MUSICIAN

HEADS

$1.95 NO. 59 SEPTEMBER, 1983

Prince Talks!

Stranger Than Fiction

BY BARBARA GRAUSTARK

JOAN JETT

THE GENIUS OF GUM

BEACH BOYS

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

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World Radio History

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A BILLBOARD PUBLICATION

MUSICIAN

NO. 59, SEPT., 1983

Joan Jett is revealed as the greatest gum chewer in eternity, because, like her music it comes straight from the heart. From the teenage girl group the Runaways to hard times to stardom, Joan Jett always knows exactly where her gum is. Charles M. Young (and in love) ecstatically elaborates. Page 46

Prince has created an elusive and bizarre mystique coming straight out of his music and lyrics. In an extremely rare interview Barbara Graustark wends her way through Prince's past and leads us to the realization that it's all true. What can happen in Andre's basement depends only upon how many people are there. Page 54

The Beach Boys did a lot more than just bring surfing to Kansas. Brian Wilson's harmonic genius paved the way for much of what followed, including the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's*. Brother Carl Wilson brings us inside Brian's room for the full story of how it all began, what happened to Brian and how they've managed for twenty years with and without him. Page 64

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Cover Photo by Lynn Goldsmith

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EDDIE JOBSON

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From Curved Air to Roxy Music to U.K., EDDIE JOBSON has helped shape some of the finest moments of British rock. The work of these bands set the standard for many others to follow. Jobson's exploits have made him a frequent winner in KEYBOARD Reader's Polls. Now the violin/keyboard whiz is expanding his area of influence. With a new band. ZINC. The result is music as intense and far-reaching as anything he's done before.

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Musician (USPS 431-910) is published monthly by Amordian Press, Inc., P.O. Box 701, 31 Commercial St., Gloucester, MA 01930. (617) 281-3110. Amordian Press, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Billboard Publications, Inc., One Astor Place, 1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036. Musician is a trademark of Amordian Press, Inc.

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Second class postage paid at Gloucester, MA 01930 and at additional mailing offices. Subscriptions $18 per year, $34 for two years, $48 for three years. Canada and elsewhere, add $6 per year, U.S. funds only. **Subscription address: Musician, Box 1923, Marion, OH 43305. Postmaster send form 3579 to above address.**

Current and back issues are available on microfilm from University Microfilms Intl., 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

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World Radio History

Letters

LETTER FROM HEAVEN

What is this? Mikal Gilmore on the vital music that silly KROQ won't play, Charles M. Young on Lester Bangs, Timothy White on Bob Marley and I haven't even gotten halfway through the issue yet. You guys are really determined to make all other music magazines look even worse than they do compared to you anyway, aren't you? And I even forgot to mention Peter Guralnick on Muddy Waters. Geez, I think I died and went to reader heaven. Please keep up these astonishing displays of passion in writing.
Kendall V. Scott
Garden Grove, CA

KOOTCH-ASS ROCK 'N' ROLL

My congratulations to Mitchell Glazer. Finally someone has done a decent interview with two of rock's best, Don Henley and Danny Kortchmar. If anyone wants to hear Kortchmar's 80s music, listen to his 1980 Electra/Asylum album *Innuendo*. It is a super album that has me listening over and over again. After years of being "laid back," Henley and Kortchmar deserve to play some kiss-ass rock 'n' roll. Kudos to both of them. By the way, Kootch, you are the sexiest man in rock 'n' roll today.
Fayanne Kanner
North Hollywood, CA

WE REMEMBER LES

I figure that between them, the Ramones and Lester Bangs have yelled out "we accept you" more sincerely than anybody. They've shown weird people like me that all it takes to rock 'n' roll is a little bit of soul. When it hit me that Lester had died I bawled my eyes out and stared at the stars. Some people break down walls but Lester smashed 'em to bits.
Mary Byrd
Oklahoma City, OK

LET YOUR MOTHER DECIDE

If John Lennon had worked harder on his craft, as you suggest, Sting, perhaps he might have mastered polyrhythm or microtone, but I don't think his songs would have been any better than they were—they must be judged with a standard other than mere musiciarship. His music was a by-product of his quest for self-realization, and ultimately I think all music which truly touches the hearts of the people comes from this source, including your own. Songs like "Driven To Tears" and "King Of Pain" reflect a genuine spiritual struggle, but if you listen to Andy Summers' "Mother" back-to-back with John Lennon's "Mother," it becomes quite clear who has done more work in this area.

A handful of catchy-yet-progressive pop tunes are not going to do us much good if the world goes up in flames, and Lennon clearly emphasized that the salvation of the world depends on the salvation of the individual. Yes, you are a tight and clever little band, and your forays into the inner world are at least encouraging. But please, show a little humility at the feet of a master, no matter how ragged be his clothing.
Jim Nail
Brentwood, CA

DO IT FOR LOVE

I commend Mikal Gilmore for his stimulating article on L.A.'s new pop. But the ultimate stimulation comes from the music itself: Three O'Clock, the Bangles, Dream Syndicate and all the rest of L.A.'s new rock 'n' pop. But the real proof lies in the fact that this music originates in the imaginations of its purveyors and is not the result of some trendy record exec trying to market a new fad. These bands are not in it for the money.
Jordan Oakes
Valencia, CA

ROMANCE POLICIERE

The interview of Sting by Vic Garbarini was absolutely fantastic. Vic's intuitive, understanding evaluation of Sting and his music was beautifully tempered with insightful, easy flowing, witty-yet-sincere writing. (Can you tell I loved it?) Hopefully, there will be more interviews of Sting by Vic. I equally enjoyed Andy Summers' diary of his adventure on Montserrat and I gained a greater understanding of his genius through his photographs. That was a clever bit of analysis of Stewart Copeland and his kinetic world, done by Chip Stern, but I felt the interview was far too short in comparison to the others. 'Le travail par excellence!'
Love from a Police Deputy,
Amrita Parmar
Richmond, B.C.

Sting—the humble introvert, hmmmm? This is certainly a novel idea and not an unwelcome one. I knew there had to be more behind the poignant lyrics of "Synchronicity" than the tortured artist/egomaniac that the media loves to present as *the* Mr. Sumner. Thank you, Vic Garbarini for the *finest* interview with Sting I have read, and I have read quite a few.
Caroline Tipton
Coventry, RI

GUITAR CRAZY

Have you people gone guitar crazy? I mean you have been featuring some *real* guitarists lately: Ronnie Drayton, Vernon Reid, Jim Hall and Bill Frisell, not to mention your June feature on Andy Summers. These are people who prove that the synthesizer will never replace the guitar—a stupid argument anyway; all instruments are created equal.

Also a nice Police article, but I'm really waiting for them to release an instrumental LP. Do it under a different name, anything to get it out! The B-sides of their singles are not enough. One more thing—you have the best magazine on the market (the truth—not just bull to get my letter published).
Ron Ertman

In J.C. Costa's piece on the new Steinberger guitar he states that those locked in the holy union of select hardwoods and vintage pickups would not be too happy with the new offering. The only people who will not be happy with the Steinberger are vintage dealers with large stocks of Strats, Teles and Les Pauls. Just as the prices of old Fender amps have been kept in check by Mesa Boogie, and various old organs are losing out to programmable synths capable of emulating them, the Steinberger might just bump off the old Strat-Paul-Tele trinity. It's original, affordable, indestructable, playable and portable. Praise Ned, I'm satisfied.
The Guitar Grappler

REVOLUTIONARY SURVIVOR

I can't believe it! I'm part of a nation-wide trend again! (Haven't been in one of those since the sexual revolution—anyone remember that one?) Lack of support for original music from people, clubs and management led to breaking up the band and setting up a studio in my house, thanks to new technology, but what to do, what to do? Then the next thing you know the latest issue of Musician arrives to tell me to take heart, I'm not alone. Alone or not, I'm recording and those record execs will be hearing from me—and in 8-tracks too! And if you know any A&R people, tell 'em to write or call—I've got great stuff!
John Santa
Chapel Hill, NC

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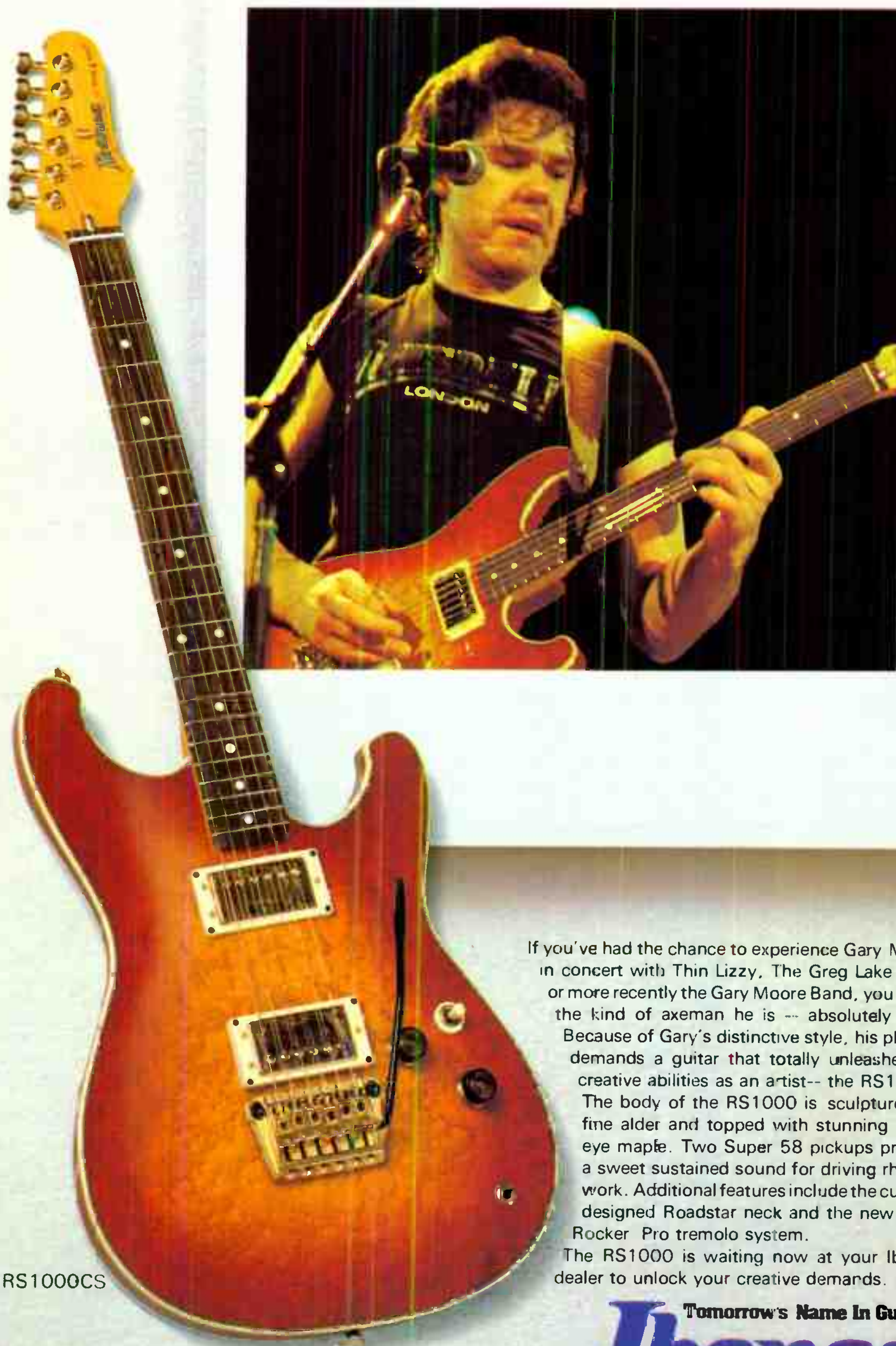
Gary Moore's Key To Creative Expression
The RS1000 By Ibanez



If you've had the chance to experience Gary Moore in concert with Thin Lizzy, The Greg Lake Band or more recently the Gary Moore Band, you know the kind of axeman he is -- absolutely wild! Because of Gary's distinctive style, his playing demands a guitar that totally unleashes his creative abilities as an artist-- the RS1000. The body of the RS1000 is sculptured of fine alder and topped with stunning bird's eye maple. Two Super 58 pickups provide a sweet sustained sound for driving rhythm work. Additional features include the custom designed Roadstar neck and the new Hard Rocker Pro tremolo system.

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World Radio History

music industry news

by Jock Baird

The bombshell of the year arrived at the end of June when Warner Communications revealed that it was negotiating with the parent companies of PolyGram Records to purchase eighty percent of the U.S. operation and half the European arm, making it the largest multi-national record company in the world. PolyGram's shareholders are a large high-tech conglomerate, the Seimens corporation, and Philips, a consumer electronics firm specializing in the Compact Disc format. Warners' interest in CD, amply demonstrated at the recent IMIC conference, was believed to be one of the motivating factors of the offer. The Seimens group was reportedly unhappy with PolyGram's ten-year struggle to get a profit-turning chunk of the American record market, and has been rumored to be thinking of bailing out for almost two years now.

The wave of shock and outrage gave way to anti-trust action by CBS Records and MCA Records. CBS' **Walter Yetnikoff** in particular blasted the takeover, adding, "It will result in an overly concentrated industry. But if they can do it, we have some interesting ideas of our own, which I thought until now were illegal." More serious obstacles to the buy-out occur in Germany, where the Berlin Cartel Office has rarely consented to mergers which give the new company thirty percent of the German market; the Warner-Polygram deal would garner at least thiry-six percent. Major German labels are also expected to stridently oppose the sale.

Quickly following on the heels of this was the gloomy news that MCA was inking a new distribution arrangement with the last independently distributed major label, Motown. Following the defections of Chrysalis to CBS and Arista to RCA, it heaped the final indignity on the indie distribution network, the more so because Motown had actually started its own distribution company in the L.A. area in the wake of Pickwick's departure from the record business. MCA's new appetite for film and video projects, increased by the hiring of **Irving Azoff**, may have been whetted by the success of the Motown twenty-fifth anniversary show and **Berry Gordy Jr.**'s film activities.

Ornette Coleman, not one to undertake small projects, will be opening a state-of-the-art performance center on September 25 in Fort Worth, Texas. The complex, dubbed Caravan of Dreams, includes a 400-seat club, a restaurant and a solarium, and a small amphitheater. To christen the new venture, financed completely by local investors, Ornette will play the full orchestral version of "Skies Of America" (never performed in its original form before) and introduce a piece written about the late Buckminster Fuller.

Sonny Rollins is doing three sold-out dates in Japan with **Jack DeJohnette**, **Alphonso Johnson** and **Pat Metheny**, including a 20,000-seat jazz festival that will be broadcast on Japanese national TV. If we're lucky, a discussed U.S. tour will go forward.... **the Police** kicked off their tour of U.S. arenas by playing the tiny Half Moon pub in Putney, England, right around the corner from Putney citizen **Andy Summers**. Bandmate **Stewart Copeland** will play on a cut from the upcoming **Paul McCartney** album, due in the fall.... **David Paich** and the **Porcaro brothers** of **Toto** are writing with **the Jacksons** and playing on the new Jacksons' LP. Yes, **Michael**'s in on it; he plans to sing a duet with Queen's **Freddie Mercury**. (He's also producing a couple of tracks for, glack, **Barbra Streisand**.) **Phil Collins** will be playing drums for the fall **Robert Plant** tour.

The early-July New Music Seminar in Manhattan shed some interesting light on the progress of radio/record reform. Many old-line independents felt that the seminar turned into a major label orgy of self-congratulation, a celebration of cooptation. There was anger from the indies, shoved into the back of the room (and having no hotel hospitality suites). In his opening address, I.R.S.' **Miles Copeland** took note of the fragility of revolution: "The problem is, when you create success, you want to formulize it. That's the danger." The passion to formulize took the form of endless attempts to define "new music" at a host of seminars (Chic's **Bernard Edwards** came up with the only acceptable one: "Anything I haven't heard before"). Nonetheless, despite the branch majors' provocations, a number of the so-called new music people scarcely distinguished themselves by complaining, cat-calling, whining, "Why don't you play more hard-core?" and other juvenilia. Faced with such contradictions, the conference left the neutral observer with a mild uneasiness about the new music future.

Chart Action

It was turnover time on the old LP charts this month; well, almost. That pesky kid Michael Jackson dropped another single off *Thriller* and went back to #1 after only one week in the runner-up spot. *Flashdance* had put up a great defense, but there was no stopping the Police's *Synchronicity* from going to #2. Def Leppard, David Bowie and Men At Work's *Cargo* hung in, as did Prince (#9) and Eddy Grant (#10), but below that, the old and feeble started dropping like flies. Drifting down were Journey, Bryan Adams, Hall & Oates, Styx and ZZ Top. Falling more rapidly were Culture Club, Lionel Richie, Rick Springfield and U2.

Roaring up on the outside curve came Stevie Nicks, and Loverboy, hitting #7 and #8 in three weeks. The Kinks (#15) executed a less spectacular but still impressive passing maneuver, as did A Flock Of Seagulls (#16), Talking Heads (#28) and The Fixx (#24). Joan Jett hit #63 running, Quarterflash got to #58 in two weeks, Rickie Lee to #48 in three, the Eurythmics and the Human League looked strong in the mid-30s and even Bob Marley's *Confrontation* leaped eighty places to take #68. It was a time of rampant optimism, spoiled only by the appearance of a new Iron Maiden album even as their *Piece Of Mind* still rose in to the low twenties.

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IT'S WORTH IT.

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THE NICE THING IS, IT'S AVAILABLE TODAY!

Unlike a lot of products you might buy, you won't be sorry next year about the Roland product you bought this year, because Roland products are designed for the future.

We design our keyboard products with such thoughtful features as standard interface jacks sync-in jacks, sync-out jacks, and then we make those sync jacks mean something by giving you a whole line of other products to sync with. In fact, we put features on Roland products that you won't even use until next year, and then you'll wonder how you ever got along without them.

There's not another product line in the business that can offer the performance and flexibility of the Roland products you see here.

SH-101

The monophonic SH-101 is battery operated for remote applications, and can be enhanced with the optional MGS-1 modulator grip and shoulder strap. The battery operation of the SH-101 gives the keyboard player the same on-stage freedom as the guitarist.

Functions of the SH-101 include: Dual Waveform VCO, Sub-oscillator, LFO Mod, Noise generator, VCF, Key Follow, and a switchable VCA, normal or automatic Portamento. The SH-101 also contains a three-direction Arpeggiator and a 100-step sequencer which syncs to other Roland products. The SH-101 retails for $495, and the MGS-1 for $100. NEWS FLASH!! THE SH-101 WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE IN METALLIC RED AND METALLIC BLUE!!

JX-3P/PG-200

The revolutionary new JX-3P has six-voices, twelve Digitally Controlled Oscillators, 64 program memories, Chorus, a built-in polyphonic sequencer and MIDI interface (a new system of interface developed for computer-controlled instruments), for the very low price of $1395.

A companion to the JX-3P is the PG-200 Programmer. The JX-3P Synthesizer can accept and store programs off the PG-200. This allows you to buy a JX-3P and then rent time on the PG-200, or buy it later. The PG-200 will also be interfaceable with other products Roland will introduce this year. The PG-200 retails for $295.

SYSTEM-100M

Write your own rules with the 100M Modular Synthesizer System. The modular nature of the 100M lets you build your sound one block at a time to choose exactly the system that most suits your needs, and then add to it at any time. You can also buy individual blocks from the 100M System to expand your current synthesizer set-up.

Because the System 100M was designed using mini-phone jacks (rather than the much larger phone jacks) it gives a lot of performance without taking up a lot of room. Complete synthesizer modules start at just $275.

MC-4/MTR-100

The Roland Micro-Composer has, without question, written the industry rules for music programming and computer control of a musical performance. Roland has refined this process into an art form on the latest generation MicroComposer—the MC-4. Describing the numerous features on the MC-4 must include mention of the 16K of internal ROM music programming software, which makes programming fluid, and editing flawless.

The MC-4 features 4 channels of sequential control with 2-CVs, 1-Gate and 1-Multiplex output for each channel. Connecting easily to modular synths (like the System 100-M) the MC-4 can also connect to many other synthesizers (like the JP-8 and Juno 60) by means of the CV Interface Unit (OP-8). The MTR-100 Digital Cassette Recorder is used for digital storage and retrieval of program data. MC-4 with 48K RAM memory retails for $3295.

JUPITER-8

The current heavyweight champion of the keyboard industry, the Jupiter-8 is responsible for introducing features like Split, Dual, and Whole Keyboard Modes, Oscillator Assign Modes and Arpeggiator. The 8-voice 16 oscillator JP-8 has 64 program memories, 8 patch presets and cassette interface for patch program storage. The powerful sound and sleek design of the JP-8 have also dictated synthesizer design for the 80's and into the future.

A brand new feature of the Jupiter-8 is its new low price of $4995.

JUNO-6/JUNO-60

In Greek mythology, Juno was Jupiter's mate. In every sense the same is true in keyboards, as the JUNO perfectly complements the Jupiter in sound, features and price. The fat-sounding DCO (Digitally Controlled Oscillator) first introduced on the JUNO-6 has become accepted as a "must" by many keyboard players. Internal architecture of the JUNOs make it next to impossible to get a bad sound out of one.

The JUNO-60 provides the addition of 56 patch memory to the 6-voice JUNO-6 and also cassette program storage and DCB (Digital Communication Bus) that lets you slave two JUNOs, or interface with the MC-4 through the OP-8 Interface. JUNO-6 is $1295, JUNO-60 is $1795.

JUPITER-6

The Jupiter-6 is a six voice version of Roland's Jupiter-8 featuring a split keyboard and a host of new performance features. The JP-6 can store 32 different patch preset combinations and up to 48 different patch sounds, all easily switched by a remote footswitch.

Other unique features include a four-direction Arpeggio, a Detune key for ensemble effect, Cross Mod, VCO1 & 2 Syncing in either direction, Key Follow, 3 kinds of Keyboard split, MIDI digital interface and tape Save and Load of patches. The Jupiter-6 retails for $2995.

MC-202

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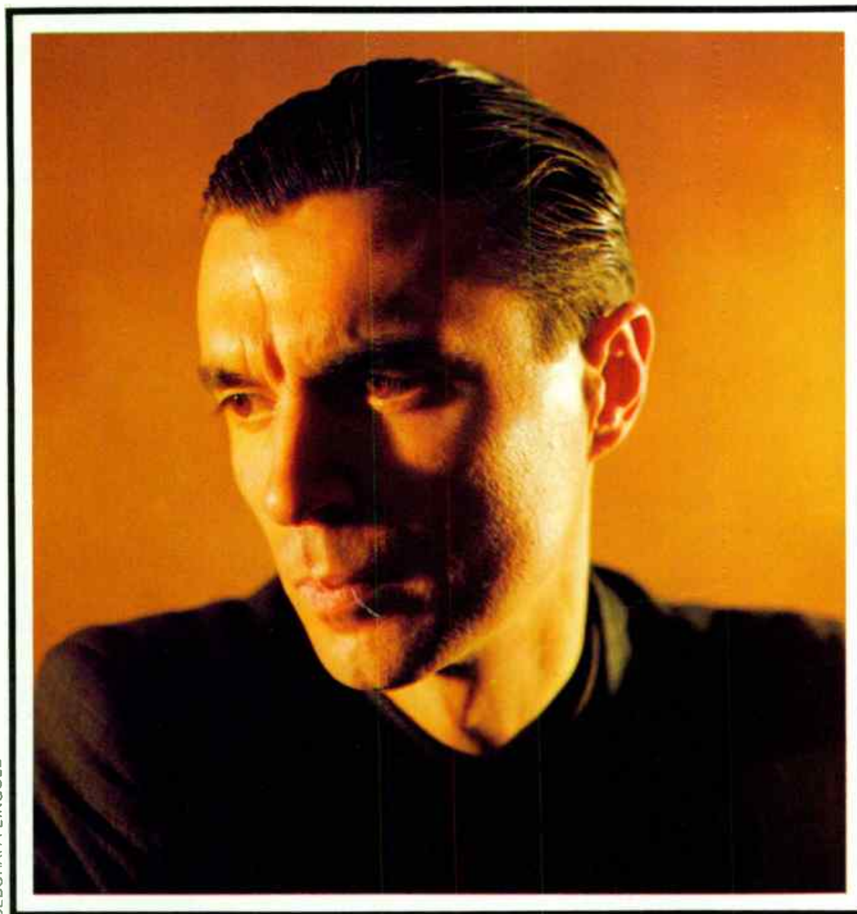
TALKING HEADS

Grooves from the Heart of Darkness



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

"A lot beyond the surface"; David Byrne's new moods range from spiritual to sillyass.

BY GREG TATE

Keeping up with the Talking Heads these days is akin to keeping up with the mutations of an extraterrestrial life form—like, say, the ones in John Carpenter's *The Thing* or Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Likewise, this monster band not only practices cell division (via solo projects) but also changes form for each return appearance. In keeping with this tradition of metamorphosis, the group's new LP, *Speaking In Tongues*, throws you for a loop and then a left curve. While it's as knee-deep in funk/new wave synthesis as 1980's *Remain In Light*, it upsets the expectations engendered by that LP as much as that one did those of *Fear Of Music*, not just musically, but lyrically and spiritually as well. As intrigued as anybody by the transformations, I expected that a rap with head Head David Byrne would explain them all away. Instead, it left me with as many unanswered as answered questions, chief among the former being just how the band defines itself and its audience now. To mention this, however, is to jump ahead of ourselves a bit, and perhaps the best way to work up to this conundrum is to let Byrne himself run us through how the new LP came into being.

When I mentioned to him the difference in feel between the band's last two studio LPs, he explained it as simply a matter of renewed camaraderie. "The recording didn't take all that long this time, but we did spend a lot of time rehearsing and learning how to play with one another again, since everybody has been off for a while doing solo projects. The initial music, the basic tracks and rhythms and whatnot, were all done by Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison, Tina Weymouth and myself, though Alex Weir (guitar) and Steve Scales (percussion) were also involved in some of that basic recording. We hadn't worked together as improvising or jamming musicians for quite a while, probably since the first couple of records, so there's more of a sense of a band playing a new record."

Sidestepping the thorny issue of how Brian Eno's departure may or may not have brought on this *esprit de corps* is not to neglect how audible his absence is on *Speaking In Tongues*. To these ears, the minus side of Eno's split from the Heads lies in how the new LP lacks visionary usage of studio-tech. On the plus side, however, is, as Byrne said, more a sense of Talking Heads as a band of hearty human musicians rather than Eno's merely cybernetic functionaries. Moreover, after the sizzling novelty of *Remain In Light* wore off with me, I did begin to hear its technocratic funk mutations as so many static snatches of Parliament-Funkadelic tape looped into working more like clockwork than a motor-booty affair. What's impressive about the new record is that, while it's as structurally sound as its first cousin, it's also, by comparison, as loose as a

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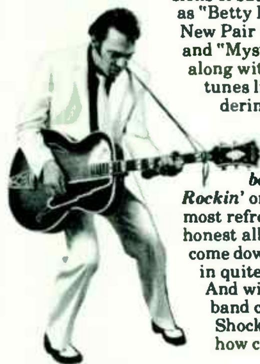

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LIGHTFOOT SCORES A PERFECT 10. Gordon Lightfoot went into the studio with 10 new songs and producer Dean Parks. He came out with ***Salute.*** And everyone was happy. Because Gordon and Dean didn't just make another great Gordon Lightfoot album—they made what some Burbank devotees consider the ***best*** Gordon Lightfoot album. The academic explanation offered is that Gordon's mature singing and songwriting skills meshed perfectly with the studio technology of the '80s. Listen for the cuts "Salute (A Lot More Livin' To Do)" and "Someone To Believe In," and judge for yourself. An interesting fact: Gordon's album ***Sundown*** achieved Platinum status (sales of 1,000,000 units) before the record industry gave awards for that sort of thing.

THEY FOUND THE CURE, so "Let's Go To Bed." A touch of romance has crept into the hearts of a band known for its rather brooding posture, resulting in ***The Walk,*** the latest from **The Cure.** This specially-priced Sire mini album features the group's "brightest sounding music" to date, according to the ***L.A. Times.*** The hit "Let's Go To Bed" and the title track are among the disc's more contagious offerings.

NEXT STOP, SCOTT LAND...Quick, look out the window! It's a singer/songwriter! Tim Scott's debut appearance on Sire obliterates those annoying rumors about the death of the singer/songwriter; entitled ***Swear,*** it's a specially-priced mini album of danceable (read "Danceable") rock. Production duties were undertaken by Richard Gottehrer, whose other debut credits include Blondie, The Go-Go's and Marshall Crenshaw. Listen for the title cut, "Swear," and watch for Tim's videos and live shows—he's in the midst of a two-month tour. Great Scott!!

THE AZTECS USED GOLD, and Kodak uses silver (emulsions), but **Aztec Camera** may be looking at Platinum. And considering the support this Scottish quartet has been receiving in the English press, we wouldn't think of metaling in its affairs. ***Melody Maker*** says the group's first LP is "one of the best records to come out this year," combining "sophisticated emotional irony" with "rock's simple drive" and "punk's honest vitality." ***High Land, Hard Rain*** is the title of Aztec Camera's Sire debut; the songs are written by 19-year-old Roddy Frame; the production is sparse and frequently acoustic; the lead cut is "Oblivious."

