll and soul music, which was not black: it was *integrated* music. There was no difference between black and white.
OATES: Especially in Philadelphia.
HALL: You listen to the Spaniels and to Vito & the Salutations and there's not that much difference between the two. Even though one's a white group and the other's a black group. Stax/Volt and Motown and the early Philadelphia music that we were both a part of—playing in the studio at Sigma—were integrated. There were a lot of white musicians playing along with black musicians. Steve Cropper, Bobby Ely, Vince Montana. It was a white and black musical form. It was grey. And that's really what our influences are.
OATES: Our influences stopped when black music began to split off. Black people in general became more concerned with their identity, their roots. And it also had to do with our growing out of being teenagers at about the same time.
HALL: About 1970 a big schism happened. White music got real white and black music got real black. That's where heavy metal comes in, and that's when Philadelphia music threw out all the white guys.
OATES: When Gamble and Huff decided to write about their own experiences in the ghetto, when they began to concentrate on the black experience and express that in their music....
HALL: ...both lyrically and musically, is when we moved away from it and into other things.
OATES: It's totally understandable. That's what was going on in the times, the early 70s.
HALL: It was socially necessary. I understand perfectly. But now I think that era's over and it's come back to where it used to be. I think the new wave was misnamed. It was a flash in the pan. If there's a new wave in our perception it's this realignment, this coming back together of black and white musical forms. Which is the unique American music. It's what makes rock 'n' roll and whatever else is going on, pop music, happen.
OATES: All the way back to jazz. It's what *is* American music.
HALL: Prince is doing it, we're doing it, the Police do it. Earth, Wind & Fire do it. Even in easy listening, the Commodores do it. They're more like Barry Manilow than like the O'Jays. There's Kid Creole and those people. It's black and white being together, confronting each other and integrating together. That's what the *city's* all about. Anybody who disregards that is being a racist.
OATES: And they're also not sensitive to their environment; to what's going on around them spiritually and physically.
HALL: And this, to me, is an area of music that's valid, that's new, has room for giant growth in the future, isn't particularly looking back the way that the, quote, new wave music is. New wave was really just a retro movement looking back to early 60s white music. What *modern* new wave is—James White & the Blacks, where Augie (August Darnell of Kid Creole & the Coconuts) comes in—is the avant-garde end of it. From every end it's all coming to some sort of focal point. This black and white combination. I think we always have been a part of that and are very much involved.
MUSICIAN: *The divergence between black and white became most extreme when there was the "Disco Sucks" campaign and real hatred.*
OATES: When we made the *X-Static* album, that was our attempt. We were saying it then but no one was listening.
HALL: They didn't want to hear about it. They just said, "Well, Hall & Oates suck, too." Which is a sickening attitude. We were really scared then. Not for ourselves, scared for music. I really thought something terrible was happening.
OATES: People burning records.
HALL: That shit that was going on. I wanted to go out there and kill that DJ who was responsible for that.
MUSICIAN: *Burning the disco records.*
HALL: Yeah. I mean, that guy was *proud* of that shit. I keep using the word "racist" but it keeps poppin' up. It was a real racist statement. And what's going on in AOR radio right now, too. Which is a dinosaur. This heavy metal revival. Sure, it has an audience of people who understand that. But that's not rock 'n' roll. That's *part* of rock 'n' roll. What we do is just as much rock 'n' roll as what they do. It all comes from a root way back which is the same. They went in their direction and other people went in others, but to make them the sole benefactors of the term "rock 'n' roll" because they use guitars and play loud and do whatever the heavy metal people do... that doesn't give them the right to say they are rock 'n' roll and everybody else isn't. That's just an off-shoot of rock 'n roll. And I don't think one of the particularly better off-shoots.
MUSICIAN: *Is it fair to say that your album sales are more dependent on hit singles than are those of most other artists of comparable stature?*
OATES: We have a core of fans who buy our albums regardless of what happens with our singles. A hit single does make an album go over the top in sales.
MUSICIAN: *I'm wondering about the division in your audience. Stewart Copeland of the Police said (in* Musician *#38), "Completely irrelevant to the readers of your magazine, but very important to a large majority of our following is that we're three photogenic guys."*
HALL: Oh, yeah. That's the way it is. I think the Police and us are very similar in that situation. We've got the same thing going. We've got the teen magazine people, little kids, all that stuff. And then we have people who care about music. I think it varies. Sometimes one side's bigger than the other. Right now we've got a lot of the little kids because of all the hits.
OATES: It's very difficult for us to tell, other than looking at statistics or having someone tell us. When you play live and are confronting people who listen to you for the first time, it's difficult to make an accurate judgment. You can't really tell who they are because, you see, the little kids come down front. The rabid fans come down front. The people who are really there to listen to the music may be in the middle, because they have the good seats and are just sitting there listening. And then the people who heard you while driving to work that

morning and are curious may be up in the top. But you can only see the front, so you see the kids down there screaming and going berserk and all the little girls. So you can't really be accurate about who your audience is or what brings them there. But I think that's fairly accurate.

MUSICIAN: *That's an interesting dichotomy. Something Bob Dylan doesn't have to deal with.*

HALL: He used to, though. Bob Dylan in his heyday did. When he was at his peak he had people who liked him for all the wrong reasons. They liked his hair style.

OATES: Or his poetry, or his stance.

HALL: He ran the gamut.

OATES: And he had the folkies moving. From the front to the middle to the back to out the door. (laughter) Depending on which guitar he played.

HALL: That's right. He got booed off the stage at Newport for going electric. Obviously those were people who didn't understand where *he* was coming from.

MUSICIAN: *What's funny is the insult they yelled at him: "Where's Ringo?" As if the lowest thing you could accuse someone of was being like the Beatles. How did you two react when you finally got stardom, and how did it feel to....*

OATES: To lose it? (laughter)

MUSICIAN: *"What was it like to lose it?" That's a better question than the one I was going to ask.*

HALL: Losing it was kind of scary. Cause we did lose it once.

OATES: But we were always stars in our own minds. (laughter)

HALL: You know what it was? We kept saying, "Oh man, this is crap. We hate what we're doin'. We're gonna change, we're gonna change." And then we did it. And we went, "UH-OH. We changed!" You make your step, and then there you are in that place. It was conviction that we followed through with and then had to deal with. We went from playing Nassau Coliseum to playing My Father's Place (a New York club) in one tour. We saw that if you don't want it real bad, it'll leave you real fast. It won't stay around waiting for you.

OATES: But luckily enough, we were smart enough and perceptive enough to use it to rebuild and realign ourselves and our careers, our business, our lives, everything.

HALL: We went all the way through with it. We carried it all the way through and came out the other side. We didn't get scared. We didn't panic and look like *real* jerks to both ourselves and the people by coming back the next album and saying, "Okay, we're sorry. We didn't mean to do that. Here's 'She's Gone.'" We didn't do that. We kept on going with it for two or three albums.

OATES: And the result was *Voices*, and a rebuilding of our entire way of performing, our entire way of recording, everything. And it's paid off. We did the right thing. But we took what we got.

MUSICIAN: *What was the lowest point?*

HALL: I think the lowest point was when we put out the *X-Static* album and that "Disco Sucks" shit was going on. The rock people were accusing us of being disco and the disco people thought we were too weird and not R&B enough. We were nobody's friend at that point. I thought, man, we've got a heavy thing to confront here. Because it didn't seem like any segment of the musical population wanted us to do anything. Everybody had another idea. "Why aren't you doing this?" or "Why aren't you doing that?" or "We'll only play if you do this." That was a really hard thing to deal with. We didn't know where to go. Nobody gave us any breaks.

OATES: But it was the final stake driven in and the result, the next album, was *Voices*. We finally said, okay, that's it. We're going to produce ourselves. We're going to make this sound the way we want it to sound. We're going to stand behind our music and see what happens and say, "Okay, no excuses, this is it. If it's good, great. If it's bad, okay, I guess no one likes us."

We could say, "Oh, David Foster produced *X-Static*, that's the reason." We could rationalize and make those invalid excuses all the time. But we finally decided to just take total responsibility for everything. It was a big step.

MUSICIAN: *The vocal harmonies on* Voices *sounded* whiter *than on your earlier albums.*

HALL: Yeah, we lowered the inversions. In the past we sang a lot of high harmonies. And that, I think, is more associated with R&B. But we've dropped the inversions down. "How Does It Feel" is a perfect example. It's a low harmony, almost like the Beatles or the Byrds. *Private Eyes* is the same way. We kept the inversions lower. I like them better. It's a change in our vocal sound.

MUSICIAN: *Is there anything you would like to deal with in a song that you haven't been able to?*

HALL: I wish you were allowed to use more raw language. You should be allowed to say *fuck* in a rock 'n' roll song without being banned to the edge of the world. We write conversationally in a lot of our lyrics, and we're denied the use of a lot of words. Because we'd be cutting our throats to do it. I think in that way we're restricted. Every artist is.

OATES: I think there are some subjects we think about that maybe....

MUSICIAN: *Go ahead, our readers are sophisticated.*

OATES: They may be sophisticated, but they may not be quite so *perverted* as we are.

MUSICIAN: *The perverted portion of our readership will be sorry we didn't pursue this.*

HALL: We *allude* to things. The song "Tell Me What You Want" is a real sex song. That says basically everything you need to say. It's the kind of song I always say should be sung through clenched teeth. It's a conversation between two people who are heavily involved in doing something right then and there. You know, that's close enough. Like I say, you can't use the

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Hall & Oates Equipment

Onstage, John Oates plays a Fender Navigator, a Rickenbacker twelve-string, and a custom-made Schecter. Oates has a '58 and a '59 Stratocaster but explains, "I finally retired all my old guitars 'cause I don't want to take a chance."

Daryl Hall uses a Yamaha CP-70 piano and, on "I Can't Go For That," a Korg CX3. He also plays Mandar, a sort of four- or eight-string guitar he designed. Having already played mandolin, Hall explains, "I wanted something that sounded like a guitar. Unfortunately, in the mandolin family there's mandolin, mandola, and then all the way down to mandocella, which is more in the bass range. There's nothing in between for some reason. Gibson tried to make something called an 'Octave mandolin' in the early 1900s, but it never went anywhere. So I had a guy make me what I called an octave mandolin, and then I changed the name to Mandar because it sounds like a guitar. It's in a guitar range, but tuned in fifths, the way the violin/mandolin family is."

Both Hall and Oates use Music Man heads.

Guitarist G.E. Smith uses two Marshall bottoms and a hundred-watt Marshall head. He "changes guitars hourly," sighs road manager Michael Page, "mostly old Fenders."

Charlie DeChant plays Selmer alto and tenor saxes, and doubles on keyboards: a Prophet 5, two mini-Moogs, and a Vocoder through a Yamaha mixer and a Crown amp.

Tom Wolk's bass is "sort of home built" and he plays it through two Music Man Reflex bottoms, and a Marshall cabinet with JBLs.

Drummer Mickey Curry plays a pretty standard Ludwig wooden kit.

Hall and Oates both compose on keyboards and on guitar, using "whatever's around." "I use a Yamaha electric," Hall explains, "because you can get a pretty good variety of sounds with that. I use Prophets, a Wurlitzer, sometimes Fender Rhodes, but not too often.

"At home I have the normal keyboards," Oates says, stirring envy in the abnormal listener. "I have a Fender Rhodes, a Wurlitzer, a Prophet. I'm starting to play bass now, too. I'm starting to approach writing a little differently. I'm working more from the point of view of *grooves* so I'm laying down things with electric drums and bass."

Hall and Oates are enthusiastic about the advantages of composing and taping with the new electronic drum machines. "We don't have to deal with a rhythm section *per se* like we used to," says Hall. "Now we can start with much smaller things. Maybe just a guitar and a Rhythm Ace, or piano, bass and Rhythm Ace. We build from a much smaller place and so it's opened to go in a lot more directions.

"I think every musician wants to be able to control his own beats," Oates suggests. "Because drummers are a very strange group of people anyway," he laughs, "and sometimes the less you have to do with them, the better off you are."

"The EX-18 could well become a classic audio tool"

June 1981 Modern Recording and Music. c 1981 Cowan Publishing

That's what Modern Recording said about the EX-18 stereo 2-way/mono 3-way electronic crossover. The same statement could very well apply to the new TAPCO 2210 and 2230 graphic equalizers as well.

The EX-18 provides all the necessary controls and functions for bi-amplifying stereo or tri-amplifying monaural speaker systems, and this can be accomplished using a unique mode switch so no external patching is required. A single knob on each channel adjusts the crossover frequencies, with a 10X multiplier available for very high frequency crossover operation. It is definitely one of the cleanest and quietest electronic crossovers available.

The same precision design and human engineering found in the EX-18 is found in the one-third octave 2230 and the dual ten-band 2210 graphic equalizers. Both are magnificent performers in recording and sound reinforcement applications. Whether you need the precision of the 2230 with its combining filter action, switchable high and low-pass filters and floating balanced outputs, or the economy and flexibility of the 2210, there are simply no better values in today's marketplace.

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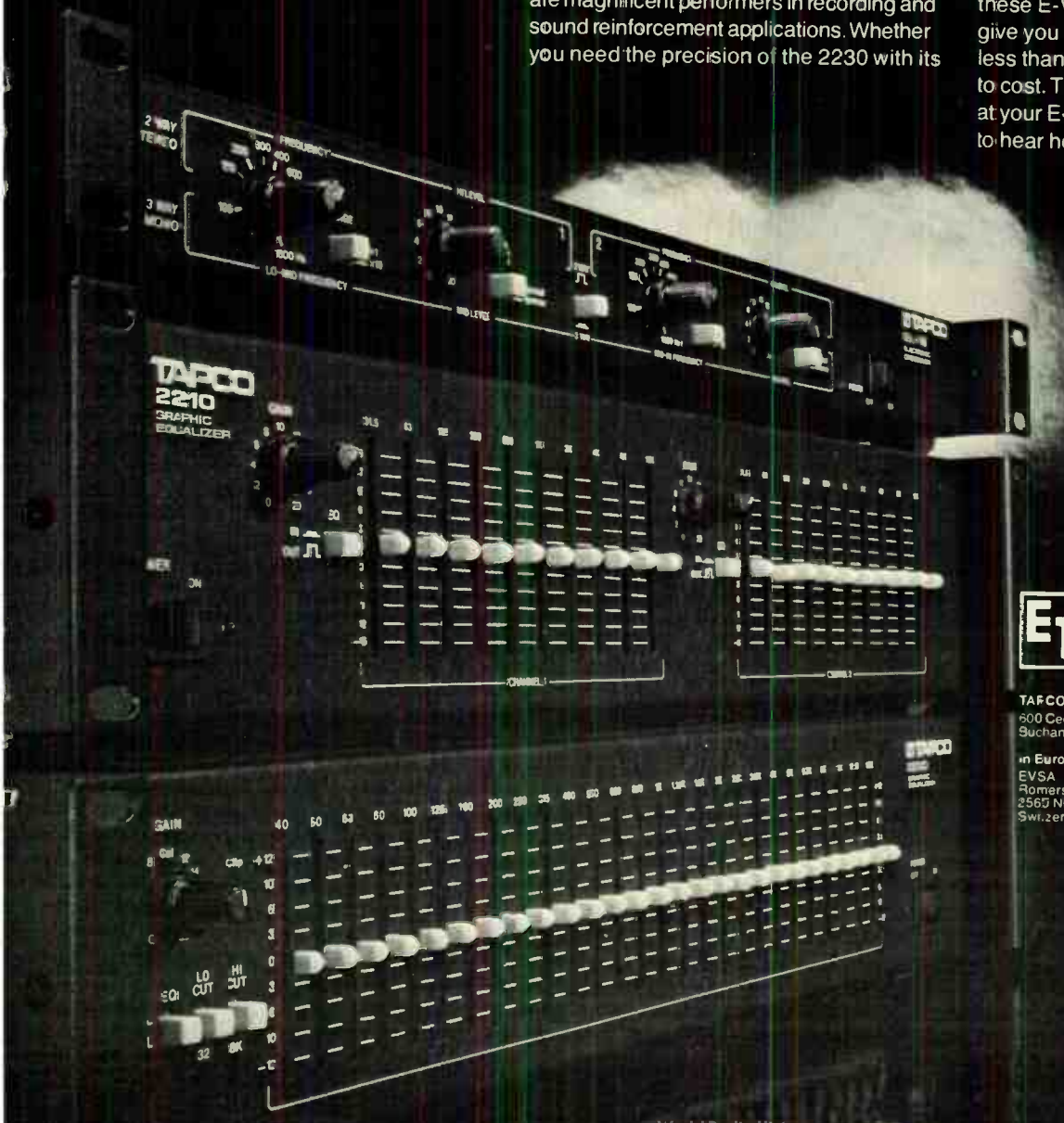

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CLARENCE CLEMONS

THE BIG MAN STEPS OUT FRONT

Bruce Springsteen's sidekick and main man, one of the greatest rock 'n' roll sax players in the game, has a new hobby: his own band, CC & the Red Bank Rockers, and a shot-and-beer rock club in Jersey.

By Chris Doering

Like the Rocky Mountains, Clarence Clemons' sheer size can upset your sense of scale. The first time I saw him live, he was blowing choruses of "Georgia" over the eight-piece (four horns, four rhythm) Red Bank Rockers, his new band, and they were halfway through the song before I figured out that he was playing a tenor, not an alto sax. The Big Man's sound is as massive as his presence. Powered by a pair of lungs that could probably run a blast furnace, his sax erupts with so much sound it seems that the horn can't contain it, is about to explode into a million pieces with the next note.

That sound, as much as his theatrical onstage interaction with The Boss, has made Clarence Clemons the E Street Band's most recognizable member. Like the Baptist preachers that abound in his family, his sax can whisper, shout, testify, call down damnation and hellfire, or sing Hallelujah. It's the perfect complement to Springsteen's music, and not just because Clarence is the latest and arguably the greatest exponent of the rock 'n' roll saxophone tradition that stretches back through Jr. Walker and King Curtis to the anonymous R&B shouters of the 40s and 50s. One of the driving forces of Springsteen's music is the urge to find and express the Truth, but there's a part of that truth that can't be contained in words. And when Springsteen the lyricist gets lost in the darkness on the edge of town, or blinded by the light, he calls on the Big Man's sax to speak for the spirits in the night.