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THEY SHALL BE RELEASED...Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel recently completed work in the studio on ***Think Too Much,*** the new (read "New") **Simon and Garfunkel** recording...Other artists with forthcoming projects include Asia, T-Bone Burnett, Carrera, Dave Davies (Ray's brother), Jennifer Holliday, Serge Ponsar, Rufus & Chaka Khan (live), Carly Simon and Tom Tom Club...We'll keep you posted.

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goose, not to mention more groove-fluid in feel. Even more fascinating is that this quality carries itself over into Byrne's singing and writing. On the new record he comes across as more a creature of whimsy than a brainy whinybutt; results which derive from how hard he worked to integrate his vocal persona into the band's lively, albeit rigorous, rhythm tracks.

"After we finished the basic recording I spent a long time writing lyrics and melodies. I sang nonsense lyrics (I mean complete gibberish) to the music until I felt happy with the way that the gibberish fit the music. Then I put in more words to fit the rhythms and melodies."

The riotous call-and-response that goes on between lyrics and rhythm hooks on *Speaking In Tongues* is more akin to rap and other forms of black pop than anything Talking Heads have done before. So too is the way in which celebration is channeled through tightly-knit songforms, synaptic syncopation and funkatization of the beat. All of which asks whether Talking Heads are actually after a synthesis of black and white pop or are really trying to become more adept at playing black music. From Byrne comes an answer which lies somewhere in the middle and also somewhere near the bottom dollar.

"For myself this is real American music we're playing: bits of this and bits of that which naturally get mixed up after a while. It's music from all over, and that's American music to me, or at least what it should be. A lot of our music is a synthesis of black music with some white pop forms. But purely from a merchandising point of view we were also thinking at one point that our only chance of being heard was on R&B stations—because white radio doesn't play us anymore, they stopped a couple years ago. It's really ass-backwards since the white stations should be playing...well, it's obvious what they should be playing. Some of the white stations have started to open up, but not very much."

Ass-backwards being the name of the game when it comes to Apartheid Oriented Radio, maybe it's really not so surprising that America's major white pop act can't get behind going deeper into a black sound. And given that Talking Heads defy easy racial classification since the adoption of several black musicians (not to mention black musical attitudes), maybe their gamble to cross over from black to white radio isn't so off the beam either. Nonetheless, some crucial questions do arise from the band's investment in this gambit—one being whether audiences on both sides of the color line will take to their quirky hybrid *en masse*; another being just why the Heads continue exploring black music at the risk of alienating portions of their

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old audience. Beyond the standard "artistic integrity" lies the riddle of why the Heads seem more obsessed with dissecting and reassembling black music's structural and spiritual components than any of their contemporaries. If you want my opinion, I think it's that they've been possessed by what Kool & the Gang once referred to as "the spirit of the boogie." If you'd like Byrne's take on it instead, well, it all goes back to his childhood.

"Black music is very different from the homelife I had as a child. Also, the black religious experience as I perceive it is very different from what I was led to believe religion was all about: it doesn't seem to be based so much on guilt and bad feelings. There are probably bad feelings in there, but generally it seems to be more about community, and that can often be a really enjoyable experience. In turn I think this aspect of the black religious experience has had a large impact on the black music that's affected me."

In relating to Byrne how I thought many of the band's critics didn't give as much credit to their black influences as they did, he replied, "Well, you know, we get really tired of having to say what the sources of our music are. You know it was really odd, but with our first record, only in Europe did people pick up on the fact that a lot of what we did was heavily influenced by, like...Booker T. & the M.G.'s—that really sparse but rhythm-oriented music. And nobody here picked up on that at all. They were picking up on, I don't know, the *words* or something (laughs)."

Speaking In Tongues suggests various forms of black religious and secular celebration—from the hedonistic Rick James vamp that galvanizes "Making Flippy Floppy" to the shouts of the gospel choir (Dolette MacDonald and Nona Hendryx) who intensify Reverend Byrne's evangelical vocals on "Slippery People." The percolating Bernie Worrell synthwork which funks up "Girlfriend Is Better" so badly that you'd think it was a cut from Parliament's *Motor-Booty Affair* and the Marleyish luminescence which makes the lover's rock of "This Must Be The Place (Naive Melody)" take on domestic bliss as if it were a kind of spiritual absolution. Matching these musical moodswings are lyrics which range from spiritual to sillyass, from cries for salvation to throwdown rap-attacks. Reading through them for meaning is to step into ambiguous terrain, primarily because the line between prayers and puns isn't so finely drawn, just as it isn't in the work of a George Clinton or a Bootsy Collins. Pushed to explain himself on these weighty matters, Byrne again dissembled towards middle ground.

"I don't have a real religious faith or anything, but I do believe there's a lot beyond the surface. A lot of times I don't know exactly what it is I'm trying to get at until afterwards. It's almost as if the lyrics are dreams that come to me and I know exactly what it was I saw, but I don't know what it means before anyone else does. I do know that in the past I've written a lot of songs that didn't really reflect the fact that I enjoy singing, so I thought this time I'd write some lyrics and melodies that show how I can really get infected by the character of the music. When we perform now I can really do things that are as much fun to sing as they are to perform—things that reflect how much enjoyment I get from performing."

As part of the band's rebirth as happy-go-lucky funkateers, their current tour will find them outfitted for the first time in stage costumes, furthering their connection with black funksters. What of course remains to be seen in all of this is whether black or white pop audiences are ready for Talking Heads' new fence-straddling act. While it's too early to know just how the new record will be received, I know that my own response to it has gone from disappointment to enchantment to dance-crazed to a kind of indifference. The initial response resulted from missing Eno and Adrian Belew's hallucinogenic touches; the second came from being seduced by

continued on page 122

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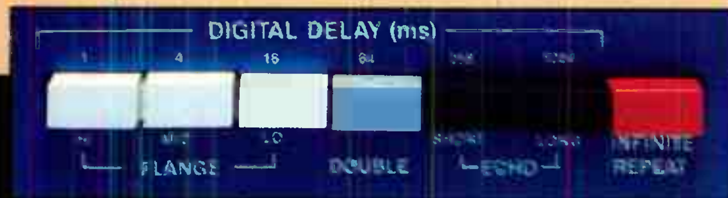

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A flock of Seagulls

Easy Street Comes to an End

BBC RETNA

Seagulls in heat: Paul Reynolds, Frank Maudsley, Mike Score & Ali (Captain Pernod) Score.

BY JOCK BAIRD

Come on now, admit it. It's driving you crazy. You may otherwise be a very tolerant, generous, open-minded person. You're even able to handle Boy George and maybe a couple of those techno-pop bands. But you *hate* that guy in A Flock Of Seagulls' hair, not in any rational, sorry-but-it-ain't-my-cup-of-tea way, but in some primitive, deep, unnatural way. Admit it. Go ahead, call him a techno-geek, a trendie twerp; tell us how you'd like to cram his face in a bottle of Dippidee Doo. There. Feel better? Good. It's a completely normal reaction.

Mike Score, owner of the hair you love to hate, is standing in the lobby of a Washington, D.C. hotel, trying to locate the limo drivers and the rest of A Flock Of Seagulls. Since he only does weird things to his hair onstage, this afternoon he looks approximately like a Huntington Beach surfer without the tan. The band pulled into D.C. at eight this morning after coaching it all night from Pittsburgh, and not everyone is awake yet. It looks like they may not make their in-store promo visit by 3:30. Already a small entourage is assembling around them, including people from FM station DC-101, Arista and Kemp Mill Records, the store, all of whom are co-sponsoring today's multi-media press blitz. There is also a guy from MTV who, he says, was sent down to get an autographed poster for programming veep Buzz Brindle; "They're his favorite group," he confides.

Mike (whose name in their Liverpool dialect sounds like "Mick") is naturally suspicious of journalists like myself, having been raked over by some of the best and worst of the lot. "It's just one of those things, I guess," he sighs. "Maybe we look like we're enjoyin' ourselves and have it soft, while they had to struggle or something. You can't put your finger on it. But it should just *stop*," he adds emphatically. "They should leave us alone and let us be what we want to be."

Singer/keysman Score's indignation is heavily tempered by insecurity at this moment. They've just managed to "break the huge barrier between first and second album," producing a sophisticated, eclectic, synth-ambient LP as a follow-up to a relatively straight-forward punk 'n' roll pop debut. Even their Grammy-winning instrumental "DNA" was a first cousin to their 1982 smash, "I Ran." Now here was *Listen*, a quantum leap into three aural dimensions, layered with little contrapuntal devices and carefully constructed dynamics. Causing even more insecurity is the absence of a clear-cut single; "Wishing" was the first pick and didn't do badly in Britain or America, but hardly made AOR history like "I Ran" had. "Nightmares," a riveting tableau of nameless fear, stiffed in the U.K.; they are now ready to launch "Transfer Affection," the strongest contender for its insidiously singable verse melody, but still awfully subtle. Singles are a new album's legs; without 'em, it's hard to go very far.

"I was worried about it, myself," Mike muses. "When the second album's really different from the first, you think, 'Is there a market for it? Is it what we really are?' You suddenly think, 'We could've done this, we should've done that. Maybe we're not hip anymore....'"

Mike's brother Ali Score, a balding, energetic chap who bashes drums, joins the conversation: "The first album was more catchy tunes, boom-boom-boom-boom, grab you by the neck and shake you. The second album's a bit more thoughtful." Were they influenced by their surroundings, Conny Plank's studio in Neunkirchen, Germany? "Well, it's part of the European community and all that. We've always admired Ultravox and wanted to go in that direction. We did have a lot of help on the first album. On the second one, we knew more of what we wanted to do."

As bassist Frank Maudsley and guitar-

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ist Paul Reynolds trudge bleary-eyed into the lobby, the caravan saddles up. A Flock like to travel about the cities they play in in hired Cadillac limousines; they say they're just as cheap as cabs. This small concession to pop stardom is just one more bone of contention between the Flock and the critics, a running dispute that may prove hazardous to some writers' health: "Now, if someone slags us and wants to do another interview, we say yeah; when they show up, we nearly beat them up," chuckles Mike menacingly. "We give them stupid answers to their questions and things like that. Then they come back and slag us again!" Ali adds brightly.

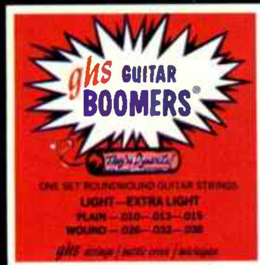
More critical contentiousness derives from the fact that Mike's lyrics aren't necessarily about issues of literary or political import. Score is philosophical about that: "People have said to us, 'Your music should make a statement,' but we don't think it should. We've made a statement, 'Man Made' on the first album ("Man made machines make music for the man / Now machines make music while the man makes plans"), which is a warning that technology is there to be used properly, not wrongly like an atomic strike force that will automatically fire back if they fire one. But people think you're constantly thinking along one certain line. They don't seem to think that your brain can jump around from the grass to Saturn." The grass to Saturn, inquires the journalist, sensing a subliminal statement about soft drugs? "Yeah, you could be sitting there looking at the grass in the field and suddenly you'll be going, 'I wonder what's going on up on Saturn.'"

Outer space and high technology are a major ingredient in A Flock Of Seagulls musical iconography. They have a bright fascination about the future that perfectly meshes with the jet-like synth effects and song titles like "Telecommunication," "Space Age Love Song" and "Modern Love Is Automatic." But beyond the fascination is "just a big mistrust in general" about technology. Despite the ironic rooster crow of "The Electrics Are Everywhere" on the new LP, both Scores believe "there's definitely going to be a new music backlash. Everyone is going to stop using electronics and mechanical stuff and go back to just being bands. David Bowie's just done it."

The limo approaches the record store back alley. A few curious onlookers take note of the caravan but there is no demonstration. Assembling quickly, the four band members enter through the back. The small store is packed with kids waiting for autographs, and between the Georgetown humidity and the absence of fresh air, it is sweltering. The band takes up positions in a small alcove extensively decorated with poster collages, little paper seagulls flying across the walls and a large white face silhouetted against a circuit board, an enlargement of the cover of *Listen*. Posters even cover the floor of the alcove, a veritable seagull shrine. There is mild curiosity from the autograph hunters, but no screams or even applause at the end of the first song that's been blaring on the store sound system. The scene cries out for some uncontrolled hysteria.

Paul Reynolds, twenty-year-old guitarist, looks like he could have been a poster boy for the Hemophilia Foundation, with his pasty pallor and apparent anemia. Since the band is leaving for Atlanta after the show and driving all night, it seems to the journalist that they are working pretty hard. "Umm. It's the only way to make it," replies Paul seriously. How long before you're going to.... "Fall over? Oh, I have no idea."

It is time for the big giveaway. The winner of a drawing will go to L.A. for a weekend to see A Flock's show there. The moment is strangely devoid of suspense as Mike reaches into the jar. "The winner is... Brian Rosenthal!!" Everyone looks around. Brian is nowhere to be found. A young man in the front row laughingly says, "That's me." After a brief chuckle, Mike draws again. "Derek Jarvis." Everyone looks around again. What is this? Where did these guys go? Suddenly the same young man in the front row says again, "That's me." Everybody chuckles again, a little wearily.



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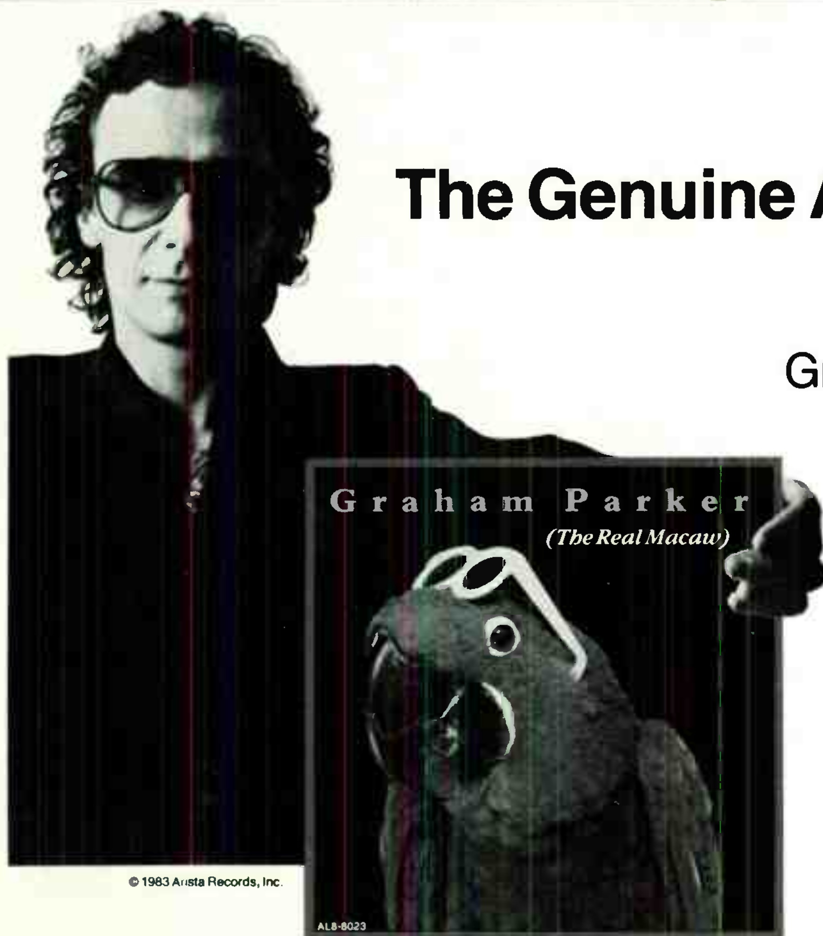

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"No, it really *is* me. I just wasn't thinking...." With much confusion, Derek is brought into the alcove and quickly given the trip to L.A. The DC-101 people seem dazed with the sheer anticlimax of this expensive giveaway.

As the parade of autograph hounds continues, the heat is rising. One young woman asks Ali to write something completely original, an inscription he's never done before. "You've got to be kidding," he pens.

When the line finally winds down, they return to the Caddies. The journalist points out that the crowd was pretty controlled and didn't scream very loudly. "Nice quiet one," agrees Ali. "Sometimes you go in and YEEAAAAWWW!" "We've had some offers we can't refuse," chuckles Mike.

En route to soundcheck, the band is queried about their practice of listing all four members as songwriters despite Mike's suspected primacy. "Well, we all do our little bit," explains Ali. "It's kind of an agreement we made at the beginning. After all, nobody writes every single note of a song." "It's a democracy," adds Paul. Mike agrees: "It's a band, not Mike Score & A Flock of Seagulls. I do probably contribute more of the song ideas, but they get bent and twisted by the band. Sometimes I don't like it, sometimes they work out better. We have big arguments about it.

"I do a lot of writing at home on a 4-track Teac 3340. On the road I take along a Portastudio, which is one of the best things ever invented. You don't even have to leave your hotel room to record. Just the other day, I hooked up a Casio and got the basics of two songs in a couple of hours. My ideas run in breakthroughs: suddenly I'll hit something and that triggers off two or three songs.

As the limo pulls up to George Washington University's basketball/sports complex, a small group is loitering at the ticket window. Hardly a mob, the journalist observes; looks like only a dozen or so. "Oh, a dozen's plenty for me," says Mike. "A dozen's too many for me," says Ali. Mike hops out of the limo and enters the hall to good-humored cheers from the would-be mob. Ali enters, gratefully unrecognized. As we look about the inside, the MTV guy spreads his arms excitedly and bubbles, "We could get a big house tonight—five, six thousand!" Ali's female traveling companion quietly turns and raises her eyebrows: "*We*?"

Suddenly, an unrecognizable murk of bass fills the hall. Frank Maudsley is the first onstage for soundcheck (and also the last to leave). He is practicing the sixteenth-note bridge to "Nightmares" and wave upon wave of low-end frequencies are bouncing off the wooden seats, turning his crisp, flatpicked notes into mud. The bass' oozing, glassine

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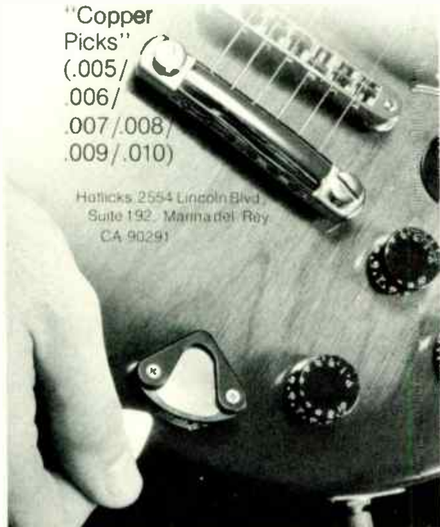

quality contributes mightily to the transparency of *Listen*. How will they render such a delicate, gauze-like ambience onstage? "You've got to lose *something*. I prefer the studio myself," shrugs Mike, "because you get more control there. I think, though, that once the people get up there in the bleachers, that they'll absorb the sound. You just gotta go for it and do your best. If people see you're doing your best, they'll appreciate it."

For soundcheck, the band mostly plays "Transfer Affection"; it seems to be a song they've fallen in love with, as have some in the entourage—later, after the show, it was what everyone is humming. While they occasionally jam for hours, today they play a few numbers and quickly check the monitor system. Possibly too quickly, but except for the extreme boominess, things seem fine.

Mike feels expansive after soundcheck; merely playing for a half hour has taken that edge of insecurity off his youthful animation. He reduces the struggle of making it to a simple matter of idealism: "It's easy. Just go for it and never back off. Keep hold of the dream. It really is easy." It *has* been easy for AFOS. Their story is a short and sweet one: three and a half years ago, Ali, Frank and Mike got together as a trio. A year later, Paul joined. A year after that, a record deal. Why did they pick a guitarist when synthesizers seemed the coming thing? "We *liked* guitars. We went halfway and gained commercial acceptance; we took the middle course." Do their bankers like them better now? "Not really," says Mike, "because we still haven't seen any money from the first record, won't see it till the end of the year. I still have trouble paying the rent on my flat. Paul still lives at home."

After dinner, Mike disappears for more publicity work while the other three members wait on the wooden benches of the locker room. As the heat of D.C.'s Foggy Bottom refuses to let up, they seem somewhat drained. Frank lies on the bench, pretending to sunbathe with his shirt open. Paul sits hunched over, still trying to calm down. From what? "I get so upset by the extravagance. A lot of people wanted posters at the record store and they were using them on the bloody floor, just for decoration. They got all ripped up." Showing me his steel briefcase, he says, "I bet you're wondering what's in here." The journalist indeed is. Reynolds opens it. Inside are dozens of tapes, cassettes of *Thriller*, Ultravox, Bebop Deluxe, lots of Roxy Music (Mike has called *Avalon* "The album of the decade") and...Queen. Paul grins sheepishly. "Yeah, I love Brian May. He got me into playing guitar. I still love everything he does."

For what seems hours, the band waits in this concrete limbo. Ali begins mixing drinks of Pernod and grapefruit juice, partaking mildly himself, but anxious to make sure the journalist is provided for: "That's the secret of good reviews—get the critic plastered!" One of the entourage, a Florida promoter up to testify before the FCC, says, "You know, I had this drink afterwards, but it never tasted the way it does when Ali made it for me." Revealed in his true identity as Captain Pernod, Ali gives up a pirate's laugh.

The long limbo ends as some misplaced stage clothes arrive and road manager Chas Mervyn gently sweeps the swelling entourage from the locker room. Mike begins his final preparation on the hair you love to hate, but is practicing restraint: "I haven't done the spikes this tour. I'm not going to do them until the record goes number one." Yes, fans, Mike does use Dippidee Doo, but no endorsements are planned. Frank also does some minor last-minute combing. Paul, of course, is an all-day greaser and Ali really has no hair to comb. The journalist leaves Paul slouched on the wooden bench, the picture of terminal inertia. Ali's doing a quickie interview with the afternoon drive-time guy on DC-101. Are they really ready to play?

Up on the gym floor, the part of the crowd that isn't sitting primly in the bleachers is pushing toward the stage, moving to Prince's "1999" and "Little Red Corvette." The band is announced with little fanfare and dashes onstage, launching into several familiar first-LP tunes with unbelievable energy and dynamism. Elaborate stage lighting filters delicately through the mist of a fog machine. The apparently lethargic Paul and Frank have become electrified, Paul twisting and bobbing with this strange, perverted smile and Frank jogging furiously in place at his mike, then dashing across the stage. Captain Pernod explodes at his Simmons kit, his amiable wit replaced by savage boldness. Only Mike, who looks older and more severe in his hairdo, avoids any overt showmanship, planting his short frame in front of his keyboard stack and tensely belting the songs. The crowd is enthralled, dancing in place and heedlessly bumping into one another. Wild ovations follow the first four tunes.

Mike then announces "Nightmares" to a smattering of applause. The band, running at full tilt, plunges into the opening verse with the same fervor as the first album tunes, but suddenly realize they've started too loud; there are no higher levels to build to. Robbed of its expressive dynamics, the song sounds more ordinary; Mike's subtle vocals can't be heard. The applause is more mixed. The band returns to its strength and the bodies begin bumping again. Then comes "Transfer Affection" and something is clearly wrong. Mike, who

continued on page 114

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World Radio History

Cecil Taylor

Complex Concepts & Rhythmic Revolt

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Cecil Taylor at home, planning new ways to outrage the dunderheads.

BY CLIFF TINDER

A former music professor of mine once described the revelation of attending a Cecil Taylor performance during the heart of the 60s hotbed of black music revolt. Turning out in full force, the young intellectuals of the day fully expected Taylor to tear down the walls of the temples of tradition with the fiery intensity of his music. But instead of mounting the piano onstage, he lifted the arm of a turntable and proceeded to play James Brown and Horace Silver, explaining to his audience, "This is what my music is about. This is the essence of black music."

Not everyone in attendance understood what Taylor was getting at, but when he finally went to the piano, it became apparent that these earthy blues and multi-layered rhythms were truly the ultimate link between Afro-American music and the ancient traditions of Africa. It also became clear that this audience was witnessing one of the utlimate realizations of the orchestra, the drum ensemble and the essentials of the blues distilled into one instrument of percussion and song.

Not since Thelonious Monk have we had such a complete and unique artist playing piano, a rare combination of true genius, ineluctable innovation, technical facility and complete integrity. Yet one of the most glorious fruitions of black music remains all but ignored today. Admittedly, Taylor's music is challenging and intensely personal, thwarting facile imitation. It doesn't jump out and wrestle you down with inspiration the way Coltrane's does, nor does it coax you into the inner realms like Ornette's. There is so much happening in Taylor's music that it seems a separate existence, a life and community unto itself. There's something darkly mysterious, ritualistically organic, something *knowing* about this music. It not only engages the mind and the emotions, but it potentiates the body I can't sit still when I have a Taylor album on; there's a dance going on and you want to join in. A friend of mine once tried to describe Cecil Taylor's music to someone who had never experienced it. As his verbal attempts proved futile, he finally fell to the ground and began twitching and rolling around, screaming in rhythmic monosyllables. That probably conveyed more about Cecil's music than hours of conversation or pages of description ever would.

Tenorist Archie Shepp, who received his first big break from Cecil, recently described Taylor this way: "He's an iconoclast and a maverick who, like Monk, challenges us to avoid complacency.

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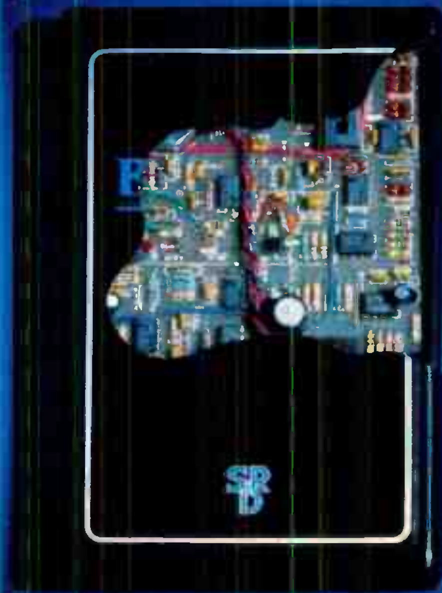

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He's always looking for something fresh, for new ideas. Cecil represents the winds of change as a perennial dialectic. He keeps on growing, he doesn't let it become stagnant. He's a very articulate, elegant man.

"Our society has never really given Taylor an adequate hearing, because it can't pigeonhole him or put him in any kind of bag. It's probably difficult for people who don't know Cecil's music from the beginning to understand it, because he started off at a very complex level; it's difficult to get into his music in the middle. Unfortunately people want this music to be easy, when in fact it's very complex. It's an indication of just how complex this so-called jazz music has become. Even now, I'm still trying to work out some of the concepts I learned and continue to learn from Cecil."

The first of what we called the New Thing to be recorded, Taylor was in many ways the father of the movement, but rarely gets the credit. As far back as the mid-50s, Taylor was deep into the process of redefining jazz. Go back and listen to 1958's *Looking Ahead* and you'll hear just how far he actually was looking ahead. While you're there, rediscover "Excursion On A Wobbly Rail" and his treatment of the blues "Luyah! The Glorious Step" to hear the filtering of the whole jazz tradition into his music.

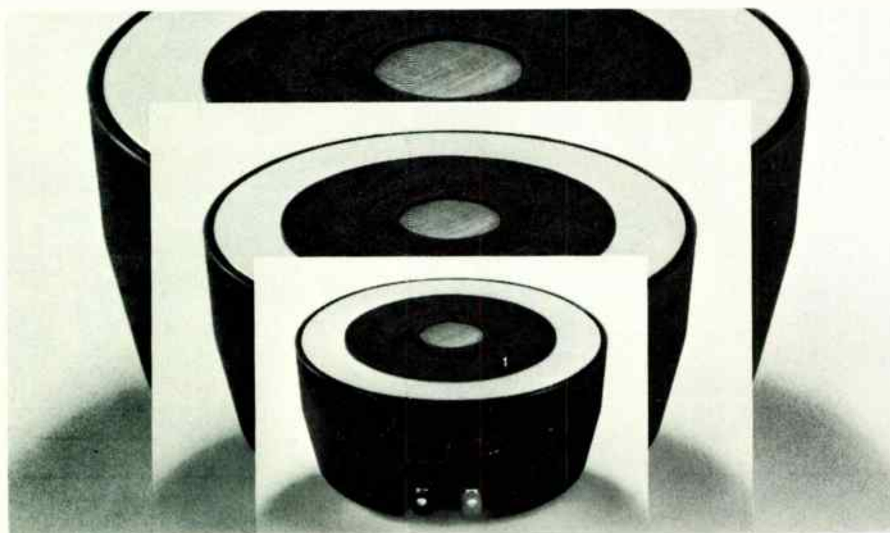
Continuing to collaborate with Diane McIntyer's dance ensemble, leading a number of ensembles (including his big band), writing poetry, Taylor pushes forward into his fifth decade with the same relentless energy, verve and insight he's always possessed—he can still talk or play the night away with more endurance than most twenty-year-olds. And his music continues to be refined and perfected. His most recent ensemble recordings, *Call It The 8th* and *It Is In The Brewing Luminous*, are as strong as ever, and his solo piano masterpiece *Garden* is in many ways the most perfect performance of his life. Taylor's solo piano works have always defined the measure of his art. Recordings like *The Spring Of Two Blue-J's, Indent, Silent Tongues* and *Air Above Mountains* burst with the sensuous lyricism and cathartic thrusts that help define both the technical and spiritual potential of the piano.

Cecil Taylor spends a good deal of his time these days putting the world into perspective through his poetry, is enthralled by the worlds of dance, literature, art and sports, is honest and open ("Aries are always open"), amazingly intelligent and perceptive, and still a mischievous little boy. His Park Slope, Brooklyn brownstone apartment is filled with the things he loves: the pictures of Ellington ("my god"), Lena Horne, Billie Holiday, Miles Davis; his dog and cat who know they are part of the family and are treated that way; and in the front room, nestled in bay windows, the centerpiece, his Yamaha grand.

Musician: *When did you decide that the piano was going to become the love of your life?*

Taylor: When I was five. My mother gave me my first lesson then. I'll never forget it, I asked to play the piano one day and the next day the piano stool was pulled out and there was a chair next to it. Before I sat down, she said, "If you want piano lessons, you can have them, but you will be one of three things: a dentist, a lawyer or a doctor. This will be your avocation." But of course, she died before I was twelve. There would have been problems. On one level, she was the power in the family. She was an incredible lady, she spoke three languages, she recited poems, she made one silent film and she grew up with Count Basie and Sonny Greer. Sonny's brother was a close friend of my mother's only brother, who lived with us. My uncle was very important to me because he gave me my first drum lessons and was a model for me in many ways. He was a very elegant man.

When I was five years old, she took me to see Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa and to the Apollo Theater to see Ellington and Basie. Once when she was sick, I went to my father and said that I wanted to go see Billie Holiday. My father had many favorites, and Miss Hol-



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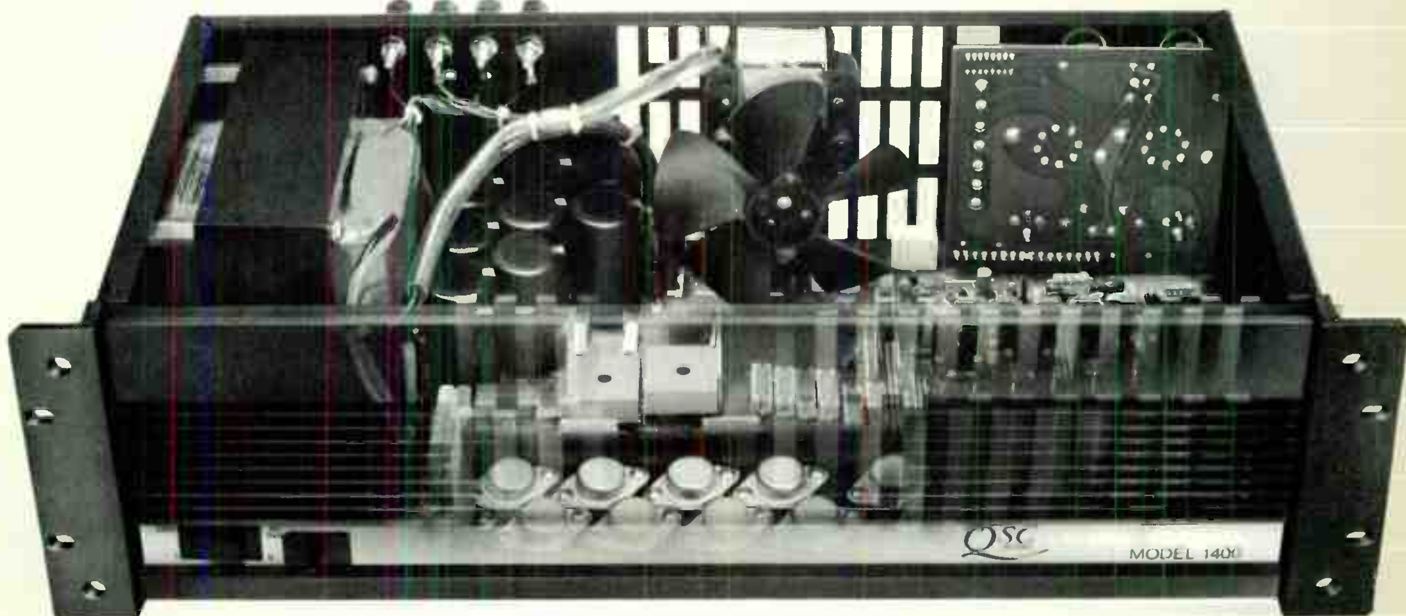

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iday wasn't one of them, because of the social stigma attached to Billie. Of course he said no. So, I got the money and went anyway. And of course, it changed my life. I mean, this was the way Billie looked when I saw her (points to an early picture of Holiday hanging prominently on his wall). It was magnificent.

Of course, as a child I was very hot; you couldn't tell me anything. My father would just say very quietly, "No, no, no, you don't understand." The thing is that in the South, where he was from, everything is understood. I'm still trying to learn a lot of what he laid out for me. He was very smart. He worked until he was seventy-five, in a quiet way.

My mother was very different. She was brilliant, but her life was over by the time she was thirty-five. I just started writing a poem about her. She gave birth to me through a Caesarean section, and I'm quite certain that it changed her life, because, from that point on, I do remember that she was in a great deal of pain....

One thing that I really do know for certain, is that that instrument (points to his grand piano) has saved me. When everything else goes completely out of whack, I can always go there and it becomes beautiful. The exciting thing is that you are doing something that makes the machine come alive.

Musician: *Are you familiar with much R&B, people like Sam and Dave...?*

Taylor: Oh, yes, that was one of my revivals in the 60s. At that time I was really in my ivory tower.... As a child I was dancing on stage at the age of five and I used to dance with my favorite cousin all the time. I mean, these people could move! So, during the 60s I started going to this bar right across from Slugs called the Old Reliable. They had this marvelous jukebox, but I knew nothing about those sounds then. There was always a group of people dancing in the back room, but still, I couldn't hear the music. I knew that I had to do something; the body was atrophying. So, because I could relate to the dancing, I started to dance again. Then I really began to hear the music, so by the time "Respect" (Aretha Franklin) came out, I was *ready*. I started listening to Sam and Dave and all of it, and I just think that music is incredible. I mean, I think that Marvin Gaye is as great as Thelonious Monk—and that stops parties. I tell this to people my age and they get very upset.

You see, I don't make the separation that the business people make between jazz and rhythm & blues; for me it's all part of the heritage of the music. For Stevie Wonder and people of that genre, if they are really into it, when they sing a ballad, cut time is the point at which they really begin. And if you don't understand that, if you're older and you're saying, "Eehh, c'mon, these guys, rhythm & blues" (in a mocking tone of voice), you've missed it completely. In that case, what are you going to do with a man like James Brown? You have to understand that the legacy of his work is *there*. I mean, he is one of the *seminal forces*.

I've got to go see Lester Bowie's band down at Sweet Basil's tonight, because the last time I saw the Art Ensemble, it was just a magnificent musical experience.... I think that Lester has opened up other possibilities. He's made it more obvious that music can assume many different personalities and characters, i.e., interpretation that becomes characterization much the way great actors can play many different roles. I thought he played brilliantly at Town Hall. As an ensemble, they all supported each other very well. There were many, many different orchestrated colors coming out of the ensemble. There were different types of music played, and the integrity and the quality level of the music was uniformly high.

Musician: *I love the way they put together little patches of contrasting styles and musical references, but when you read Stanley Crouch (*Village Voice *critic) it's exactly that quality in their music that he singles out to vitiate.*

Taylor: Just in the last year alone, the paucity of ideas in this individual has been amply demonstrated, really. And in

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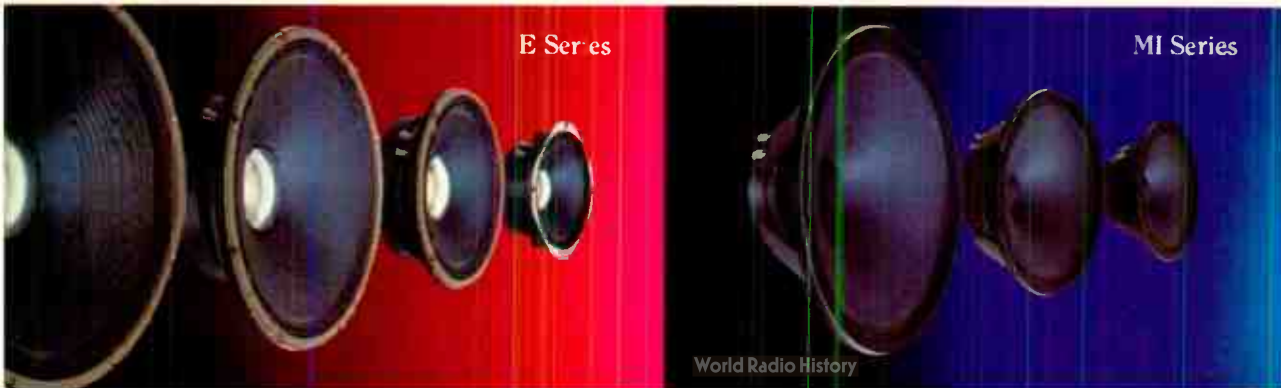

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FACES

JULES SHEAR

WRUNG ON THE LADDER

"I was lifting up ladders/ And trying to stand on them, too," sings Jules Shear near the end of his new record, *Watch Dog*. An apt thumbnail description of a futile relationship, the lines also capture the feeling that Shear himself must have had over much of the past few years: the man whose name, face and music led Jules & the Polar Bears was stuck in a record industry Catch 22 so severe that when he played L.A.'s Universal Amphitheatre in late June, Shear hadn't set foot on a stage in his adopted hometown in more than two years.

These days, though, Shear's home is in Woodstock, New York, environs that usually host songwriters less quirky and dizzying than Shear. Spewing out mile-a-minute images and casting himself as a disoriented observer grappling with all the big questions ("You think you got all the answers/ Till one day you find/ Holes in your pocket/ Where your keys once were," he once sang), Shear wound up wrestling Columbia Records after two poorly-selling Polar Bear records. The label rejected an indulgent, freewheeling album aptly titled *Bad For Business*; wouldn't give him the money to remake the record but also refused to release him because, ironically, a few staffers believed in him so passionately. "Just business," shrugs Shear now. "But the business took an unnaturally ugly turn in my case."

That much is now completely behind Shear; there's not a Polar Bears song to be found in his current show, nor, he says, will there ever be. Instead, Shear and his band, which he's dubbed the Rocking Icons—and which includes two former colleagues, ex-Polar Bear drummer David Beebe and ex-Funky Kings guitarist Richard Stekol—stick to songs from his new EMI solo album, plus a couple of the thirty-plus tunes that producer Todd Rundgren passed on. ("There aren't many advantages to being unsuccessful," says Shear. "One is that you don't have to do the old songs.")

In front of a remarkably receptive Joan Armatrading audience at the Amphitheatre, Shear's band plowed through a set that was calmer, less frantic and friendlier than the charming frenzy that the Polar Bears used to favor. In fact, between the bouncy pop tunes ("All Through The Night"), the riff-heavy hard rockers ("I Need It") and the soaring mid-tempo songs ("Love Will Come Again," "Whispering Your Name"), the guy almost sounded *commercial*.

Wearing a white suit and standing center stage without a guitar, Shear even looked as if he were trying to be a regular pop showman sometimes, albeit a showman who looks something like Sal Mineo with droopier eyebrows. But touches like Shear's bemused, baffled and bewildered expression keep giving it away: the guy's still as much an individual as ever. The band settled into an almost majestic groove, Shear grabbed the mike stand in both hands, swayed incessantly from side to side, arched his eyebrows and sang of contentment and doubt, Jules style: "Wishing your life would set/ Like thick cream gravy in a bowl/ But how to keep the bowl from spoiling?"

And then there was "I Know You're Not Alive." One of the new songs he introduced, it's a ragged, roaring blues song ("Oh, a blues exercise," sniffed Rundgren when he rejected the tune) that showed off the enormous punch of Beebe's drums and a riveting Stekol solo; it's also one of the most twisted love songs ever written. "I've been waiting at your house, girl," sang an earnest, intense Shear, "though I know that you're not alive." Glad to see that you're still with us, Jules. — ***Steve Pond***

ROLLINS & MARSALIS

TKO IN NEWK-WYNT REMATCH

Sonny Rollins radiates physical vitality and vigor—so when early into trading phrases with Wynton Marsalis during their much-anticipated Manhattan performance together, Sonny threw up his hands, still gripping his tenor, smiling like brilliance itself had dawned, and fell to the Town Hall stage floor like stiff timber, my first thought was, "He's gotta be kidding," followed quickly by, "Sure hope Newk's okay...."

He wasn't kidding. Fatigue and high blood pressure had blanked the clean-living fifty-four-year-old saxophone colossus. He revived immediately, but the show was cancelled. And a month later, newspapers quoted Rollins as fearing he'd let down his hometown audience. But at the rescheduled concert at the much larger Beacon Theater, Rollins launched "Don't Stop The Carnival" with the healthy fervor and sheer exuberance to satisfy any fan's disappointment—and, unintentionally, showed up his much younger band.

Life's much more than a carnival, Sonny seemed to sing, digging into his bottomless breath-hold, spilling forth variation after urgent variation of

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original and appropriated melodies. In loose, white clothes and a floppy red hat, his huge frame jerking in syncopation to the endless calypso that surged from his horn, Sonny proved that inspired improvisation can turn all music into one long, rich and complexly interconnected song.

An unspoken amen seemed to sweep the near sell-out crowd, and there was a grin of humbled awe on the face of sharp-suited Wynton the wunderkind, who stitches a mantle to his own fit from the fabric of the jazz trumpet greats. Jack DeJohnette echoed and emphasized the hearty athletics of Rollins' lines; electric bassist Russell Blake bared his teeth while displaying a pyro-funkitechnique solo, and cool guitarists Yoshiaki Masuo and Bobby Broom wove tight, light trebly rhythm chords as a springboard for their leader and his guest on brass.

Sonny all but ignored his sidemen and their springboard; as he paced the proscenium he shot moans, honks, rundowns, twisted tones, sighs and rousing hollers from the bent metal that emerged from his mouth. Sonny's sound, diamond-hard and rough cut, lifted everyone within hearing to euphoria, and following the saxist through a two-plus-hour program (with two anticlimactic encores) must have challenged Marsalis, who sometimes had to fight for an opening, so expansively did Rollins fill the air.

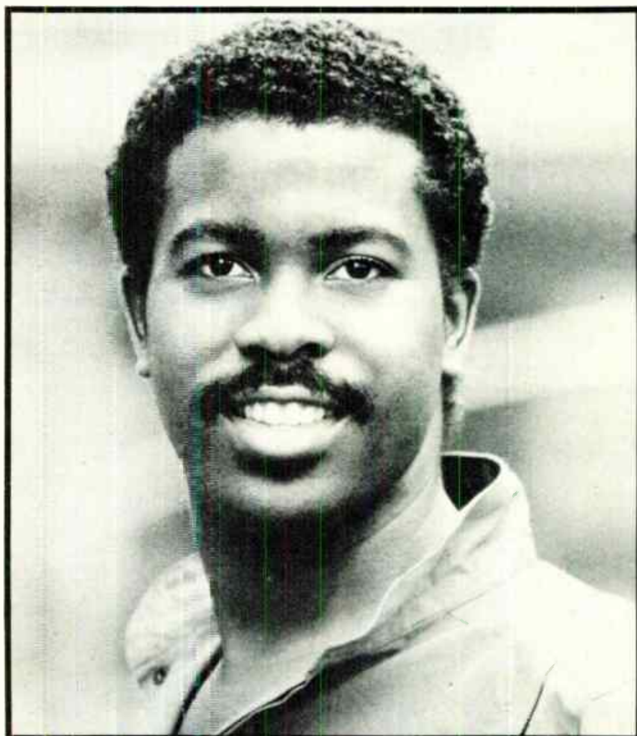
But from Charlie Parker's "Big Foot" through his own "Hesitation," Wynton plunged gamely on, even when he'd find himself at a loss to play anything Rollins hadn't yet suggested. Then Wynton dropped his volume low, focused his vision on a sharp point just beyond the downward tilt of his trumpet's bell, and sketched out an ambitious design from near silence. At stageside, Sonny bobbed, nodding with approval.

Perhaps Rollins was reminded by Wynton of the trumpeters in his past—Fats Navarro, Miles, Clark Terry, Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham, Thad Jones, Don Cherry, Donald Byrd—though Wynton is resolute in playing himself. Maybe Sonny thought he *had* to deliver or risk his reputation for being able to blow circles around any other tenor man alive. Whatever the case, he was at his best: humorous, energized, generous, imaginative, wise. He lit bright several decades of jazz and American popular song, while his protegés burned to keep up. Wynton stood with a fiery giant, and grew in the encounter. Sonny might live forever; if he's ever recorded playing as he did that night, the glow of his art won't dim until old Sol itself goes out. — ***Howard Mandel***

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

KASHIF

SCIENCE OF SUBLIMINAL HOOKS



His name is Kashif and even before he released his self-titled debut album on Arista, this twenty-five-year-old Brooklyn native was one of black pop's most ubiquitous writer/producers. With the irresistibly danceable "I'm In Love" and "Love Come Down," Kashif gave Evelyn King the only two number one black singles by a woman in the 80s. For Howard Johnson Kashif created (and sang the catchy backup vocals) on the funk-doo-wop hit "So Fine." He wrote (and co-produced) George Benson's fine, silky smooth "Inside Love (So Personal)." In addition, since 1981 Kashif has either written, produced or arranged for the Average White Band, Tavares, Melba Moore and Fonzi Thornton. Now with the top ten black chart success of his "I Just Got To Have You," Kashif is finally becoming more than one of black music's best kept secrets.

Kashif's career began at age fifteen, when he joined the then influential funk-disco group B.T. Express, playing keyboards on their *Energy To Burn* album. Later he formed a band called Stepping Stone (with Vernon Reid on guitar) that almost landed a deal with A&M Records. To make ends meet he gigged with Stephanie Mills' road band and signed with MCA Music Publishing to sell his growing catalog of songs.

Through MCA, Kashif's music attracted the attention of

Morrie Brown and Paul Lawrence Jones, two other young producer/writers, who recruited him into their production company, Mighty M. Together they took over a failing East Side studio, Celestial Sounds, where, says Kashif, "We were able to get as much time as we needed to perfect our sound and to experiment. We were looking for a clean, youthful sound, much like the music of Shalamar's 'The Second Time Around' and Michael Jackson's *Off The Wall*, which set a standard for us."

The synthesizer, with all its variety, provides the backbone of Kashif's music, even affecting the vocal arrangements in which wordless vocals appear in almost all his productions. "Joe Zawinul has always been my favorite synthesizer player, and from him I got the idea of interpreting synthesizer sounds with voices," says Kashif. "You're not limited by the words. It allows you to do different things with your harmonies and melodies. On 'Stone Love' from my album, wordless vocals are really the hook."

Kashif's songs have also shown a sophisticated approach to melody. Instead of the typical verse-chorus-verse structure, songs such as "Inside Love (So Personal)" and "Got To Have You" begin with one hook and then flow into another. "I just happened to try it one day and found that it was easy to do," says Kashif. "Instead of just one hook, you have little hooks that keep the song interesting. I spend a lot of time with the melodies of my songs, because that is the backbone of pop music. Just like the great songs at Motown. Even if you just played them on a piano with one finger, they'd sound good. That's what I aim for." — ***Nelson George***

THE FIXX

SAVED BY DRAMATIC RESTRAINT

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Though you may not be able to instantly identify the Fixx by their name or image, chances are very likely that you know their songs, especially if you watch MTV or listen to much new music radio. Being known by their work, finely crafted mini-dramas like "Stand Or Fall," "Lost Planes," "Red Skies (At Night)" and "Cameras In Paris," is pretty much the way the Fixx would have it. That's also the way they play it in concert: album-perfect, with disciplined restraint and a natural faith in the material itself.

"Our sound comes from understanding the power of standard rock music," explains Cy Curnin, lanky, fair-haired Fixx vocalist. "There's a point where you can have that same kind of power and move around it. Each player leaves a lot of space around his particular coincidentals—so the melodies hang as a whole picture.

If Curnin seems to be speaking jargon, it is most likely related to the theater and to drama school, where he and splendid drummer Adam Woods first conspired to cross over into cinematic rock. "My lyrics aren't written to be read," allows Curnin, who has said he has a camera clicking inside his head when he writes songs. "It's very much using words in the context of vocal sound. Occasionally there'll be a line that reads well, but I always write with the idea of how I'm going to *deliver* it in mind."

For such a dramatic bent, one might expect the worst visual excesses, but the Fixx never wanted to play the image game. When Curnin, Woods and ambient keyboard specialist Rupert Greenhall were signed as the Portraits in 1979, they firmly resisted their management's desire that they go New Romantic. Trapped as a "pop package," Curnin & Co. met cold steel chisel guitarist Jamie West-Oram two and a half years ago and began a new gimmickless life as the Fixx. That first LP, *Shuttered Room*, assembled from years of strong material, was produced by closet cult hero Rupert Hine of Quantum Jump. Its high polish (especially West-Oram's) and chameleonic, hook-ridden confidence led some to call the band poppy copycats, or at least to suspect their sincerity.

Reach The Beach, their Hine-produced followup, admirably deflects both criticisms. It settles into a more unified sound, fortified by snappy funk and treated with even more "atmosphere," a veritable Fixx buzzword. Their snakey single "Saved By Zero" is prototypical of their reduced dependence on straight-ahead sing-along choruses and increased interest in shimmering, moody, visceral Anglo-dance. Especially haunting is the slow, odd-metered tension of "Outside," with its arresting guitar climax.

Small wonder the Fixx consider themselves an "album band" and are reluctant tourers. Wearing black suits and white shirts against a black curtain while opening for A Flock Of Seagulls, the Fixx couldn't possibly have been any more low-key. Other than precision renditions from their two LPs, there were few surprises or stage devices. But as Adam Woods describes their decision not to get hairdressers, "It's something we've been doing for more than just a week. It isn't the flavor of the month to us." — ***Khaaryn Goertzel*** & ***Jock Baird.***

MUTABARUKA

REGGAE RAP REDEMPTION

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

If you're neither Ruandan nor a member of the Crucial Reggae fan club, then Mutabaruka probably isn't a word that means much to you. Should it happen that you do fall into one or the other category, you'll know Mutabaruka as either your ethnic medicine man or as one of the strongest voices to emerge from reggae in years. On his debut LP, *Check It*, Jamaican dub poet Mutabaruka proves himself a writer and composer of sure social conscience, potent political satire and more than a little musical ingenuity. Moreover, in his recent New York premiere at the Ritz, Muta, as he's called, also show dat him know how to mash it up onstage inna wicked dreadlocks style. Which is to say, yeah, the

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brother *got down.*

Bounding out onstage barefoot, barechested, brandishing a white chain on both wrists and backed up by both a mammoth backdrop reading "Afrika Mus Be Free" and his natty High Times band, Muta performed a sharp set, mostly of songs from his LP. Whirling and thrashing about with stage movements which recalled Burning Spear in one of his more possessed moods, Muta rapped and recited his way across the topical landscape of his lyrics and poetry. References to the freedom struggles in South Africa, Angola, Britain and Jamaica abound in his work, alongside allusions to the quest for national identity among blacks in the West. One of the strongest of these is "Witeman Country" which contains the admonishment, "It's not too good to stay in a white man's country too long." This piece in particular has been the cause of some controversy among Muta's audiences. In a recent interview session, he addressed the controversy head-on by explaining the impetus for the song. "That poem has caused a lot of misconceptions, but it was written because in the 50s and 60s a lot of black people left the Caribbean for England figuring it was heaven, it was where the gold was and dem tings there. And so they migrated. Now we see that over the years black people have been building England with their blood, sweat and tears—except we also see that black people are still not

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GWEN GUTHRIE

BEYOND BIT & PIECE PARTS

Gwen Guthrie's new album, *Portrait*, reveals more of the Roberta Flack protegé and less of the Patti Austin-with-dreadlocks persona purveyed on last year's self-titled debut album for Island/Mango. In Guthrie, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare had found the perfect voice for their experimental Bits & Pieces disco band, whose specific goal was to cinch the black American dance market with their Antillian version of the funky two and four.

"But the one thing I really want to say about the first album," emphasized Guthrie just prior to her first series of club dates to promote *Portrait*, "is that I'm really concerned about people just viewing me as a disco artist. It's too early in my career to be typed. 'It Should Have Been You' (one of three songs black radio sent up

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STEVE MORSE

THE P.I.T. COUNTERREVOLUTION

Ever since the punk revolution of '77, we've been hearing a lot about something called "D.I.Y." (a.k.a. Do-It-Yourself). This brave new musical ethos declared freedom from learning an instrument thoroughly, from the study of written music, from training in traditional jazz and classical idioms, and from other boring and difficult prerequisites to being a musician.

The best-laid revolutions have counter-revolutions, however, and a small, die-hard claque continues to oppose D.I.Y., champions of P.I.T., or Prodigious Instrumental Technique. In an effort to gauge the strength of the P.I.T. movement, *Musician*, Ernie Ball, Sequential Circuits and D.O.D. brought three of its more skilled proponents to the late-Victorian crystal ballroom of Chicago's Hotel Radisson (with sound by Electro-Voice). These were L.A. upstarts the Fents, Jamaaladeen Tacuma's new funk project Cosmetic, and former Dixie Dreg gone solo, Steve Morse.

The Fents opened the show, hot and heavy with P.I.T. A four-piece instrumental group melding *Leprechaun*-era Chick Corea with vintage L.A. Express, the Fents raced through exceedingly complex arrangements with disarming eagerness. Guitarist Ted Hall won the house early (perhaps reminding them of look-alike Robben Ford) as did drummer Larry Anderson's muscular maturity. Some of the Fents' pieces were unfortunately overwritten, however; the first-time listener tended to get little to hang on to and nothing at all to hum. There were also moments of ensemble overplaying, but the Fents are a young band doing exactly what young bands do; with a little aging and some judicious weeding, they will turn heads.

Jamaaladeen Tacuma of Cosmetic electrified the crowd with his lime green suit and obviously monstrous P.I.T. (several front rows, in fact, began chanting, "P.I.T., P.I.T." during his first solo). Constantly bobbing and weaving, Jamaaladeen's pure physical energy powered the band through tight, funky, single-vamp grooves. Although workmanlike, unusual and more than adequate, the other three members of Cosmetic were unable to match Tacuma's charisma, nor were the vocals or song structures. This was compounded by weak set pacing, including some interminable funk numbers—though in Cosmetic's defense, they were forced to cut a jazz number due to time. Cosmetic is an interesting band, a great sweaty-body band, but nonetheless, a band in need of another strong focal point.

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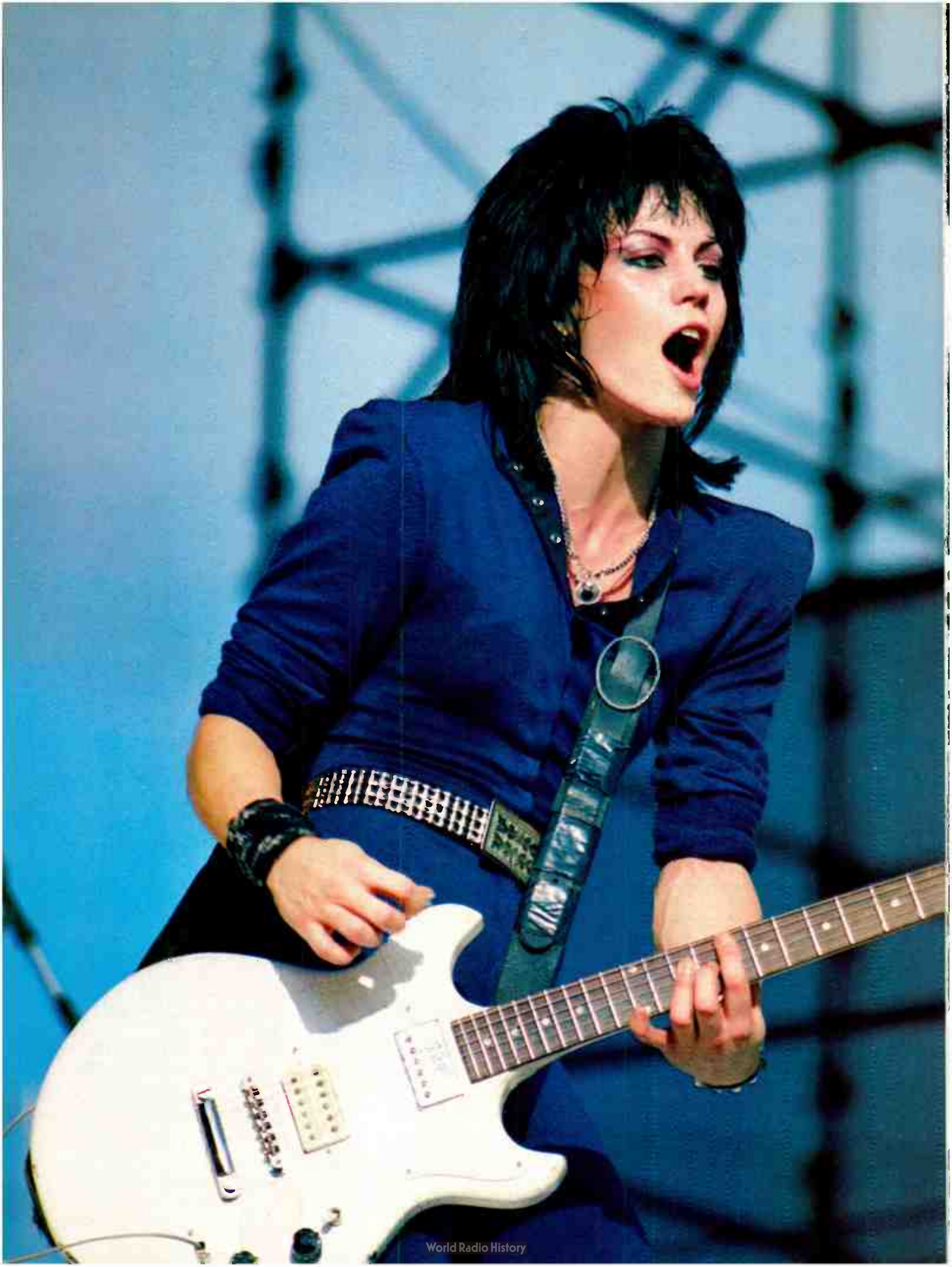
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JOAN JETT'S GUM GREATNESS

BY CHARLES M. YOUNG

As Jimi Hendrix is to electric guitar, as Keith Moon is to the drums, as Otis Redding is to soul, as Beethoven is to symphonies, as Lawrence Welk is to schmaltz, as Josef Stalin is to prison camps, as Beelzebub is to badness, as my mother is to goodness, as Moby Dick is to fishness—that's how Joan Jett is to gum. People have chewed gum since the Primordial Golf Ball big-banged into the known universe, and people will chew gum until the known universe unbangs back into the Primordial Golf Ball, but in all that time no one will chew gum better than Joan Jett. I know this because I have watched Joan Jett chew gum for an eon. Not continuously, I admit, but I do remember the precise moment when God revealed to me that Joan was the greatest gum chewer in eternity. She was sixteen and her first band, the Runaways, was playing the

LYNN GOLDSMITH

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> *"Sometimes you have to let people find out the hard way what things feel like. The stronger ones make it."*

CBGB on their first national tour. About equally divided between hostile New York rock writers and horny Long Island pipefitters who'd gone autistic drinking contaminated groundwater, the crowd seemed incapable of transcendence and Joan's consternation grew with every contraction of her pulsating jaw muscles. In those days she did vocals on only two or three songs per set, and when her turn finally came around to sing "Rock 'N Roll," she yelled, "(chew, chew, chew) Come on, New York! (chew chew) This is *Lou Reed*! (chew, chew, chew)."And she sang about how her life was saved by that fine, fine music and if you did not fall in love with Joan Jett at that precise moment, well, you did not love rock 'n' roll.