In search of more information, I took a trip to Red Bank, New Jersey (down the shore, right) where Big Man's West, the rock club Clarence opened last April while on a world tour with the E Streeters, is located. I was a little apprehensive about the interview as I stepped out of my car (Clarence does not look like the kind of person on whose bad side anyone would want to be) and my fears were in no way diminished when I opened the door and walked straight into a classic shot-and-beer scene. But Clarence immediately put me at my ease (like many big men who never had to bully, he's a very gentle person) and my first impression of the club was erased when I saw the back room, which he has transformed from a pool hall into a fully equipped showcase with light and sound systems to equal anything in New York, and a large air-conditioned stage. With facilities like that, the club could be a gold mine if it

followed the standard rock club booking policy of clone bands and kamikaze nights. But instead of milking the place for all it's worth, Clarence prefers to make a contribution to the future of rock 'n' roll by hiring local original bands, most of whom will never play in a better setting than Big Man's West.

The front bar is due for renovation soon, but Clarence shows as much concern for the people who made it their home as he does for the young bands who get their first taste of the big time in the back room. He might not think Charlie Parker is the greatest, but he's a perfect illustration of the Bird's famous saying, "If you don't live it, it won't come out your horn." If you've heard him play, you know him about as well as his friends do, and you know that he's a big man in more ways than the physical.

MUSICIAN: *So, where should we start? Are you from Red Bank?*

CLEMONS: No, I'm originally from Virginia. I grew up in, well, I didn't grow up yet, but I'm working on it. I was born in Norfolk, Virginia and went to high school there. I came from a very religious background, long line of Baptist preachers. My grandfather's a preacher, my brother's a preacher, he's a musician too. Singing in the church choir was the basis of my musical background. When I was nine years old my father asked me what I wanted for Christmas, an electric train or a saxophone. Told him I wanted an electric train, so he bought me the saxophone, and I've been stuck with it ever since. I go back now and say, "Aren't you sorry? If you had bought me the train I could have been an engineer or something." Anyway that's how I got started. My father heard this sax player and it made such an impression on him that he wanted his son to play saxophone. Nobody else in my family played any instrument before that.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA LTD

When CC asked to sit in, the wind blew and the sparks flew.

My father used to make me practice. He had a fish market, and it was the noisiest joint on the block. Maybe he thought I was bringing customers in or something, but I'd be in the back room practicing scales, hating every second of it. The guy that was teaching me used a classical format, with scales, chords and exercises, and I didn't dig it at all, I wanted to get down right away. I even quit one time, I didn't really get into the horn until later. I was influenced by a combination of things, one of which was the first Elvis Presley show on TV, and I knew rock 'n' roll was what I had to do with my life.

MUSICIAN: *You were a football player for a while, weren't you?*

CLEMONS: Yeah, I went to the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, on a football scholarship.

MUSICIAN: *What did you play?*

CLEMONS: Offensive center and defensive line. I majored in football, never got my degree. My mother still says, "Why don't you go back and make something of your life?" All the time I was playing music, in search of myself, you know.

MUSICIAN: *What was the first band you were in?*

CLEMONS: That was a band called the Vibratones. Nine pieces, all music majors in college, and all we did was practice. We never played a gig. We used to get off on just covering a song and having it... perfect. We did a lot of James Brown, stuff like that. The manager of the campus grill heard us one day and said, "Hey, you guys should be out making money." So he took us out to our first gig. We played for beer and hot dogs, and it's been downhill ever since, no, not really.

MUSICIAN: *How did you get hooked up with Bruce?*

CLEMONS: After college I came by a roundabout way to New Jersey, through Philadelphia. My first wife's from Philly and I stayed there for a while until some guys threatened to break my horn up 'cause I wasn't in the union. I was jamming in this little place... "You don't have no card, we're gonna tear your horn up." I said, "Aw shit, it's time to leave Philly." So I came to New Jersey and worked for eight years as a counselor in a reform school in Jamesburg. I was still playing on weekends, still in search of this thing and I knew I was getting closer to it. Bruce was playing over at the Upstage down here on the shore, I had never met him. I used to wonder where all the white kids were, they were all at the Upstage, across the tracks, and we were over here on the other side of the tracks playing all the soul music and the funky stuff. One day I met this guy Norman Sellers quite by accident. My car broke down in front of the place he was playing. I went in and asked if I could sit in. He said, "No." A couple of weeks later I went back, 'cause I dug what was happening, it had something that was very appealing to me. He finally let me sit in, and hired me right on the spot. That was a big deal, because white bands played in white places. It sounds very weird. This was the early 70s, but that's the way it was down here. So I made the transition and we played.

This girl named Karen Cassidy sang in the band. Karen knew where my head was at. I wasn't really into what I was doing, but I was doing it, to be doing something. Bruce was going out with her roommate, so she knew Bruce, knew his music, and she said, "You gotta meet this guy, because you two are going to be fantastic." She knew Bruce was looking for something, she knew I was looking for something, and she put us together. That story Bruce tells on stage, with the wind swirling, and I was walking down the street with a cane, that's exactly what happened. He was playing at one end of the boardwalk, and I was at the other end playing in a bar, and on my break I went down there. It was a cold night, the wind was blowing, the rain and all that stuff. I walked in the joint....

MUSICIAN: *You had on your white suit?*

CLEMONS: Well, that's a little artistic license. Anyhow I walked in there, said, "Can I sit in?" "Sure, come on." And like Bam! It was like sparks, man. I've been with him all the time and I said, "Thank God, 'cause this is what I've been looking for all my life." That's how it took off, and that's how it's been

ever since, we've been rockin' ever since.

MUSICIAN: *How has the E Street Band changed since you started?*

CLEMONS: I think the band is an extension of Bruce, what he's saying. When Davey (David Sancious) was in the band, there were some things like "New York City Serenade"—that was a piano-oriented song and Davey influenced it, brought in some jazz overtones. Roy comes along, and he's not as jazz, a little more rock 'n' roll, and Bruce writes the songs knowing what he has to work with. I think we've just progressed together, and the only changes have been when he changes.

MUSICIAN: *How do you guys learn the songs?*

CLEMONS: Bruce comes in with the song, he plays the format on guitar, or maybe he has a tape, and everybody adds their colors. It's like he's drawing a sketch and we're coloring it in. Bruce knows everybody's capabilities, he knows what he's going to hear from Roy, from me, Danny and everybody else. He has definite arrangements, what he wants, what he hears, and that's the way it works.

MUSICIAN: *Would he give you a line to play?*

CLEMONS: There have been times when he's given me a line to play, or I may come up with my own line, or a variation on the idea. The most spontaneous thing we ever did was "Spirit In The Night." He came into rehearsal, we listened to the song, played it and it came out like that. And it's still like that.

MUSICIAN: *What's the worst gig you ever played?*

CLEMONS: I can't remember... Oh God, yeah. There were quite a few, come to think about it. Once about fifteen years ago, the girl that works for me now was tending bar, and a fight broke out. I had to go to court every Saturday, taking her to court. One time my horn got ripped off.... I never got beat for the bread, though. Either there was no money or we got paid. My size, who's gonna try to beat me for some bread? I've been bigger than this, you know, I've been a bigger man than I am now.

With Bruce I can't think of one bad gig. Early, early on we played one at Villanova, and there were seventeen people in the audience. Seventeen people, and that included our crew. And we played one of the best shows we ever played. We played the whole show, just like we always did it. Everybody had a front row seat. I was in Wisconsin or some place last year, and this lady came up to me, she's a nurse or a doctor now, and says, "Do you remember Villanova? Well, I was one of the seventeen."

MUSICIAN: *Now that you're playing for more than seventeen people, do you have to work things out more?*

CLEMONS: We never work things out. Everything you see on stage is spontaneous. I look at a video of a show and see shit that I do and say, "Man, if I tried that now I'd never get up. I'd be in a wheelchair." The energy that happens out there just takes over, and you just relax and let it go, go with the flow. Everybody is in tune with The Boss, he's the guy and you watch him, and he's a fantastic leader of men. He has the respect of everybody out there. And everyone loves him so much, it all just... comes together. That's the magic of playing in the E Street Band.

MUSICIAN: *Is the band on vacation now?*

CLEMONS: Yeah, Bruce is writing, or hanging out, or whatever he's doing.

MUSICIAN: *And you just started your own band, CC & the Red Bank Rockers?*

CLEMONS: Yeah. We just finished a world tour with Bruce, we played all the biggest places in the world, and I'm getting off, I think, a little more than when I did that. Because when you play these big places you can't touch everybody. The guys in the back row might be shooting crap, there might be a fight back there or something, you don't know. But in a small club, you're touching everybody in that place. Everybody becomes a part of it, it's like everybody's onstage. If everybody's into it, they're putting something back. You need this time to recharge yourself, to get back in touch with reality.

See, playing with Bruce is fantastic, it's great, but it kind of stifles my own creativity. I have to be out on my own a little bit, which is going to help me to be even better when I go back with the E Street Band, 'cause I'm getting more confidence in myself as a musician, as a singer, as a writer.

MUSICIAN: *Do you find that you play less sax in the show than you used to?*

CLEMONS: There was a point, around the third album, where there was less sax, but these were the songs he was writing. You can't just put a saxophone in just because you have a saxophone in the band. Doesn't bother me, I have as much fun playing tambourine as I do playing saxophone, as long as I'm involved and doing something. People say, "How do you feel playing less sax?" Oh, am I playing less saxophone? I really hadn't stopped to notice. It doesn't feel any different.

MUSICIAN: *How did you get the Red Bank Rockers together? Have you worked with all these guys before?*

CLEMONS: Never in my life. We're just good friends. I knew Jack Scarangella, the drummer in the band, through another friend. Never heard him play until we played onstage. But I knew he was the drummer I wanted because we talked, we used to have these raps, and I could feel his vibe. It's just one of those things, everybody who tried out for the band is still in the band. I called certain people that I knew, who I had heard play, who were available. The nucleus of the band is from the Shaboo All-Stars. Jack, Jeff Levine the keyboard player, Harvey Brooks on bass, and Colin Tilton, one of the horn players. The singer, J.T. Bowen, I met in Christfield, Maryland when I was in college. That's how far we go back together. I've always thought he had a tremendous voice. Last week we added a new member, David Landau on guitar.

MUSICIAN: *So you have two guitar players now?*

CLEMONS: Hey, we're having fun, we spare no expense. No expense spared when you're talking about reality. Everybody in the band is fantastic people, and it's been amazing to see it come together like this, for people who've been around this business for so long and have done so many things to come back and play what we like to play. We rehearse here at the club (Big Man's West in Red Bank) and we get into it so good, I wish somebody was here to see it, because it's so much fun.

MUSICIAN: *The show I saw at Trax reminded me of the* King Curtis Live At the Fillmore East *album.*

CLEMONS: Oh, you were there? That was our first show. It's been getting steadily tighter since then.

MUSICIAN: *Are you going to stick pretty much with the Stax/Atlantic 60s soul sound?*

CLEMONS: I'll tell you one thing: before I did this I heard "Try A Little Tenderness," one of the songs I love, done *disco*. It was like blasphemy, man, and I said, "We're gonna do every song I ever loved." That's what I'm doing in this band. Every song that I ever really dug, whether it's R&B or rock 'n' roll, it's music. That's something we were talking about as a band. Where does it end, where does it start, where does R&B stop and rock 'n' roll take over? It's more of a feeling inside you. If it makes you feel good, I don't care what it is, we're gonna play it. Our country has labeled everything, but some things you just can't label. You can't label emotions. Music is a universal language, you can't label it. I guess to market stuff you have to label it. You know, "If we label it and keep this over here and that over there, we know which market is doing what, we can see how much money this is making." But that's bullshit.

That's why it's so much fun playing in this band. You can call it what you want. Did you have fun? Yes. That's all we're here for. Like one of Bruce's sayings, "We're not here for business, we're just here for fun." We call this tour we're on the No Product Tour, and it's great not to have a product. Anybody who wants to come to the show, they have to buy a ticket. The record industry, the press, they can buy a ticket and come like anybody else. It's just to say that we can have rock 'n' roll without big business being hooked up to it. All we have to do is get to the place, go in, play, have a great time, turn everybody on, turn ourselves on, get off, come home, and "Wow, man, that was great!"

I think that's what's necessary nowadays. We need some reality. There's something to be said for rock 'n' roll, it has its

place in our society. We're in trouble, the country's in trouble. This is where rock 'n' roll began.

I should call this the People's Band, 'cause we're playing music for the people. A girl walked up to me in Tramps the other night and said, "When you played 'Try A Little Tenderness,' I cried." That was all I needed to hear, to know that you can stir that up in somebody, that somebody still cares about the songs you grew up on.

We're giving people a good feeling. It's unsynthesized, unhomogenized, unpasteurized, it's straight out the tit. Just pure natural, just guys up there sweating and singing. The real thing. I get a buzz just thinking about it. My juices start flowing and I start talking like crazy, because I believe in it so much. It's real fun.

MUSICIAN: *It's fun to watch. How long will the band work?*

CLEMONS: We're gonna work as long as we can and take it as far as we can. Right now we're going to Hartford, Boston, Philly and Washington, D.C., and we're gonna play here every Sunday night. I'm going to put a sign out front, "Home of the Red Bank Rockers." I'm not saying we're not going to do an album, but it's not even a gleam in my eye yet. It's mostly just to get together and play. And mostly, when people get together and play for a while, an album comes out of it. But that's not our main objective. We're not trying to sell nothing to no record company. And it's crazy, 'cause there's a serious buzz going on. It's great, I love it. We're doing more original stuff, though. We did three originals the other day, and we're working on some more stuff, 'cause there are a few writers in this area. I don't write that much. I wrote my first song, and when you write a song, it's like having a baby. You don't know if it's ugly or it's pretty, and you're afraid to put it out there, because somebody might go, "Oh, what an ugly baby." You gotta be real sure, so I kind of put it out there at rehearsal the other day and the guys said, "Hey, it's not bad," so we're going to work that up in our show, and I've got some other little ideas. I'm getting my confidence.

We're giving a good feeling. It's unsynthesized, unhomogenized, unpasteurized. Just pure natural, just guys up there sweating and singing. The real thing.

MUSICIAN: *Who were some of the people who influenced you?*

CLEMONS: Syl Austin, I kind of listened to him. But then King Curtis came around, he was the greatest, and he was my biggest influence. I never saw King Curtis live, never got a chance to talk to the guy, but I feel a kinship, I feel very close to him. As I grew older I began to enjoy Boots Randolph. A musician that really influenced my life was Frank Sinatra. The guy has that thing that every musician should strive for, breath control. He's in total control of every note that comes out of his mouth. Tommy Dorsey, I think, influenced him as far as breath control and the quality of the tone.

MUSICIAN: *Do you listen to jazz players much?*

CLEMONS: No, not that much. I'm into more form, structure, I need a "pedestrian" beat. People talk about the Bird, how he was the greatest, well, to me, he wasn't the greatest. Am I supposed to say Bird was the greatest because I'm a musician and I play saxophone? No, hell no, I'll say what I feel and to me King Curtis was the greatest. The guy made the saxophone sound like a saxophone. I didn't dig Coltrane and those guys that much, either. Maybe I wasn't exposed to it enough in my younger years, I don't know. I'm not saying they're not great, but my ear isn't cultivated to that point. I'm a country boy, I like things nice, clean and simple.

MUSICIAN: *I'm sure all the horn players reading this want to know how you get that sound. It's unbelievable.*

CLEMONS: Well, it's animal. It's an animal that lives inside of you that you can't be afraid to unleash. Everybody's got it, but a lot of people are afraid to let it go, because they can't control it.

I don't practice a lot of scales. I practice circular breathing, which builds up your diaphragm and your embouchure. Circular breathing, keeping a note right there on that same pitch for 10 or 15 minutes. You do that three or four times a week and you'll create something. You'll see that animal come out. It's your approach to your instrument, you mastering the instrument instead of the instrument mastering you. I look at the saxophone as an extension of myself. It's a part of me, and we've kind of developed each other as we went along.

MUSICIAN: *Did you have to look around for different mouthpieces and reeds?*

CLEMONS: Yeah. I fluctuate between three or four different mouthpieces all the time. I still haven't gotten that one mouthpiece. For the last couple of years I've basically stuck with a Berg Larsen 130/0. It's a very open lay, it takes a real dedicated person to get into it. You gotta blow it hard, you gotta be an animal, you gotta be on it. You get a little soft lay, you cannot get that sound out of it, it's impossible. With a little mouthpiece, a little sound comes out. Sweet, you know? The saxophone can be a sweet instrument, it can be a hard instrument, it can be anything you want it to be, it's just technique. Playing rock 'n' roll, I need that big thing. The rock 'n' roll saxophone is a hard thing, it's in competition with all those watts back there on guitars, so you gotta be out there, you gotta be kind of nuts.

MUSICIAN: *What kind of reed do you use?*

CLEMONS: I use LaVoz basically, LaVoz medium or medium-hard. Nothing too soft, because I have a tendency to overblow. I get so excited when I play, especially with Bruce, onstage with him, or even with my band now, I get this extra.... Adrenalin is the best drug in the world. There's something about adrenalin, so I have to use a hard reed to kind of keep me in line.

MUSICIAN: *What impresses me the most about your playing is that you blow so hard without going totally into overtones and losing...*

CLEMONS: ...the saxophone. The saxophone is made to play within a certain range, and I stay within that certain range. I like the saxophone as a saxophone, within that range of the horn. Fill the entire horn up. Because it's a beautiful horn when it's played.

MUSICIAN: *What kind of bands do you book in your club?*

CLEMONS: We book basically original bands. We don't book any cover bands, and that's why I'm starving to death. But I wanted to set this thing up so that a young band can come in here, they can send out their feelers, and let people come and see them in the best surroundings and the best setting they can be seen in. Rock 'n' roll gave to me, and I want to give back to rock 'n' roll. I have the greatest stage in New Jersey, the greatest light system, the best sound system. It's a musician's stage, it's air-conditioned. I remember all the places I used to play, with drunks bumping into my horn.... I remember Max telling me a story about one place he played, a 300-pound go-go dancer jumped up on the stage, fell into his bass drum and crushed it. I didn't want that kind of thing. New bands need somewhere to go. It's good for them, it's encouraging for them to have somewhere they can be heard and seen. I get letters from young musicians saying how much it means to them to have somewhere to play. Sometimes I go home and I have a couple of bills or somebody's hounding me about some bullshit, and I just read one of those letters or reflect on those letters. That's where my success lies.

I eat every day, I have a nice house, I have a beautiful wife, I just got married in October. I have my own band, my own place to rehearse, my own place to play. What more could a man ask for? I don't have a fine big car or anything, but I enjoy where I am in my life. I guess that's as successful as you can be. To enjoy your life and to help somebody else find a way to enjoy his life. M

JONATHAN POSTAL

Best known for his artful piano accompaniments to Dolphy, Mingus, Kirk and other greats, Jaki Byard still leaps gracefully and unpredictably from free jazz exploration to loving excursions into bop and stride.