So the objective point is that Joan Jett knew what was cool and could act on it way back in 1976, a time when Pat Benatar was doing this phony Liza Minnelli-type cabaret act in Greenwich Village (I saw her), and Blondie didn't know how to play their instruments (I heard them), and most of these new techno-haircut bands hadn't even flunked out of art school.

"I like to make a lot of noise and blow bubbles," chews Joan, now twenty-three and still fully cognizant cool. "It's a good way to clear out sleeping space on airplanes."

Had she ever sucked it down her throat during a song?

"Uggh! I don't even want to think about it!" Joan cringes. "No, that's never happened. I'm always aware of where my gum is onstage."

Being a consummate professional, Joan makes chewing gum look easy, but in fact she has put in years of practice developing gum awareness and mastication technique. "I've chewed gum all the time ever since my parents first let me," she says. "I go crazy without it now. I even fall asleep with it. I'd probably get fat if I stopped. The second time the Runaways went to Europe, I knew they didn't have the right gum (Carefree Sugarless Bubble) over there, so I spent about fifty dollars for a supply before I left. The girls were begging me for gum by the end, but they payed for it. On the road, it was like gold."

All actual teenage girls from L.A. (Joan is originally from Baltimore), the Runaways never did quite get their gum together. Lead singer Cherie Currie used to wear this Frederick's of Hollywood negligee weirdness, sing songs like "Cherry Bomb" and then look terrified when the pipefitters would declaim their libidos. Bassist Jackie Fox should have been telling people about her 165 IQ in the comparative literature program at Oberlin. Drummer Sandy West laid down some solid crunch but in every photograph—whether arrogant or happy or sexy or sullen was the mood called for—she looked bewildered. Lead guitarist Lita Ford wanted to be Ritchie Blackmore with breasts and only half succeeded. On rhythm guitar, Joan was a hard rock minority group oppressed by a heavy metal majority. Their mentor, Kim Fowley, proclaimed it all a scam and feuded with their manager Scott Anderson (who later managed the Knack from oblivion to the pinnacle to oblivion). Their record company, Mercury, couldn't sell anything not sung by Bachman Turner Overweight. And the press thought they were bimbos.

This last problem was partially my fault. I wrote a cover story about them for the late and somewhat lamented *Crawdaddy*; spent a week anthropologizing in the L.A. teen subculture; had squirtgun fights in rehearsal and learned the hard way never to shoot a woman with eye makeup on in the face; was present at the historic and pretty revolting first time Joan dyed her hair black; concluded they had a chance to make it because they had some good songs (mostly Joan's) and put on a fine live show. I also figured that since a lot of their act was geared toward throwing gasoline on the fired loins of pipefitters with a taste for jailbait, I should ask about sex. And then I wrote about it. It seemed like good journalism at the time. And a lot of other journalists seemed to agree.

"Did they have to ask in *every* interview?" wonders Joan, still managing a shudder. "All it did was make us feel defensive. We were just a good band that wanted to have a good time onstage. What were all the other groups singing about? They didn't have to answer those naive questions: 'Oh, my God, this is your career? What are you going to do if you find the right boyfriend? Will you dump your career?' Well, not me. When I listen to our records or read old articles, I still don't understand what got people so uptight. They were afraid we'd rob their houses or kill someone."

So how come nobody's called her a bimbo since 1978?

"I don't understand that either. It's shocking...funny...disgusting...amazing.... It must be them who changed, because I haven't."

"This next song is about someone named Randy," Kenny Laguna announces to a slightly confused Joe Folger, music director at KEGL, Dallas. "That means sex in England."

Joan's mentor/manager/producer, Laguna presses fast forward on Folger's tape deck in search of "Handyman" on an advance cassette of Joan's new album, *Album*. "As soon as they make it," says Folger, "a lot of bands don't do radio or press anymore...."

"EGL saved 'Touch Me' in this market," says Laguna. "We promised God we would never forget radio when we had our first hit, and you don't fool with God."

"What I'd really like to know is who starts these Joan Jett-is-dead rumors," says Folger. "Every station I've been to in the last couple of years gets a flood of phone calls about once a month from people asking if Joan has died of an overdose."

"I wish I knew," says Laguna, cranking the volume as Joan screams about being stark naked, tired of masturbatin' and in dire need of her handyman. "We don't allow any drugs at all. In fact, we fire people when we find them. Keith Richards is great, but we don't want that image."

"You know my favorite Joan Jett song?" Folger smiles wistfully. "'Crimson And Clover.' I was listening to the Tommy James version the first time I got to second base with a girl. I was in junior high in this little town in Minnesota."

"I must have played 'Crimson And Clover' five thousand times when I was in the Shondells," says Laguna.

"No kidding? You were a Shondell? Whatever happened to Tommy James?"

"I don't know right now," says Laguna. "He had twenty-four hit singles when he was hot and I know it hurt him terribly to play bars as a has-been. Ninety percent of those guys get the Elvis disease, sitting in front of their TVs with their heads spinning, wondering how to come back. They never recover psychologically from two years at the top. It's the saddest thing you ever saw."

"Innocent, that was exactly the word for Sid Vicious," says Joan. "He was like an innocent little boy. The Runaways lived on a houseboat on the Thames for a while in 1978. Sid and Nancy came over one night and they seemed very high. He was yelling 'I'm violent! I love violence!' I'm not one to complain about noise but I finally said, 'Shut up, you goddamned junkie.' He stopped shouting and started crying about a friend of his who had just died. He said he was on a methadone program and kept telling me, 'The Sex Pistols love Joan Jett.' He went out the door and that was the last I saw him."

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MICK ROCK

Joan & the Blackhearts: tattooed bassist Gary Ryan, Jett, shoplifting drummer Lee Crystal and punctured lung survivor Ricky Byrd.

The last she saw of the Runaways was New Year's Eve that same year in San Francisco. Dropped by their record company and unable to shake the jailbait image, they went their separate ways—Joan's being drinking, drugging, blimping out by about forty pounds, spending some time in the hospital and answering for herself the dominant question for all aspiring punks in 1979: Did you have to die to be as sincere as that junkie/murderer/suicide/comedian/innocent Sid Vicious?

"Sometimes you just have to let people find out the hard way what things feel like," says Joan. "The stronger ones make it, the weaker ones don't. I was lucky to have some friends who cared enough to help put me back together."

"I was out looking for shoes one day and couldn't find what I wanted, so I got this instead," says Blackheart bassist Gary Ryan, indicating the winged dragon tattooed on his arm. "Yeah, it was painful, but I like pain. I've got two days on it so far, six hours a day."

"This guy is second only to Joanie for integrity over pragmatism," says Kenny Laguna, buttoning the fly of his designer jeans a half hour before showtime at Dallas' Six Flags amusement park. He has been filling in on electric piano for a week since regular guitarist Ricky Byrd punctured a lung colliding with Ryan onstage. "At first he wasn't going to let me onstage at all, but then he figured it would sound like a tape, so he put me way in the corner. 'Better old and ugly than sounding like a tape,' he said. You should put me out another four feet."

"We already discussed this! No!" says Ryan. "You were going to wear a gold lamé suit with a feather in your cap. Then you bought twelve pairs of shoes and you're only doing six shows. Didn't the *hippies* used to wear different colored bowling shoes on each foot? I read that somewhere."

"I don't know," says Laguna. "I was never a hippie. I was a bubblegum guy."

An Air Force brat and the only Ramones fan in a junior high populated with Led Zeppelin advocates, Ryan could abide it no longer at the age of fourteen and ran away to become the "stereotypical L.A. derelict" for a couple of years. There, the late Darby Crash of the Germs, whom Joan had produced, recommended Ryan for the Blackhearts. She liked his style and soon they were playing the Whiskey every Monday night.

"Ritchie Cordell (Joan's co-producer) and I had just been to San Francisco to see the Who," says Laguna. "We flew down to L.A. that night to see Joan. When we found out this guy was fifteen, I freaked."

"We had our fans," Ryan insists.

"Leftover Runaway fans who would have been thrilled if you farted. You were wrestling in broken glass in the dressing room."

"You still had your Who pass on, I remember," says Ryan. "Joan was crazy then."

Like what would she do?

"She had no fear of anything," says Laguna. "She would get this insane look in her eye and there was no stopping her. One time at the Roller Derby, she dove across the track and attacked the opposing coach. The security guards had to throw her out."

Like what else?

"She used to get her meals by sneaking into the Hyatt House and stealing food from old room service trays."

Like what else?

"In Holland, she would get up at two in the morning to take a walk in the red light district. You'd go out to find her and she'd say, 'Isn't it beautiful?' right in the middle of the dregs of the world. So you'd say, 'You're coming home with me little girl,' and she'd just tell you to screw off. But the thing is, she's been able to focus all that energy."

Some of the omens bode ill: it's been raining all day, Larry Holmes is defending his title on HBO, the Pretenders are playing on the other side of town, and four keys are busted on Laguna's used Wurlitzer electric piano. Some of the omens bode well: the sky has finally cleared, it isn't too hot and the crowd doesn't stink.

Hard to imagine but true. Fifteen thousand or so teenagers

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EBET ROBERTS

Experienced seducer Joan coaxes temporarily reluctant airmen.

all in one place and nary a one is throwing up or nodding out from too many 'ludes or drinking grain alcohol and Kool Aid out of an anti-freeze container or even looking sullen. What they look like, actually, is Joan Jett—the Joan Clone phenomenon apparently having swept through Dallas like flu in March.

"That one looks like a can of smashed assholes," observes Elliot Saltzman, Joan's deeply sensitive road manager and veteran Clone watcher.

"We want a touch!" chants the crowd. "We want a touch!"

Joan lays her "Bad Reputation" on them to start, setting the theme for the evening with this one-note-rhythm-riff refusal to apologize for anything. Joan doesn't get mad at her audience—as was the wont of many of her punk brethren—she invites them to get mad with her at various unnamed authority figures, unfaithful and/or dominating lovers, sycophants, cowards, liars and male birth control devices. *Album* not being out yet, fifteen thousand brows furrow as one during "Coney Island Whitefish," as if to ask, "Did she really say 'scumbag'?" Yes, and then she says it some more: "Baby, you're a scumbag, you're rotten to the core/ You're the biggest fool that I've ever known."

"We want a touch!" chants the crowd. "We want a touch!"

Joan mixes her oldies ("Wooly Bully," "Love Is Pain," "You're A Nag") (wish she hadn't dropped "Too Bad On Your Birthday") with her newies ("Fake Friends," "The French Song" "I Love Playin' With Fire") in about equal proportion, her low-slung and low-sounding Gibson getting such a beating that you wonder how she has enough energy left over to chew her gum properly. Dressed in a red jumpsuit and high-top sneakers, she has managed the remarkable feat of growing into a beautiful woman unmarred by a trace of Cheryl Tiegs homogenization that would extinguish the eternal question smoldering in her big dark eyes: "Have you wrestled on broken glass? 'Cause if you haven't, you're a wimp."

"We want a touch!" chants the crowd. "We want a touch!"

"You know, Dallas, Texas," says Joan. "There are a lot of things I like... (chew, chew, chew)... But I love... (chew, chew, chew)... I mean, I *love*... (chew, chew, chew)... Dallas, Texas!... (chew)... I LOVE ROCK 'N' ROLL!" And the kids do most of the singing about putting another dime in the jukebox, baby.

Gary Ryan runs back and forth with such unchoreographed abandon that it's easy to see how he could have punctured the lung of fellow Blackheart Ricky Byrd. Barely onstage next to the amplifiers, Laguna cuts an appearance dangerously close to nerdly with semi-balding pate and Chams de Baron sleeveless sweatshirt. His piano, it turns out, is jarringly out of tune, as well as missing four keys. The solo on "Crimson And Clover" has to be one of the lamest things I've ever heard from a major band and comes close to derailing the song entirely.

"We want a touch!" chants the crowd. "We want a touch!"

And they finally get it. *Bump che buh-bump che bump che buh-bump che*—Lee "No Frills" Crystal lays down the beat and Joan soon has 15,000 teenagers clapping over their heads and sneering, "Yeah, oh yeah, oh YEAHHHH!"

"Do you wanna touch...." "YEAH!"

"Do you wanna touch...." "YEAH!"

"Do you wanna touch me there?" It has to rank as the greatest audience participation number since sex.

"YEAH!"

"THEY HAVE A WEEK OFF SO THEY SCREW PIGS AND FORGET WHO'S PAYING THEIR HOTEL BILL!" screams Laguna, turning purple and throwing food back in the dressing room. "HOW COULD THE CREW NOT FIX A PIANO IN A WEEK? I DIDN'T HAVE B FLAT OUT THERE! HOW CAN YOU PLAY A SOLO WITHOUT B FLAT?"

"It's probably pretty tedious tuning a piano," someone volunteers.

"SO IS UNEMPLOYMENT!"

One widely unknown fact about Joan Jett is that she was a good student in school, developing enough stealth in her chew so that teachers didn't perceive imminent danger of chaos and disorder. She almost got straight A's one semester, sunk only by a deep aversion for math.

"I didn't graduate from anything, though," says Joan proudly. "I wouldn't be caught dead in a cap and gown. When I was fifteen, I took the high school equivalency exam and passed. All my friends were cutting classes but I figured if I didn't go now, I'd be there till I was eighteen or nineteen or have to go to summer school."

Joan has her entourage well trained not to disturb her when her nose is in a book. "It can wreck my day if someone breaks my concentration," she says. "I love to read: humor... detective stories... not romance. I've read the James Bond series over and over."

Last book read? "*Red Dragon*."

What's she listening to these days? "The same glitter stuff I've always listened to. Sly & the Family Stone. Marianne Faithfull. I keep my old singles on what I call the 'Mixed Shit' tapes. All the Rolling Stones, mostly *Let It Bleed* and *Get Yer Ya Yas Out*. *Ya Yas* sounds like someone plopped you down right in the middle of the stage."

Did she remember telling me in 1976 that the Rolling Stones were old and washed up?

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"Okay, but what was their album out in 1976?" *Black And Blue.*

"See? That was when they went disco. They *were* old and washed up then."

Joan seems to be at least a decade away from that assessment on *Album*, which could be less generically titled *The Joy Of Not Whining*. The Blackhearts are really playing together as a band—solid, simple, guitar-based rock 'n' roll about expressing anger and not getting depressed—even when she's singing about lust and love, closely coupled with frustration and hate.

"Anger? Really? A lot of people have commented on that," says Joan. "I think 'Fake Friends' is not so much about anger as a show of disgust. It's not a big deal to lose fake friends, people who just tell you what you want to hear. You don't have to be in rock 'n' roll to understand that. They're all over. What's another song about anger?"

How about "Coney Island Whitefish"?

"Okay. That wasn't directed at any one person, though. People snicker when they hear 'scumbag' but I think everyone can relate to it. Everyone knows at least one scumbag."

"Had Enough" seems pretty angry.

"That's just about getting rid of a weak person, someone you've had enough of."

Carianne, three-year-old daughter of Kenny and Meryl Laguna, toddles around the corner with a spoon in her mouth.

"Hey! Take that out!" says Joan. "If you fall, it'll go down your throat and you'll rip your guts out or something."

"Joanie's been a very good aunt," says Meryl, who co-manages Joan with Kenny, as Carianne removes the spoon. The three Lagunas and Joan live together on Long Island.

"Carianne's been on the road since she was six months old," says Joan. "She knows all the words to the songs. She wants to go onstage and sing next."

When Neal Bogart left Cameo Parkway to become vice president at Buddah, the idea was to create a white Motown with a small group of interchangeable house musicians. What emerged was the Ohio Express, the 1910 Fruitgum Company, the Kasenetz-Katz Super Cirkus and the Lemon Pipers. They called it Bubblegum.

"It's about sunshine and going places and falling in love and trusting love and dancing for the fun of it," Bogart wrote in the liner notes to *Bubble Gum Music Is The Naked Truth, Volume 1*. "Most of the sadness in the world comes from losing your innocence. But you can find it again...in this album."

"We didn't even wait for a record to go off the radio before we'd steal the riff and put it out as our own," says Laguna, who sang backup and played keyboards at Buddah (first hit: "Yummy Yummy Yummy"). "We used to rip *everybody* off. The total lack of respect we got was just amazing, inside and outside the industry. For years I couldn't go to a party without getting snubbed. We were so embarrassed that we didn't even tour. My wife turned off the radio when my songs came on."

Bogart went on to found Casablanca where he launched Donna Summer (orgasmic bubblegum) and Kiss (painted bubblegum) and the Village People (gay bubblegum). Laguna went on to other studio gigs (he was Archie on "Bang Bang Shang A Lang"), some major acid dabbling with the League for Spiritual Discovery and a brief flirtation with failure after the Shondells.

"All these guys made millions off me, and suddenly I couldn't even get a job in the mail room," he says. "My goal was just to pay the rent. I ended up loading boxes."

The Who finally gave him a break and let him produce (most notably Steve Gibbons) at their Ramport Studios in England. Next stop was the West Coast where he produced Little Roger & the Goose Bumps (the notorious "Stairway To Gilligan's Island" that Led Zeppelin suppressed), Greg Kihn, Jonathan Richman and the Runaways on a few unreleased tracks.

When the Runaways broke up and Joan was in danger of losing it, he sensed a talent worth saving—first buying her an

"She had no fear of anything. Once at the Roller Derby she attacked the opposing coach. There was no stopping her."

extra pair of bluejeans so she could take off her other pair and wash them, ultimately financing her first album *Bad Reputation* and acting as her manager despite a phobia of business.

Originally made so they could charge a few extra bucks for live shows, the album startled everyone by selling all five thousand independently produced copies in four days. The Blackhearts toured endlessly, developing a huge club following, some radio play and a monstrous debt as Laguna sharpened his business acumen the hard way. Finding something to live for, Joan gave up drugs except for an occasional off-the-road beer and large amounts of on-the-road caffeine. Her bad reputation remained mired in the days of her Sid Vicious imitation, however, and no major label would sign her.

Re-enter the renegade: Neal Bogart was now starting Boardwalk Records and looking for talent. "He couldn't tell the difference between Donna Summer and the Rolling Stones; thought rock 'n' roll could be promoted the same way as disco," says Laguna. "But he knew Joan was a star. He had an uncanny sense. He understood hit singles better than anyone."

So the man who had made several fortunes selling some of the most cynically manipulative music ever preserved in plastic became the unwitting champion of rock 'n' roll purity. His weapon was Joan's voice, which had colored and deepened over the years while losing none of that original Runaway enthusiasm. Above all, the voice was true. In listeners, it touched emotions that had been buried for years under a mudslide of nostalgia, disco silt and corporate sludge. Pushed by the ridiculously addictive "Do You Wanna Touch Me (Oh Yeah)," *Bad Reputation* became a major hit, blazing a trail for other new music on the charts and playlists.

The Blackhearts followed up with a second album in 1981. "I didn't want *I Love Rock 'N Roll* to come out the same week as AC/DC's *Black In Black*," says Laguna. "But Neal didn't want to wait, so he stole the tapes and put it out. He was ruthless."

Joan Jett could be equally ruthless. "He wanted us to play *Fridays* on ABC," says Laguna. "Joanie was scheduled to play the Capitol Theater in Albany that night for 3,000 kids. The Capitol's a theater with history—the Who and Springsteen played there, so she refused to do *Fridays*. Neal screamed, saying a television appearance would mean 600,000 more records sold. She told him she didn't need more than two hundred dollars a week to live on and she wouldn't do it."

None of it hurt *I Love Rock 'N Roll*. Not even the weird pattern of radio play could hurt it—Top Forty stations often saying it was too New Wave and AOR stations often saying it was too Top Forty. It was the most requested song in the country for four months and the number one single for eight weeks—the rawest rock song to top the charts in years.

By all reports, the success made dying a little easier for Neal Bogart. The guy loved to fight too much to have anyone feeling sorry for him, so he didn't let on he had cancer until the end.

"Joanie wasn't right for months afterwards," says Laguna. "They argued all the time but she loved him. He was the one guy who would take a chance on her when everyone else had given up. At the funeral, his mother grabbed Joanie and told her she was Neal's greatest pleasure when he died."

"The collision with Gary came about halfway through the

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show," says Ricky Byrd. "I knew it was serious when I couldn't raise my arm for the clapping on 'Touch Me.' We went off and they asked if I could do the encore. I said yes, just give me the lightest guitar you have. All I could do was lean against the amplifier and turn white."

Byrd went back to his hotel room, finally agreeing to imprecations that he go to the hospital. "They said I had a collapsed lung and it was pushing my heart out of place. If I'd waited any longer, I would have died of a heart attack."

Byrd plays lead sneer over Joan's rhythm snarl and is an admirer of the late Paul Kossoff of Free. "He only played one note but he played it with his whole body," says Byrd. "Joan also comes out of that tradition—the naive side of guitar playing as opposed to the technical side. She may not know everything she's doing, but it comes from the right place and that's what counts."

"She's a really solid guitar player," agrees Eric Amble, now a Del-Lord, whose place in the Blackhearts Byrd took. "A lot of people who sing and play you have to compensate for. I never had to compensate for Joan. She sings *and* plays great, never fails to put out for an audience. She doesn't really care about anything else."

Still somewhat bitter about being bounced from the band for reasons that don't seem clear in anyone's mind, Amble has his doubts about the Blackhearts' business situation. Indeed, managing an artist who has sold eight million units of everything worldwide and still listens to records on a dime-store stereo, Laguna is in a classic position to exploit, if he wants to.

"You can't hide anything from God," says Laguna. "Joan Jett carries some heavy karma with her and the person who rips her off will pay for it. I know what it's like to be successful and then have to load boxes for sixty dollars a week. I'm investing as much of the money as I can in pensions for them. If we can all walk away from this with some screw-you money, my first ambition will be fulfilled. My second ambition is to stick around for a while."

"There are a lot of mercenaries out there," says drummer Lee Crystal, formerly of the Boyfriends (who first met Joan while shoplifting in California). "The other day I met this guy from a fairly prominent group. He told me, 'I'm really into jazz but I can't make any money at it so I'm playing rock 'n' roll.' I lost all respect for the dude. When I play 'I Love Rock 'N Roll,' I *do* love rock 'n' roll. I don't have contempt for the music. I play a simple, heavy drum sound—that's what the group needs and that's what I like. Buddy Rich chops are okay if that's what you do. I just don't."

"What are you drinking?" asks Laguna, still in a foul mood from the previous night's piano solo. As with Joan, emotions blow across his face like the weather.

"A beer?" says Crystal. Laguna glares at him.

"You're serious? *One* beer?" Laguna glares harder. Crystal throws the beer in a trashbin. Joan herself is drinking hot tea and eating a white bread sandwich on the theory that whole wheat and anything that's supposed to be good for you is boring. So what does she make of these rumors that she's dead?

"People love to talk, I guess," she says. "Maybe it happens after shows. People see you exhausted and assume you're the worst kind of stoned. Or maybe they just don't want me around. Something about me still bothers a lot of people."

Outside the dressing room there's a half-inch of beer spilled on the floor and the air is an ulcerating fog of cigarette smoke. The couple thousand young men sitting at the long cafeteria-style tables have hair so short they could pass for skank-or-die punks at a Circle Jerks concert. The uniforms, however, give them away.

"They're going to go for it tonight," says a guy who will identify himself only as a "low-ranking individual" at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. "They've got people here who just got out of basic and haven't had a beer in twelve weeks. They won't be able to handle it. They've been so militarized they gotta have an explosion just to relax."

Surrounded by a thousand miles of flatness in all directions, Wichita Falls makes an ideal home for pilots in training. "You know what else this town is known for?" asks Vernon Moore, former psychologist and present talent coordinator at the Airmen's Club. "Willie Nelson used to sell Bibles here."

How come they have a flimsy picket fence in front of the stage? At a rock 'n' roll show that's not sane.

"This is the Air Force," Moore laughs. "There's no connection to mental health."

The airmen stare dazedly at Joan during "Bad Reputation"—the sight of someone who's happy apparently summoning up so much homesickness that they don't want to live anymore. An experienced seducer with a reluctant lover, Joan coaxes them gradually through "(I'm Gonna) Run Away" and "I Love Playin' With Fire" until they get loose enough to sway from side to side like some giant paramecium quivering with hunger. The realization dawns on the paramecium during "Tossin' And Turnin" that it can sway forward too. Several security guards in jackets and ties brace themselves against the stage, pushing mightily with their backs against the creature, turning around occasionally to scream at it until the ligaments threaten to snap in their necks. A fainted woman is pulled out before the paramecium can devour her, causing a momentary pang of conscience in the beast, but the only thing that seems to cool it off are Laguna's horrible piano solos. The fence finally gives way entirely as the paramecium's tentacles clutch at Joan's feet and knock over the stage monitors.

"Hey, is this a rock 'n' roll party or a riot?" asks Gary Ryan, as the security guards are reinforced with MPs, German shepherds and roadies who are piling chairs and amp cases in front of the stage in the absence of the picket fence.

"No," says Joan. "This is Armed Forces Day. Hey, Sheppard! There are a lot of things I like...(chew chew chew)...but I love (chew)...I mean, I love...(chew chew chew)...Sheppard Air Force Base!...(chew chew chew). I LOVE ROCK 'N' ROLL!"

"I like the one that says 'National Defense,'" says Joan to a fan who wants to give her his medals. "That means you kicked someone's ass and told him to leave our country alone."

Tommy Williamson, manager of the Airmen's Club, waits patiently in line in the dressing room with a piece of birthday cake. "It is now 2400 hours," a loudspeaker pleads. "Please leave the club in an orderly manner."

"I just want to add my personal thanks for the show and for wishing me a happy birthday up there," says Williamson. "My wife and I are going to get redneck now and have a party."

Did he have an official Air Force evaluation of the show?

"I'll give you a pilot's term," he says. "That was shit-hot. When you're talking Air Force, that's the top of the line." M

JETT NOISE

Joan Jett relies most heavily on a white '63 Gibson Melody Maker that she bought from Eric Carmen. She's also fond of a brown single cutaway Melody Maker, a '61 Fender Jaguar (hear it on "Coney Island Whitefish") and a natural blonde ("Not a goldtop!") Les Paul Deluxe. All are strung with Fender Super Bullets. She plays through a couple of Music Man HD 130s over a 4x12 bass cabinet and a 2x12 combo.

Ricky Byrd favors a black '63 Les Paul, a TV model Gibson, a '63 Strat and a '61 Gibson Junior, all strung with Dean Markleys and wired through two Ampeg SVTs tops and bottoms.

Gary Ryan owns five or six Ampeg basses with the classical cello-like head. His rumble starts with Super Jazz Roto Sound strings; is picked up by Seymour Duncan 1959 P-Bass pickups and comes out through a couple of 100-watt Marshall Master Volumes over two 4x12s with Electro-Voice speakers. All guitars use Nady wireless systems.

Everything **Lee Crystal** thumps is Ludwig. Everything he crashes is Zildjian.

Joan used to have an Ibanez acoustic but she cut it up in little pieces with a bayonet (U.S. Army issue, World War I) when she failed her driver's test for the second time.

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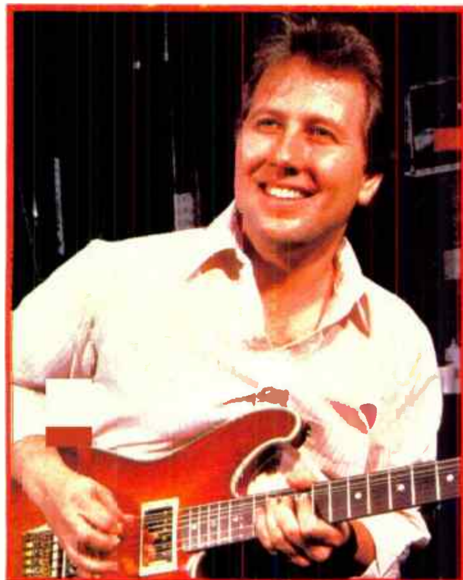
The Pros Are Talking About Ibanez Multi-Effects Floor Systems!