By Joseph Blum

JAKI BYARD

If you want to hear the entire history of jazz, from ragtime, stride, swing and bop on into the most contemporary and atonal experiments, just go hear composer/pianist Jaki Byard, runs the oft-observed maxim. Far from a didactic display of museum curatorship, Byard's playing is vital, lively and startling. Just when we begin to lay back, confident of his next move, he'll turn us around with the unexpected, an abrupt dive from romantic mellow harmonies to dissonant attack or hard pulsation swing. Resolutions melt away, songs are transformed in their development; it's just not finished until the last note. Jaki Byard is like a child at play in an old, unused mansion, opening dusty doors, uncovering lovely pieces of furniture under yellowed sheets. His use of the past is good-natured and fluid, punctuated by his contagious elflike grin and marked by a miraculous continuity that flows from his own well-integrated personality; Byard doesn't just *use* the past, he *is* the past... and the present, and, fortunately, the future.

The jazz audience hasn't always had such a respectful and reverent attitude toward Byard's freewheeling use of tradition. When Byard inserted stride episodes into Charlie Mingus' compositions in the 60s, laughter was a commonplace response (much to Mingus and Byard's consternation). Critics took his work with Eric Dolphy, Booker Ervin, Maynard Ferguson, Don Ellis, Sam Rivers and Roland Kirk more seriously, however, and hailed him for steering a course through the wandering rocks of the mainstream and the avant-garde. Byard's use of polytonal, polychordal, atonal and modal lexicons antedated the breakthroughs of Tyner, Hancock and Corea, yet his refusal to discard old ideas simply because new ones were discovered made him Duke Ellington's choice to take over on piano during the bandleader's last illness.

If Byard had stopped growing and codified his eclecticism around a more limited style that could be pigeonholed and marketed, he probably would be better known. Jaki, however, won't stay avant-garde enough to become genre ("no-school") and thus languishes with only the praise of his peers and his students, not with the notoriety and financial reward he so richly deserves. Possibly "family man" Byard's tendency throughout his career to avoid touring and keep his role as husband and father a strong one may have cost him fame and fortune, as did his residence in the backwater town of Boston. But Jaki Byard has recently moved to New York and has begun a new phase of his forty-year career that promises to be as exciting as any before it.

Jaki can currently be found working with his trio at the Angry Squire and the Star and Garter. A typical set might consist of a medley of Monk tunes, a couple of Tin Pan Alley ballads, something from Miles or Mingus, maybe a bop standard, and often as not a selection from the top forty. Byard stays with his audience, but doesn't condescend. He'll take the most apparently banal hit song and rework it totally, taking it apart piece by piece and honing each of these pieces into new form before reassembling. People respond, they know what he's doing and are fascinated. Jaki can run through the score of *Porgy And Bess* the way others would brush their teeth in the morning. At points where the harmonies shifted he might pause and repeat the phrase, like, "Gee, look at this!" The audience is with him because Jaki himself is fascinated by the materials he's working with—you can't help but travel along. His intent look is broken by a grin each time he discovers something.

Byard doesn't condescend to his musicians either. He is

able to pursue Tatumesque passages for choruses at a time without crowding anyone off the stand. The keyboard may be crowded with fingers but we don't get stuck with the noise; the crowd lightens, the trio begins to walk, a few chimes sound and we are moving from soliloquy to conversation. When Byard was using Major Holley on bass he gave Major all sorts of room to parade and two-step; he was able to showcase Holley, a more limited musician by comparison, and still present his own ideas with full scope. He could use Major's drive and humor to advantage, rather than be restricted by Major's limitations. Jaki likes people and he won't pander them. He wants them to join him in what's happening, to share in the experience; he prefers not to bitch. "When I come onto the gig, I sort of get into a shell where I'm thinking just about the music. What makes it hard is when people are coming to socialize rather than listen, then there's all that noise and I can't get into my shell. It doesn't usually happen, just a few places."

As for his use of occasionally bizarre material, "I fix it up for myself, make it a vehicle for improvisation. I add what I think should go to it, mess it up, you know. Right now I'm working on an arrangement of Willie Nelson's "Whiskey River" for a North Dakota junior college band. Last year I wrote up Lawrence Welk's theme for the same band. I'm gonna take the Willie Nelson thing and put it in my repertoire. It's country and western, but it's still jazz."

Jaki Byard was born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1922. "Everyone in the family played something. I started lessons when I was four years old, classical music. The European tradition stayed somewhere in the back of my mind, I didn't use it immediately. But a trend developed in the 30s of transcribing concert music into popular tunes. You know, the Romantics, the Impressionists, Rachmaninoff, Debussy... I started reharmonizing things such as Chopin's Waltz in C# minor, which I had learned when I was seven. Jimmy Lunceford used to play a Chopin prelude, I transcribed that. It was all the same music.

> They need us. Jazz, after all, is very important to the system, to selling music. The art of improvisation is vital to the music industry, it can't be pushed aside. Rock is all involved with improvisation.

"I didn't know my future early. It's not like I had a sense of mission, I was just playing to make a living for myself. I never thought I would go this far. When I was young, I wasn't even paranoid about my situation as a black man—I just followed what was happening. In retrospect it could be said that what happened to me, happened to all of us, we wound up staying with a certain music because it was part of the way things were, economic conditions, the social scheme. In the 40s I got more aware of Stravinsky, Henry Cowell, the avant-garde. But it would've been hard for me to get into the tight circle of avant-garde 'composed music' performers; they were starving anyway."

As a teenager in the 30s Jaki played around the local clubs that featured "jazz, dance music and almost always a belly dancer. The cats would jam, you know, and I got to play with Joe Venuti and a few other notables, but the first big-time cat I hung out with was Kenny Clarke. This was in the army during the war years; we were stateside with the army band, and I got to writing charts for them with George Duvivier. I also got to meet John Lewis, Ray Charles, and I caught Cannonball Adderley down in Tallahassee, Florida when he was fourteen years old. Nat Adderley must have been ten.

"Those years I'd be listening to Basie on piano, Fats Waller, and more than anything, Nat King Cole. His trio was the thing to hear. He had a bass and guitar, no drums. Now I don't think the rhythm sections caught up to what the improvisers were doing until the 40s, when the drums began to play polyrhythmically. Before then they were just keeping time. I'm assuming this is why King Cole didn't have any drummer, because the drums might have kept him behind, kept him from doing what he wanted to do. He didn't have a drummer but rhythmically it was there; maybe if he had a drummer from *this* era it would've fit into what he was doing. I played drums myself at the time and I ran into trouble—I was too busy.

"I remember someone told me about Dizzy Gillespie. I thought he was Jewish. At first he was playing too many notes for me. He was playing with Cab Calloway then, and was the first bebopper I ever heard. The bebop era is something I refer to as the era of revelation in improvisation. The continuity wasn't lost; that goes back to Louis Armstrong. I just kept playing, listening to Bunny Berrigan, Jimmy Lunceford, Basie, Duke, Lady Day. Bud Powell was the piano player you'd listen to (then with Cootie Williams) and compare to Fatha Hines—they talk too much about the years he was sick, you really should hear his earlier stuff. The conception of the jazz performer as an artist didn't arrive until the 50s, but be that as it may, by the age of 21 or so, I'd gotten objective about my playing. There were certain things I wanted. That's the revelation part. People were getting a lot more academic, more thorough, more serious. Questions developed like, 'Why is there a seventh chord, why is there an augmented eleventh?' Also an appreciation began to develop of earlier music, going back, let's say, to the sixteenth century. Up to this point I had been all wrapped up in jamming, so enthused over the fact that I could play. But the curiosity and searching which started here just keeps going on; it's an endless obligation for study—music itself.

"After the war, I kept around Boston, went back to school, played music to survive, also did some other work. But I never questioned music as my life. I worked with Ray Perry (violin) and Gator Rivers (bass), we had a trio together, Ray introduced me to the hipper things that were going on at the time. He doubled on alto, and got me into doubling. Then there was a quintet with Sam Rivers and an excellent trumpet player named Joe Gordon, a Boston cat. We played the earliest bebop in town, this was in the 40s. Then in 1949 I went on the road with Earl Bostic for a couple of years. I started playing solo in 1955. Later on they called me a legend! But all over the world there are people doing their own thing....

"I did my first recording with Ray Perry in the late 40s, some with Earl Bostic, then with Charlie Mariano in the early 50s. We had a jazz workshop up in Boston, Charlie was there, then Herb Pomeroy. Mingus was working across the street at Storyville, that's how I first met him. Then there was a place called the High Hat, which would feature Basie, Charlie Parker, Woody Herman. I wound up playing 'intermission piano,' which gave me a unique opportunity to get myself together. Playing solo I could concentrate on the piano itself, explore, work out different tunes, different approaches. I was free to use two-handed techniques, to stride and to experiment. Aside from Tatum, there wasn't much solo piano in those days. After a while, people started coming in to hear *me*.

"When I finally left Boston in 1959, I went on the road with Maynard Ferguson. Playing with him I learned a lot about big bands, particularly what I wanted to do with a big band. We did a concert one night, Eric Dolphy was there, and we hooked up together, started jamming. Two albums came out of that, *Outward Bound* and *Far Cry*. Dolphy recommended me to Prestige Records, for whom I recorded some solo things. Eric and I would talk a lot about music, the search for new ideas, how to treat chords, for example, in the manner of Stravinsky or Bartok. But Maynard kept calling me back on the road, and Eric went to Europe.... Don Ellis and Paul Bley were also influences on moving into new forms, experimenting, but playing in such a way that people could understand it.

"I met Booker Ervin before I left Boston, we both wound up in New York, where we recorded *Space Book* and *Freedom Book* (now a Prestige double album, *The Freedom Sessions*). There was lots of good, controlled energy in those records,

although they weren't of any commercial value. But we were glad to get those dates, they paid scale! Gigs didn't pay much in those days, even with Mingus. Now Roland Kirk and Mingus were both interested in traditional piano styles; Dolphy and Booker would laugh—they thought it was interesting but it wasn't the direction. I met Roland Kirk in Boston, we'd jam together, he'd be playing all those different instruments—we used to call him 'Spitfire.' A lot of these people have passed on. If they were alive today, I wonder where the music business would be at by now. That's what I think about. Unless I'm alone to get sulky, then sometimes I choke up. Fortunately I'm usually running and dodging and not alone all that much. I finally gave up trying to have a group, so many people had died.

"Anyway, Mingus loved stride, so I could really groove on that. He had a knack for leadership, he got what he wanted. Also a beautiful lyricism, closely related to bebop, but refined, more sustained. I took some of the background things from Mingus and made them into my own tunes. This group traveled a lot, which was a break. Later I booked my own tours to Europe, Japan, Australia, until the novelty wore off. I still go periodically, but continual traveling is very taxing on the health, as rewarding as it is to be surrounded by those enthusiastic foreign crowds. I've had a pretty healthy life, musically and socially, and met a lot of good people. A few characters of course, but nothing real bad. I don't need a psychiatrist for example, I can talk to you. The only thing I regret, seriously, is losing nine acres of land I bought when I was with Earl Bostic. I messed up on my tax payments. I was gonna start a music colony, something like Tanglewood...."

In 1962, Byard joined Jerome Richardson, Dick Hafer and Charlie Mariano as a member of one of Mingus' best bands; *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady*, one of the two Impulse albums of this group, is considered one of Mingus' best. Jaki also arranged and played on Mingus' 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival concert, including the extended composition, "Meditations On Integration" (released on Mingus' own label as *Mingus At Monterey*). But despite these epic contributions, Jaki found his working situation in the mid-60s had a lot to be desired; he held down a long gig at a burlesque joint to feed his family. At that point, he decided to return to teaching.

"I didn't see the burlesque job as the bottom," Jaki reflected. "That's what musicians are doing all the time, working different musical situations, earning their bread. I wrote the charts, learned some new tunes. It was a gig! No, I didn't see it as the bottom at the time, but...." Bottom or not, Jaki got out. He secured a teaching job at the New England Conservatory of Music at a time when many better-known jazz musicians were looking at teaching as a means toward respectability and financial security—a way out of the rat race. After years of pioneering the jazz frontier with Charles Mingus, and consolidating virtually every piano style from Fats Waller to Cecil Taylor, Byard went "to pursue in my own ways some obligatory missionary work in the jazz community." He liked it, and stayed on for thirteen years, and, as happens with jazz faculty, achieved a large measure of success with the student body and acquired a large measure of heartache from the administration.

"Thirteen years and they still wouldn't give me a sabbatical. I just didn't go back this term. It's too much. Don't get me wrong, there are things happening in the colleges. If you allow yourself to get paranoid it can be pretty bad, because there is opposition. But they need us. Jazz after all is very important to the system, to selling music. The art of improvisation is vital to the music industry, it can't be pushed aside. Today's popular music—rock—is all involved with improvisation. They need us, and I don't intend to stay preoccupied with the problems, I taught there, that's all. It would be demeaning for me to do any name-calling just to heal a wounded ego. I'm too far above that. My ego gets wounded regularly." Instead of commuting to Boston, Jaki now has his New England Conservatory 17-piece big band, the Apollo Stompers, replanted in New

continued on page 80

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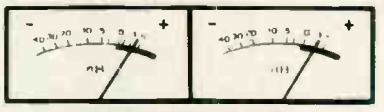

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RECORD REVIEWS

Janis Joplin
Farewell Song (Columbia)

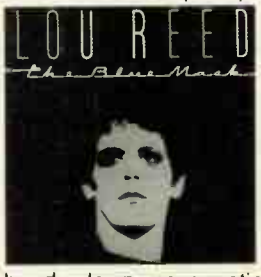
Big Brother & the Holding Company were forerunners of punk; technically, they couldn't really play their instruments. Not that it mattered to Janis Joplin when she found them jamming in the basement of a Haight-Ashbury rooming house in 1966. Their amplified folk-blues and ballads sounded tentative at first in the Avalon and Fillmore ballrooms, but the following year the bohemian quartet and the singer who patterned herself after Bessie Smith won international acclaim at the Monterey Pop Festival. It was the beginning of the end. By the time the incendiary *Cheap Thrills* album was released in the summer of 1968, group infighting had taken its toll and Janis cut loose six months later.

In his liner notes to this collection of nine previously unreleased tracks from the Columbia vaults, Country Joe McDonald recalls how Janis would ask, "Do you ever think I'll be a good singer like Otis Redding or Tina Turner?" Obviously she recognized that Big Brother was restricting her professional growth, and her decision to leave certainly facilitated her musical/cultural ascent. But it was not without consequence: neither the Full Tilt nor Kozmic Blues bands ever managed to sustain the intensity that made Big Brother more than just her backup band.

Her attempt to redefine her post-Big Brother sound is evidenced on the album's most valuable tracks, "Tell Mama" and "One Night Stand," recorded in the last seven months of her life. The former, a paen to the Big O, finds Joplin ravishing the crowd at the Canadian Festival Express in Toronto, driving Full Tilt with the force that Otis used to power the MGs on "Respect." "If you're a woman I can only assume that you know what you're looking for," she says in a telling, if not apocryphal, aside. My favorite song, "One Night Stand," recorded in Los Angeles with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, captures what McDonald calls "the paranoia and confusion of life as a star with no home for real." Tough, defiant, resigned, Janis knew there was no compromise: "Don't you know that you're nothing more than a one night stand/Tomorrow I'll be on my way, you can catch me if you can/Honey take me by the hand and play that game again." Butterfield's harmonica weeps eerie blues. The brass blows chilly smoke. Todd Rundgren produced.

The rest of the album is equally compelling, musically and historically. "Misery 'N" and "Catch Me Daddy," produced by John Simon around the time of the *Cheap Thrills* sessions, are great Joplin vocals. Her reading of Eddie Floyd's "Raise Your Hand" for a German television audience is so good that one understands why guitar, sax and drum parts were overdubbed to salvage the vocal. Finally, there is "Farewell Song," recorded live at Winterland in April 1968, the Sam Andrews song that foreshadowed Big Brother's demise. Soft and low-keyed, Janis sings: "You're gonna have to pay your dues and sometimes you gotta lose/But that's the way you're gonna learn to love deeply." — *Leo Sacks*

Lou Reed
The Blue Mask (RCA)



In a word: good. In two words: very good. If this had been released a month ago, it would have been the best album of 1981 hands down, no questions asked, and we could all have stopped embarrassing ourselves with our talk about the Police, the Stones, U2 and whatever. As it is, it's the best album of 1982. It's the record I'd given up all hope of Lou Reed ever making: musically, emotionally and spiritually, *The Blue Mask* is the logical successor to the first three Velvet Underground albums, crackling with the energy of the first, the off-hand "fuck you, it's supposed to sound like this" chaos of the second, and the one-to-one unguarded intimacy of the third.

For one thing, it's the first time in I don't know how many years that Reed has trusted his own playing enough to really feature it, to base an entire album around his particular rhythm and phrasing and let his guitar dominate the sound. As integral as his playing was to the Velvets, Reed more often than not shied away from really playing on his solo albums, trusting instead in the less inspired but more "professional" studio musicians, hacks and hired hands that have dominated his records (to the point where almost all the music on his last two albums was written by others). Like Van Morrison and Neil Young, he's fought hard to retain his amateur status as a musician, to stay singular and pure and strange, playing in a quirky off-rhythm that has always defined his songs and his sense as much as the conversational presumption of his voice. Good as he is as a lyricist (and at his best he's awesome), he's an even stronger melodist, making an art of his limitations; no one does more with three chords (Dylan uses four). How good and right this album is is proof of how crucial his own playing is to his sound.

On the third Velvets' album (my favorite—the one with "What Goes On" and "Pale Blue Eyes" and "Beginning To See The Light"), there were wrong notes and incredibly sloppy solos (check "Pale Blue Eyes"), but there's not a FALSE note to be found anywhere. The same can be said of *The Blue Mask*...it fairly bursts with a sense of urgency and release and long-awaited homecoming. There've been wonderful and real moments on other Reed albums (on *Street Hassle* and *Coney Island Baby* and *Berlin* and *Transformer*), but nothing to match this in its scope and power; it's as if Reed had taken the parable of the talents to heart and was once again using *everything he knows*.

With all of the instruments recorded live in the studio (except one cut on which Reed, God bless him, overdubbed a solo), *The Blue Mask* sports a stripped down band of Fernando Saunders on bass, Doane Perry on drums and Lou Reed and Bob Quine (best known for his work with Richard Hell and Jody Harris) on guitars. Quine is not only a brilliant

guitarist, he's a brilliantly *supportive* guitarist and listener, interacting with Reed to make their two guitars sound like outgrowths of each other, pushing Reed to confront his own strengths and giving him the room and the support and the dynamics to play as well as he's ever played. If the late poet Delmore Schwartz, Reed's mentor and friend, is at the spiritual center of the record, Quine is clearly at the musical center.