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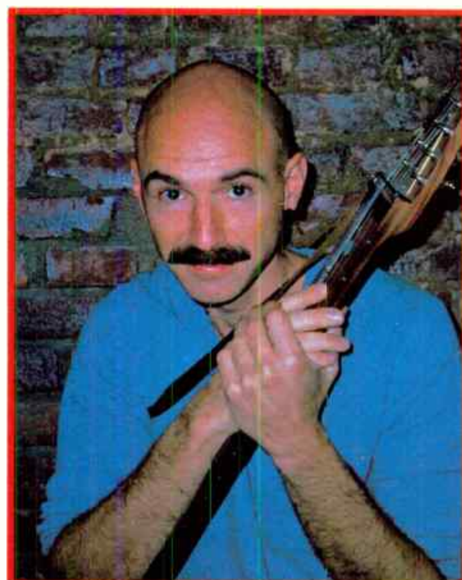

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World Radio History

By Barbara Graustark

Sure he's a weird kid. For Prince Rogers Nelson, a man for whom Henry Miller and Howard Hughes are undoubtedly behavioral models, the two S's of sex and secrecy are paramount. His reluctance to talk to the press is well established and his role as a beacon of sexual controversy is past legendary. Jimi Hendrix may have helped open the floodgates when he asked an innocent generation, "Are you experienced?" but Prince didn't have to ask. His sexual excesses in a dank, dark Minneapolis basement with his confidant and

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Prince:

Strange Tales from Andre's Basement

... and other fantasies come true.

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> *"I'm happiest making records that tell the truth, and I don't beat around the bush. I have to be what I am and sing what's on my mind."*

companion Andre Cymone and a host of neighborhood girls shaped the values of his earliest songs and mirrored the experiences and insecurity of a liberated generation.

His first albums were full of funky innuendo. *For You* established him as a poetic prince of love, with a mission to spread a sexy message here on earth—a message reinforced by his "special thanks to God" credit on the LP's jacket. Prince had heard the call, all right, but it wasn't the Lord's sermon that he was preaching, and with his next album, *Dirty Mind*, he catapulted out of the closet and into the public eye as a raunchy prophet of porn.

That album established Prince in rock critical circles as a truly special case. He created his own musical world in which heavy-metal guitars crashed into synth-funk rhythms, where rockabilly bounced off rapid punk tempos, all of it riding under lyrical themes of incest, lost love, sexual discovery and oral gratification. It was then that I became interested in talking to this elusive boy genius.

His concerts that fall had been a hot, erotic blast of wind

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

A chronic runaway, the adolescent Prince outschemed school.

through the chilly Northeast, and I was primed to meet a proper, swaggering conqueror—"The leader of a pack in a brave new world without rules or categories or any limitations," as Boston critic Ariel Swartley had extravagantly described him. What I found facing me that sleepy-eyed morning was shockingly different: a man-child in the promised land. Despite the studded trenchcoat, the leather jock bikini and the blatant bare chest, he was a shy and unsure creature, small as a leprechaun and just as elusive.

The interview became a lengthy excursion into Prince's pained past and through songs that had a purpose beyond the titillating of fantasies, as I was soon to learn. Prince's preoccupation, disclosed between the lines of the interview, was loneliness, which in the world had become painfully interwoven with sexuality. His own childhood was something else. Multiracial, one of nine children of a hard-working Italian mother and a half-black father—a struggling musician who was mostly absent during his youth—Prince was a veteran of foster homes and a chronic runaway.

At the time of our interview, he was proud and hurt, contemplating ending interviews altogether. He communicated with the gravity of a crestfallen child, speaking in short grudging bursts of words that nevertheless revealed a great deal more than he wanted anyone to know. At the end of our long visit, he gave an eloquent summation: "That was the longest I've ever talked," he said with a child's awe. He gave me an uncertain grin and, as he trudged off into the New York rain, wobbling a bit on his high-heeled cobra boots, I liked him immediately and had the feeling that Prince would survive his current bout with success.

MUSICIAN: *Let me start off with* the *question, to me at least.* Dirty Mind *seems to be the antithesis of what sex should be. Or is it? Why was that album called* Dirty Mind?

PRINCE: Well, that was kind of a put-on...I wanted to put it out there that way and in time show people that's *not* what sex was about. You can say a bad word over and over again and sooner or later it won't be bad anymore if everybody starts doing it.

MUSICIAN: *Are songs like "Head" and "Sister" serious or satiric?*

PRINCE: "Sister" is serious. "Head" could be taken as satire. No one's laughing when I'm saying it so I don't know. If people get enjoyment out of it and laugh, that's fine. All the stuff on the record is true experiences and things that have occurred around me and the way I feel about things. I wasn't laughing when I did it. So I don't suppose it was intended that way.

That's why I stopped doing interviews. I started and I stopped abruptly because of that. People weren't taking me seriously and I was being misunderstood. Everything I said they didn't believe anyway. They didn't believe my name. They didn't believe anything.

MUSICIAN: *Your father's stage name was Prince Rogers. Was that his real name?*

PRINCE: That wasn't his real name. He made it up.

MUSICIAN: *And what's your last name? Is it Nelson?*

PRINCE: I don't know.

MUSICIAN: *Your point about being misunderstood is kind of important. We should try and be as straight as possible with each other so I know that what you're saying is being interpreted correctly.*

PRINCE: Okay. I tell the truth about everything but my last name. I just hate it. I know how it's just the name that he had to go through life with, and he hated it too. So that's why he gave me this name and that's why he changed his when he went onstage. I just don't like it and I just really would rather not have it out. It's just a stupid name that means nothing to my ancestry, my father and what he was about.

MUSICIAN: *Was your father very much there when you were growing up?*

PRINCE: Well, up until the time I was seven he was very much there. Then he was very much away. Then I went to live with him once...I ran away the first time when I was twelve. And then he worked two jobs. He worked a day job and then he worked downtown playing behind strippers. So he was away and I didn't see him much then, only while he was shaving or something like that. We didn't talk so much then.

MUSICIAN: *Did he have any feelings about you being a musician? Was he a supportive person?*

PRINCE: I don't think so because he didn't think I was very good. I didn't really think so either. When I finally got a band together he used to come and watch us play every once in a

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while. But he finds it really hard to show emotion. I find that true of most men and it's kind of a drag, but....

MUSICIAN: *Is your father a good musician? What does he play?*

PRINCE: Piano. The reason he's good is that he's totally...he can't stand any music other than his. He doesn't listen to *anybody*. And he's really strange. He told me one time that he has dreams where he'd see a keyboard in front of his eyes and he'd see his hands on the keyboard and he'd hear a melody. And he can get up and it can be like 4:30 a.m. and he can walk right downstairs to his piano and play the melody. And to me that's amazing because there's no work involved really; he's just given a gift in each song. He never comes out of the house unless it's to get something to eat and he goes right back in and he plays all the time. His music...one day I hope you'll get to hear it. It's just—it sounds like nothing I've ever heard.

MUSICIAN: *How did* you *get into music? Where were you? What were you doing?*

PRINCE: I was at home living with my mother and my sister, and he had just gone and left his piano. He didn't allow anybody to play it when he was there because we would just bang on it. So once he left then I started doing it because nobody else would. Everything was cool I think, until my father left, and then it got kinda hairy. My step-dad came along when I was nine or ten, and I disliked him immediately, because he dealt with a lot of materialistic things. He would bring us a lot of presents all the time, rather than sit down and talk with us and give us companionship. I got real bitter because of that, and I would say all the things that I disliked about him, rather than tell him what I really needed. Which was a mistake, and it kind of hurt our relationship.

I don't think they wanted me to be a musician. But I think it was mainly because of my father, who disliked the idea that he was a musician, and it really broke up their life. I think that's why he probably named me what he named me, it was like a blow to her—"He's gonna grow up the same way, so don't even worry about him." And that's exactly what I did.

I was about thirteen when I moved away. I didn't really realize other music until I had to. And that was when I got my own band and we had to play top forty songs. Anything that was a hit, didn't matter who it was. We played everything because we were playing for white and black audiences at the time. Minneapolis is mostly white anyway.

MUSICIAN: *Do you feel a strong identification with anything...anybody?*

PRINCE: No. I think society says if you've got a little black in you that's what you are. I don't.

MUSICIAN: *When you moved away, did you move in with your father?*

PRINCE: Well, that was when I went to live with my aunt, also in Minneapolis, because I couldn't stay at my father's. And my father wouldn't get me a piano, it was too much or whatever, so...he got me a guitar. I didn't learn to play the *right* way, because I tuned it to a straight A chord so it was really strange. When I first started playing guitar, I just did chords and things like that, and I didn't really get into soloing and all that until later, when I started making records. I can't think of any foremost great guitarist that stuck in my mind. It was just solos on records, and it was just dumb stuff; I hated top forty. Everybody in the band hated it. It was what was holding us back. And we were trying to escape it. But we had to do it to make enough money to make demo tapes.

MUSICIAN: *How'd you get to Andre Cymone's cellar?*

PRINCE: Andre Cymone's house was the last stop after going from my dad's to my aunt's, to different homes and going through just a bunch of junk. And once I got there, I had realized that I was going to have to play according to the program, and do exactly what was expected of me. And I was sixteen at the time, getting ready to turn seventeen.

MUSICIAN: *Were you still in high school?*

PRINCE: Mm-hm. And, that was another problem. I wasn't doing well in school, and I was going to have to. Otherwise the people around me were going to get very upset. I could come in anytime I wanted, I could have girls spend the night, and it didn't make a difference. I think it had a great deal to do with me coming out into my own, and discovering myself. I mean, the music was interesting at that time, once I got out of high school. And I got out of high school early, when I was like sixteen.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Bikini basement: "It depends on how many people are there."

MUSICIAN: *Did you finish?*

PRINCE: Yeah. Because I got all the required credits. And that's relatively early. In about two and a half years, or something like that. It was pretty easy and stupid. To this day, I don't use anything that they taught me. Get your jar, and dissect frogs and stuff like that.

MUSICIAN: *How'd you support yourself?*

PRINCE: Well, that was the problem. Once I got out of high school it was interesting for a while because I didn't have any money. I didn't have any school, and I didn't have any dependents, I didn't have any kids, or girlfriends, or anything. I had cut myself off totally from everything. And that's when I really started writing. I was writing like three or four songs a day. And, they were all really long. Which is interesting for me as a writer, because it's hard to just take a thought, and continue it for a long period of time without losing it. And it's harder for me now to write than it was back then, because there's so many people around me now. I wrote a lot of sexual songs back then, but

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they were mainly things that I *wanted* to go on, not things that *were* going on. Which is different from what I write about now.

MUSICIAN: *You mean, what you were writing about then was just a fantasy of women?*

PRINCE: All fantasies, yeah. Because I didn't have anything around me...there were no people. No anything. When I started writing, I cut myself off from relationships with women.

MUSICIAN: *Did you ever have a relationship?*

PRINCE: Several solid relationships (laughs). When you're broken, and poor and hungry, you usually try to find friends who are gonna help you out.

MUSICIAN: *Who are rich and things?*

PRINCE: Yeah. And successful. And have a lot of food in their fridge. I don't know.

MUSICIAN: *Did you ever do anything that you're embarrassed about?*

PRINCE: Mmm...no...well....

MUSICIAN: *Were you doing drugs?*

PRINCE: No. One thing that turned me off to that was seeing my brother get high. At first we all thought it was funny, but then I started asking him questions and he couldn't answer 'em, you know. So I felt it was kinda stupid. And I didn't want my mind all cloudy at any time, because I always felt...I don't know, maybe it was a basic paranoia or something about me, but I didn't want anybody sneaking up behind me, and doing me in, or taking my money, or tricking me in any way. So I never wanted to get high.

MUSICIAN: *How does Andre Cymone fit into all of this? Was*

MIXED EMOTIONS: Prince on the Music

By Robert Hilburn

MUSICIAN: *I liked your first two albums, but it seemed to me that the third record,* Dirty Mind, *was really a growth....*

PRINCE: Yes. The second record (*For You*) was pretty contrived. After the first record, I put myself in a hole, because I'd spent a lot of money to make it. With the second record, I wanted to remedy all that, so I just made it a "hit" album. I usually write hits for other people, and those are the songs I throw away and don't really care for. *Dirty Mind* started off as demo tapes; they were just like songs inside that I wanted to hear. So I took it to my manager and he said, "This is the best stuff I've heard in a long time. This should be your album." The drag is that I don't know how I could make another album like that. I usually change directions with each record, which is a problem in some respects, but rewarding and fulfilling for me. I have mixed emotions.

MUSICIAN: *The fourth record,* Controversy, *sounds more new wave.*

PRINCE: It depends a lot on what instrument I write on. When I write on guitar, I come up with songs like "When You Are Mine" and "Ronnie Talks To Russia." When I start with drums, I get "Controversy." *Controversy* is a little erratic. I'm really proud of this new album (*1999*).

MUSICIAN: *How did "Little Red Corvette" come about?*

PRINCE: That song was a real life incident. A girl in a little red Corvette....

MUSICIAN: *Did you resist the idea of* 1999 *being a double album?*

PRINCE: Yes. I didn't want to do a double record, but I just kept on writing. Of course, I'm not one for editing. I did try to shorten things.

MUSICIAN: *How do you prepare to go into the studio? Do you have rough ideas...?*

PRINCE: I don't plan or anything like that. When I record, I find if I usually just sit down and do something, I'll gradually come up with something. Sometimes it starts with a lyric.

MUSICIAN: *Is it easier to work alone rather than with others?*

PRINCE: Oh, much easier. I have a communication problem sometimes when I'm trying to describe music.

MUSICIAN: *Were you always a musical loner?*

PRINCE: When I first started, I always had buddies around me. I never wanted to be a front man. It felt spooky to be at the mike alone. I had a bad habit of just thinking of myself—if I just moved constantly, then people would think I was comfortable. But that wasn't right.

MUSICIAN: *When did you finally become comfortable performing?*

PRINCE: Last year, on the Controversy tour. There was something about coming down the pole and going out in front. I felt real comfortable.

MUSICIAN: *What was the incident at the Stones' Coliseum show when you left the stage early?*

PRINCE: When we went onstage, there were a lot of people throwing things and making noises and stuff. At first I thought it was fun, okay, and then I thought, "Well, we just better play." Dez, my guitar player, is just a rock 'n' roller at heart and he said, "Show 'em we can play, and then it'll simmer down." But there was this one dude right in the front and I looked down at him—you could see the hatred all over his face. He wouldn't stop throwing things. And the reason that I left was I didn't want to play anymore. I just wanted to fight him. I got really angry. It's like I'm feeling, "Look, I got twenty minutes. If you can't deal with that, well, we'll have to go outside and work it out." You know? How dare you throw something at me?

MUSICIAN: *Many songwriters use the word "love" to mean other things such as ambition or goal or talent. Is the word "sex" almost interchangeable sometimes?*

PRINCE: Yes, I think everything basically is. Like in "Lady Cab Driver," for example, "sex" is used in two different contexts. One is anger.

MUSICIAN: *Does that imply an S & M kind of thing? A lot of people might perceive that from the record.*

PRINCE: Well, that's up to them. I don't want to burst anybody's bubble, but the idea was that a lot of people make love out of loneliness sometimes.

MUSICIAN: *And they want to be touched in reassurance?*

PRINCE: Yes, exactly. It just went from anger and you start saying, "Well, how long can this go on? This is a person here. I have to be human." The right spot was hit so....

MUSICIAN: *Do you enjoy being in the studio?*

PRINCE: Yes. There's nothing like the feeling after you've done something and play it back and you know that you'll never hear anything like it and that they'll never figure it out—I'm sorry, I know what that sounds like. When I say "figure it out," I mean something like I'll try to go so high and so jagged with my voice that if anybody tries to do it their tonsils will fall out. I don't try to trick people. Life is too confusing itself, and I wouldn't put any more on anybody else. Now everybody's worried about the fact that I can't use engineers.

MUSICIAN: *You can't use engineers?!*

PRINCE: No, they drive me crazy. It's because they're so technical. Everything just got so esoteric, "We've got to do this a certain way," when you're ready to play. The engineer I use and give credit to on the album, she sets everything up for me, most of the time before I come in. And then I just do what I have to do and split. She puts things together afterward.

MUSICIAN: *I once heard you described as a child prodigy.*

PRINCE: Don't. That's all fabricated evidence that the management did to make it happen. I don't want to say that I was anything less than what they thought, but I just did it as sort of a hobby, and then it turned into a job and just a way to eat, and now I do it as art.

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he there at the beginning, and then you went to New York and came back, and resumed the friendship?

PRINCE: Well, what happened was, before I went to New York we lost our friendship, because he was in the band with me at the time, and I asked them all what they wanted to do, "Do you want to stay here, or do you want to go to New York?" And Andre didn't speak up, but everyone else was against it. No one wanted to do it. They liked their lifestyle, I guess. I don't think they really liked the idea of me trying to manipulate the band so much. I was always trying to get us to do something different, and I was always teamed up on for that. Like, in an argument or something like that, or a fight, or whatever... it was always me against them. That's when I wrote "Soft And Wet," which was the first single I put out. I really liked the tune, but everyone thought it was filthy, and "you didn't have no business doing stuff without us, anyway." I just did what I wanted to. And that was it.

MUSICIAN: *When did you realize that?*

PRINCE: When I was in Andre's basement. I found out a lot about myself then. The only reason I stayed was because of Andre's mother. She would let me do anything I wanted to, but she said all I care about is you finishing school. *Anything.*

MUSICIAN: *How much can you do in a basement?*

PRINCE: Well, it depends on how many people are there! (laughs) You know, one time she came down and saw a lot of us down there, and we weren't all dressed, and stuff like that. It kind of tripped her out, and we got into a semi-argument, and whatever, but it, was... you know....

MUSICIAN: *Was the scene back then in the basement a heterosexual scene? Was it homosexual?*

PRINCE: No, everything was heterosexual. I didn't know any homosexuals, no. There was one guy who walked around in

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Prince gets comfortable; don't ask what's under the coat.

women's clothes, but we didn't know *why* he did it, we just thought it was funny, and that was that. Some things don't dawn on you for a long time. And now I hear, like... Minneapolis is supposed to be like... the third largest gay city in the country, or whatever. Huge.

MUSICIAN: *Were you ready for New York when you came?*

PRINCE: Yeah. I was ready for anything. I felt disgusted with my life in Minneapolis.

MUSICIAN: *What'd you do when you got here? Did you know you were gonna live with your sister?*

PRINCE: Mm-hm. When I called her and told her what had happened, she said, well come here and I'll help you. And I came. She had a great personality. You know, all my friends were girls, okay? I didn't have any male friends, because they were just cheap, all of 'em were just cheap, so I knew then that if she used her personality and her sensitivity she could get us a deal. That didn't mean going to bed with anybody, it just meant that... you know, use your charm rather than trying to go in there and be this man, because you're *not.*

And then my sister was introduced to this one guy who had a band. And, I don't know how she got this, but it was really cool. She ended up talking to this guy and found out everything he did, and found out that he had a demo and he was gonna take it to this woman named Danielle. And he was gonna try to get his band signed to her. So we all went together, and she said, "Can my little brother come in?" And she said sure. So we were all sitting there, and Danielle said, "Alright, put your tape on." So he put on the tape of his band. That tape was pretty terrible, and Danielle said so, and the guy started making excuses, saying, "Well, that's not the real guitar player, *or* the real singers, so don't worry about it." And she said, "Well, why did you bring a tape that doesn't have the real musicians?"

Then my sister started telling Danielle about me and finally she asked me to sing. And I said no (laughs). And she said, "Why not?" And I said, "Because I'm scared." And she said, "You don't have to be scared." And they turned the lights down, and it was really strange.

That same day I had just written "Baby," and I didn't really have it all together, but I sang the melody and she really liked my voice. She said, "I don't care what you do, just hum, because I just want to hear you sing." So that's what I did, just started singing and humming, and making up words and really stupid stuff.

MUSICIAN: *Were you singing in your upper register then?*

PRINCE: I only sang like that back then because, I don't know... it hurt... it hurt my voice to sing in the lower register. I couldn't make it, I couldn't peak songs the way I wanted to, and things like that, so I never used it.

MUSICIAN: *Oh! I would think it would hurt to sing in a falsetto.*

PRINCE: Well, not for me. I wish it was that way, but....

MUSICIAN: *Did Danielle sign you to a contract?*

PRINCE: Well, she wanted to start working with me immediately. Nevertheless, this guy was pretty upset that he didn't get his band in there. He and my sister fell out right away, but she didn't care. And that's what I dug about her. So I talked with Danielle, and she told me to come over to her apartment. She was very beautiful, too, which made everything a lot easier, I remember that about her. And she made me bring all my songs, and we went through 'em all, and she didn't like any of 'em.

MUSICIAN: *None of them? Not even "Soft And Wet"?*

PRINCE: None. Except for "Baby." She wanted me to do "Baby" with a lot of orchestration, tympani, strings, and....

MUSICIAN: *How'd that sound to you?*

PRINCE: I didn't care. You know. I was cool with it. All I wanted to do was play a couple of instruments on it, and let it say on the album that I played something. And she said no, unless I could play better than the session guy, which I didn't think I could do if a guy was gonna sit there and read the chart, and I was going to get aced out right away. So that didn't materialize. Anyway... after I finished that, that's when me and my sister kinda had a dispute.

MUSICIAN: *About what?*

PRINCE: Mainly money. I had nothing; I was running up sort of a bill there, at her place, and she wanted me to sell my publishing for like $380 or something like that—which I thought was kinda foolish. And I kept telling her that I could get my own publishing company. I didn't care about money. I just didn't care about money. And, I don't know, I never have, because... the one time I did have it was when my step-dad lived there, and I know I was extremely bitter then.

MUSICIAN: *And did you have to go back to Minneapolis?*

PRINCE: I didn't *have* to, which was nice. Danielle knew this was gonna happen sooner or later. It's was all really interesting to me back then, and I kind of would have liked to have seen what would have happened if she had managed me.

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MUSICIAN: *What did happen? Why didn't she?*
PRINCE: Well, when I got back to Minneapolis, that's when I first met Owen Husney. I had been talking to him over the phone, and all he kept saying was that he thought I was really great, and that....
MUSICIAN: *Was Owen big time then? Was he a big-time kind of promoter, or manager?*
PRINCE: Mmm. He had promoted some gigs, but he was working mainly in his ad company. And he wanted to manage an act. The main thing he said was that no one should produce a record of mine—*I* should do it. And, I still had a deal with Danielle if I wanted it, but something about him saying that to me made me think that was the way to go. So I told her that I was going to college.
MUSICIAN: *Was Danielle somebody that you had a relationship with?*
PRINCE: Mm-mm. It was only...it was only mind games. I mean, we'd look at one another and...play games, but it wasn't...we never said anything.
MUSICIAN: *Um...when you came back and started working with Owen, what did he do? Did he get the contract for you with Warner Bros.?*
PRINCE: Owen believed in me, he really did. First of all, nobody believed I could play all the instruments.
MUSICIAN: *How many instruments did you play?*
PRINCE: Well, on the demo tapes I didn't play too many—I played drums, keyboards, bass and guitars, percussion and vocals; but when I did my album, I did tons of things. Somebody counted and said I had played twenty-seven on the first album. Different ones, but I don't know, I never count things (laughs). Because the quantity is...people put so much emphasis on that. It's about the quality, and what it sounds like.
MUSICIAN: *It must have been a battle with the record company to produce and arrange.*
PRINCE: Well, I got a couple offers and the only difference between Warner Bros. and the others was that they didn't want to let me do production, they didn't want to let me plan anything on the records. Warners had a lot of problems with it at first but Owen was fighting for control for me. They made me do a demo tape. So I did it, and they said that's pretty good. Do another one, and so I did another one. Then they said, "Okay, we can produce your album." And they waited a week to call me back and they said I couldn't. I had to go through that process a few more times. Then finally they said okay. It was kind of frustrating at first but I got used to it.

To some degree in the earlier days I was listening to Owen and the company. I didn't want to create any waves because I was brand new, and stuff like that. But now I feel that I'm going to have to do exactly what's on my mind and be exactly the way I am. Otherwise sooner or later down the road I'm going to be in a corner sucking my thumb or something. I don't want to lose it. I just want to do what I'm really about.
MUSICIAN: *Did you know what you wanted to do when you started out? When you got that contract with Warner Bros., and they said to go into the studio and do it?*
PRINCE: I had an idea, but it was really vague, and I think that had to do with...at least, with having such a big budget. It was really big—over $100,000. You're supposed to go in and do an album for $60,000. But I went in and kept going, and kept going and kept going. I got in a lot of trouble for it.
MUSICIAN: *How much time did you spend in the studio?*
PRINCE: Hours. Hours. I was a physical wreck when I finished the record...it took me five months to do the first one. I'm proud of it, in the sense that it's mistake-free, and it's perfect. And it's...that's the problem with it, you know. But it wasn't really me, it was like a machine. You know, I walked in, and I was sleepy all the time. I didn't really feel like recording for eighty percent of the record. But I did it anyway, because, by the time I had gotten close to $100,000, it was like, you know, you were going to have to do something *great*. So, by that time, I didn't want to make any mistakes. The relationship between me and the executive producer that they assigned with me was horrifying.
MUSICIAN: *Did Warner Bros. ever look as if they were just going to wash their hands of the whole thing, or were they committed?*
PRINCE: No, I don't think so, because I owed them too much money.
MUSICIAN: *They had to stick with you, so you could pay off.*
PRINCE: Yeah. At least three albums. And I didn't want to do anything like interviews or touring. I was being real stubborn and bull-headed, and Owen didn't realize how to get it out of me, and make me stop. And, I don't know, our friendship died slowly after that. It just got strange.
MUSICIAN: *How did you get the whole act together? When did you get a band and decide to go on the road?*
PRINCE: Well, the band came right before I did the second album (*For You*).
MUSICIAN: *What happened when you went back to Minneapolis...first, after New York, and then, after you had actually recorded? Were you treated very differently? I mean, this was big time with Warner Bros., for sure.*
PRINCE: Yeah. The same people who told me I wasn't gonna be anything, treated me with a lot more respect now. And it made me a much better person. It took a lot of bitterness out of me. Because that's all I really wanted; I didn't want the respect so much as I wanted friendship, real friendship. That's all that counts to me. And I tell my band members the same thing now. I mean, you have to learn to deal with me on an up-front level, or else, you know, it's dead. I don't want people around me who don't do that.
MUSICIAN: *Has your music changed much since then?*
PRINCE: I think I change constantly, because I can hear the music changing. The other day I put my first three albums on and listened to the difference. And I know why I don't sound like that anymore. Because things that made sense to me and things that I liked then I don't like anymore. The way I played music, just the way I was in love a lot back then when I used to make those records. And love meant more to me then—but now I realize that people don't always tell you the truth, you know? I was really gullible back then. I believed in everybody around me. I believed in Owen, I believed in Warner Bros., I believed in everybody. If someone said something good to me, I believed it.
MUSICIAN: *And it was reflected in your music?*
PRINCE: Yeah, I think so. It was....
MUSICIAN: *More romantic?*
PRINCE: Yeah. And I felt good when I was singing back then. The things I do now, I feel anger sometimes when I sing, and I can hear the difference. I'm screaming more now than I used to. And things like that. I think it's just me. It also has to do with the instrumentation. It has nothing to do with trying to change styles or anything. Plus, I'm in a different environment; I see New York a little bit more. In my subconscious I'm influenced by the sinisterness of it, you know, the power. I hear sirens all the time, things like that. It's not like that in Minneapolis. If you ever go there you'll see it's real laid back, real quiet, and you have to make your own action. I think a lot of warped people come out of there. My friends. I know a lot of warped girls, okay? Warped to me means they see things differently than I would, I suppose. They talk a lot. They talk a lot about nothing. But I mean heavy. They get into it like you wouldn't believe. I mean, we could get into an hour-long conversation about my pants. You know, why they're so tight, or something, do you know what I mean?
MUSICIAN: *Well, why are they tight?*
PRINCE: I don't know (laughs). I don't know. Because I want them to be. I just like the way they look.
MUSICIAN: *Did Warner Bros. flinch when you put "Head" on the third record?*
PRINCE: They flinched at just about everything (laughs).
MUSICIAN: *I wanted to ask you about the cover of Dirty*