Hearing Reed's songs is still like walking into the middle of late-night conversations or tapping in unexpectedly on a stranger's phone call: there is always a sense of hearing a little too much but not quite knowing the context; and, having heard what you've heard, you're somehow implicated, drawn into a circle that is still in the process of closing.

In "My House," Reed discovers, through use of a Ouija board, that the spirit of Delmore Schwartz is living in the house and, with the generosity that comes from having extra space, gives over a room to his departed friend. The title cut, "The Blue Mask," is a terrifying, passionate account of submission, of refusing to act on your own behalf ("They tied his hands behind his back to teach him how to swim"), told through a cacophony of near white-noise. It's the album's most powerful song, all the more so for coming at a time when Reed is clearly acting on his own behalf and using all his strength. After years of fitfulness and sleepwalking, Lou Reed has started to dream again. And, as Delmore Schwartz told us years ago, in dreams begin responsibilities. — *Brian Cullman*

Nick Lowe

Nick The Nife (Columbia)

Too much studio manipulation to compensate for too little solid material makes Nick a dull knife. A surprising letdown given the fact that *Nick The Nife* ostensibly provides a *carte blanche* format for Lowe, now unfettered by Dave Edmunds' rock-stolid traditionalism, and a variety of sympathetic heavies like the irrepressible Carlene Carter, former Rockpilers Terry Williams and Billy Bremmer and Paul Carrack (ex-Ace, Squeeze) to break new ground in the territory of smart rock rethink.

"Burning," the opener on side one, sets up the sonic profile for the LP: lots of big, tough acoustic rhythm guitar, a sturdy bass-drum sound and a busy, multi-layered mix drenched in studio echo and/or hard reverb. Here and elsewhere, Lowe uses the radical positioning of different vocal parts (in this case, a lead vocal distanced by echo and a

continued on next page

Techno-Rock

By J.D. Considine

High tech rock—what a joke! While advances in digital and synthesizer hardware have dramatically expanded the horizons of possible sound, most of the current generation of synthesizer bands seem to treat their instruments as slightly more advanced versions of the sort of super-automated console organs found in shopping malls across the country. (You know, the type advertised with claims like, "Play the entire works of Buxtehude with one hand! So simple, even your dog can do it!")

After spending the better part of a week scrutinizing recent efforts by Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Depeche Mode, Soft Cell and others, it became increasingly obvious that technology was not the answer, particularly for people who have trouble understanding the question in the first place. By and large, the only thing these bands have managed to do has been to camouflage the banality of their compositions by littering the arrangements with noises unobtainable through standard instrumentation. Personal favorites include a percussion effect that I call "the heartbeat of destiny;" another that resembles the sound of a ten-pound maul striking a sheet of aluminum; a variation on high-hats that recalls the hiss of a locomotive starting up; and a cheerful percolating device that invariably reminds me of the Maxwell House commercials.

Still, that's not really enough to sustain a whole song, much less several albums, and so I was left with the various affectations and musical inadequacies of each group. It was in these that the distance between this music and rock 'n' roll became apparent.

Take Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark. Where last year's *OMD* at least managed the poppish banality of dance-floor hit "Enola Gay," the band's latest effort teeters between tedious displays of acute melancholy and drearily industrial sound effects—exactly the sort of music you'd expect from an album called *Architecture & Morality*.

For all its sonic pretension, the music OMD peddles is remarkably amateurish. At the most, there are three or four chords per song, all wearing the same diatonic straightjacket and three-finger voicings. Yet the amount of programming that went into dressing up these drab melodies was remarkably extensive, something that puzzled me until I realized that for Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, the machines didn't exist to play the songs; the songs existed to show off the machines.

Accepting that, you could probably concoct some sort of quasi-Bauhausian defense, such as the music *should* be kept simple in order to show off the machine because it is the machine that is the glittering flower of progress, but even that can't account for failures like "Souvenir," where the big trick is a vocal effect that 10cc came up with five years ago in their hit, "I'm Not In Love."

While OMD wrestle the morality of mechanisms, Depeche Mode, Soft Cell and a Flock of Seagulls devote themselves to somewhat less spiritual pursuits: sex and dancing.

For Depeche Mode, the two are roughly the same—detached, ritualized and devoid of any emotional depth. The band's lock-step dance beat, as represented on the album *Speak & Spell*, is so insistent and contrived that I began to wonder if this wasn't what Heaven 17 meant with the single, "(We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang." Yet for all its shallowness, the fact that "New Life" is a good imitation of bad Brian Eno means the album will probably reel in more suckers than it deserves.

Better they should get their jollies with Soft Cell's *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*. This celebration of sleaze (sample titles include "Sex Dwarf," "Seedy Films" and the hit, "Tainted Love") may sound like some bizarre mutation of Suicide and Roxy Music, but it's the only album in the bunch that sounds like the product of flesh and blood. I won't argue that Soft Cell's sex-object mentality is any more humanizing than the lofty geometry of OMD—because it's not. Let's just say it comes closer to approximating listenable entertainment.

And there's plenty more to come. A Flock of Seagulls, Liverpool's answer to Bill Nelson's Red Noise, already has a drearily predictable EP called *Modern Love Is Automatic/Telecommunication*; Manchester's Human League will finally see U.S. release sometime in late February through A&M. Still waiting in the wings are John Foxx (who sounds like Gary Numan's dumber brother), Japan (singer David Sylvain looks like Debbie Harry's prettier brother) and Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft (sample title: "Der Mussolini").

As Gil Scott-Heron put it, "Why wait till 1984? Panic now, and avoid the rush!"

close-miked vocal chorus part) for dramatic impact. Unfortunately, the ordinary material makes this kind of device stand out all the more as mere recording gimmickry.

The wistful reprise of "Heart" (originally released on Rockpile's *Seconds Of Pleasure*) flirts with dub reggae, and the brilliant *montage* of counter-rhythms via echo and delaying tactics both salvages this version and shows how fundamentally sharp Lowe can be when he's not too busy being gratuitous.

Conversely, the obvious lift of the principal guitar figure from Creedence's "Green River" coupled with a diffused cultural putdown lyric robs "Stick It Where The Sun Don't Shine" of much of the visceral energy promised by the song's title. In fact, the lyrics throughout *Nick The Nife* seem uncharacteristically heavy-handed: alliteration-choked lines straining awkwardly to rhyme with one another.

One of Nick Lowe's (and Edmunds') major attributes has been the ability to "borrow" certain melodic and rhythmic conventions from classic rock 'n' roll chestnuts and make them resonate once again in the context of strong, well-crafted pop songs redolent with hooks and an unusually precise feeling for "golden oldies" nuance. This time around, the more obvious attempts at assimilation like "BaDoom" and "Raining Raining"—which might be termed a Smokey Robinson medley since the former recalls the Miracles' "Get A Job" and the latter offers up a Robinson-type ballad without the languorous ecstasy of Smokey's voice—simply don't have the compositional "legs" to make it on their own.

All of which is a shame because lighthearted, upbeat ditties like "Lemme Kiss Ya" and "Zulu Kiss" clearly show that Lowe still knows how to have fun while creating atmospheric little ditties which underscore the time-tested aesthetic of rock 'n' roll as designated trivia. Full points for instrumental execution and multi-track wizardry. For the rest: chalk up Lowe's compositional stasis to temporary burnout (compounded by the notable absence of Edmunds' spiritual fervor and motivational guitar) and assume that he'll be back in the groove on the next one. — *J.C. Costa*

Bobby Womack
The Poet (Beverly Glen)

Bobby Womack was a protege of the late Sam Cooke as a member of the Womack Brothers from Cleveland in the late 50s. Renamed the Valentinos, their popular blues and soul sound yielded such hits as "It's All Over Now," an early hit for the Stones, and "Lookin' For A Love," on Cooke's independent Sar label. Their mentor's death in a Los Angeles hotel in 1964 prompted Womack to launch a solo career; he quickly established himself as a prolific songwriter and session player, cutting sides with Janis Joplin, Aretha Franklin, and composing the classic "I'm In Love" for the Midnight Mover, Wilson Pickett, as his bandleader in the late 60s.

Fifteen years and eighteen solo albums later, Womack has emerged with one of his finest records to date, aptly named *The Poet*. Womack is never at a loss for words; a two-year retirement, marked by the loss of three family members and the birth of a son, helped him to clean out and reevaluate his life. The album certainly affirms the most positive aspects of the change.

As a teen, comparisons to Cooke's sweet innocence led him to develop a deeply personal, full-throated delivery, full of melodic, broken phrases. That biting growl predominates the first side, which collects five uptempo, straightforward tunes by Womack and collaborators Patrick Moten, Jim Ford and Cecil Womack. The formula is pure Womack: a little R&B on the bottom, a little rock 'n' roll on the top. "So Many Sides Of You" best represents the singer's ability to fuse rock, reggae, funk and soul into a

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sound that is both intimate and commercial. Along the same lines, "Secrets" is the type of sing-along tune that Cooke used to win a broad popular audience.

Side two captures Womack's reach as a balladeer with the crossover hits, "If You Think You're Lonely Now" and "Where Do We Go From Here." The tracks are deceptively simple, set against chilling background vocals sung by the Waters. The former features a wicked hook, "If you think you're lonely now...Wait until tonight, girl." Don't stroke me, he sings; tell me where it's at. The latter song has Womack soaring and stretching the blues, wrenching notes that make a strong heart weak. Its hard, emotional edge is a fitting close to an album that fimly reestablishes Womack's footing in the pop-soul mainstream. — *Leo Sacks*

Arthur Blythe
Blythe Spirit (Columbia)

In his last three records alto saxophonist Arthur Blythe has assumed a burden of awesome size: by means of subtle anthologizing on each LP he seems to be trying to refer to and call up the whole history of jazz, from rural churches and New Orleans to 70s mysticism and loft experimentation. There have been Latin forays; boogaloo exercises; devotionals to Waller, Ellington, Coltrane (and maybe Hank Crawford); and hints of Ornette Coleman's harmolodics, along with Chico Hamilton West Coastisms. And unifying all of this, giving it its logic and direction, is Blythe's saxophone, which has been favorably compared with Cannonball Adderley, Paul Desmond, Ornette Coleman, Johnny Hodges and, I would add, Eric Dolphy and Earl Bostic. Yet with all of this cross-referencing, no one has suggested that Blythe lacks originality; quite the opposite, his innovativeness surfaces the more because of the daring of his allusions. His playing is simply brilliant, a joy and a revelation.

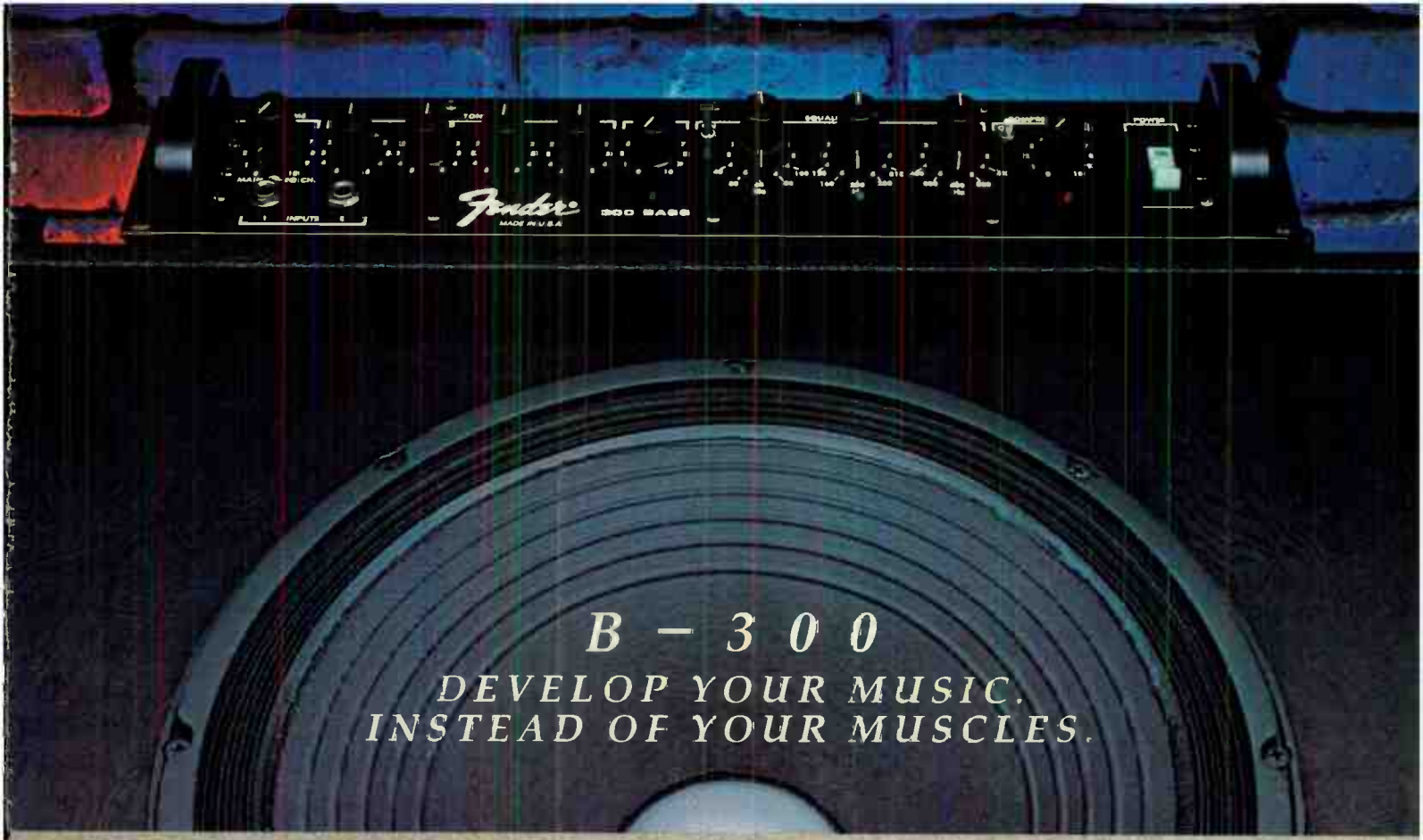
Blythe Spirit, like the other Columbia recordings before it, is a kind of compilation, of groups, of styles, and if this one displays perhaps less variety than the others—possibly being remainders of other sessions—the standard is just as high, and includes one startling departure from previous albums: "Just A Closer Walk With Me" is performed straight (or "straight" in the manner of certain black churches) as a trio with Bob Stewart's tuba and Amina Claudine Myers' organ. It's a sweet and generous performance, the organ played deliberately thin with the tuba filling in the bottom.

"Contemplation," "Faceless Woman," and "Reverence" are played by a quintet similar to the one used on the *Illusions* album (alto, cello, guitar, drums and tuba), except that guitarist Kelvyn Bell brings a much more conventional chordal sense and concern for timbre to the group than did James Blood Ulmer. Yet, despite his more restrained approach, the group sounds surprisingly similar to its previous manifestations. These three compositions flow together across the record, holding the mood of full richness and tight interplay which Blythe encourages.

"Spirits In The Field" is played by tuba, cello and alto, and was previously recorded by a larger group on Blythe's *The Grip* album. Here it is more controlled, shorter, and as a result more pointed and lyrical. Only two tunes seem less interesting to me—"Strike Up The Band" and "Misty"—the first because it is taken at an inhumanly fast tempo, and the second (though done lovingly with a conventional rhythm section) stays close to the original of what seems to me to be a tired melody. — *John Szwed*

Various Artists
Phases Of The Moon/Traditional Chinese Music (CBS Masterworks)

Most of the Chinese music I've heard in this country has sounded vaguely out of tune. I've always assumed it was supposed to be that way. Either the instruments them-



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selves were not constructed to play my idea of correct pitch, or it was a musical and cultural nuance, a subtlety to make up for the extremely simple structure and lack of harmony in the music.

There is nothing out of tune on *Phases Of The Moon*, a CBS Masterworks album compiled from Chinese recordings of traditional folk songs and composed pieces, all using traditional Chinese instruments and virtuoso players.

At first, I was suspicious: is this really "Big Bill Broonzy As Played by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir"? Which is to say, a Westernized record, something China is putting out to try to impress the West with its own cultural heritage, watered-down and bearing no resemblance to the real thing. But the musician in me responded otherwise, and I realized that I was hearing Chinese music the way it was supposed to be heard. It was the difference between my playing Chopin, or letting Horowitz do it.

The record is somewhat of a revelation. After all, what is Chinese music? If I told someone I like American music, a logical question would be "what kind?" American classical? Jazz? Blues? Rock 'n' roll? Anglo-Saxon ballads? Bluegrass? And so on. In the same way, we hear melodies on this compilation that are decidedly "un-Chinese" to ears expecting something else. There are Russian-sounding melodies from Inner Mongolia. Islamic melodies from Xinjiang. Melodies from the Tang Dynasty and pieces written to commemorate the Chinese Revolution in 1949. The instruments used range from the relatively familiar *cheng* (the Japanese *koto* is descended from the same roots) and *sanxian* (a long-necked, three-stringed instrument, played with a plectrum) to instruments we in the West are not familiar with at all, the *sheng*, the *dizi*, the *xiao* and the *banhu*.

But what all the music has in common is something that I usually do not think of when I think of Chinese music, especially music in Communist China: passion. Whether the song is mournful, like "The Moon Mirrored In The Pool," or joyous, as in "Days Of Emancipation," passion and deep feeling and an almost romantic view are the common threads.

Musically, traditional Chinese music is not interested in harmonies. Instead, unison and octave parallel melodies fill out the sound. The timings, unlike the complex ones of neighboring India, are rather simple. The textures, however, are subtle and varied, in many ways much more so than Western classical music. There are synthesizer-like noises. Warbles. Squeaks and wails and harsh walls of sound. The textures are built up into layers of sound filled with drama and intensity. There are stunning, virtuoso performances (like the extended *dizi*—a transverse flute—solo on "Dance Of The Yao People." I've never heard anything like it in terms of pure

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fluidity and joyousness) and traditional Chinese orchestral techniques, like synchronized vibrato, something which composers in the West do not use at all.

All in all, this record was a joy and brings me to my World Peace Plan Number 46. It goes like this: play "Song Of The Herdsman" for U.S. children in elementary school. In high school music appreciation classes, play the elegant and moving *pipa* solo on "Flute And Drum At Sunset." In college, play all of side B. Likewise, in China, play Woody Guthrie in elementary school, Chuck Berry and Mahavishnu in high school, and in college, Charles Ives, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis and Ludwig van Beethoven. Peace will be ours in a generation. I wish someone could tell the United Nations. — *Jason A. Shulman*

Ricky Ford

Tenor For The Times (Muse)

With the ongoing revival of interest in Caribbean and Latin rhythms, it is no wonder that Ricky Ford chose to play three sambas on his newest recording. However, even coupled with his previous interest in Latin rhythms, I don't know if it's proper to call him the tenor for these times. Rollins revitalized his calypsos with a greater concern for rhythmic perpetuation — the kind that'll make him King Carnival and keep the people dancing long after the music has stopped. Henry Threadgill generates an irresistible booty-bump rhythm through short repetitious riffs on his calypso themes. And don't forget the twin darlings of Columbia Records, Arthur Blythe and Paquito D'Rivera, who have, as alto players, reintroduced the hot to romance, making it sensuous rather than sentimental.