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Mind. *How was that done?*
PRINCE: We were just fooling around, and we were jamming at the time. It was summertime, and we were having fun. And that's what I had on. But my coat was closed, so the photographer didn't know. I was with some friends and...
MUSICIAN: *Does everyone in Minneapolis just walk around with bikini underpants?*
PRINCE: (laughs) No. But, see...I don't know. I mean... once...I mean, if you've got a big coat on. I mean, who knows what he has on? I mean, it was hot out. Everybody was saying, why you got that hot coat on? I'd say, I'm really not that hot. (laughs) And they'd say, you gotta be.
MUSICIAN: *I bet you flash.*
PRINCE: No. Not in...it depends on who it is. But, we were just jamming and stuff like that, and he didn't know that's what I had on. And so, he was taking pictures and I happened to open my coat for one, just as a joke, you know? He said, wow. Like that. And, well, see, I used to wear that onstage.
MUSICIAN: *How'd you pick that image of yourself? Where did it come from?*
PRINCE: Well, I used to wear leotards and Danskins and stuff, because our stage show is really athletic and I wanted something comfortable. And my management said, "You have to at least start wearing underwear, because...."
MUSICIAN: *You weren't wearing any* underwear?
PRINCE: No. Kind of gross. So I said, okay, and started wearing underwear.
MUSICIAN: *What kind of friends were you hanging with?*
PRINCE: Prostitutes. Pimps. Drug dealers. Really bad people and preachers' daughters, you know? Which is strange, because they were the total opposite of their fathers.
MUSICIAN: *How did you meet them? At gigs?*
PRINCE: Yeah. I talk to people, and if they're real and sincere about what they're doing, and they don't really want anything out of me except to be my friends, then, you know, I go for that.
MUSICIAN: *The people who you were friendly with back then...that group...did they influence your style?*
PRINCE: Well, I think to some degree. They're really rebellious. They cut themselves off from the world, as I did. The band's attitude is, they don't listen to a lot of music and stuff like that. And the band is funny, the only time they'll go to see someone else is if they're going to talk about them or heckle. It's really sick. They're like critics.
MUSICIAN: *Are they all close friends?*
PRINCE: I don't know anymore. It's hard to say. When we first started I think we were. That's how they got in the group. Some of them I didn't find out if they could play until later.
MUSICIAN: *Are they concerned, now, about not being on the road? Do they feel that they'd like to be touring?*
PRINCE: Yeah. We all do. Once I stop, then I start writing again, or whatever, or start playing...fooling around, then I don't want to play out in public so much. I guess I write letters better than I talk, basically. I can write really good letters. And that's where the records come from. I can sit down and say exactly what I want. I don't have to worry about someone else next to me doing their job.
MUSICIAN: *It's funny, because you're a very imaginative guy. I would think for someone who draws on fantasies and wrote about dreams, fantasy would be important.*
PRINCE: Well, it is. But it's not so much when you're writing a letter. Do you know what I mean? If I were to write a letter to a friend, and tell them about an experience, I wouldn't say how it made me *feel*; I would say exactly what I *did*. so that they could experience it, too, rather than the intellectual point of view. If you give them a situation, maybe that you've encountered, or whatever, give them the basis of it, let them take it to the next stage, they make the picture in their own mind. I know I am happiest making records like this, making records that tell the truth and don't beat around the bush. Maybe I'm wrong for it, but I know the people at the concerts know exactly what the songs are about, sing right along, and are really into it. We have their attention. They understand, I think, and they're getting the message. I don't know. It seems real to me because...well, it is, because I'm saying exactly what's going around me. I say everything exactly the way it is.
MUSICIAN: *Do you think people think that you're gay?*
PRINCE: Well, there's something about me, I know, that makes people think that. It must stem from the fact that I spent a lot of time around women. Maybe they see things I don't.
MUSICIAN: *People always speak about a feminine sensibility as if it's something negative in a man. But it's usually very attractive for most women. Like a sensitiveness.*
PRINCE: I don't know. It's attractive for me. I mean, I would like to be a more loving person, and be able to deal with other people's problems a little bit better. Men are really closed and cold together, I think. They don't like to cry, in other words. And I think that's wrong, because that's not true.
MUSICIAN: *Is there anything that you want me to mention that we haven't talked about?*
PRINCE: Well, I don't know, it's...I don't want people to get the impression that sex is all I write about. Because it's not, and the reason why it's so abundant in my writing is mainly because of my age and the things that are around me. Until you can go to college or get a nine-to-five job, then there's going to be a bunch of free time around you. And free time can only be spent in certain ways. But if people don't dig my music, then stay away from it, that's all. It's not for everybody, I don't believe. I do know that there are a lot of people wanting to be themselves out there.
MUSICIAN: *Will you always try to be controversial?*
PRINCE: That's really a strange question, because if I'm that way, then I will be forever writing that way. I don't particularly think it's so controversial. I mean, when a girl can get birth control pills at age twelve, then I know she knows just about as much as I do, or at least will be there in a short time. I think people are pretty blind to it. Pretty blind to life, and taking for granted what really goes on.
MUSICIAN: *Do you think that older people don't give the twelve- and thirteen-year-olds enough credit for knowing as much as they know?*
PRINCE: I'm sure they don't. I'm absolutely sure they don't. I mean, when my mom had stuff in her room that I could sneak in and get. Books, vibrators, all kinds of things. I did it. I'm sure everybody else does. And if I can go in there and do all that, I don't see how she figures I won't know. And the way she figures I don't know is, she doesn't sit down and tell me exactly what's going on. I never got a rap like that, and I don't know how many kids do.
MUSICIAN: *I think that a lot of kids would like to feel that there's somebody who's capturing that experience for them. And I don't think anybody really has done it before.*
PRINCE: Yeah. At the same time, you're telling them about wanting to be loved or whatever...accepted. In time you can tell them about contraception and things like that, which need to be said. No one else is going to say it. I know I have definite viewpoints on a lot of different things: the school system, the way the government's run, and things like that. And I'll say them, in time. And I think they'll be accepted for what they are.
MUSICIAN: *So is that really you up there onstage?*
PRINCE: What? The way I act? Oh, yeah, without a doubt.
MUSICIAN: *In other words, when you go back to Minneapolis, and you go to parties, is that you?*
PRINCE: Oh, yeah. And when I'm with my friends, I'm more like that than anything. A lot of times, when I got out to clubs, if I go, I just go to observe, and I watch people. I like to watch people. They way they act and things like that.
MUSICIAN: *So what will be the first thing you do when you get back to Minneapolis?*
PRINCE: Probably take a long bath. I haven't had one in a long time. I'm scared of hotel bathtubs.
MUSICIAN: *What do you fear?*
PRINCE: They just...a maid could walk in and see me. M

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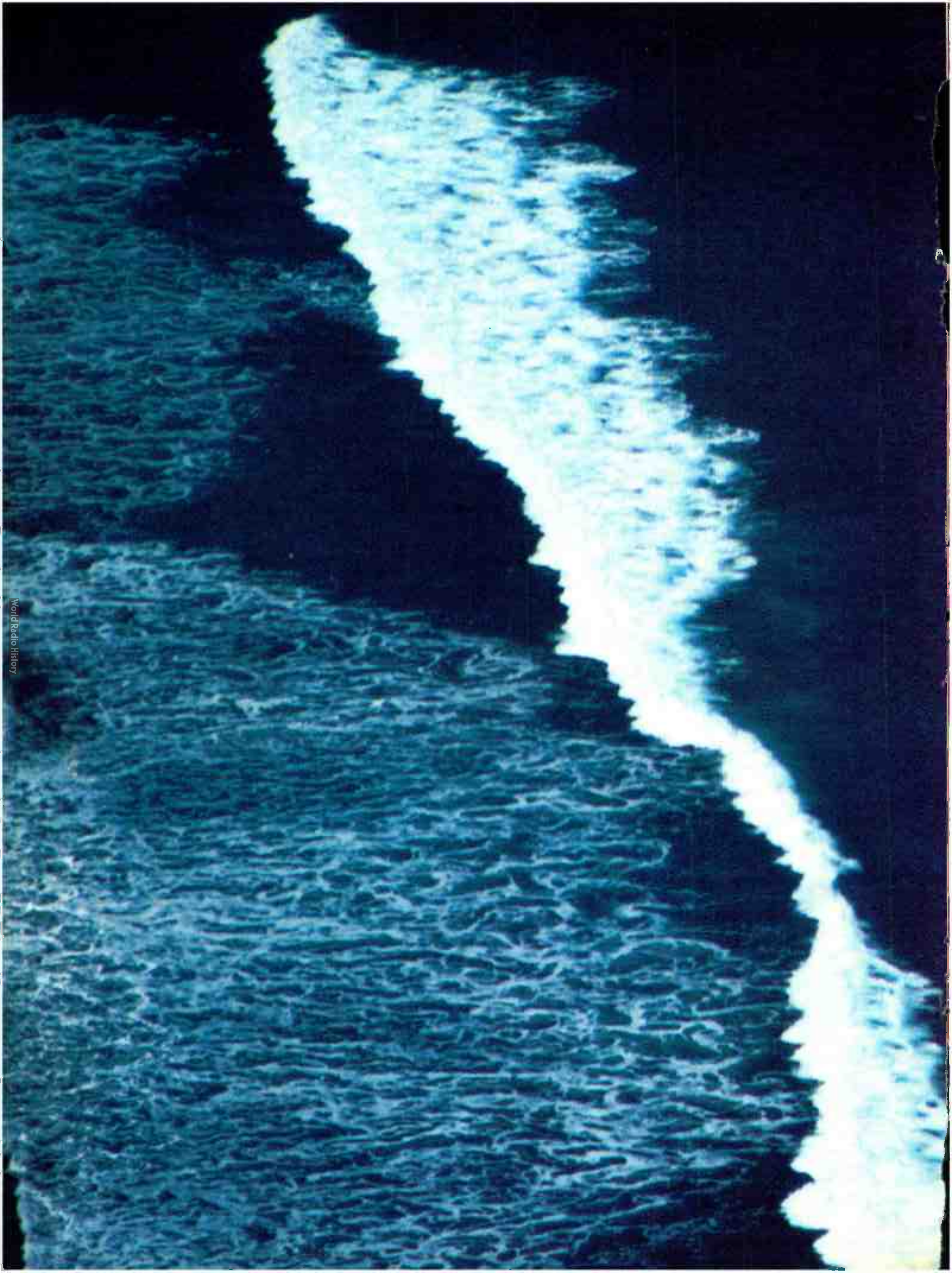

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The Beach Boys: High Times and Ebb Tides

Carl Wilson Recalls 20 Years With and Without Brian.

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

With the possible exception of Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys' story contains more contradictions than any rock 'n' roll act in history. When Secretary of the Interior James Watt attacked the Beach Boys last spring as a "hard rock band" that attracted the "wrong element," many reports gleefully pointed out that the Beach Boys had played a benefit concert for George Bush during the 1980 campaign. They neglected to point out that the Beach Boys first played the Washington Mall in 1971 as a warm-up for the May Day demonstrations, one of the most radical actions of the anti-war movement.

Many reports cited the Beach Boys' involvement with handicapped kids, corporate advertising and transcendental meditation; few mentioned their involvement with draft resistance, Charles Manson, illegal drugs and nervous breakdowns. While their famous singles certainly support their wholesome,

DENNIS STOCK, MAGNUM

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"Brian was evolving very fast, getting into a very expansive stream of energy. We could see that he was opening up and making very serious music. He was writing stuff that needed session players."

all-American image, their albums are filled with brooding, troubled meditations by leader Brian Wilson, one of rock's most puzzling enigmas. Most reports consigned the Beach Boys to the nostalgic oblivion of an oldies band, but they have continued to release albums that always contain several examples of exquisitely imaginative pop.

Most importantly, the reports overlooked the Beach Boys' tremendous musical influence. You can hear their influence in Elvis Costello's "Oliver's Army," in the Go-Go's "Our Lips Are Sealed," in Steely Dan's "Aja" and in almost anything by Paul McCartney, Christine McVie or Lindsey Buckingham. Brian Wilson was the first to prove that odd chord changes, counterpoint harmonies and thickly layered arrangements could enhance rather than restrict rock's dance beat and emotional tug. Many are his debtors.

Brian instilled rock 'n' roll with the suburban idealism that has shaped it ever since. He demonstrated conclusively that it was possible for a shy, frustrated suburban kid to compensate for drab surroundings by conjuring up a utopian vision through the sheer force of imagination. But when that idealism collided with adult disappointments, the optimism darkened, the music grew complicated, the hits dwindled and eventually Brian gave up full-time music-making. The elusive promise of Brian's aural dreams have shaped both the successes and the frustrations of the Beach Boys story.

No one has worked harder to keep the Beach Boys creative life going than Carl Wilson, the band's youngest member. For years, he was the one who kept the band's squabbling factions working together and who encouraged as much participation as Brian could muster. More recently, he has combatted the band's slide towards nostalgic paralysis, releasing two solo albums of new material. The new album, *Youngblood*, shows flashes of the old Beach Boys' inspiration. Though uneven, *Youngblood* has enough gems to prove how much Carl has absorbed as Brian's apprentice.

"I've always been the one who worked real closely with Brian," Carl claims. "I was his sounding board; I was his underling. I always tagged along. In addition to being one of the players in the studio, I worked with him in the control room, because he wanted my ear."

Carl was only a freshman in high school when his big brother Brian called him into the family den to teach him a new song called "Surfer Girl." Even as Carl learned the mid-range harmony vocal devilishly close to Brian's lead, he realized this ballad offered far more than anything he was hearing on the radio. "'Surfer Girl' has a real spiritual quality to it," Carl says, using the present tense, for the song has not faded a bit in twenty-one years. "I don't know whom he wrote it for, but there's a real heart attached to that. The chords are just so filling. For its time, the record was so advanced. It was really beautiful to be alive when that record was playing. The way our voices sounded on that, the melody Brian wrote, the way he put the arrangement together, that might be the perfect melding of all the elements. It's very enchanting; it's very Brian.

"If you think back to 1961, the records then were really pretty nerdy. Our stuff was very appealing: all over the country, people wanted a neat car and a girlfriend or boyfriend; people wanted to hang out at the beach. It was really an early hippie thing."

A bushy, brown beard wraps around Carl's chubby, cherubic face as he stands by the window of his house at Colorado's Caribou Ranch. The snow-capped Continental Divide looms through the window. "Brian created this whole world at home at his piano, and people were mad to get to California. There was an awe connected to California and the beach and the way we lived. Those were the people who were really cool. But it wasn't the real California so much as the California in Brian's songs."

The Beach Boys' story is essentially a family drama. After several personnel changes, the current quintet is the same as the original: the three Wilson brothers—Brian, forty; Dennis, thirty-eight; and Carl, thirty-six—plus their first cousin, Mike Love, forty-one, and Brian's high school football teammate, Alan Jardine, forty. These family ties have kept the band together when most groups would have split up.

Probably the most perilous moment came in 1977, when business mismanagement and cocaine led to public announcements of the band's break-up. "That was a very rough time for all of us," admits Carl. "Relations were very strained and icy. Everyone was frightened and it came out as anger. Everything was falling apart in front of us, and we didn't know how to get ahold of it. What we had to do was just let everything fall apart and then realize, 'Now, wait a minute. Do I want to fight with my family and friends?' We got a chance to see if we really wanted to be a group or not. We got to choose again. It became clear that we should put it back together."

The family drama begins in a lower-class housing development in Hawthorne, a Los Angeles suburb five miles inland. It was a modest place of neatly mowed lawns, no sidewalks and $2,000 two-bedroom homes. "I remember music was always present," Carl says. "My dad was a part-time songwriter, and we always had a couple of pianos in the house and a jukebox. We had a garage that my dad fixed up into a den. We'd all get around the piano; my mom would play, and later Brian started to play. By age ten, he already played great boogie-woogie piano."

As Brian entered high school, he became more proficient at the piano and grew fascinated with the Four Freshmen. He needed extra voices to replicate their cool jazz vocal arrangements, so he drafted Carl and their mom, Audree. "Brian was in love with the Four Freshmen's approach. He would play the piano for hours, really studying. As he got better at it, he'd start to do his own arrangements of their arrangements.

"When I was ten, I'd have to sing a background part. The thing about that kind of modern jazz is that the parts are very strange; it's not like singing Christmas carols. I had to listen really hard; they weren't your regular three-chord tunes. If I'd make a mistake, he'd say, 'No, it goes like this,' and I'd have to do it again until I got it right. Just so it would be more fun, I started to learn my parts more quickly. It was great training. By the time I was fifteen, I could hear a part once and have it."

Dennis Wilson had never been much of a participant in the family sing-alongs, because he was a real rough-and-tumble, outdoorsy kid. "He was the only real surfer in the group," Carl concedes. "I tried it, but I was never good, so I gave it up. Dennis was really living it; that was his life. I remember everyone was bleaching their hair; Brian tried it and it turned out a very unnatural orange—very funny. But Brian drew on Dennis' experiences. I remember Brian would drill Dennis on what was going on, really pump him for the terminology and the newest

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thing. Dennis was the embodiment of the group; he lived what we were singing about. If it hadn't been for Dennis, the group wouldn't have happened in the same way. I mean, we could have gotten it from magazines like everyone else did, but Dennis was out there doing it. He made it true."

Mike Love added another key element: the R&B doo-wop influence that transformed Brian's Four Freshmen harmonies into rock 'n' roll. "Mike went to Dorsey High," Carl points out, "and most of his classmates were black. He was the only white guy on his track team. He was really immersed in doo-wop and that music, and I think he influenced Brian to listen to it. The black artists were so much better in terms of rock records in those days that the white records sounded like put-ons."

The five young boys went to the local studio of Hite and Dorinda Morgan, friends of their father, Murray. They cut four songs, including "Surfin'." "It was my guitar," Carl recalls. "Alan had the upright bass, and Brian played a single snare drum with a pencil, and that was it. Brian took his shirt off and put it over the drum because it was too loud. We did it all at once, with Michael on one microphone and the rest of us on another." The single, released on X and Candix Records, became a regional hit and broke the top hundred nationally. "Dennis was so thrilled," Carl says, "because he was living it. He went to school and his friends said, 'We were on our way home from the beach, totally exhausted from riding the waves all day. We heard your record come on, and it turned us on so much that we went back to the beach.'"

A second recording session produced "Surfer Girl," "409," "Shut Down," "Surfin' Safari" and "The Surfer Moon." But Candix folded, and after a few label rejections, Hite Morgan gave up. Al Jardine gave up too and went off to dental school. He was replaced for a few years by David Marks. Finally Murray took the tapes over to Capitol Records, where a twenty-one-year-old staff producer, Nick Venet, immediately recognized the hit potential and insisted that the company sign the group. "Surfin' Safari," the first Capitol single, went to number fourteen. The first album, *Surfin' Safari*, was a hodge-podge of old tunes from the Morgans' studio and new tracks at Capitol studios recorded by Nick Venet, Murray and a twenty-year-old Brian (though Nick got the LP's production credit).

The real breakthrough came in 1963. "When we heard 'Surfin U.S.A.,' we just knew it was going to be an undeniably big hit. It was the first time we were aware we could make a powerful record. Brian had this idea to change 'Sweet Little 16' into 'Surfin' U.S.A.' We were total Chuck Berry freaks, and the original Chuck Berry record is a fabulous record, but we made it our own." (Unlike many Chuck Berry borrowers, Brian also gave Chuck co-authorship of "Surfin' U.S.A.")

A large part of the record's power came from Carl's guitar style that blended Chuck Berry R&B with Dick Dale surf. "My first guitar was a Kay," Carl explains. "I would mute the strings a bit to get that clipped surf sound. I'd just hit the strings lightly with the palm of my picking hand to give it more of a percussive sound. It was a style that became popular in southern California with a lot of surf bands. Most of them were guitar bands, though, and we surfaced because we had the vocals.

"I combined that surf style with a white approach to the Chuck Berry style. Our sound was very clean; we had big amps that made a clean sound, while he was just turning his amps up and cranking. I used a Stratocaster on the early records. We were young and foolish; we wanted the biggest, best, newest, most powerful thing: Fender amps, Showmans, Dual Showmans.... Brian played Fender Precision bass on the early records; it was a great recording bass. Dennis was into Camco drums for a long time. The snare was good and bright and it had a full range. He used Zecos for a few years; he still has a set to record on."

The group's real contribution musically, though, was its vocals. In much the same way that he had trained Carl earlier, Brian trained the other three to follow difficult voice parts at perfect pitch by drilling them to exacting standards. "Everyone sensed their part," Carl explains. "When Brian would present a

"We were young and foolish; we wanted the biggest, newest, most powerful things"; back: Carl, Dennis, Al Jardine; front: Mike Love & Brian.

SKR / RETNA

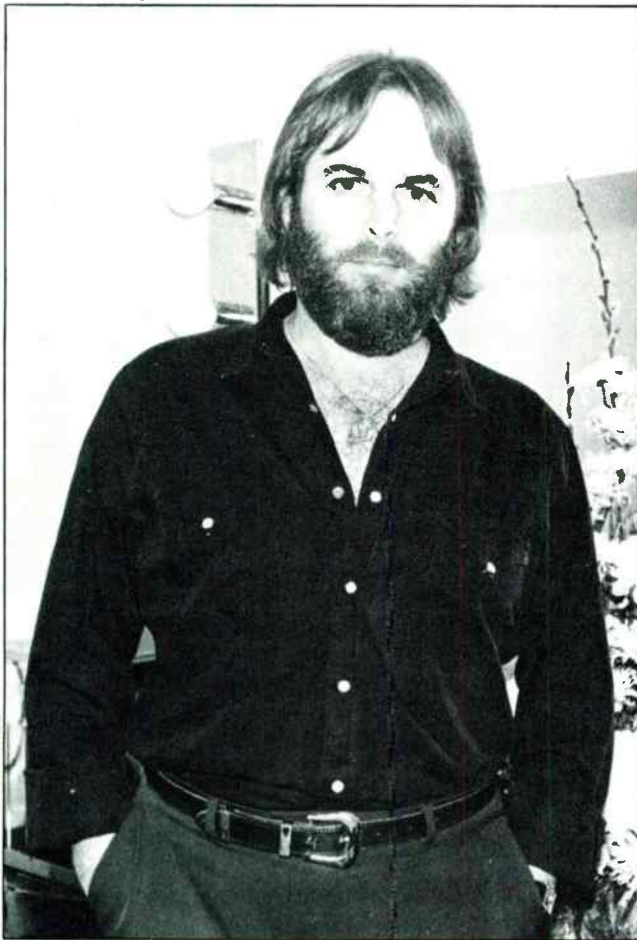
song to us, we would almost know what our part would be. Michael always sang the bottom; I would sing the one above that, then would come Dennis or Alan, and then Brian on top. We had a feeling for it. It's not widely known, but Michael had a hand in a lot of the arrangements. He would bring out the funkier approaches, whether to go shoo-boo-bop or bom-bom-did-di-did-did. It makes a big difference, because it can change the whole rhythm, the whole color and tone of it. We're big oooh-ers; we love to oooh. It's a big, full sound, that's very pleasing to us; it opens up the heart.

"Alan's voice has a bright timbre to it; it really cuts. Brian's voice is very complete. He's not using it now; it's really sad. But when he does, he has a very thick voice. Our vocals were voiced like horn parts, the way those R&B records made background vocals sound like a sax section. They're all *within the same octave*; that's really the secret to it. We didn't just duplicate parts; we used a lot of counterpoint, a lot of layered sound. Obviously, Brian's influence is now massive."

Though Brian produced "Surfin' U.S.A.," Nick Venet once again got the credit. This forced a showdown. "Brian was really the one making the records," Carl insists. "Nick would call out the take numbers, but he wasn't part of making the music. When Brian said he wouldn't work with Nick anymore, Capitol sent over this other guy. Then it became really clear to Brian, and he said, 'Look, I'm not cutting with these guys, and what's more, I'm not going to use your studio. We'll send you the next record.' Now this was a big thing in those days, because record companies were used to having absolute control over their artists. It was especially nervy, because Brian was a twenty-one-year-old kid with just two albums. It was unheard of. But what could they say? Brian made good records. He wouldn't work at Capitol, because it was a crappy-sounding studio. It had a fabulous string sound, and it was great for those records that Nat King Cole made, but not for rock 'n' roll guitar. So we recorded at Western Recorders, which was really our home."

"I got itchy. I was so bored I couldn't believe it. It was horrible to go onstage..."

Contemporary Carl Wilson



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Once Brian got control, things started happening fast. He recut "Surfer Girl" with a new intro, and it went to number seven in 1963. "In My Room" hit number twenty-three. In 1964, "Fun, Fun, Fun" went to five; "I Get Around" (backed by "Don't Worry, Baby") went to number one; "When I Grow Up (To Be A Man)" went to nine, and "Dance, Dance, Dance" went to eight. This was at the height of the Beatles' invasion. Then 1965 brought "Do You Wanna Dance?" (number twelve), "Help Me, Rhonda" (number one), "California Girls" (number three) and "The Little Girl I Once Knew" (number twenty). Brian's artistic command was growing so quickly—and across the Atlantic, his competitors, Lennon and McCartney, were keeping pace—that it seemed the youth culture they inspired would keep expanding without limit. It was the summer before the fall.

"'In My Room' is a tune we've learned to appreciate more as the years go by. You can tell it's getting pretty close to home for Brian, and all those tender, vulnerable things are coming out. 'California Girls' is a very artistic record for its time. The guitar part by Ray Pohlman and myself in the introduction was very different, very bizarre. You didn't expect a rock 'n' roll record to sound like that, classical and majestic. Then it came on like gangbusters out of nowhere.

"Brian was evolving very fast. We learned as we went. He was writing stuff that really needed to be performed; that's why he needed session players." The players included bassist Carol Kaye, who had played on Motown and Phil Spector records. Other Beach Boys musicians who also worked with Phil were acoustic bassist Jimmy Bond, pianist Leon Russell, saxophonist Steve Douglas, pianist Don Randi, saxophonist Jay Migliori, drummer Hal Blaine, percussionist Frank Kapp and guitarists Tommy Tedesco, Bill Pitman, Ray Pohlman and Glen Campbell. Jim Gordon played drums; Billy Strange played guitar. Chuck Britz engineered the early records.

The Beach Boys met Phil Spector through their mutual friend, Lou Adler. "Brian just adored Phil; he couldn't get enough of him. Brian started going to Phil's sessions, and it just blew him away. Phil would play things back so loud it was scary. I think the psychological and emotional impact of going in and hearing songs before they came out made him totally fascinated with Phil, under a spell almost. That was Brian's kind of rock; he liked it more than the early Beatles stuff.

"When Brian first heard a record, he would get the whole thing at once. The rest of us would have to listen ten times or so to really get everything that's going on. So when Brian taught us our parts, he had the total picture in his head.

"I remember a date at Gold Star one night. There were a lot of players in the room. They were making a big, big sound, and Brian said, 'Whoa!' because one little thing didn't happen: someone didn't ring an orchestra bell at the right time. He used to drive Michael crazy. Michael would be doing his lead , and Brian would say, 'Okay, scratch.' We'd say, 'No, Brian, wait a minute, we love that part.' And he'd say, 'Nope, eighty-six,' and it'd be gone; we'd have to do it again. But he was always right."

At the end of 1964, Brian had a nervous breakdown and left the tour. "This guy had turned Brian on to pot and LSD, and Brian just wasn't set up for it; he couldn't handle it. The pressure of writing, producing and performing all had a cumulative effect on him. Earlier that year, the group had decided they didn't want to work with my dad anymore. There were some parts of fatherhood he wasn't willing to let go of. It's hard to

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PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Brian Wilson, 1979

have someone bossing you around and working for you too. All these pressures and the chemicals took Brian apart. He flew home, and it was decided he couldn't go on the road.

"We had the choice of continuing or not continuing. We just felt, 'This is too much fun to stop.' It got the group to discipline itself and really do good work on the road. I just assumed leadership; it seemed natural. It got down to the point where I knew it would get done if I did it. It was kind of a private directive from Brian, too. I'd always been Brian's apprentice. That's really when I became the older brother."

Glen Campbell substituted for Brian as a stop-gap measure until he departed for a solo career. Then Bruce Johnston (half a surf duo with Terry Melcher) became the permanent replacement. While the band was on the road, Brian would stay home, write and cut rhythm tracks.

"*Summer Days And Summer Nights* (Capitol, 1965) was a turning point; that album sticks out. Brian was really getting into a very expansive stream of energy. We could see that he was opening up and making very serious music, and it was serious rock 'n' roll music which made it complete."

Pet Sounds (Capitol, 1966) still stands as one of the great rock 'n' roll albums of all time. Brian hired his wife's friend Tony Asher, an advertising writer, to write the lyrics for a cycle of songs that described the awkward doubts ("I Just Wasn't Made For These Times"), eager expectancy ("Wouldn't It Be Nice") and sense of loss ("Caroline No") that go along with the transition from adolescence to adulthood. These themes were backed with the richest music Brian ever got to the public.

"The disappointment and the loss of innocence that everyone has to go through when they grow up and find everything's not Hollywood," Carl says, "are the recurrent themes of that album. *Pet Sounds* was really Brian's baby; he did an awful lot of the singing on it. Singles weren't enough for him anymore. He wasn't getting enough out of the experience. Most of the albums at that time had a hit and eleven other tunes. He was really the first to make albums as a whole. *Pet Sounds* was far

"...the disappointment and loss of innocence in growing up and finding everything's not Hollywood."

more adult and human than what he had done. The whole album was integrated with this really high quality music recorded beautifully with all this big production. *Pet Sounds* had rhythm and power in it, and yet the chords and constructions were starting to get classical.

"The idea for *Pet Sounds* was Brian's; it would be his favorite sounds, his pet sounds. He was fascinated by sounds and collected them. He would experiment with tapes: we'd laugh in key and try different things just to see what we could do. It's that old thing of going maybe a little too far out to find what you can do, and then pulling back a little bit to fit what else you're actually doing.

"Capitol didn't support *Pet Sounds*; I think they tried to talk Brian out of having it. Can you imagine that album not coming into being? It was a glorious album in our ears, but the record company gave it a real lukewarm reception. That really worried Brian; it really bothered him. He'd put his heart and soul on the line."

But Brian pushed on, and crafted "Good Vibrations," his three-and-a-half-minute "pocket symphony," the biggest selling Beach Boys single of all time. "'Good Vibrations' has a lot of texture on it," Carl notes, "because we did so many overdubs. We'd double or triple or quadruple the exact same part, so it would sound like twenty voices. When I first heard it, it was much rougher sound; it had more *whomp* to it. Instead of making it bigger, bulgier and more raucous as Phil Spector might have, Brian refined it and got it more even-sounding. He

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had the idea of 'I'm picking up good vibrations,' but Michael didn't write the lyrics until the very last minute.

"We recorded different sections at three different studios. Each one had a good sound for a different thing. Recording in sections was an innovation. It was pretty daring back then to record a section and see if it would fit later."

"Good Vibrations" was supposed to be part of a new album called *Smile*, Brian's would-be masterpiece. If *Pet Sounds* absorbed adulthood into Brian's imagined world, *Smile* would bring the larger world into Brian's musical realm. With L.A. poet/composer Van Dyke Parks writing the lyrics, Brian planned to expand his vision to "The Grand Coulee Dam," "The Iron Horse," "Old Master Painter," "Cabinessence," "Vegetable," "Mrs. O'Leary's Cow (Fire)" and "I Love To Say Da-Da (Water)." *Smile* was never completed, never released

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA

Bleacher Boys in Holland, 1980, with Bruce Johnston at left.

and today it remains the most legendary and controversial "lost album" in rock history.

"Brian just couldn't thread it all together," recalls Carl; "he couldn't make that full cycle and tie it all together. How finished was it? Half, I suppose. At that time, it seemed inconceivable to spend two years on an album. Just think: two years before, they wanted three albums a year. If people heard the *Smile* tapes today, they'd hear a lot of themes that keep cycling back on each other. A lot of tunes were interchangeable; you could take a section out of one and put it in another.

"To get that album out, someone would have needed willingness and perseverance to corral all of us. Everybody was so loaded on pot and hash all the time that it's no wonder the project didn't get done. Brian was getting fragmented, starting to have difficulty completing things. And it was also a thing of, 'What if it didn't turn out to be great, what it if had totally flopped?' That would have completely destroyed him. We would have lost him forever in terms of having any communication with him.

"In the middle of all this, Brian just said, 'I can't do this. We're going to make a homespun version of it instead. We're just going to take it easy. I'll get in the pool and sing. Or let's go in the gym and do our parts.' That was *Smiley Smile* (Brother/Capitol, 1967). I've always said that *Smiley Smile* was the bunt, and *Smile* was the home run. A lot of *Smile* songs were on *Smiley Smile* but they didn't sound the same at all. The melodies were similar, but the versions were more laid back. Maybe we'd do the melody, but nothing would be there of the original production. Brian had given up and didn't want to know about it. So we just had fun."

The next album, *Wild Honey* (Capitol, 1967) was even funkier than *Smiley Smile*; it was an out-and-out R&B record. It had a hit single, a Stevie Wonder tune and Brian's version of an Aretha Franklin cut. Brian withdrew from the production responsibilities and asked Carl to take over. "*Wild Honey* was underrated," argues Carl. "It didn't have the polish and pizzazz, but it brought out all our R&B influences that had always been there but people had overlooked."

Friends (Capitol, 1968) was another folksy, homespun album with hidden charms. It reflected the group's growing involvement in transcendental meditation. It was the first album to feature non-Brian tunes from the band. By *20/20* (Capitol, 1969), nearly every song had a different producer and a different composer. As Brian withdrew, the unity of the Beach Boys' records evaporated. Carl was now doing the bulk of the producing. And *20/20* included the nostalgia-styled hit single, "Do It Again," and two *Smile* tracks: "Our Prayer" and "Cabinessence."

In the way of the *Smile* debacle and the commercial flop of the subsequent albums, the band found that its original idealism could no longer sustain it. Their optimistic vision of American life seemed naive to those who were fighting to stop an increasingly cynical war in Vietnam. A family unit that had relied on Brian for leadership and support suddenly found themselves deserted by the ever more reclusive composer. Their efforts to emulate him somehow always fell a bit short.

"We were used as a reference point as to what was lame about the time," Carl remembers painfully. "It was nonsense, but people still associated us with cars and surfboards. When the hits stopped coming, we all felt a lot of pressure. It was back to the real world after the fairy tale." Carl leans back in his couch and sighs. "That was a scary time for us. We were trying to get free from Capitol, because we didn't think they supported the group anymore. We were really stuck. Mo Ostin had always dug the group, so we finally signed with Warner Bros. It was called 'Mo's folly,' because people at the label thought we were ridiculous. But Mo was incredible; he really supported us when we needed it.

"We did *Sunflower* (Brother/Reprise, 1970), which we thought was one of our really good records, but that didn't hit either. It was a great time for Dennis; he was at the very height of his creativity and it got stifled later. He wrote 'Got To Know The Woman' and 'Slip In Through'; damn, I wish he would do that again."

Sunflower reawakened Brian's interest in music, and he next turned to one of his most beautiful records: *Spring* (United Artists, 1972). Spring was Brian's wife, Marilyn, and her sister, Diana Rovell. After *Sunflower*, Marilyn collected on Brian's long-standing promise to write and produce and album for her. But *Sunflower* didn't crack the top hundred, and *Spring* didn't chart at all. Once again Brian felt rebuffed and retreated "back to the bushes," as Carl describes it. The responsibility for shepherding the next three albums through production again fell to Carl. On *Surf's Up* (1971), Carl wrote his first two songs: "Long Promised Road" and "Feel Flows."

Two new band members, Ricky P. Fataar and Blondi Chapman, contributed two songs to *Carl & The Passions—So Tough* (1972), which was released on a double set with *Pet Sounds*. "Even without the *Pet Sounds* reissue," Carl argues, "I thought that *Carl & The Passions* should have been three separate albums. I wish Brian had been strong enough to produce the record, because it could have been an ass-kicking, great record, but...."

Instead, Brian, then Dennis, and eventually, Carl, succumbed to drug problems. "Brian was starting to get into the drug stuff then, some really bizarre behavior. We didn't know what was going on. It didn't even occur to us that he was strung out on coke. We were really sheltered. We were dumb."

The band tried moving to another country to change their luck. They recorded *Holland* (1973) in a studio outside Amsterdam. It ended up a financial disaster, as they had shipped an entire studio across the Atlantic and wasted a month getting it to work. Meanwhile, under the direction of manager Jack

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Rieley, the band had rebuilt its live show and was playing to large and enthusiastic crowds. Jimmy Guercio, the mastermind behind Chicago and Blood, Sweat & Tears, took over the management late in 1973 and shifted the emphasis more to oldies. The band moved up to arenas.

Then *Endless Summer* (Capitol, 1974) was released. This two-record compilation of the band's pre-1966 material sold four million units at a time when the band couldn't get a new album inside the top twenty. "We just surrendered to it," sighs Carl. "We'd gone through so many changes over the idea of oldies over the years, and now it was obvious what the people wanted us to play. Really obvious."

So there was a three-year gap between *Holland* and *15 Big Ones* (Brother/Reprise, 1976). Brian was in a strict therapy program with Gene Landry, and the advance publicity for the album was "Brian's back." "That slogan was simply premature," Carl states flatly. "Brian was almost there, but not quite. Once we had finished a certain batch of songs, Brian said, 'That's it; put it out.' That's why the album sounds unfinished. Brian just wanted to do one cut and capture the moment rather than working on something."

Ironically, Gene Landry's work paid off a year later in some of the most fascinating music of Brian's career, including *The Beach Boys Love You* (Brother/Reprise, 1977), which features some fourteen Brian originals. *The Beach Boys Love You* captured parenthood. The record has a crude, Crayola texture as Brian shares his daughters' fascination with airplanes, skates, roller coasters, bedtime, cars and Johnny Carson. If the production is revealingly sparse, the compositions are rich. Changes in key, tempo and mood occur at surprising junctures; vocals are offset by counterpoint harmonies; bridges miraculously take songs in completely new directions.

"Brian was just getting back on his feet," Carl maintains. "He had been with Gene for more than a year. He was becoming a lot more productive. It was part of his therapy to make music. But Gene and Steve Love (Mike's brother and the group's business manager) disagreed a lot about what Brian should do. Gene was doing it from a therapeutic angle, and Steve had business considerations. So Steve terminated Gene. It was really a shame, because Brian regressed pretty much after that.

"The group was really fractured at that time. We really went through an explosion. A lot of stuff that hadn't been acknowledged and hadn't been dealt with surfaced."

Disillusioned with Warner Bros. and eager to work with Jimmy Guercio again, the Beach Boys signed a lucrative new contract with Jimmy's Caribou Records, a CBS subsidiary. The first album was *L.A.* (*Light Album*) (Brother/Caribou, 1979). Bruce Johnston produced it and gave it the most polished finish of any album since *Sunflower.* Unfortunately, the material was weak.

Bruce also produced *Keepin' The Summer Alive* (Brother/Caribou, 1980), but this time the material was stronger. Carl foreshadowed his solo work with two strong R&B-flavored songs co-written with Randy Bachman. Brian contributed six new songs. "Brian got hot for about three days in the studio," Carl recalls. "He was singing like a bird. All the protection that he usually runs just dropped; he came out of himself. He was right there in the room. Michael got so excited that he was singing several notes above his normal range."

After twenty years as a member of the Beach Boys, Carl Wilson released his first solo album in 1981 and left the Beach Boys tour to do his own tour. He has recently released his second solo album, *Youngblood* (Caribou). Carl returned to his first love: funky, blustery R&B rock, or, as he puts it in "The Right Lane"—"giving the passin' lane a try."

"I was never inclined to do a solo album until three years ago," Carl acknowledges. "I got to the point where I wanted to sing and make new music; the guys in the band decided not to record and were playing the same old songs every night. I got itchy. I remember the last two weeks of the summer tour of '79, I was so bored I couldn't believe it. It was horrible to go on sometimes, because there was nothing in it. It was the first time that had ever happened to me with the group.

"I asked Jerry Schilling (Carl's personal manager) if his wife Myrna might like to write some tunes with me," Carl says. Myrna had been one of the Sweet Temptations. "So I took a cassette player, guitar and tiny amp over to their house, and we just started making up tunes. It was very easy and natural. She has a very pure sense—very gentle and yet funky." Carl and Myrna co-wrote all eight songs on *Carl Wilson* and seven of the eleven on *Youngblood.* Myrna also sang on both albums plus the solo tours. The music they produce is very different from the Beach Boys' music, dominated by R&B rhythms, Carl's rock lead guitar and his shouted lead vocals.

"I didn't want to compromise," Carl maintains, "and make my solo stuff sound like the Beach Boys, just as I wouldn't want to compromise the Beach Boys' stuff either. The R&B approach just came naturally. It's a side of me that's always wanted to come out. I have this massive collection of R&B records. When we were doing *Pet Sounds*, I'd go home and put on my Stax and Aretha stuff. It's always been a big part of my life."

Jimmy Guercio produced the first solo album at his Caribou Studios. To underscore the funky approach, the songs were initially cut with just guitar, bass, drums and voice to see if they could stand up on their own.

The album didn't sell too well, less than 50,000, but "Heaven" got some airplay and even went top five in Miami. Carl embarked on a solo tour of showcase clubs in the spring of '81. Interviewers kept pressing the point about his future with the Beach Boys. Finally Carl issued a press release that said, "I haven't quit the Beach Boys, but I do not plan on touring with them until they decide that 1981 means as much to them as 1961." He listed three demands: he wanted the Beach Boys to make a record of new songs, to rehearse thoroughly before each tour and to stop playing multi-night engagements at Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe and other resorts.

The band didn't respond, so Carl made plans for a second album in November, 1981. Schilling suggested Jeff "Skunk" Baxter—the former guitarist for Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers. "Jeff has a lot of energy; he's a wiry, go-get-'em kind of guy," Carl explains. "I'm sure he was hyperkinetic as a kid. I mean, his idea of relaxing after a big album project is to book a week of session work: commercials, records, anything."

Youngblood is much more versatile and satisfying than *Carl Wilson.* Though the end of side two drags badly, three cuts in particular stand out as important contributions to the Beach Boys' tradition: "Givin' You Up," "What You Do To Me" (by John & Johanna Hall), and the Coasters' "Young Blood."

As for playing with the Beach Boys, Carl agreed to do some dates with the band in April of 1982, but again the lack of formal rehearsal time irked him: "Everything was very rushed; it was very mechanical. There was resistance to rehearsing out of habit. But it all finally came together at the last minute. In 1983 there'll be a lot more rehearsals, new faces, new songs.... I may open some shows with my new band.

"I'd like to see the group take another shot at making one more good record. That's the thing we keep trying to do but can never quite pull together all of the elements. But I don't think we'll make another Beach Boys album until Brian's healthy enough to produce again. I know we could make a real strong commercial record with an outside producer. So that's possible, but, if you're talking about making a great record, 'Good Vibrations' class, you're talking about Brian with us. Anything else is bullshit.

"And yet, I don't mind if he doesn't make any more music. That's fine with me. I don't care if he makes hits or not. My interest in Brian is that I love him as a human being and a brother, as I love all my family. I want him to have some joy and satisfaction in life, and he's not getting that. I'm not discouraging him by any means, but the main thing is that he have a nurturing, loving life. That's all that matters anyway." M

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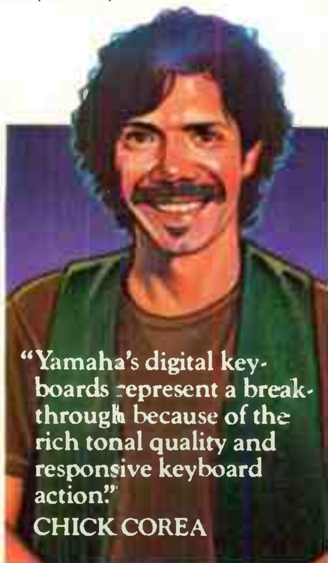

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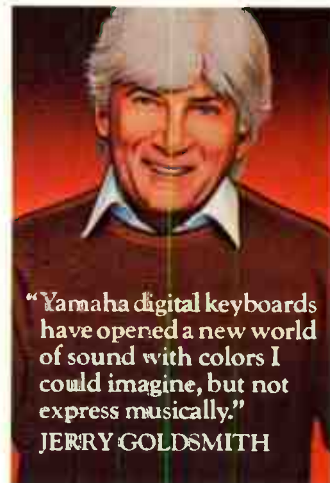

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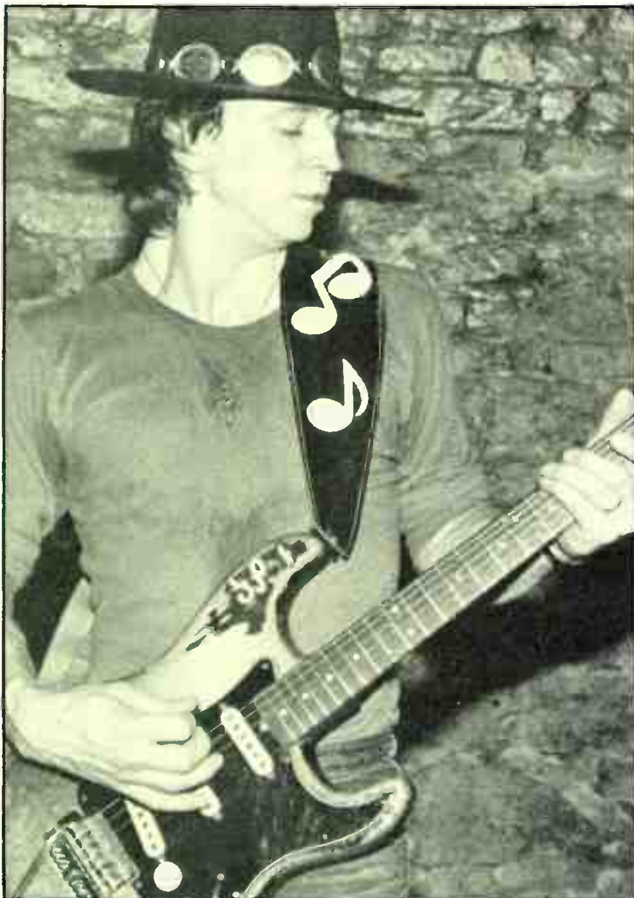

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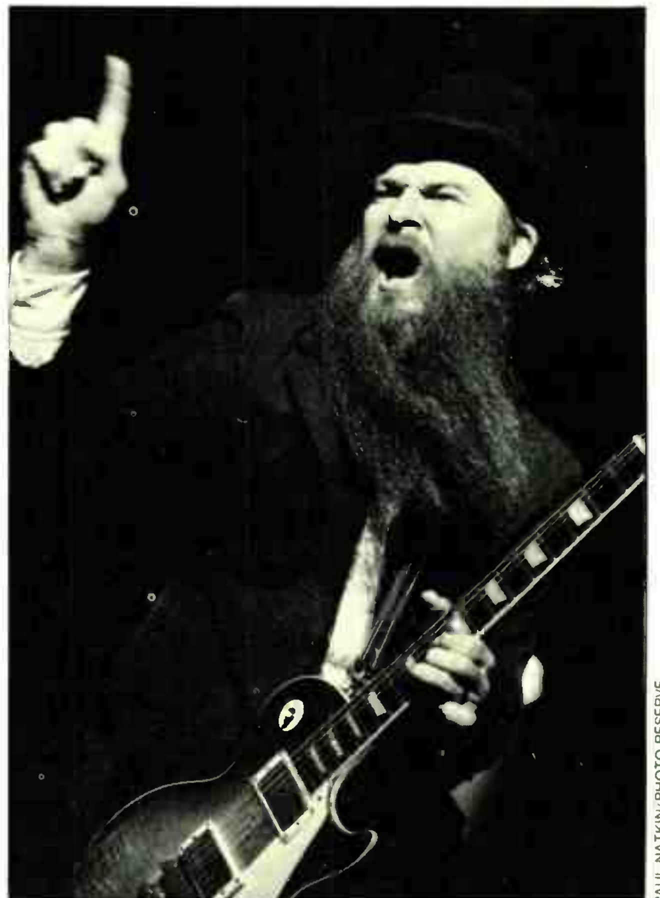
Stevie Ray Vaughan



PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top

World Radio History

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

"It's gotta be real."

By David Fricke

Stevie Ray Vaughan does not wear greatness well. He shuffles into the bar of a posh Manhattan hotel as if the weight of the world's problems had been dumped on his skinny shoulders at the door. Scuffing the tile floor with his dirty white eel skin boots, he slumps into a chair and glances uneasily at the tape recorder placed on the table in front of him, his craggy squarish face (barely visible in the shadow cast by his wide-brimmed cowboy hat) breaking into an embarrassed smile. To five out of ten questions he merely mutters, "I just have fun, y'know?" in a deep Texas drawl that spreads across his words like melted butter.

Anyone who has seen Vaughan fronting his blues trio Double Trouble (with ex-Johnny Winter bassist Tommy Shannon and drummer Chris Layton) knows what he means by fun. From the time the twenty-eight-year-old guitarist straps on his weatherbeaten '59 sunburst Fender Stratocaster with the cheesy silvery SRV decals affixed to the upper left fin (like the reflective STP stickers you get in custom auto shops), he comes alive with an energy and emotional glow he apparently does not waste in conversation. He often pops his strings so hard with his picking hand that it shoots out from the guitar in a wide arc, as if he's dealing cards in a heated game of poker. A spunky Texas shuffle will usually inspire Stevie to play a few bars with the guitar behind his head like T-Bone Walker and Jimi Hendrix. Behind him, Shannon and Layton keep relaxed but accurate rhythm, always at his back but never crowding him.

But with his eyes closed tightly and his face sometimes twisted up in a look of intensive prayer, Stevie Ray Vaughan does not always look like what he plays—those slashing metallic chords, the sharp abrasive licks and quick dextrous fills, the sweet whine of his slow blues—comes from the here and now. His older brother Jimmie Vaughan, thirty-two, lead guitarist with the Fabulous Thunderbirds, tries to explain it this way: "Me and Stevie, what we do is stand there and wait for something to come to us and then we play it. That way, it's straight from inside, it's all feeling. With Stevie, it's like he can see the notes in his head, he can see them in a chart going by."

Stevie is not quite as articulate but no less sincere. "The easiest way for me to describe what I do is that I've tried to learn something from everything I've ever heard. And I try to do it as well as when I first heard it.

"I just call it real," he shrugs. "I hope it's real, anyway. I'm just having fun playing the most real music I can play. Y'know?"

Trying to play real music in an unreal business has already made Stevie Ray Vaughan a legend *before* his time. Even before the release of his new debut album *Texas Flood* on Epic, industry wags were crowning Vaughan this year's Johnny Winter—a white blues tornado for the new wave generation—for his fusion of honky-tonk blues and urban funk gloss on David Bowie's *Let's Dance* LP. Last year, the Rolling Stones staged an expensive private Double Trouble show at a New York rock club to audition Vaughan for their record label. "And then," Vaughan says, a bit mystified, "I never heard any more about it. The next time I talked to Jagger was at last night's show."

Ironically, most people now know Vaughan as the guitarist who blew off the current Bowie tour at the eleventh hour over contract disputes. (In a press statement just before the opening European dates in May, Vaughan's manager Chesley Millikan—a fast-talking hustler who is also general manager of Manor Downs racetrack in Texas—alleged that Bowie's management had reneged on a verbal agreement to have

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BILLY GIBBONS

"It's gotta have crunch."

By J.D. Considine

Someone asked me the other day, 'Why are there so many blues players from Texas?' Texas is real macho country, where it's still: 'There's only room for one of us in this town—draw your gun!'

"Well, the six-shooter has been replaced by the six-string." — Billy Gibbons

With his baseball cap pulled low over his forehead, ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons appears to be little more than beard and sunglasses, just as you'd expect. Nor is there anything surprising about the dry, twanging grumble he says hello in—after listening to him mutter through endless replays of "La Grange," the Lightnin' Hopkins cop that put ZZ Top on the map, anything less would have been a disappointment.

What was unexpected was that the first thing Gibbons wanted to talk about as we sat down in the Atlanta Hilton was synthesizers. And drum machines. And sequencers, programming tricks, digital drum sounds and electronic percussion.

Synthesizers?

"It's all valid," he explains. "In rock 'n' roll, it's all valid, and what's particularly acceptable is the fact that manufacturers have made *obscene* tones available. I mean, the early synthesizers had the little dripping sounds and tweets: now, they've put in some real beefcake settings. It can get vicious when you want it to, and that's what rock 'n' roll still remains. In my book, you gotta excite 'em, gotta have that crunch."

Which is why you're as likely to hear the sawtooth buzz of a Memorymoog in the rhythm tracks of ZZ Top's current Warner Bros. album *Eliminator* as the overdriven roar of Gibbons' Gibson or Dean. It's a long way from A Flock Of Seagulls or the polished sheen of the synthpop sound; as Gibbons admits, "We program everything ourselves, and, not being experts in the field, a lot of times we'll have to settle for what we can create on the spot and sneak into the control room, past the producer's ear." But it's not that far removed from the band's boogie heritage. In fact, strip the electronics off songs like "TV Dinners," "Sharp Dressed Man," "Bad Girl" or even "Thug" and you could fit them onto an oldie like *Tres Hombres* without anyone being the wiser.

"The nucleus of our music is the way we approach playing a song physically," shrugs ZZ bassist Dusty Hill. "Whatever guitar or electronic device we use, we still play it the same. So I'm not really sure that bluesiness could be washed out, even if we wanted to."

"I think we're fortunate to have stayed together until the return of simple, three-chord, let's-get-it songwriting," says Gibbons. "'Cause that's what we've always done, and probably always will do. It's okay to use the latest and greatest technology, but you've gotta be true to the way you feel inside. You're right—trade the place of the synth with a guitar and it's back to *Tres Hombres*. But it's also fun to sneak in a few new sounds and see how—*if*—you can make it work.

"ZZ Top goes garage band in the 80s? We're out there, not knowing a thing about what we're doing, but saying, '*This* sounds good.'" He laughs, then adds, lest the wrong impression be given, "I don't think there are a whole lot of ZZ Top followers who want to come see us behind a bank of keyboards one day. It would probably take *banks* for us to do it."

If all this seems either too unlikely or suspiciously trendy, perhaps a bit of context is in order. Despite their reputation as Coliseum Circuit Kings in the 70s, ZZ Top has always kept well within the limits of the three-minute-hero approach on vinyl. Short, punchy and blues-saturated, the typical Top tune was lean, mean and to the point—no overblown elegies here. In

Continued on next page

World Radio History

part this may be the heritage of Gibbons' days with the Moving Sidewalks, the legendary Texas psychedelic punk outfit whose few records present them as sort of grittier cousins to the Yardbirds. But mostly it seems a reflection of Gibbons' sensibility, his understanding of what the blues means and how they feel regardless of technological trappings.

"We're treated fairly by new wavers," he says, addressing the seeming disparity between his group's ambition and its audience. As he sees it, "They feel it's valid to come and see ZZ Top because we like playing blues licks, but we're not up there showing 'em off.

"When white people started to embrace the blues, when it started showing up outside the chit'lin' circuit, I don't know if they truly understood it. They did a lot of speed stuff that, you know, got messy. When they got into string bending in the early 60s, there were a lot of records that had guitar playing that stretched a little too far, that went a little bit sharp, and it was unsettling. Because, in an attempt to recreate the soulful expression of a B.B. King passage, they lost it due to a failure to stop bending the note upwards at the right place.

"There's a lot to be said for perfecting a technique that you *feel*, so that when you start spankin' that plank, gettin' funky with it, it comes out naturally. You've spent enough time rehearsing and working it out to where it becomes a soulful expression, not 'Well, I'm going to copy this record.' *Then*, when you get comfortable with that, you can jazz it up a little bit."

For Gibbons, it has become a matter of using his blues grounding as a sort of springboard to bounce off contemporary sounds. As an example, he cites "Heaven, Hell Or Houston" from the band's *El Loco* album. "That started out as an exercise for warming up before the engineer got in there. We came back to it and thought that it was so crazy that we could actually turn it into a useable piece. But we had to lengthen it, because it was a little short. So we added the solo section in the middle.

"Now, imagine you're sitting in the control room, waiting for the guitar break to roll by so that you can unleash. You're not thinking about it, but there has been about a minute's worth of this weirdness blowing by you, and you could be thinking Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry as hard as you could, but you can't ignore what's just blown by. It's going to affect the way you'll play Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry.

"So in that respect, I was trying to do blues licks, but they were coming out affected. It was kind of like blues gone wacko."

Nor are all ZZ Top influences so simple. "Party On The Patio," from the same album, was inspired by the B-52's. "We had been at a club outside of Palm Springs—Rancho Mirage, California. The DJ there was sponsoring two contests. One of them was a 'Cheap Sunglasses' contest—of course, they didn't know that we had our beards tucked in and were hiding in the corner. Then he played the B-52's and had a 'Rock Lobster' contest. He had a little rubber lobster, and was throwing it out of his DJ booth onto the dancefloor, and he'd stop the music and whoever was closest to it had to leave. Sort of like musical lobsters.

"I was diggin' that B-52's thing, and also later on, when 'Party Out Of Bounds' was playing. The next day we flew back to Texas, and there was a big party in Austin, so we all went to it. It was an actual series of events during that evening that the lyrics of 'Party On The Patio' are describing—a true event steeped in a B-52's feeling."

No wonder that Gibbons is so enthusiastic about other attempts to put the blues in a modern setting. David Bowie's *Let's Dance*, for instance, has Gibbons exclaiming, "What a fine sound! It legitimizes new music to couple it up like that, plus it's fun to listen to. And Stevie Ray Vaughan, he's a tremendous player, and very economical on that Bowie LP.

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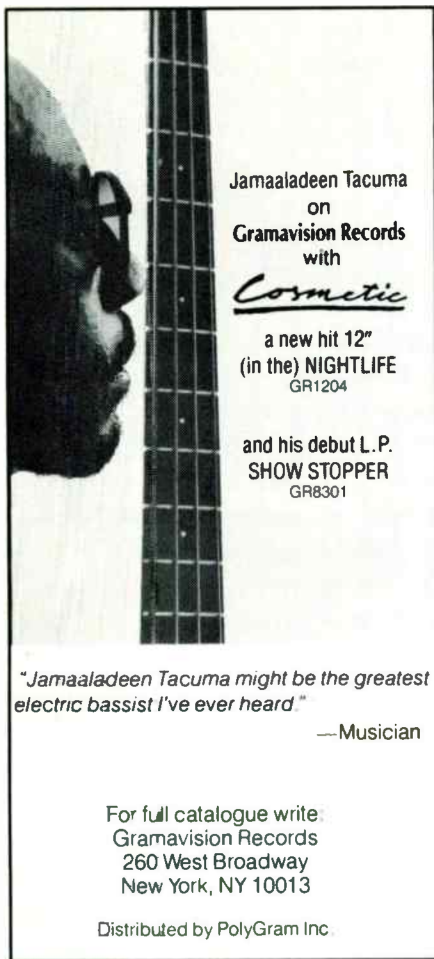

Vaughan from pg. 79

Double Trouble open some of the Bowie shows, that all Vaughan publicity on behalf of *Texas Flood* was subject to the Bowie camp's approval and that Vaughan's tour salary was insulting, reportedly less than $300 a concert. Bowie's management replied that excessive Vaughan publicity would turn the tour into "a circus" and that other members of Bowie's band signed similar contracts.)