Ford eschews all these and takes the music right up the gut, but too hard somehow, too unrelenting without opening up.

The rhythm section is left to bask in the warmth of Ford's tone. Rufus Reid, Albert Dailey and Jimmy Cobb are efficient in a languid patio-lounging way, but they drop no bombs. It is only on "This Is Our Love" that Ford cuts loose, dropping a quote from "Frankie And Johnny" as the notes wrestle their way into a fluid order. But even here Ford's love of shifting meters impedes rather than enhances the emotional and rhythmic development. "Hour Samba" is a Pharoah Sanders-type mantra, but it produces a sedate trance.

"Saxaceous Serenade" is a most fulfilling blowing by Ford that emulates his excellent album, *Flying Colors*, and his collaboration with Sonny Stitt. The rhythm section gets under Ford, acting as a ballast while the tempo shifts from a

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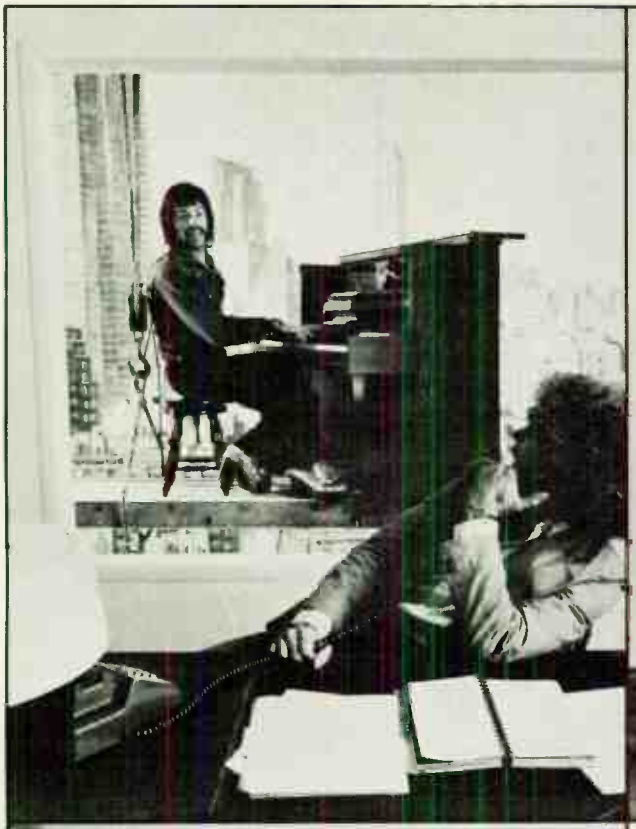

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lope to a sprint and back again. The ballad "Portrait Of Love" is very much an Ellington idea filtered through the Mingus experience. Trumpeter Jack Walrath adds a muted Miles-ish flavor as the foil for Ford's snuggling sound.

Allusions to eras and players gone by are peppered throughout the album, as there are brief paraphrases of Dexter, Rollins, Ammons, Byas, Slam Stewart and Powell by knowledgeable anthologists. The various styles are presented in constantly changing and fresh contexts, which is part of the problem. Ford's compositional techniques overshadow the playing and may well draw on too many sources for the quartet to fully articulate. So what's left is Ford's deep-chest chuckles and furry, bear-hug tone and not enough blowing. It's comforting but just a little too safe. — *Don Palmer*

Various Artists
Amarcord Nino Rota (Hannibal)

L'envoi: go, oddly brilliant record, and find your natural audience if you can, whether among film buffs who fondly recall Rota's bittersweet and circusy scores for the films of Fellini, jazz buffs looking for a good time, listeners with a sense of loss and humor, pervs excited by the cover—it matters not. Just find them, and stay in biz.

Oh, it's obviously the work of a producer obsessed. What a great idea, he thought one day, to find a bunch of jazz and other musicians and make a record of Nino Rota music, thus marrying my fetishes each to each, and if I can't do that, what is owning a record company for? The album opens with a long Jaki Byard solo piano rendering of "Amarcord." Happily, he does not use the theme as a springboard for his usual routines, but walks a fine line Rota himself might have appreciated, between melancholy and its travesty, the public face and its private echo, the cocktail room and jazz. A brief vibraphone interlude by Dave Samuels separates this performance from an 11½-minute suite on the themes of "8½" by the Carla Bley band, which kind of dwarfs (did I say dwarfs, Federico?) everything else on the album not because of its size but because of all the musicians on the album Bley is closest to Rota at heart. It's more or less impossible to know where Rota leaves off and Bley begins. In any event, it's one of her band's best performances in years, Gary Windo plays his tush off in what is probably his swansong with the ensemble, an euphoniumist named Joe Daley has a great time, there are eerie moments from the baritone sax, a fine lead from Mantler, etc., etc.

Side two is less consistent, but since the album's nearly an hour long, why complain? Muhal Richard Abrams orchestrates a Notturno from *La Dolce Vita* and accomplishes a great deal in under three minutes. Sounds like he's been boning up on Gil Evans and renaissance brass. Jay Hoggard, Amina Claudine Myers and Henry Threadgill take brief but memorable solos. The other contribution of note on side two is that of Chris Stein and Debbie Harry of Blondie fame. Accompanied by accordion and a thoughtless drummer, they capture more of Fellini, perhaps, than Rota; specifically his fondness for trash, plastic radios playing on hot beaches, cheap glamor, sweat. It's a nice cut. Also present: David Amram doing his third-world stuff to some nice drumming, Steve Lacy solo saxophoning and banging the gong, and a conventional jazz suite from William Fischer that denatures Rota and serves up some good George Adams and Branford Marsalis. Byard takes the album out with *La Strada* solo. What's surprising is how whole the album sounds, for all its disparity. You've seen the album, now go out and hear that movie. — *V. Gaits*

Charles Mingus
Mingus In Europe, Vols. I & II (Enja)

This German concert was recorded shortly after the Paris date that resulted in *The Great Concert Of Charles Mingus*, a Prestige threefer which this set in some respects surpasses. This was the European tour on which trumpeter Coles took sick and which a trumpetless quintet completed, with Jaki Byard playing the missing parts on the piano. Since in these charts the trumpet most often played lead, the compositions suffer accordingly—on the one hand it's surprising that Mingus didn't do some corrective transpositions for alto; on the other, considering tour schedules it's not. Never mind. The meat of these recordings, for all the excellence of the other players, can be found on the bones of the extraordinary interaction between Mingus and Eric Dolphy.

There are reasons Mingus never became fashionable in his lifetime; even posthumous awe hasn't turned the trick. Most music seems a subjective expression from which something can, at one remove, be deduced, experienced, or intuited about life. Mingus' music seems in contrast unremittingly realistic, made up of the same stuff as life itself, the tangible struggle of a heavy spirit out to wrassle the materiality and even whup it. Or so this record has made me feel. Mingus, the questing, inquiring and aggressive bassist, has rarely been as well registered. He seems not to let a note or moment go by without testing it for truth, cracking its bones for marrow. It happens behind Clifford Jordan's solos, a bit more behind Byard and, of course, in the ritual telepathy with Dannie Richmond, but the Mingus/Dolphy "conversations" enshrined here are some of the pair's most thoroughgoing and unbridled.

For this reason I'd recommend Volume I over its accomplice—the set's not a twofer, and the mono sound is fine since it's got a long "Fables Of Faubus" containing a sidetrip to TJ and superb Mingus and Dolphy solos back to back, and "Starting," a piece for Mingus and Dolphy only. Great, jabbing, unpredictable stuff that's true through and through, and good all the way down. Volume II's fine for the sufficiently breaded: "Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress Then Blue Silk," a dazzling bass solo "Sophisticated Lady," a Jaki Byard unaccompanied piece of the kind that has not been recorded before and badly needed to be—a daring and tumultuous stylistic medley—and "Peggy's Blue Skylight" retitled "Charlemagne" and erroneously credited to Clifford Jordan. — *Rafi Zabor*

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Thompson *from pg. 32*

partly to indulge a private whim, Thompson recorded a discreet album of instrumentals (recorded primarily by himself on a four-track recorder) and released it on his own label, Elixir Records.

Last fall, Joe Boyd, who produced all the best Fairport Convention albums and who currently heads Hannibal Records, offered to produce and release a new Richard and Linda Thompson album and flew over to London to begin recording. That album, *Shoot Out The Lights*, is their strongest since *Pour Down Like Silver* and features Thompson's most powerful playing and most assertive singing on record. Like all their best albums it was recorded live in the studio with a bare minimum of overdubs, but here the band included a rhythm guitarist (Simon Nicol, from Fairport days), giving Thompson freer rein. And here they were helped by a strong and sympathetic producer who was able to give a depth and a sense of dynamics that was often lacking before; it still has the spontaneity and power of people playing together, listening to each other, and inventing all at once, but something else is present...it feels more like *a record* than anything they've done before.

Fresh from playing sessions for Pere Ubu's David Thomas, Thompson plays with a fire and a directness that he's always stopped just short of, driving his Stratocaster through the title song and through the ride-out on "Walking On The Wire" with moon-struck abandon and power, challenging himself, competing with himself and winning. But the delicacy is still there, hand in hand with the power and the intensity, like in Mark Rothko's best paintings, loud within their proper silence.

Back at the Bottom Line, news that Thompson plans to return in the spring with a full band is met with cheers and wild applause.

"Who's in the band?" someone calls out as Thompson stops to tune a string.

"Oh, you know. Dave Mattacks."

Cheers and applause for Fairport's old drummer.

"Simon Nicol on rhythm guitar."

More applause and cheers. Nicol was, with Thompson, one of the founding members of Fairport.

"Someone you don't know, Pete Zorn on bass. He's very good."

Polite but slightly restrained applause. Thompson could have announced Margaret Thatcher on bass and gotten approximately the same response. Still, the audience is trying to be open-minded.

"And John Kirkpatrick on accordian."

More cheers for Thompson's longtime associate. Thompson returns to tuning his bottom strings.

"What about Linda?" somebody calls.

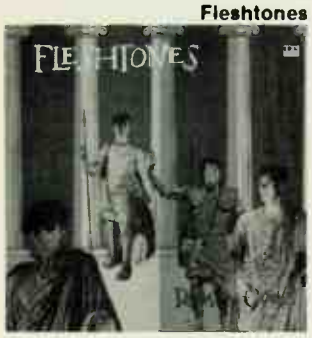
"Oh. Yes." Richard Thompson looks up shyly. "The missus'll be there." M

ROCK

By David Fricke

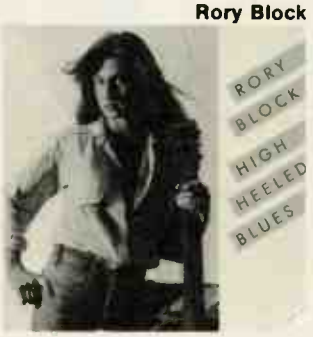
SHORT TAKES

Fleshtones

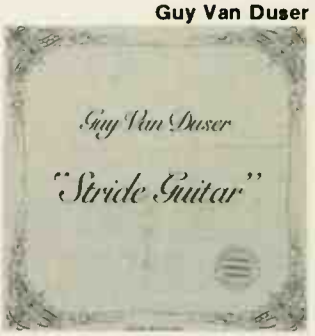


Carmine Appice

Rory Block



Guy Van Duser



SVT — *No Regrets* (MSI) In the great power trio tradition of Blue Cheer and May Blitz, this awesome Frisco threesome—featuring the swarthy bass of Jefferson Tuna's Jack Casady—put hammer to anvil and pound away at the speed of Oi! What's more, there's song amidst the steel, like the atomic pop of singer/guitarist Brian Marnell's "Heart Of Stone." When heavy metal grows up and punk gets smart, they'll sound like this.

Fleshtones — *Roman Gods* (IRS) All good things come to bands who wait and these long-suffering New York garage-punk revisionists have waited long enough. "Stop Fooling Around!" and "The Dreg (Fleshtone-77)" sound like shiny new *Nuggets*, but the Fleshtones don't just mine history with that bullying beat, Keith Streng's rippling tremolo guitar, or singer Pete Zaremba's wily coyote harmonica. "The World Has Changed," goes one song here, and in bringing the spirited innocence of rock's yesteryear face to face with the urgency of its future, the Fleshtones make good sense today.

Carmine Appice (Pasha) He drummed with Vanilla Sludge, beat the beejeezus out of his kit with Beck Bogert and Appice, and co-wrote rooster Rod's "Young Turks." For this he deserves a solo album? The world is not that desperate for bad Police cops like "Keep On Rolling" or an instrumental version of "Paint It Black" that sounds like Sandy Nelson meets the 101 Synths. And you thought Ginger Baker's Air Force was one of rock's darkest hours.

Tommy Mandel (Songshop) Experienced keyboard player (Ian Hunter, David Johansen, Syl Sylvain) makes uneven but encouraging solo EP. Six minutes of perfectly good vinyl is wasted on "Caught In A Chinese Disco," murky opium den funk hung on a slender rhythm idea. More interesting are "Pirate," which borrows a piece of Fleetwood Mac's "Oh Well" for a Volga boatmen electro-chant, and "Allow Me (To Destroy You)," which sounds like Genesis if they tried to play Todd Rundgren's "A Treatise On Cosmic Fire."

Rory Block — *High Heeled Blues* (Rounder) On her two Chrysalis albums, this wonderful wailing woman subverted her hard blues instincts with sub-Bonnie Raitt commercial backing. On this solo acoustic outing, she tastefully deploys piano, hammer dulcimer, harmonium and John Sebastian's harmonica moan behind her own mean struttin' guitar and deep blue voice. When it comes to "Walkin' Blues," "Devil Got My Man," and even the sweet loving "The Water Is Wide," this mama don't take no mess.

Mighty Diamonds — *Reggae Street* (Shanachie) The Delfonics of roots take a stroll with the usual JA session champs (Sly, Robbie, "Chinna" Smith). The sassy lilt in their stride and their sunny streetcorner harmonies belie the angry passion lurking within "Hunting Ground" and "Illiteracy." Unfortunately, Babylon Boulevard won't get the message until it's too late.

Guy Van Duser — *Stride Guitar* (Rounder) If John Fahey was more interested in hot jazz piano than phantasmagoric blues inventions, he might sound like Guy Van Duser. With a little help from Billy Novick's cobra clarinet and sultry soprano sax, Van Duser strums and strides through Gershwin, Ellington, Waller and Kern with a technical facility that does not overwhelm the fun. That he is a real master of his form is proved by the fact that Van Duser's two originals, "Seneca Slide" and "It's Not True," sound like they should bear 1934 copyrights.

Robin Trower/Jack Bruce — *Truce* (Chrysalis) What truce? Guitarist Trower, reformed Hendrix disciple, and vocalist/bassist Bruce give another rock war after last year's *B.L.T.* standoff and one is left wondering if anyone will come. This undynamic duo never get past the limitations of their heavy Anglo-blooze backgrounds and a dry wafer-thin mix doesn't help. Maybe they should have called the LP *White Flag*.

The Teardrop Explodes — *Wilder* (Mercury) In Britain, singer/writer Julian Cope and company have passed the acid test of the new psychedelia and become pop stars. "Passionate Friend" shows why—a snowballing upbeat tune, the brassy blare of horns and token hippie touches like electric sitar. At their most obvious, the Teardrop Explodes are Dave Dee Dozy Mick and Tich with press credibility. Then there are moments like "The Culture Bunker"—catchy central guitar figure, a beat that catches you up short, animated brass and synth counterpoint, a resonant Cope vocal—when the brainy coyness becomes genuine rock drama. They're both good listening, but only one sounds real.

Jimmy Destri — *Heart On A Wall* (Chrysalis) Blondie's keyboard man leaves the funkin' to Debbie and instead hits the hard-rock button on his first solo outing. Destri's voice is sometimes mixed a little too far back and Michael Kamen's production has an odd demo clang to it, as though there's too much space between instruments. Still, there is sock 'n' spirit in

continued on page 79

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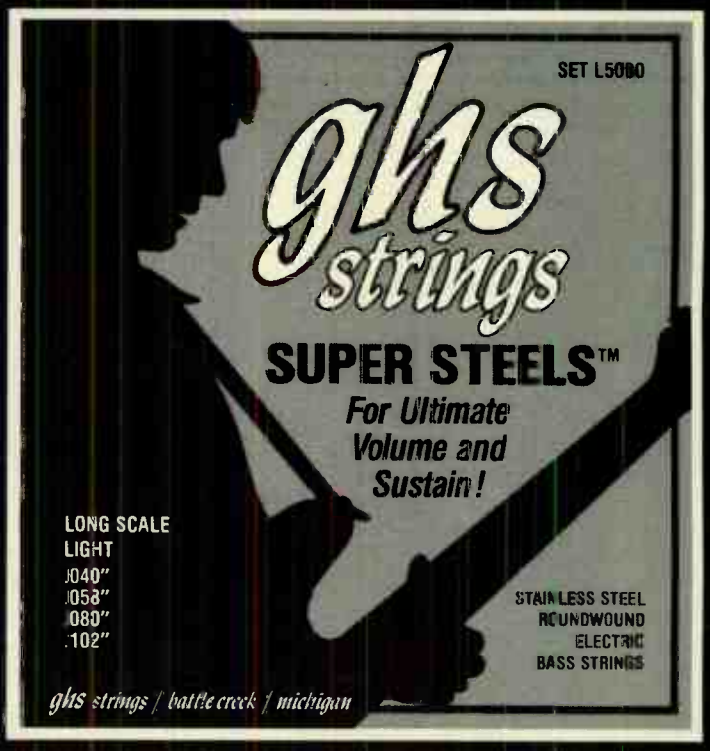

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JAZZ

By Francis Davis

SHORT TAKES

It's been an active month. **Wynton Marsalis**' debut (Columbia) is as good, as rejuvenating, as everyone hoped it would be, and there was an avalanche of new releases as the days before my deadline dwindled to a precious few.

Encouraged by the success of their Verve and EmArcy reissues, PolyGram has begun to distribute high-quality import pressings of the German Enja label (wonder if it will ever occur to them to record some jazz themselves? But I don't want to sound ungrateful). Included in the first release are *Oasis*, a wellspring of small pleasures from **The New York Jazz Quartet** (flutist and grand-manner tenor saxophonist Frank Wess, pixieish pianist Roland Hanna, bassist George Mraz and drummer Richard Pratt), one of the tightest and happiest sounding collections of individuals in jazz; **Hampton Hawes**, *In Chicago*, an uneven but still worthwhile 1973 live date by one of the most talented, most tortured and sweetest tempered of hard bop pianists, in trio with Cecil McBee and Roy Haynes; *Mingus Lives*, tautological **Mal Waldron** piano solos which are perhaps a bit too taut and certainly too logical to evoke one of the most antic gods in the jazz pantheon; and two generous helpings of meat-and-potatoes tenor, one each from **Gene Ammons** and **Eddie Lockjaw Davis**.

The Enja I most eagerly awaited and was most disappointed by is *The Angels Of Atlanta* by the incendiary Coltrane-influenced trumpeter **Hannibal Marvin Peterson**. The album was recorded before anyone was willing to admit that the murders in Atlanta might be the deed of a lone madman (and that his victims might not all have been angels); the subsequent arrest and trial of Wayne Williams drain the music of its topicality, but it retains its fire and brimstone, its mournful and agonized intensity. There are good striving solos by Hannibal, tenorist George Adams and pianist Kenny Barron; bumping interplay between cellist Deidre Murray and bassist Cecil McBee; and alert punctuations by drummer Danny Richmond. But the air of religiosity attending this music becomes tiring, begins to seem self-limiting after awhile, and the vocals—by the Harlem Boys Choir and the gratuitously melismatic Pat Peterson—are never quite successfully integrated into the performances.

VERYL OAKLAND

On the other hand, Enja's **Benny Wallace** *Plays Monk* is a pleasant surprise. Wallace is an odd duck—a tenor saxophonist whose cavernous tone and rising, slashing style of phrasing are at once reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins and Archie Shepp, and whose eclecticism has caused him to be overlooked by some observers and wildly overrated by others. Wallace's earlier records left me more intrigued than impressed. But Monk's compositions make him seem more focused, more rhythmically centered—they're like a gift from one genuine eccentric to another. Trombonist Jimmy Knepper brings his cranky lyricism to three of the album's titles, and Eddie Gomez and Danny Richmond make a good rhythm team, even if the bassist is a little trebly and a little busy at times.

Freddie Hubbard is represented by *Outpost*, a quartet date on Enja, and by *Echoes Of An Era* (Elektra), on which he, Joe Henderson, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke and producer Lenny White accompany Chaka Khan as she sings Ellington, Monk, and an assortment of pop songs immortalized by jazz musicians. This record mistakes history for nostalgia, and I hate it on principle. Khan's letter-perfect Sarah Vaughan imitation is perfectly ghastly but enjoyable on some sadistic level—she wants so much to be liked. Henderson turns in some nice solos, but the others sound as disingenuous as aging Hollywood screenwriters who go back to the old neighborhood to drink eggcreams, speak Yiddish and gab about the days when the Duke roamed centerfield.

Hubbard redeems himself on *Outpost*. Even here at his bravest and truest, in the purest jazz surroundings, he is a shamefully insincere and shallow artist, gliding over the pliant Kenny Barron/Buster Williams/Al Foster rhythm surface rather than digging in. But he offers the thrill of an almost sinful technical extravagance; his tone is lived-in, brightly lit, and as big as a house; and one doesn't really notice the absence of emotional depth until his last note has sounded. Nor mind it even then.

Phil Woods, another enormously gifted player who can be facile at times, turns up everywhere this month, brimming with ideas and turning in some of his warmest, most lyrical playing ever, under the gentle prodding of bassist **Red Mitchell** and pianist **Tommy Flanagan** on *Three For All* (Enja); and injecting a shot of life into *Heartbeat* (Enja), a comfortable but rather ordinary quintet date led by trumpeter **Franco Ambrosetti**. *More Live* (Adelphi) is Volume Two of last year's *Phil Woods Quartet Live*. Each of its four tracks runs over ten minutes, which means plenty of space for Woods & Co. to stretch out and flex, but also means solos from everybody which go on a chorus or two too long. Woods and **Paquito D'Rivera** are added to **Arthur Blythe**'s In The Tradition band; Slide Hampton crashes the **Heath Brothers**; and Blythe, D'Rivera and Chico Freeman augment the **McCoy Tyner** Quintet on *The New York-Montreux Collection '81* (Columbia), a series of jam sessions from last summer's festivals. Given the reliance on working bands, the music is better organized than on most records of this sort, but hardly revelatory, except in two instances—Hampton bullies the Heaths into the kind of virile hard bop which is their strength but which they seem reluctant to put on their own records; and on the Kool ballad medley, Blythe gives a rueful, spiraling, truly magnificent reading of "Lush Life," which will forever affect the way I hear that song.

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and a spirit of fraternity between the two principals make *Night And Day* by **Red Rodney** with **Ira Sullivan** (Muse) a joy to listen to. There's a singing quality—a kind of inner glow—to Rodney's work here that I've never noticed before, and it is especially evident when he abandons his trumpet for flugelhorn.

"Jojar" on the album *3x4 Eye* by **Roscoe Mitchell & the Sound Ensemble** (Black Saint) really rocks out—it achieves the funky propriety and the structural implacability of Jelly Roll Morton's music or of Ornette's Atlantic Quartets. Overall, the *3x4 Eye* is not quite as finished as Mitchell's *Snurdy McGurdy*, however.

Some new twofers from Fantasy/Prestige/Milestone should not go unmentioned. *Dakar* resurrects two 1957 sessions of workingman's **John Coltrane**—a friendly Pepper Adams/Cecil Payne baritone joust on which Coltrane plays odd man out, and a loose and easy two-trumpet/two-tenor date with Idrees Sulieman, Webster Young and Bobby Jaspar. The lyric talents of **Kenny Burrell** and **Coleman Hawkins** blend tastefully on *Moonglow*, from 1958 and 1962. *Conception* combines **Bill Evans**' still-fresh first date as a leader (1956) with some emotionally revealing and previously unissued piano solos from 1958 and 1962—a valuable discovery. My favorite among these reissues, however, is *Caravan* by the **Johnny Hodges All Stars**, late 40s/early 50s small group sides with personnel drawn from the ranks of the Ellington orchestra, orginally issued on Mercer, Ellington's own long-defunct label. It's not essential Ellingtonia—I won't kid you—but it does offer a fascinating look under the hood of the smoothest running and most powerful of all the big bands, and it belongs in every serious jazz collection, if only for Hodges' voluptuous solos on some heartbroken Bill Strayhorn ballads. M

Rock Shorts *from pg. 74*

tunes like "Numbers Don't Count (On Me)" and "The King Of Steam." This album isn't exactly a fistful of Blondies, but "Little Metal Drummer (Little Metal Drummer)" is probably what comes of New York art bohos listening to too many spaghetti western soundtracks.

Jimmy Buffett — *Somewhere Over China* (MCA) In concentrated 45 rpm doses, Buffett's lazy sun-bleached pop makes a nice break from the rigors of PiL, et al. But this LP goes down so-o-o easy that only the spunky "It's Midnight And I'm Not Famous Yet" and the Make Believe Ballroom shtick of "On A Slow Boat To China" grab you by the collar of your Hawaiian shirt.

The Nails (City Beat/Jimboco) This three-track 12-incher by New York's Nails sports a marvy fusion of ska jump and modern pop savvy in "Cutting Edge." They add a few strokes of dark brothel blue and clever dub mixing for the six-minute "Hotel For Women." As for "88 Lines About 44 Women," would you believe something along the lines of Kraftwerk kiss-and-tell?

Girlschool — *Hit And Run* (Stiff America) Step back, Jack. These four Brit ladies set their guitars on stun and fire heavy metal blasts that send their male counterparts crawling for cover. They do not add a lot to the genre but show a flair for good hooks ("Hit And Run") and a sense of HM history (Gun's "Race With The Devil"). An A for effort, B for chops, and the volume is up to you.

Whispers — *Love Is Where You Find It* (Solar) Here you'll find it on the B side, four sumptuous ballads with soulful pleading and candlelight harmonies. On the dancin' A side, "In The Raw" and "Emergency" should get the ants outta your pants. M

What's In a Name? *from pg. 14*

4+2 in the 60s, Los Angeles' own 20/20 today, and 10cc, who took as their name the amount of semen in the average ejaculation, in between. Literature too has provided group names galore, most notably Steppenwolf (after the hardcover classic by Herman Hesse), the Velvet Underground (after a sleazy paperback), and the Soft Machine, after the novel by William Burroughs, whose name of a dildo in another book appears often on the charts thanks to Donald Fagen and Walter Becker of Steely Dan.

Speaking of naughty things, we might note that both Kiss and Hot Tuna are demure alternatives to names that featured infinitely spicier four-letter words, and that in other parts of the English-speaking world, Fanny wasn't the perfectly innocent name it seemed to us Americans. Perspicacious readers will be able to deduce the part of the anatomy Los Angeles' top all-female group of the early 70s had in mind after listening to Marianne Faithfull's "Why D'Ya Do It?"

Whimsy, of course, has always been among the most popular sources of inspiration. Over the past fifteen years alone, it's resulted in such delights as Ultimate Spinach, the Flying Burrito Bros., and the Feelies.

Never was it given freer rein than during the epoch of psychedelia. One-syllable names had originally become voguish after it was noted that, the shorter the name, the larger it could be printed on a poster. But the best posters of the psychedelic age were illegible anyway, intended to take what seemed, under the influence of hallucinogens, to be eons to decipher. Constrained no longer by considerations of catchiness or cogency, the pioneers of acid-rock gave themselves names that would have made Billy J. Kramer & the Dakotas tremble with envy—names like Big Brother & the Holding Co., Quicksilver Messenger Service, Only Alternative & His Other Possibilities. Prodigious mouthfuls of names became all the rage, as too did encoded references to drugs and their use, like the Loading Zone, Blue Cheer, and a little later on, the Doobie Bros. (a doobie being what the sort of person who thinks it cute to call Hollywood "Hollyweird" thinks a cute way to refer to a marijuana reefer).

After *Sgt. Pepper's* was declared no mere pop album, but Art, pretension ran rampant through rock's ranks, and even pleasant little folk-based outfits gave themselves names like Gnidrolog in their eagerness to be esoteric and obscure. (Can there be any question that what Oxnard is to place names, Gnidrolog was to names of pop groups?) You might have thought, after learning that Procol Harum translated from the pidgin Latin as "beyond these things," that the band of the same name took the cake for pretension—at least until you learned that the group was named after a pussycat, and that, in the privacy of their own Holiday Inn suites, they referred to themselves as the Purple Horrors.

In the mid-70s, when rock was more boring than it had been since heinous little twerps from Philadelphia took over from Chuck Berry and Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis and the other founding fathers, it sometimes seemed as though local groups would have their equipment confiscated if they failed to give themselves one-word names that ended in -er. The nation's record racks were clogged with the product of such favorites as Badger, Crawler, Driver, Flyer, Foreigner, Piper, Player, Ripper, Strider, Striker, Trickster and Trigger.

Then new wave came along, and nine out of ten of these groups got haircuts, donned narrow ties, and added the definite article before and an *s* at the end of their names. Overnight, the clubs of every metropolis in the land throbbed to the swinging new sounds of the Twisters and the Receivers and the Resistors and the Thissers and the Thatters. One of the most narrow-tied groups didn't bother to go to all this trouble, but simply dusted off what had been the name of the most popular young group on the Sunset Strip in 1966—the Knack.

When it comes to irreverence, to which most punk names aspire, you'd have your own and several large friends' work cut out for you if you wanted to surpass the Dead Kennedys, singer Jello Biafra's rather feeble contention that the name is "more of a tribute than a put-down" notwithstanding. Or sitting.

We seem, with the emergence of groups with complete sentence names (the first since Stone the Crows—British for "what's the use?"—in 1971), to be on the verge of an era of unprecedented possibilities. Never again need pop musicians brand themselves with such embarrassments as Beach Boys or Bee Gees. Wondrous times we live in. M

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Hall and Oates, *from pg. 50*

word *fuck* in it. That's about as far as you *can't* go.

OATES: That's also part of the art and the craft of writing, though. Being able to express certain things that are difficult to express in a way that communicates without being blatant. That's part of it. I think that's something we are able to do. I think it's one of our strongest points in terms of lyrics.

HALL: Also there's certain subjects—socio-political subjects—that you can't deal with. Because if you're on the wrong side, the side that's maybe not cool this week, people will think there's something wrong with you. Sometimes as I sit and write in my book, I think, "If I said this, people would think I was an asshole." Even though I believe it. I think in that way artists are restricted. Anybody who is a free thinker, who sees both sides of things sometimes can't express those thoughts because other people would take them wrong.

MUSICIAN: *Seals & Crofts, and to a lesser degree the Sex Pistols, got terrible flak for putting out anti-abortion songs.*

HALL: Right now, if we wrote an anti-abortion song, forget radio. That's where it's at.

And another thing you can't mess with is *radio*. That's another taboo. Don't say anything bad about radio. Radio's the greatest thing that ever happened. And if you say anything different from that, don't expect to be played on it. In that way it's very restrictive. But that's not a big deal. Those are past the edges. There's a lot in between that you can deal with.

OATES: I think the main thing is having the freedom to make the kind of music you want. Regardless of the topic or the subject. We do have a wide range of things that we *can* talk about. The fact that we are finally able to make the kind of music we want and have it accepted, that's the greatest freedom of all. M

Jaki Byard, *from pg. 58*

York City, and has hopes of settling into the role of big band leader. Almost sixty and still going strong, he feels there is one more turn to take in a long and influential career.

The Apollo Stompers began about four years ago at the New England Conservatory where it was an extra-curricular activity. Now it's a New York-based band with a book of two hundred tunes (largely Byard originals) and a "little following of its own." Prior to their present stay at the Jazz Forum, the Stompers were at Ali's Alley, the Public Theater, and have done some out-of-town concerts which received favorable notice. Although the band includes several ex-students, it's no longer a teaching vehicle. "No one here needs that," says Jaki, "they play as well as anyone else. It's what I want to spend the rest of my life with. You know, solos and trios are a dime a dozen—every time you turn around there's another genius coming up. With a big band I can explore my ideas further, extend myself...."

The Stompers certainly do play as well as anyone else, whether it be an Ellington ballad or a Carole King tune. All the raw elements are there: tight section work, solid rhythms, good charts. There are three vocalists, including Jaki's two daughters, and they feature a tap dancer as well. Recent guest stars Charlie Rouse and Pepper Adams have rounded out the ensemble at the Jazz Forum. But good as they are, they could be singing in the shower as far as the large audience is concerned.

"In the 30s and 40s they had big bands working all the time," Byard reminisces, "and on the radio every night. Now they want country and western. It's like an old 1940 car, where do you take it? The big bands that do exist today are doing more music than the old dance bands, but there's just a few. Mel Lewis has had his for sixteen years now, and he tells me stick with it. I'm very satisfied with what we're playing—the rest of it should happen naturally, like you called me for this interview. I'm not going around breaking any doors down, push-

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ing myself on people, I'm just not good at that. They want us in Europe, but it takes money to get over there. Here we're playing for the door, we just don't have the capital to invest in something like that. All these guys are working with other bands, I'm teaching. Now I can earn more in two nights than I used to earn fifteen years ago playing all week, so I don't have to hustle so much. But I'd like to be working with these guys all the time; it's just not happening yet.

"I keep up with what's going on, listen to the radio, buy records. There's an awareness now of Tatum, and some of the piano players of the past, as there's an awareness now of Jaki Byard. I've watched the young players come up, those who have become successful, and they've become successful only in one trend. Now the trend is they're starting to accept everything that's involved in music, in piano playing. It isn't enough for a student to just play; people come to me to get more involved pianistically, to get an awareness of what has happened from 1600 up till now. The avant-garde gets very single-minded about what it's doing. They're afraid to blend idioms, the product is often very monochromatic. But I believe this is a phase some people go through, with the exception of a few like Cecil Taylor, McCoy Tyner. Critics put pressure on performers, but that's good, we need that. Things would be at a terrible standstill if no one was saying anything.

"Another thing that's happened is the development of electronic sounds. I remember when Charlie Christian first used amplified guitar, it had an enormous impact. Now they've relegated the piano to be just one of the "keyboards." They even have electrified drums. It's very interesting, interesting and pretty expensive. I can't become involved with it because of my domestic obligations, although I do have a Fender Rhodes that I tinker with. The acoustic piano is much more involving to me because of the variety of sounds you can get; there's just so much you can get out of it, especially if it's in tune! But this is the land of enterprise and things function a certain way, they have to find things that can sell, and it's gonna go on and on. It doesn't bother me though, 'cause I'm not in it."

In it or not, Jaki Byard has been one of the most vital presences in the music for the last two decades. As the small boy discovering the unused magic of the large mansion, he has allowed us to move in with him and made the house of music larger and more fun to live in. Few musicians have so generously embraced the whole of the piano's jazz tradition and still contributed so regularly to the music's frontier. If it's possible to insist simultaneously upon tradition and adventure, it's because Jaki Byard has done it, and continues to do it, so very well. M

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By J.C. Costa

A particularly appealing trait of the electric guitar as applied to rock 'n' roll is that there is no absolute or definitive method for learning and (maybe) eventually mastering the instrument. Jazz guitar still implies a certain discipline, a given body of work that should be learned and absorbed before achieving a technique advanced enough to launch a personal "signature" style. Not coincidentally, the evolution of roots blues into contemporary funk-R&B also hangs on fairly rigid stylistic and musical conventions knit into the spiritual punch of the music.

But rock 'n' roll guitar still pivots around the overused axiom that capturing the proper *feeling*, the inner dynamic or pulse of the music, is what it's all about. A basic repertoire of textbook riffs from Chuck Berry, Scotty Moore, Bo Diddley, James Burton and others, an innate ability to manipulate electrical energy plus a well-developed sense of forward momentum (a classic visualization of this can be seen when Chuck Berry takes a "duck-walk") are often enough to send the next guitar star shooting off through the rock stratosphere.

Conscientious lead players more concerned with guitar nuance than the musical framework behind it will go back to Delta blues trailblazers like Son House, Fred McDowell or Robert Johnson and carefully move forward in time through electric blues monuments like B.B., Albert and/or Freddie King, Muddy Waters, T-Bone Walker and Jimmy Reed. Blues students are obsessed with authenticity, figuring that if they can exactly reproduce the neurotic *frisson* implicit in Albert King's bending technique, they will somehow incorporate a measure of the true grit experience behind his powerhouse style into the collective subconscious of their playing. This approach stands as a sincere homage to the past in a context of traditionalism: again, you've got to learn what went down before you came along to move forward with conviction.

In varying degrees, this approach has underlined the most widely accepted method of learning rock 'n' roll guitar. Get a guitar and amp, learn some chords and the blues scale, then move out into the streets to find like-minded electronic visionaries also embarked on the road to rock self-realization. The following years should produce an inventory of rock 'n' roll tunes (both cover versions of classic tunes and even some originals), better equipment, a more focused stage presence and chops for every occasion. Learn while you earn. No matter where you end up, you'll always have lots of stories to tell about embarrassing moments onstage, ripoff club owners and the infinite variety of moronic escapades that define the true blue rock 'n' roll apprenticeship.

Who needs skinflint club owners, neurotic musicians and dull audiences? Go it alone.

But what of the electric guitarist who chooses to stay in the lonely room that provides the initial physical setting for his or her learning experience? There *are* people who don't respond well to the complicated psycho-dynamics of establishing and maintaining a group of musicians with differing talents, world views and neurotic disorders. Certain people can play it both ways, moving back and forth between various bands and a solo posture with one eye firmly fixed on their burgeoning playing style. Here, a band serves as a sounding board or testing environment for that style, not as an end unto itself.

The idea of a solo guitarist or, more accurately, an individual musician responsible for creating all of the instrumental parts making up his or her music has found greater acceptance in recent years. This multi-instrumentalist approach goes all the way back to the 40s when the legendary clarinetist Sidney Bechet was the first to take advantage of emerging studio technology by recording all of the instrumental tracks for one of his LPs. More familiar to contemporary listeners are musicians like Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney and Todd Rundgren whose versatility and inherent musicality allow them to take this approach to new levels of sophistication without wandering too far into pure self-indulgence. Other gifted exponents such as Brian Eno and Robert Fripp have also proved that one person, with the help of multi-tracking, synthesis and tape-related technology can create a private musical cosmos. Because of these trailblazing efforts, a musician need not automatically heed the call to join a band, finding that sporadic interaction with like-minded players in open-ended jams offers the undeniable benefits of live musical interaction with fellow human beings without any of the aggravation or headaches.

No matter *how* you get there, achieving a viable and original approach to the electric guitar while learning how to make music in a general sense becomes the real goal. If you have any talent and something to say musically, you'll be forced "out of the closet" at some point. The crucial element at the core of learning on your own is retaining an honest and objective *third ear* about your relative progress or lack thereof. Obviously this is harder to do without other musicians or engineers and producers around to periodically knock things back into proper perspective.

Playing along with records can be a valuable aid if approached with intelligence and discretion. Just slapping some vinyl onto a turntable as background noise for the foreground noise you plan to create is pointless. The key is to penetrate *into* the mix: learn the chord progressions, the rhythm parts, get a feeling for the arrangement and only solo when there's some space to be filled without cluttering up the track. Obviously, tunes like "Layla" might be overlooked (unless you want to learn the guitar parts down to the last semiquaver) because there's already more than enough guitar all over the original. Older bands (Booker T & the MGs) featuring keyboards and pared-down guitar in equal parts, or newer bands (early Cars, Police) building their music off the

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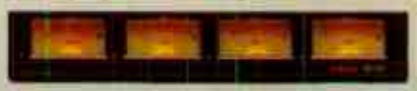

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same philosophical approach as their forebears, offer the best "play along" possibilities. Used wisely, this method can teach you the important things about timbre, rhythm fills, slurring and other lead guitar devices—not just by repetition of given notes but by a system of osmosis where you subliminally absorb the rich selection of sounds and textures built into rock 'n' roll.

Companies like Sansui (AX-7 Mixer), MXR (System Preamp) an Whirlwind Audio (Matchmate) make devices allowing you to interface your instrument directly with your hi fi system. This improves the overall mix between music-generating elements (always a basic problem with this approach) but the "dry" sound of the guitar signal taken direct is sometimes at odds with the sound of the recording. Another trick is to find a really worthwhile "baby" amplifier (eight-inch speaker) with built-in distortion (Master Volume) and reverb. This will create a small sound image with depth that can blend into your system's stereo image without necessitating dramatic volume levels.

Also along these lines, several companies offer pure accompaniment records or tapes as a musical backdrop for the aspiring player. Music Minus One has been around the longest with an extensive (mostly pop and big band jazz) catalog of records with various lead instruments dropped out so that you can fill in your own solo over the top. "Jam Tapes" are good quality cassette tapes using session musicians to lay down basic rhythm tracks in various modern styles (with different keys and time signatures). "Drum Drops" assumes an even more elemental stance with recorded drum parts designed to provide the proper rhythmic impetus for the lonely guitarist.

In recent years, more and more import has been given to the Hot Licks school of guitar instruction. At its best, this takes the form of an actual guitar lesson brought into your room through the miracle of modern technology. Homespun Tapes in Woodstock, New York embodies this view with intelligent players like Amos Garrett, Happy and Artie Traum and Arlen Roth (who also has his own Hot Licks course on cassette) presenting the best licks, tunings and special effects or fretboard devices that American roots music has to offer. A company named Star Licks promises to teach "you the exact licks of today's most popular guitarists." The actual participation of players like Beck, Van Halen, George Benson and Alvin Lee is hinted at in the body copy but a disclaimer in microtype at the bottom of the ad reveals that a studio journeyman was brought into the studio to actually play these licks at regular and slow speeds. The fact of who plays whose licks is probably moot. The crux behind learning other players' licks (usually a mutation of something

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that went before anyway) is to use them as a springboard for personal expression. Copping a bunch of random licks does not a guitarist make. It often leads to the ambivalent status of *lick meister*, wherein a guitarist has nothing to say and all of the means to do it at excruciating length.

Chord books and other method texts have been around forever. Gentlemen like Mel Bay and Ted Green (*Chord Chemistry*) offer texts chock-full of chord diagrams designed to flesh out the novice's arsenal. As it happens, the instructional segment of the industry has been trying to update methods of teaching individual instruments and music theory as it applies to make things easier for those not planted firmly in the mainstream rock band apprenticeship process. Even the staunchly traditional Mr. Bay is now offering an updated version of his Guitar Method with stereo cassettes to facilitate things for a generation of "ear-oriented" players. Chord dictionaries or encyclopedias are useful and fall under the same axiom applying to money, sex or illicit substances: you can never have too many chords, but you have to know how to use them. Other method books (Mickey Baker, Joe Pass, Barry Galbraith) are also valuable but are predicated on a certain amount of theory, especially the ability to read music, necessary *before* you can get the best results from them.

Finally, the stunning new multi-track cassette (TEAC Model 144/244 Portastudio Fostex Model 250/Mixer) and reel-to-reel machines targeted as "home" or semi-pro recorders can also be of valuable assistance to the (affluent) young musician. Besides serving as an excellent primer for the complex multi-track recording process, these allow the young music-maker to improve on a given instrument while actually absorbing the collective consciousness of all the instruments that make up a modern band. If you are "just a guitarist," your music can often be limited to a purely guitaristic way of thinking. Using a variety of tracks to record bass parts, drum fills, vocals, rhythm, keyboards, etc., can help a guitarist feel comfortable with other instruments while forging a better understanding of their respective roles within a group. Working at home, you can follow the same basic procedures used in major studios by first laying down your basics or rhythm tracks, then gradually adding *sleeping* tracks (vocals, lead instruments, harmonies, etc.) to achieve a complete piece of music or a fully realized song. These can either end up as reference or working demos for future recording or as flesh-out backing tracks to sharpen up your instrumental technique. If and when you do hook up with other players, these devices function effectively as a cold and impersonal record of you and your band's progress.

Ultimately, the whole gestalt of learning an instrument, i.e. music, is founded on a basic trust in your own instinct and your ability to really hear the music ricocheting around your brain pan and accurately express it in a manner unique to your own personal experience. If you can transcend the limitations of the instrument and move into the more comprehensive area of learning how to make music, that's as heavy as it has to get. Ⓜ

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DAVID BYRNE IN THE STUDIO

The prime mover of the Talking Heads describes his use of the studio, including his most recent technique of creatively layering and stripping tracks.

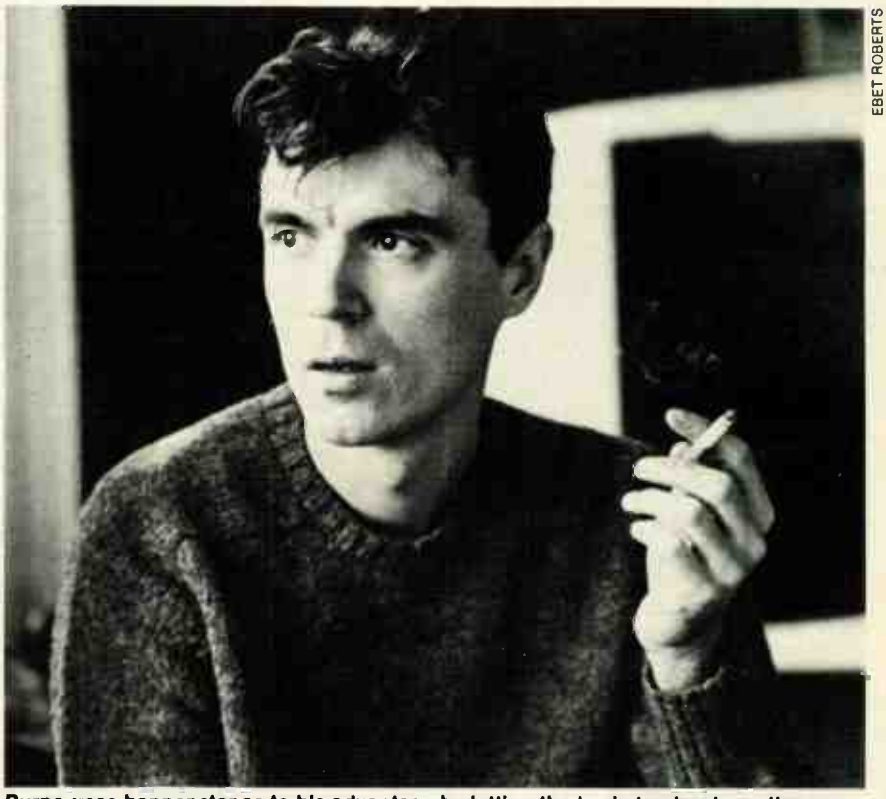
By Marc Silag

David Byrne established a formidable stall in the marketplace early on in his career. Since the release of the first Talking Heads album in 1977 he has served as a perfect specimen for the critics employed by this and other reputable publications, who enjoy their task of psychoanalytic dissection of the pop *artiste*. Though producer *cum* technoids might or might not savor the opportunity to view the track sheets Byrne and his studio cohorts might mark up in the course of a studio project, we were interested in Byrne's relationship to the studio and his work as a musician and producer in the studio environment. His articulation of the various approaches in producing or co-producing Talking Heads, the B-52s and Brian Eno, to name some, was impressive and revealing in the use of multi-track technology as part of the creative process of composition and studio production.

In an unassuming and at times cautious tone of voice, Byrne discussed some of the methods he's used in his work. Lately he's been leaning toward an enthralling process of layering and stripping tracks, perhaps best described as trial and error—though his ratio of success belies the conventional terminology. "It seems I'm most comfortable," he began, "working with something I've never done before. The band is like that, too. By taking a different approach to the recording of each album, the material benefits because, though the process is rooted in something we've done before, it's different each time—it stays exciting.

"There are two obvious ways to record pop records. One is where the material is ready and the band comes in and plays it and the engineer and the producer get the sound of the bass and drums and they just tape it, they don't worry about leakage or anything." Byrne speaks as though recounting some distant memory, his serious expression abetted by the calm, deliberate manner of his speech. "The other method is to record and you worry about leakage, with the idea being that later you'll change it, some parts might get rearranged, fixed up or added on." It's becoming apparent that Byrne has respect and admiration for the machinery that allows the juxtaposition of sounds he creates. His tone becomes more earnest and his face begins to soften with conversation.

"Our first album was done in the traditional way: we had plenty of material and we taped it pretty much as we had been playing it live, although we embellished here and there of course. I was aware before the sessions that the studio was different, but I figured the huge guitar chord you hit at home or in rehearsal would be there in the studio. No way! That took some getting used to, but we weren't stupid. We picked up on the studio as we went along and began using the studio more on the second album, doing more things in the mix. On the third album, *Fear Of Music*, some of the material had a whole song structure—here's the verse section, the chorus section, the middle-eight tag at the end, all that—no words, but everybody knew where to play. We recorded at Chris and Tina's and the Record Plant truck came out and we ran the cables through the window and did the basic tracks in two days—which is pretty fast" (Byrne seems to be partial to understatement). "On other tunes we had nothing written—we would just play a groove or jam—Chris would play drums, someone else would play percussion or bass and when it clicked, we'd record that for awhile and then we'd have a couple of riffs that fit the same groove and we'd start to record those over everything we already had. We used this approach a lot on *Remain In Light*. We'd fill the tracks with things that fit."



EBET ROBERTS

Byrne uses happenstance to his advantage by letting the basic tracks shape the song, discarding what detracts and adding new ideas spontaneously right in the studio.

We wondered about the redundant effect in laying down the intitial groove—with no distinct parts—how could Byrne and the band "compose" the piece? "Butch Jones, an engineer we've worked with, once said that disco music couldn't have been made were it not for the digital tape counters on 24-track machines. It was essential the same groove played over and over and the counter was the only way you could reference the tape for overdubbing. On some of the things on the fourth album we'd record two and a half, three minutes of groove and then, through editing, we'd expand it to say, five minutes or so and then play over that. We figured it would be more efficient and economical. When it came time to overdub, you didn't have to play through eight minutes every time. We'd just break it into parts and work them one against the other until the song or piece or whatever you want to call it would begin to have some shape, some identity of its own.

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"Once we have the basic tracks—well, there would be a number of instruments on the basics and then Brian Eno or somebody would start to play along, randomly searching through different kinds of parts and sounds and all kinds of stuff until something started to click, so if Brian was playing something that worked, I'd be in the control room saying, 'Yeah, yeah! That's it, that's the way to go with it, forget the other stuff and follow that!' This would go back and forth, we'd all switch roles and the random parts and noises would gradually evolve into something that worked or felt right."

Byrne has no compunctions about the apparent happenstance nature of this recording technique. Admitting that neither he nor the band necessarily knows in advance what instrument or effect will produce the desired result, he implies that it all happens rather quickly, without a great deal of complication or consternation. "Sometimes you don't get to where you want to go, but you do get somewhere. We add to what we've got, taking stuff away that gets in the way of a new part, or something that fits better."

Does this ever lead to a situation where the original idea, the groove itself, the bass line for example, disappears completely? Byrne answers glibly: "Yeah, that's happened a few times. Sometimes it's kind of traumatic throwing out what you started with, but it's necessary because you can get bogged down with the original idea. I imagine a lot of people record this way though. I think that's the way the Bee Gees did *Saturday Night Fever* and I imagine the Stones do the same thing."

We inquired as to the source of such dexterity and Byrne quickly points out that neither he nor Eno nor anyone in the band are engineers. "I can get my way around a studio to a point. I don't know the patch bays, but I know what should get patched into what so I get exactly what I want. Learning about the equipment was a process of osmosis; you get curious about a certain piece of equipment and at the end of the day you say, 'Let me hear what this does.' I'm comfortable in the studio, having spent a lot of time there in the last few years, but I think maybe now I'd like to reverse the process—sitting at home working with a guitar or a piano, but..." he adds with a laugh, "I haven't been too successful getting back to it."

The discussion revealed that Byrne and his collaborators also practice a fair amount of mainstream studio technique during their sessions. "I like the idea of multiple bass tracks, each with a distinct sound. I'll combine them, use one track here and switch to the other somewhere else. I do take advantage of the studio—it frees your imagination. If you play something you've got it on tape; if you like it, you keep it; if you don't, you try for something else. You might not know the metric relationship of what you play from one track to the next, but you can go back later and figure it out if you have to."

Byrne acknowledges his allegiance to the 24-track format, proposing the likelihood that given the tracks, most bands can fill them easily, although he feels that eight-track recording would be a severe limitation on his studio technique. He's also quite candid about his *modus operandi* with regard to the expansive outboard effects available in the studio. As new sounds and effects are developed, Byrne experiments, attempting to fit unique sounds into a composition. "When we find something we like, we ask ourselves what part it can play in the overall piece. Before I went into the studio to do *Catherine Wheel* (Twyla Tharp's dance piece for Broadway), I spent a lot of time at home programming sounds into a synthesizer, sort of an ongoing research project—I had no idea where or how I'd use them."

We assumed that Eno had been a technical influence on Byrne and wondered how David influences the artists he produces. "Eno has a very spare approach to his technical direction in the studio. He has more experience than I do in the studio but we're on about the same level of technical abilities. We listen to our engineers a lot and don't necessarily use a sound or an effect just because it's there." Byrne's implication is that both he and Eno share a common sensibility when it comes down to producing. "Assuming you get along with everybody, there are a number of roles a producer can play. One, he is an arranger, suggesting other parts or instruments—nodding when something sounds good and shaking your head when it doesn't. If a band has all the material together it's easier, I suppose, although it's harder when the band is recording its first album. Looking back at our first album, I can see what a rough position it is for a producer of a band that has never recorded in the studio before, because you have musicians who are really wary of having their material or their precious sound tampered with. That's natural—they've worked on this material for years, they've got their recording contract and now there's some guy sitting in the control room chuckin' out some part that the kids in the audience always liked. It's a really hairy position to be in, but it's good in that the producer can provide perspective and some level of technical advice."

Although he's aware of the great mass of technology responsible for the pursuit of his studio exploits, Byrne is hesitant to endorse new technology outside of speculation. He does acknowledge the great strides in store as digital encoding becomes a more common method of signal processing and storage. "It comes down to that piece of plastic you go out and buy—there's a limit to how good it will sound! With 24-track tape in the studio you hear a lot of hiss and noise that'll never show up on a record—at least not to the average ear. I've only heard a couple of digital records and noticed they had a nice spatial effect. Once digital encoding gets beyond the recording unit, some great things will happen, I'm sure. I've thought about digital equalizers and imagined the ultimate Harmonizer where the shape of the sound can be physically changed. It seems inevitable, I suppose, but I'm not preoccupied with it. We've just started to use automation for the first time. We mixed the live record on the computer, writing it when it sounded good and touching it up later. It saves time, though we don't spend months in the studio working on one project."

Byrne explained the live album as a mixture of live shows that had been taped as far back as '77. This caused one or two problems as Byrne explains it. "We had to fix one entire track that had a horrible buzz on the clavinet, so we fixed that, but there was a tape from 1977 and I had to fix some sour notes on a vocal track—I mean sour! That took a lot of punches because my voice had changed!" Obviously Byrne has no misgivings about "fixing" a live album—another example of Byrne's outspoken honesty with the material and the recording process from this view.

We concluded the evening's conversation with some inquiries about Byrne's work and business habits. Does Byrne address these factors as a producer? "Yup. I figure it's something to be dealt with. Rather than have the record company just pay the bills and then deduct them from our royalties, we deliver the product to our company, Sire Records. If a band doesn't see the bills, they're likely not to care about the cost. If *we* go over the budget, then it's on *us*! We try to be smart about it—we've thought about doing our own studio, getting semi-portable stuff so we can use it on the road and in the studio too, but we realized it would require a lot of maintenance and we weren't ready to foot the expense. The bare bones of the studio cost not much more than the average recording budget, but the thought of a studio in my home makes me think I'd never get anything done—I'd just piddle around all the time. When we go into the studio, we get right to work—I think it requires a lot of concentration."

In the end, Byrne's pragmatic approach is fueled by a love for his work. "I'm a natural worker, but sometimes I have to tell myself to do something, to get it done. On the whole it doesn't bother me, though," he says, laughing. "It's a good job!"

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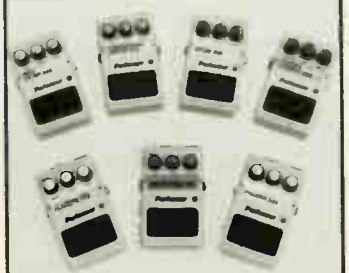
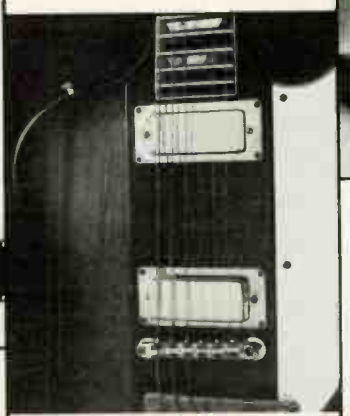


DOD Electronics announces the introduction of the Performer 500 Series line of effects, incorporating many innovative and previously unavailable features. Each Performer has a solid die cast metal case, modular design with plug-in circuit card, AC adapter, heavy duty power connector, control indexing, high intensity LED indicator, easy access battery compartment, active switching, exceptionally long battery life and newly designed circuitry. All Performer 500 Series effects are backed with a three year limited factory warranty. DOD Electronics, 2953 South 300 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84115, (801)485-8534.

The latest addition to the **Cerwin-Vega** line of professional electronics is the 13-band, 2-channel GE-3 graphic equalizer. It has a combination of octave and one-half octave filter bands and provides the precision equalization capability of a one-half octave filter set at frequencies below 250 Hz. Above 250 Hz, bands are set on octave centers. This unique combination of octave and one-half octave equalization creates enough resolution even in the critical low frequencies where eq problems are likely to occur. Cerwin-Vega, 12250 Montague Street, Arleta, CA 91331, (213)896-0777.

The S-II is a new passive circuit model from **Ken Smith Basses**. The woodwork features a 3-piece maple neck design with rosewood center, 2-piece matched maple body, 24-fret select Indian rosewood fingerboard with pearl inlay, dual flex-action truss rod and classic hand-rubbed oil finish. Electronic features are custom wound Bill Lawrence pickups, passive printed circuit board, in-out phase and stand-by switches. This is a high quality bass for the serious player. Ken Smith Basses, 27 E. 13th St., N.Y.C., NY 10003. (212)243-2777.

Kaman Music Distributors have announced the arrival of the new Mark Series drum outfits from **CB700**. These new outfits feature the exclusive Mark Series lugs on all drums along with double braced hardware on selected outfits. Pictured is the MC-9 outfit with 6½ x 14 parallel lay snare drum, 14 x 22 EQ bass drum, 16 x 18 floor tom tom, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 Circle of Sound tom toms. All wood shell drums are 9 ply. For more information on the new CB700 Mark Series drum outfits, write: CB700, Box 1168, San Carlos, CA 94070, (415)592-9160.



Seymour Duncan Pickup Research introduces three new models to their line of quality replacement pickups. All three are direct replacements for any mini humbucking pickups.

The SF-1 Vintage Firebird is a replica of the mini humbucking pickups installed in the original Gibson Firebird guitars. The two coils, necessary to achieve the humbucking effect, wrap around alnico V bar magnets which together create a concentrated magnetic field.

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Rhodes is entering the synthesizer market with Chroma, a synthesizer which combines multi-voice programming features with the feel of real mechanical action that is both velocity and pressure sensitive. The 16-channel, polyphonic synthesizer also features a split keyboard capability, 50 programmable pre-sets plus 100 taped voice programs, and digitally-based programming and tone controls linked to 16 oscillators, 16 filters and 16 amplifiers. Chroma's programming also gives the player access to a sequencer-like arpeggiation mode and software is available to allow it to connect with an Apple II. There are complete editing facilities that operate on a '51st' floating program, plus a cassette interface which allows audio and program information to be combined on tape. Rhodes, 1300 E. Valencia Drive, Fullerton, CA 92634.

Gibson has introduced their versatile Victory MVX, built with sculptured maple body for brilliance and sustain. The neck is 3-piece maple with off-set pearl dot inlays and tapers from a 2-inch thickness at the 12th fret to 1 11/16 inches at the nut. The guitar has an ebony fingerboard with white binding and is outfitted with a chrome-plated stop bar tailpiece and the new Gibson Top Adjust Tune-O-Matic bridge. The Victory MVX provides ten distinct tonalities through the use of a 5-position (blade type) pickup selector switch which enables the player to harness the power of the guitar's 3 pickups (humbucking, super stack and split coil) through the master volume and master tone controls. Definitely a hot guitar. Gibson, 707 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, IL 60615.

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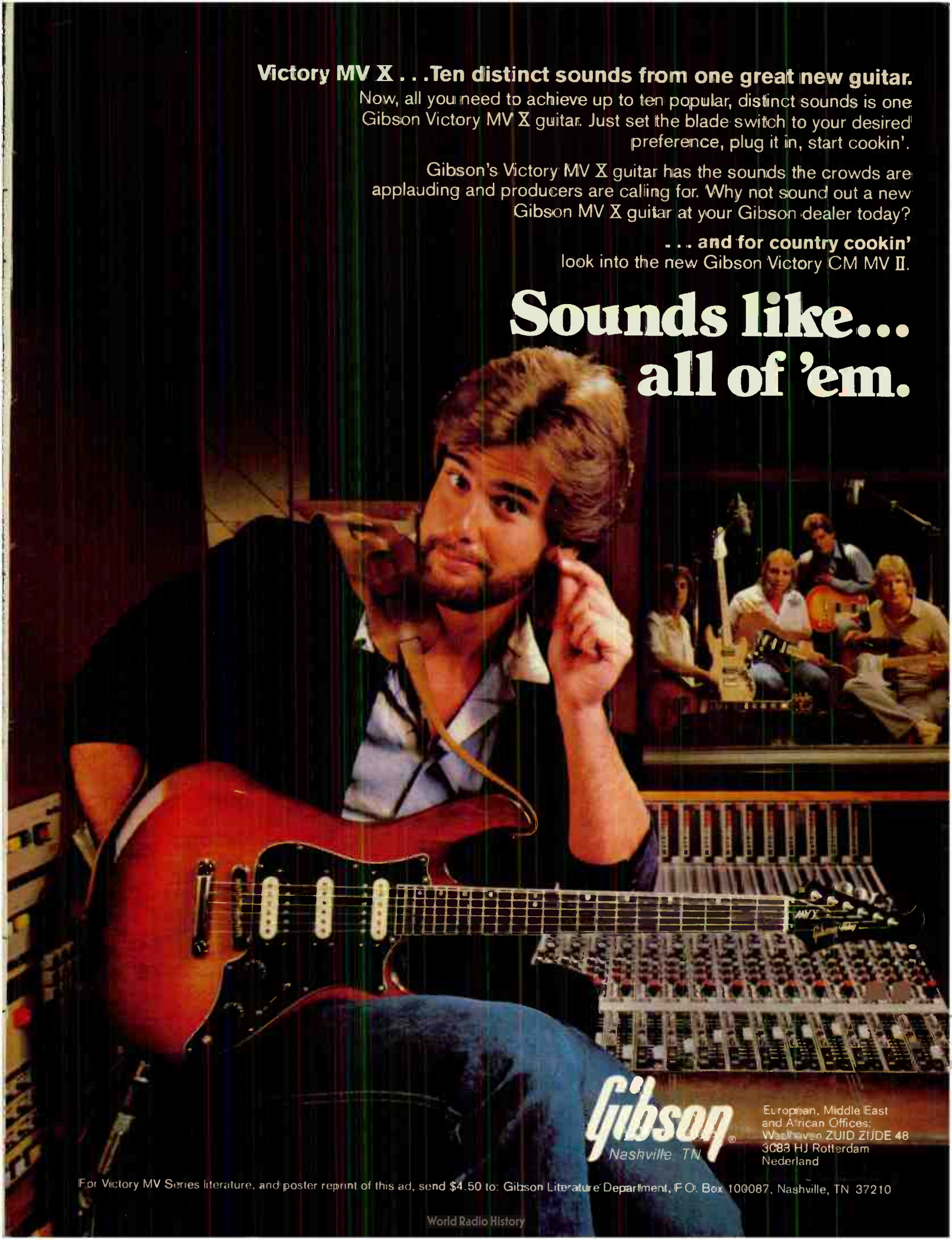

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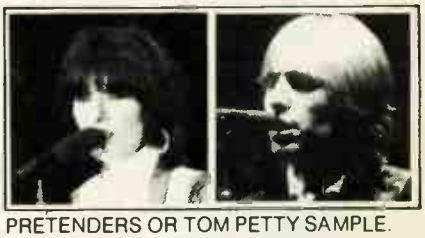

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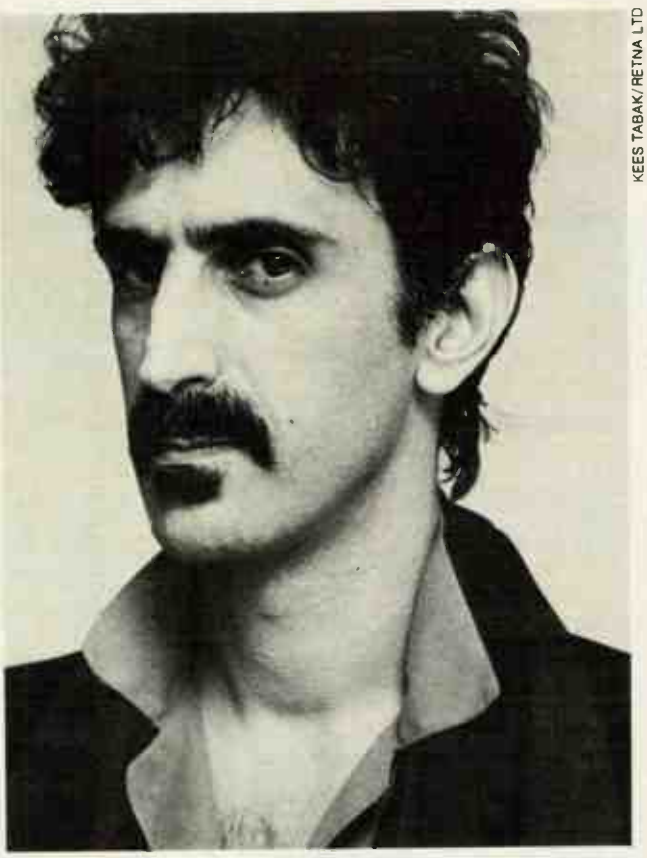
MUSICIAN, P.O. Box 701, Gloucester, MA 01930

ZAPPA: First of all, they can't do it. The era itself is gone. The reason the Mothers were what they were was a combination of these ingredients: the time in which they appeared, and the personalities of the individual members in that particular year of their growth as people. People change. Motorhead of 1967 is not Motorhead of today, nor is the Don Preston of 1967 the Don Preston of today. The Don Preston of today has been on the road with—what's that guy's name?—Leo Sayer, right? He was with Leo Sayer for a number of years. It changes a guy, you know? Those guys in '67 were different people, and the year '67 was a different year, and where they were working was a different world. They were at the Garrick Theater in this little test tube environment for six months or whatever, two shows a night, six nights a week, perfecting a certain type of weirdness that will never happen again. I've got it on film, I've got it on tape—but it ain't on the stage with those guys. So kiss it off, it's gone. If you didn't see it in '67, then you ain't gonna get it. No matter what they play or how weird they pretend to be, it's not going to be recreated—it's a fake.

MUSICIAN: *Is it harder for you now to do something that will make as much of an impact as the things you did in the 60s when you were considered to be so outrageous?*

ZAPPA: Well, it's not my desire—in those days it wasn't my desire either...I didn't go onstage and say, I'm now going to be weird. I'm gonna go onstage and do what I do. If it appears weird by contrast to Herman's Hermits, that's a sign of the times. But for an American audience that's been hyped into believing that a person who goes onstage and piddles with a python snake is really fantastic, with that type of Alice Cooper advertising blitz of "This is weird," where people are told what is weird...they're not ready for conceptual deviations from the norm, because there's not much thinking involved in music consumption today. You just go and see what it looks like, hear what it sounds like, and you've consumed it. But you don't really think about it much. It's just something that happens to wash over you. But in those days when we did it, it was a real confrontation, because everybody had been so used to the British Invasion syndrome. For anybody to do anything outside of that norm, it appeared to be very drastic. But I think what we do today is pretty drastic compared to the rest of what's going on. We play melodies, we play rhythmic compositions that are really hard, and we do it with choreography. We play long songs that have long guitar solos. We do everything wrong (laughs). We're totally against the grain of what contemporary music is today. But it doesn't appear to be weird, because we're dealing with real musical factors. There are many musical groups today that are thought of as avant-garde who aren't dealing with musical factors; they're dealing with literary factors. Certain groups that appear to be really "happening" have enormous rap sheets that have to explain their ethos, you know, to give them a reason to exist. And the press loves to go along, because it's not music, it's all words, and that's something they can deal with. But it's all fake. There's no substance behind it. We've been doing some stuff in the last weeks on the tour—I taught them a bunch of old obscure rhythm 'n' blues songs. They're so much fun to play. We're doing "Mary Lou" by Young Jessie, "The Man From Utopia," the flip side of "Death Of An Angel" by Donald Woods & the Velairs, "The Closer You Are" by the Channels, and we're doing part of "Johnny Darling" by the Feathers—ever hear that? It's a single that sells for about $500.



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MUSICIAN: *Do you think you'll record any of the R&B stuff?*

ZAPPA: We've recorded all of it. Remember, I bought the recording truck. Bought it from the Beach Boys—a hundred inputs, two 24-track machines, and most of the outboard gear for my studio.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think you'll ever do another theme LP? Like* Cruisin' With Ruben & The Jets *was the band doing this certain type of music.*

ZAPPA: I'm trying to get these guys interested in that form of music. I love that stuff. And they're coming along; they're starting to get more enthusiastic about it. It's one thing to inflict it on them and say, "Play this," but when they start getting a feel for it, then the music comes to life. I'm working on this killer tune by the Turbans called "No No Cherry," but I can't remember all the words. "You told me baby, baby, you told me a great big lie/'Cause when I got inside, you didn't have no cherry pie." Then the chorus is: "No, no cherry/No, no cherry/No, no cherry pie." That much we've got done, and it sounds *great*! I think we're well on our way of putting together 45 minutes of that kind of material.

MUSICIAN: *Getting back to the changes in performance—*

ZAPPA: Well, the stuff we're doing is musically impossible. If you saw the stuff on paper, and someone said, "Okay, here is the score for this, and you're going to take eight people, and you're going to take them on seventy dates, and they're going to play this at this tempo, with choreography, night after night." You'd say, "This is impossible." But we do it. In fact, one of the harder pieces is a thing called "Envelopes," and in this one section where the bass has sixteeen bars rest, instead of resting every night he invents something new for himself to do. One night he ate three bananas—just crammed them into his mouth. Just random acts; I have nothing to do with this. The other night in Salt Lake City he topped himself; he covered his body in mayonnaise in sixteen bars, got back to the bass and finished the number. Why? Why not?

MUSICIAN: *That's been absent from your recent performances—the spontaneous abstract theatrics.*

ZAPPA: You can't inflict that on somebody. If you get a guy in the band who's a natural at it, then he's the guy that should do it. You can't say, "Okay, on the count of three all you guys are going to cover your bodies with mayonnaise." I'd never ask anybody to do that. That's him. That's really him. That's a logical extension of his personality, and he should do it.

MUSICIAN: *Do you think it was a logical extension of his personality before he joined your band?*

ZAPPA: To a degree. He's always been a little tweezed, I think. But now that he's in the band, he understands. He can do this. So long as you're on the beat when you come back in to play your part, and you play all the hard notes right, you can cover your body with anything you want. I don't care. The audience doesn't care either. The main thing is that you're doing a musical performance. M

The most musically usable and intense effects available today are housed in virtually indestructible Lexan® polycarbonate cases which are scratch-resistant, impervious to shock and will look new for years. The Commande Series' large and accessible footswitch lets you engage the effect smoothly and quietly while a high intensity LED, positioned for maximum visibility and protected by the shape of the case, tells you when you're in Commande. A new pop-open battery access cover with a living hinge design that will last indefinitely enables you to change the batteries in a matter of seconds without tools. Convenient end-located jacks for input, output and remote AC power simplify the hookup of single effects and multiple effects chains.

The Commande Series embodies the implicit corporate philosophy at MXR. From day one, we've understood our products to represent more than mere hardware in the music-making process. Our signal processing devices are intended as individual instruments for the musician to use much as an artist uses a palette and a paintbrush. Colorations to enhance the music and focus a musician's individual means of creative expression. Transcending the hard-line parameters of electronic technology where signal processing becomes an art form in itself.

Time Delay

Providing audio delay times of 30 to 300 milliseconds, the Time Delay also features a Regeneration control for repeating echoes and hard reverb. Internal noise reduction circuitry produces a dynamic range greater than 85 dB.

Phaser

The Phaser's Sweep Control provides a wide range of usable phasing effects and Regeneration can be added for extra color and depth. Innovative switching technology allows higher signal levels without distortion and produces one of the most consistent phasing effects ever created.

Overdrive

The Overdrive offers the full range of distortion effects from a heavy fuzz with prolonged sustain to a more subtle tube saturation effect. Two controls allow adjustment of distortion and output levels.

Sustain

The Sustain produces smooth, natural-sounding compression and the punch of a dynamic attack by making automatic adjustments to the attack and release times in response to the rate of change of the input signal. Provides unbelievably long sustain.

Preamp

An instrument and transducer preamplifier, the Preamp's unique equalization circuit provides variable one-knob control of bass and treble boost or cut. A variable gain control offers from 0 to 20 dB of gain.

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