Texas Flood should change that. With its earnest covers of Howlin' Wolf's swaggering "Tell Me" and Buddy Guy's sly Mother Goose rewrite "Mary Had A Little Lamb," it is a convincing gesture of blues purity by someone who never bowed down to the British 60s blues-rock guitar gods because "Why copy somebody copying somebody else?" Yet Vaughan's fluent, intuitive summation of crucial guitar influences from Albert Collins and the three Kings (B.B., Albert and Freddie) to Hendrix and back to T-Bone Walker results in a modern blues Esperanto, a nervy re-application of roots best summarized by the elegant "Little Wing"-like turns of the instrumental ballad "Lenny" and the hyper-shuffle freakout "Testify." In the latter, over a racy cluttered Mitch Mitchell rhythm pattern, Vaughan performs extraordinary Hendrix solo somersaults marked by the incisive bite of what he calls "King-tone" with the frosty cool of Albert Collins.

"The sound I'm trying to find," Vaughan explains, "is, oh, I don't know, somewhere between horrible and pretty. It's just something I find hard to describe, but it feels natural to do it. What I'm trying to do is just *feel*, to touch something, somebody."

Veteran record producer John Hammond has only known Vaughan for a few months. But as the executive producer of *Texas Flood*, he knows Vaughan well enough to testify that his tongue-tied rap is no act. "He's direct, he doesn't have to be flamboyant," insists Hammond, whose experiences with Charlie Christian, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen have certainly taught him the difference. "Everything he wants to say comes right out."

"Technique is the least important thing to me," Hammond continues, citing Dylan's guitar playing as a perfect example. "The most important thing to me is, 'Can an artist say what he wants to say?' Stevie obviously has the technique to do that. This album shows he also has something special to say."

Remarkably, there is nothing special about what he says it with. In addition to his main '59 Strat, Vaughan has three more Strats ('57, '62, '64) that he uses as spares and a Gibson ES-355 dot that gathers mostly dust. Aside from the reflective decals on the '59, the only customizing on his main axe is a left-handed bridge, "so that I could put the whammy bar on top." Most of the time, that Strat is plugged into a Fender Super Reverb amplifier.

"Strats have more sound, more different sounds," Vaughan claims, "to me, anyway. Those guitars can still sound clean even if your amp's dirty, even if it's about to die. I'm hard on my guitars, too. And those Strats, I can beat on 'em and it doesn't seem to hurt 'em."

What Stevie's actually beating on are fat GHS strings—.013 (E), .015 (B), .019 (G), .028 (D), .038 (A), .056 (E)—so sturdy that when he pops them with his picking hand they occasionally keep one of his fingernails as a souvenir. The only effects he uses are an old Vox wah-wah pedal he found last year in a Lubbock, Texas recording studio and an Ibanez Tube Screamer that gives him modest but effective distortion. "If I had another arm, I could just reach back and turn up the amp," he laughs. "With this, it's easier to just step on it and go, 'Brrrgghh!'

"Oh, I'm always trying out all the new gadgets. But they worry me sometimes. If you use too many of those things, you forget how to play regular. John Hammond's got a great way of looking at it, even just echo. He says no matter what, all you're ever doing is covering up something—and sometimes that something is nothing."

Texas Flood is certainly no advertisement for the computer age. Recorded, mixed and mastered in only eight days (spread out, however, over several months and two studios in Austin, Texas and Los Angeles), it was done completely live, vocals excepted, with no headphones. The only punching in was done on "Testify," but Vaughan says that was no big deal. The engineer simply stopped the first take where they cocked it up, and, on the count of four, the band jumped right back into it for the big finish.

Of course, most of Stevie Ray Vaughan's favorite records were probably made that way. It was brother Jimmie who introduced him to the earthy wonders of Albert King, Junior Wells, Buddy Guy and Lonnie Mack. And it was their father, a retired asbestos worker, who also "used to manage a 7-11 store when they had curb service," who provided the first guitars—for Jimmie, a red acoustic Craftsman with only three strings and a cardboard cowboy model for young Stevie. Together, they set out dissecting every record that came into the house.

"That's one thing about us when we were starting out on guitar," Jimmie remembers. "We were really good copycats. That's how we learned all that stuff, by taking each guitar player apart on record, learning what he did and how he

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Ralph Towner
on the acoustic guitar,
Yamaha and maintaining a
sense of what is different.

"It's up to me to maintain a sense of what I do that is different. That's the good thing about what I've been doing. After thirteen years of this, people still don't know where to *put* my playing — and I like that.

"I spent years kicking around bars, playing piano as a jazz musician. I started the guitar strictly as a classical player when I was 22. The acoustic guitar is a descendant of 'keyboard' instruments like the lute and harpsichord, they perform the same functions. But the acoustic really has more tone colors. You can do something to the note after you've struck it. You can bend the strings, hit harmonics and control them.

"The electric guitar is a different instrument. It has its advantages — it's melodic and great for speed, like playing fast lines — but for chords and breaking things up like a keyboard player, there's the acoustic."

"The fingerboard of an acoustic is the most critical area because you should have something that plays as easily and accurately as possible. It's a mistake to start with a guitar so badly made that you get discouraged right away. The lower-priced Yamaha acoustics weren't available when I was teaching, and it was a constant thing of seeing the guitars my students were 'stuck with'. The thing they've done with the Yamahas that impressed me is that they keep getting better. I know Yamaha's people consult musicians, as they do with all of their musical products. And it ends up being a strong selling point because the instruments are so consistent."

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D E V E L O P M E N T S

THE NEW SORCERY: DIGITAL SAMPLING

Making Music with Absolutely Anything

BY FREFF

A dark-horse contender, the Kurzweil promises high-tech refinements for skilled sampling.

It's magic. But instead of genies and bottles, it's sounds and computer chips; instead of uncorking the bottle, it's lightning-fast conversion from digital data to analog audio signal. And you can have anything you wish (or a reasonable facsimile thereof), from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir scatting Coltrane over an E-major triad of croaking frogs, to a scraped tin can turned voodoo bass drum, to the sound of Graham Nash's very own grand piano.

No fooling. Digital sampling is powerful *juju* indeed. But it isn't without drawbacks. It requires new thinking and new playing techniques. It has limits imposed by the current state of technology and the laws of physics. And, like the fairytale genie, right now you can only use sampling if you meet *its* price.

Now that you've been promised the moon and forewarned, all at once, let's cover the basics. "Sample" is just the computer-age buzzword for "record." Take any audio signal, be it voice or violin or two bricks slapped together, and *sample* it: an ADC (Analog to Digital Converter) changes the signal into a strings of 0s and 1s. These numbers, called *bits*, are processed by a computer and stored in its memory. For playback, the process is reversed, from storage to computer to DAC (Digital to Analog Converter), and—*voila!*—you hear the sound you sampled. With good software, the computer can do a lot more. Pitch can be changed. Non-musical sounds (like breaking glass) can be turned into notes and chords. You can play sounds backwards, or chopped up and rearranged, or repeated endlessly, or stored in elaborate multi-layered sequences, or changing slowly from one into another. The computer offers you incredible flexibility and versatility of control...magic.

Unfortunately, it's also where all the trouble begins. Consider those 0s and 1s. By themselves, they say nothing more than whether a certain micro-circuit is "on" or "off." In order to say more, they have to be combined into multi-bit "words" (like 01 or 10101011) which can mean whatever the computer and software engineers choose. The whole history of computers is one of growing complexity and longer multi-bit word-lengths. Most big computers use sixteen-bit or even thirty-two-bit words. The ones becoming popular in homes—and the microprocessors you'll find in synths like the Prophet 5 and Voyetra 8—mostly use eight-bit words.

Word-length is important to sampling. There are only 256 different ways the 0s and 1s can be arranged in an eight-bit word. Which means, for example, that an eight-bit computer analyzing volume can measure up to 256 discrete levels of sound pressure, but not more. What happens when the volume is in between those levels? The computer counts wrong, that's what. It's called *quantization error*, and basically it's bad news for musical applications, because it limits an eight-bit machine's dynamic range to forty-two decibels and makes for a poor signal-to-noise ratio. High fidelity digital recording is done with sixteen-bit machines; since sixteen-bit words can measure things in up to 65,536 individual steps, obviously they're more accurate.

That's the first problem with sampling. Here are two others that are related: *reduced bandwidth* and *aliasing*. When a computer samples a sound, it doesn't do it just once. It does it thousands of times a second (precisely how many is what's called the *sampling rate*). So what happens to frequencies high and fast enough to fall "through the cracks" between those samples? They get lost, reducing bandwidth and "presence." As a purely practical limit, then, no digital sampling system can reproduce a frequency greater than one-half its sampling rate. Worse yet, frequencies above that don't just vanish. Instead they are miscounted by the computer and "wrapped around," coming back as *aliasing noise*.

And then there's *munchkinization*, which comes from playing a sound more than a few steps above or below the pitch at which is was sampled. (They call it that because of the effect this problem has on voices; most sampling machines create differing pitches by just playing the sample back faster or slower, something like changing the speed of your turntable.) Sound awful, don't they...quantization error, reduced bandwidth, aliasing...munchkinization? But never fear, the designers of today's sampling instruments are well aware of these problems, and have generated a hatful of ingenious compensations. Here is what's around, what it costs, and some of what it can do:

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The 360 Digital Keyboard from 360 Systems ($3,995). This unit, designed by Bob Easton (creator of one of the first guitar synths), began development back in the early 70s. What held it up was the primitive state and high expense of computer chip memory. Obviously, those are changing fast—so much so that the 360 is selling for a thousand dollars less than its originally announced price. This keyboard does not actually sample; instead, 360 Systems records instrumental sounds and releases them in "firmware" (computer chips with permanently burned-in programs) which fit into one of the ninety-six integrated circuit slots inside the keyboard. Different instruments require a different number of memory chips, from two on up to twelve, and cost from forty to several hundred dollars. In the fight against aliasing, 360 Systems uses special techniques in their recording stage and has built in an upper limit of about 15,000 Hz on the keyboard's frequency range. To combat munchkinization, they make their samples as long as *needed* (sometimes as much as twelve seconds) and have devised software that allows them to put more samples across the keys than other systems—for example, their "human voice" has one on every other key. The fact that the 360 Digital keyboard is strictly a playback machine—albeit one with features like vibrato, low-pass filtering, split keyboard, sound doubling and stacking, and selectable pitch transposition—will displease players who are into creating their own sounds. But it will probably please just as many others with its convenience and simple operation.

The widely used, much loved Emulator.

The Emulator from E-Mu Systems ($7,995 for eight-voice with sequencer, $450 more for additional formatting and sampling software). The Emulator was the first instrument released that was strictly a sampler, and has been widely used. With it you can play from a large library of pre-sampled sounds, or make your own from mike or line input signals, then loop and truncate them as you wish. The Emulator is an eight-bit machine. It gets around the inherent limitations of that format with a unique companding ADC and DAC, which essentially *squeezes* the data into its digital form and then expands it again on translation, increasing dynamic range thirty decibels. It comes with a built-in floppy disc drive, which is what you use to load your sounds. Each disc holds two two-second samples (that's the only sample length; if your sound is shorter, you have to edit it with the front-panel filter sliders). The quality of the presets and user-sampled sounds is generally excellent, particularly when the instrument's poly-sequencer is used to create ensemble effects, although the two-second sample length can make some sounds too organ-like when you loop them to enhance sustain. And a tendency towards munchkinization is aggravated by the fact that many of the presets (and all the user-sampled sounds) have only one sample for each half of the keyboard.

The Kurzweil 250 from Kurzweil Music Systems ($7,500-$9.000—not available until December 1983). This dark horse contender for the title of Best Sampler is barely past the prototype stage, but has attracted attention with some fairly outrageous claims (principally, that it can reproduce an acoustic piano well enough to fool people—whoa!). On the other hand, the credentials of its creators are impeccable. Founder and namesake Ray Kurzweil was the principal inventor of the most sophisticated computer reading machine for the blind, and Phil Dodds, director of research and development, was the principal figure behind the ARP/Rhodes Chroma. The approach they've taken is marked by the application of computer techniques that have so far only been used in artificial intelligence research. As currently planned, the 250 will have eighty-eight keys, a weighted mechanical action, interfaces to cassette, home computer and Atari-style ROM cartridges, and will be based on a Motorola 68000 microprocessor. The 250 uses sixteen-bit words (the only other sixteen-bit sampler is the Synclavier), which will give it a dynamic range of over 100 decibels and allow the playing of twelve notes simultaneously. That means twelve separate channels, each with its own tracking anti-aliasing filters (which adjust to suit the frequency range, instead of cutting it off arbitrarily) and two different DACs, one controlling waveform and the other controlling volume. The piano sound they're claiming wonders for is stored in over a megabyte of on-board memory, about as many bits of information as there are letters in a thick novel. The 250 will also allow you to sample sounds for yourself, and can serve as a more conventional digital synth when hooked up to a home computer. *If* realized, this instrument could set the field on its collective ear.

The Fairlight CMI from Fairlight Instruments ($27,000). This may have been the first major commercial digital synth—it was certainly the first I encountered—and its use on albums by Peter Gabriel, Yes, Kate Bush and many others more than proves the creative power of sampling. (Gabriel even credited his Fairlight's samples as individual instruments on his *Security* album.) Though only an eight-bit machine, its computing power is extensive, as is the choice it gives you to vary the rate, and therefore the length, of your sample. Obviously, the longer the sample, the lower the sound quality, but there are range-adjustable digital filters capable of keeping the unwanted aliasing to a minimum. Expensive but good, the Fairlight has a capacity for analysis and sound manipulation unmatched by any instrument in its price range or below.

And finally **the Synclavier II** from New England Digital (price variable depending on peripherals—with minimal sampling, $38,000). The peak machine on the market, this. By using hard disc drives called Winchesters, ganged together, it is capable of recording up to *fifty-five minutes* of sampled sound, which you can then gleefully rework and rearrange to your heart's content. It has software programs to conquer munchkinization—essentially, they "fill in" the gaps and re-invent the sound in correct time all across the keyboard—and a 50 kHz sampling rate that wipes out aliasing for all but the very lowest pitch levels, which can be filtered if required. The Synclavier II is actually a high quality digital recorder, fully up to the standards of gear like the Sony PCM, and I can think of only two drawbacks: number one, it's very, *very* expensive; and number two, when used to sample, it's monophonic. That's right. Every other instrument mentioned so far is at least an eight-voice, but not the Synclavier II. The folks at New England Digital say they're working on polyphonic sampling, but refuse to release it until it can maintain their current standard of sound quality.

That's the lot. Bottled genies, every one, and at almost every price tag. If their possibilities excite you—and they should, judging by the way that digital drum machines, their younger cousins, have reshaped the field—then raise up a smile. Because in a year or two or three, with costs coming down and capabilities expanding, with new advances breaking open newer and newer bottles, there'll be genies enough for us all.

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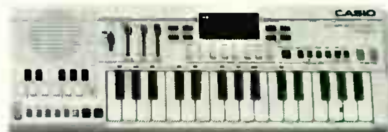
PT-20


PT-30

MT-45

MT-65

CT-405

CT-7000

or not.

CT-501

MT-70

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World Radio History

PRODUCING

MOSES ASCH & FOLKWAYS RECORDS

A Humanist Is the Hunter

BY GARY KENTON

DAVID GAHR

Moe Asch at work enlarging his catalog of 2,000 recordings, none of which have been deleted.

Although many tend to think of the independent record company as a recent phenomenon, as early as the 1940s and 50s independent producers and manufacturers were the backbone of the industry. One of the oldest of these indies is Folkways Records, founded in 1947 and itself the successor to two previous indie labels. Over the past thirty-six years, Folkways has had its ups and downs (reaching its zenith during the folk boom of the 1960s), quietly amassing and sustaining a catalog that now boasts nearly 2,000 titles covering a remarkable range of musical, literary, political and experimental recordings.

Folkways Records is very much the product of one man's lifelong vision and effort: Moe Asch. At seventy-seven, he still arrives at his art-festooned Manhattan office each morning at 7 a.m. to sort his mail and prepare for the day's labor. Although this gruff-mannered, white-haired man no longer produces records himself, he still decides what is to be recorded and released and spearheads all marketing, sales and promotion activities for the label. If one were to call Folkways in search of, say, early folk-blues by Leadbelly, dulcimer songs by Kevin Roth, or classic jazz piano by Jelly Roll Morton, it is more than likely that Moe Asch would be the one to answer the phone and fill the order.

Moses Asch was born in Warsaw, Poland on December 2, 1905. His father was Sholem Asch, the world-renowned Yiddish writer whose controversial novel on the life of Jesus, *The Nazarene*, was an international best-seller. His aunt, Barbara Shapiro, was a minister in Lenin's cabinet in Moscow and a revolutionary. Asch has been married for fifty-three years, has one son (an anthropologist who collaborated with his father on several American Indian field recordings for Folkways) and two grandchildren.

In a very real sense, though, the entire roster of Folkways artists and producers, as well as the listeners who comprise their audience, are an extended family to Asch. After the schools and universities, whose large acquisitions indicate the value placed on Folkways Records in the field of scholarship, Asch's best customers are the children and grandchildren of people who bought his earliest releases two generations ago. In fact, sales of Folkways' children's recordings account for nearly forty percent of his revenues.

In addition to children's records, the Folkways catalog boasts recordings in such categories as ethnic, folk, country and bluegrass, blues, spoken word, classical, sea chanties and, to the surprise of many, an extensive repertoire of electronic digital computer recordings. Among the performers and personages who turn up, in one context or another, on Folkways albums are Langston Hughes, Bob Dylan, Mary Lou Williams, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Uncle Dave Macon, P.G. Wodehouse, the Chambers Brothers, Gertrude Stein, Lightnin' Hopkins, Huey Newton, James Joyce, Mahalia Jackson, Phil Ochs, Charles Dodge, Dr. Martin Luther King, Bertolt Brecht, Dock Boggs and Richard Nixon. If that isn't diverse enough, there are also smatterings of science, language instruction, murder mysteries, religion, street sounds, Shakespeare and just about anything else in the world that makes purposeful noise.

In sharp contrast to most commercial record companies, Asch has never deleted a single item from this astounding catalog. He explains his iron-clad policy with this analogy: "One does not eliminate the letter J from the alphabet because it is not used as much as the other letters," he says. "Each record in my catalog is important for the intellectual information on it and I will not cut something out because it is not in demand at the moment."

After studying electronics and high frequencies in Germany in the 20s, Moe Asch set up Radio Laboratories, creating custom recording and amplification equipment, and was the Eastern representative for Stromberg-Carlson, which he dubs "the Rolls Royce of radio." One of the firm's early clients was Les Paul, who had his first electric guitar amplifier built by Asch. Asch also built equipment for several radio stations, among them WEVD, a still-extant New York station named after socialist leader Eugene V. Debs.

When Columbia and RCA unceremoniously dropped their international record series in 1939, WEVD and other stations were left without religious and ethnic records to satisfy their largely immigrant audiences. Using his Stromberg-Carlson contacts to get his product into the retail shops, Asch stepped into the breach and started making records for this market. When Japanese military actions curtailed shellac imports in 1941, Asch made a deal with Herbert Harris of Stinson Records, who supplied him with shellac and acted as a distributor for the fledgling Asch Records. He was also able to diversify his roster to include such artists as Leadbelly, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie and others.

This arrangement lasted to the end of

Continued on page 94

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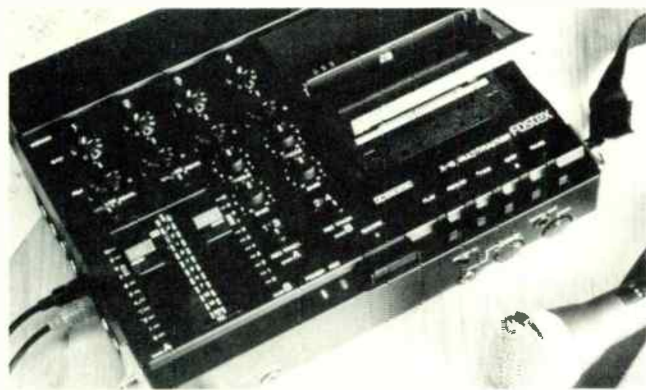
FRESH WIND FROM CHICAGO NAMM

Some of the most interesting new products at the recent National Association of Music Manufacturers Convention.

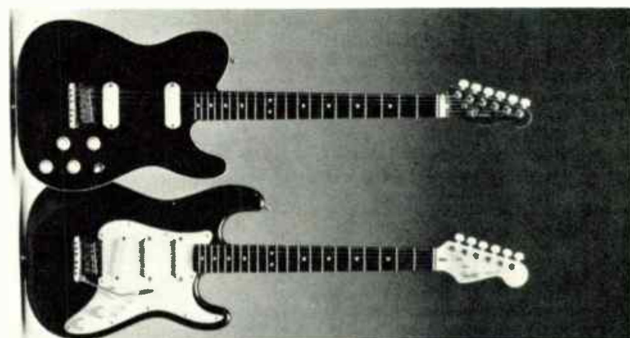


THE WALKMAN GOES 4-TRACK

Teac and **Fostex** have been slugging it out in the battle to make the world safe for the portable 4-track cassette recorder and had just about gotten everyone used to the idea that they had to shell out about $1200 to get into the 4-track game. Now Fostex makes a daring bid for the somewhat less discriminating and less wealthy would-be producer by making a battery-powered, headphone-sympatnetic, textbook-sized model for under $500, the X-15 Multitracker. Sure, there's no reverb, it only records two tracks at any one time, and the knobs are less sexy than pan pots, but it puts a lot of sound onto a cassette, even though its running speed is only 1⅞ IPS (of course, that means it's compatible with other conventional cassette decks). Dolby B noise reduction, lots of patch bay possibilities and even a pitch control sweeten the package. Come on, you spent more than $500 on party supplies last year. You *know* you can afford this one.

GUITAR WARS

A small company, **Strings & Things in Memphis**, created some substantial six-string excitement with dozens of new solid-body guitars. Endowed with smooth playability and remarkable bite, many of the models feature volume and tone knobs that push in and out for two very different tonal variations. A list of recent purchasers may best communicate the industry ripple: Steve Morse, Elliot Easton, Eric Clapton (who endorsed a Bluesmaster model), Marshall Crenshaw, Billy Squier, Martin Briley, Elvin Bishop, Glenn Frey, Albert King, Billy Gibbons and more. Whew. Kudos to designers Chris Lovell and Charles Lawing. Prices fall between $600 and $700.



Fender let guitarchitect Dan Smith improve its supposedly perfect Strats and Teles and he didn't waste any time genuflecting. For the new Elite series, Smith left the playability intact but went after the "nagging little problems" of electronic origin. He replaced the old pickups with new noise cancelling single-coil ones (Alnico II nickel magnets), and new active electronics. This not only enables one to add midrange to the bridge pickup, but enhances the "doingness" of the middle-bridge pickup position. For around a grand, a damn nice instrument.

The championship for the midline category goes to the new **Ibanez** Roadstar II series, hovering around $400. The highlight of this series is the neck, which is eminently playable and well fretted in both maple and rosewood. We played Tele and Strat copies with single-coil pickups and found them more than satisfactory, and even addictive; there are also humbucking models available in body types galore. For the money, quite a competitive group of guitars.

TREND OF THE YEAR

Everyone, and we mean *everyone*, is making a digital delay these days. Not just the older pros and specialists like **Lexicon**, **Roland**, **Delta Lab**, **ADA** and **Loft**, but companies like **Korg**, **Ibanez**, and **Peavey** are all trying to grab a piece of the action. While most of the ultra-professional units are still around $1000, good models with a few less features and

World Radio History

slightly shorter hang time are scrapping to get near the $500 mark. If ever there was a time to buy one.... Craig Anderton will elaborate further in a Working Musician coming soon to your neighborhood.

KEYBOARD INTELLIGENCE

If you are strictly a right-handed keyboard player who has never been able to muster up a good left-hand bass part, let alone chords, read on. The **Korg** SAS-20 keyboard automatically plays not only a bass pattern and a rhythm track, but also chords. Punch in the "accompaniment pattern" and the sound, hit the root note of your key and you're on. Think you can handle the melody? To play changes, hit the root note and maybe a seventh and a minor third: you get a minor seventh. The bass follows devotedly, altering its third and seventh too. Admittedly, some of the stock patterns are a bit cornball: the "disco" one rips off Sylvester's "Dance With Me" bassline and the "bossa nova" drips with loungeyness. But Korg has software cartridges that have significantly hipper patterns. Even more impressive, the thing also *thinks diatonically* (are you starting to feel insecure yet?). Play a single-note melody and it harmonizes it, adding two other voices—talk about impressing your friends at rehearsal. It also analyzes simple melodies and accompanies automatically. For around $1,000, this is stranger than fiction.

DIGITAL DRUMS PROLIFERATE

While no digital drum machine has yet to match the LinnDrum for overall programmability power, neither has one matched its $3000 price tag. With the addition of **MXR**'s Drum Computer (Model 185), to the **Drumulator** and **Oberheim**'s DX, the race to make affordable digital drums has gone into high gear. For $995, the Drumulator (E-Mu Systems) is clearly the crowd pleaser, but as a demonstrator eloquently put it when a questioner asked if it could do several tricky functions, "What do you want for $995?" MXR has added quite a bit for $1250, giving us mixing controls, better sounds, more memory and its own numerical keyboard to store and call up its one hundred patterns and one hundred pattern sequences or "songs." But wait! Spend another $250 and you can get the Oberheim DX, an update of their DMX. The DX has, among other things, three accent levels for each of its twelve parts, more realistic cymbal and percussion sounds, and removable program circuit boards so you can replace them with congas, claves and other specialized percussion sounds. All of these machines have error correction if you can't push a button in time, external trigger pads and adjustable "swing" feel. Lest we neglect an interesting variation, we should mention that **Simmons** has a sequencer called the SDS-6 that uses their electronic drum and cymbal sounds. Another intriguing variation is the **Music Percussion Computer** which has eight trigger pads built right on it. This is vaguely related to M.P.C's Kit, but has significantly improved accent and tonal variations, computer interfacing and memory capacities. You've got to be able to handle drumsticks, but for $1300, it's a lot of percussion.

WHY DIDN'T THEY THINK OF THIS...

Sure you've been winding your strings onto the tuning peg the same way for years now, careful to wind the string over itself for enough turns and tolerating slippage while they settled into place (then, when you tugged your whammy bar, they relaxed for an instant and slipped again). **Dewey Bowen** decided this was a ridiculous situation, the more so because he made a quality whammy bar for Les Pauls. He devised a tuning machine with an Allen wrench in the top: put the string through the hole, tighten the Allen wrench, and you're done. You'll never get caught with your slip showing again.

AMPLIFIER MODULATION

One of the biggest rumbles came from a new high-end line of amplifiers by string specialists **Dean Markley**. Based loosely on the old Audio-Matrix design, these babies aren't cheap but don't sound that way either. While we heard bigger stacks than the one pictured here (they reminded us of classic Marshalls), even the smaller models had a big, tubular sound. Unfortunately, they're hard to find, since the professional community has snapped up the early models, but in a few months they should filter down to us grunts. Definitely worth a listen.

TWO PART INVENTION

For all those non-sight readers who agonize over writing horn parts or who flunked counterpoint because they couldn't keep two separate parts in their heads and hands, **Roland** unveils the MC-202 Microcomposer. Half of it is a bare-bones synthesizer, the other half a programming board that enables one to first punch in a melody, then the note values, and then the accents. You work bar by bar, checking your work on the readout screen. Once you're done, it plays both parts of what you've programmed; if you want to go to four-part, record two on a tape machine and start over. While not loaded with memory, it's got more than enough to write a magnum opus. In its ample patch bay are external keyboard (the SH-101), tape synch and memory storage inputs and outputs, plus plenty of headphone power in its internal amp. For $650, this machine could teach you more about reading and writing music than a term at Berklee. — ***Jock Baird***

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Gibbons from pg. 80
You don't hear a note out of place."

Which brings us to a key word in the Gibbons vocabulary: economy. The most striking characteristic of Gibbons' playing is his ability to say so much with so little. He credits this aspect of his playing to the records he grew up with, in particular those by Jimmy Reed. "In terms of sheer economy, Jimmy Reed had to be the greatest. His records are still really fun to listen to—in fact, they're magic. I'll slap a Jimmy Reed cassette into the box and put a pair of Walkman earphones around my shoes before I leave in the morning, just to give them a good vibe."

The vibes for the current ZZ Top tour have not been so hot, though. Although the band is playing as well as ever, they've been beleaguered by all sorts of snafus. They were late getting into Atlanta the day I interviewed Gibbons because the plane that the group had been on had one of its engines quit and was sent back to the airport.

But that was nothing compared to the theft of one of the group's semis after the second date of the tour. As Gibbons explained, "Somebody followed us back into town and absconded with the 40-footer. They found the truck the next day, and some of the production items that had been manufactured over a period of months were so big and bulky that they left them. But they did rifle the cases for guitars, drums, the lasers...."

Gibbons is no stranger to having his equipment ripped off—a few years back, thieves broke into the ZZ Top warehouse and stole, among other things, the pink Stratocaster Jimi Hendrix had given Gibbons back in his Moving Sidewalks days. That guitar he was lucky enough to recover: "It appeared in a nightclub, and a guy who knew of the instrument saw it," he says. "We were in Memphis, and he called me up and said, 'Hey, I'm in Houston, I'm at this club and I think you ought to get down here—there's a guy playing your Jimi Hendrix axe. So I came down the next day and went over there. Sure enough, the guy had it and was grooving on it. It was a friend of mine, so I said, 'Hey, man, I think you're playing my guitar.' He said, 'Yeah, I should have known—this thing played too good and cost too little.'"

While the gear stolen this time included some valued guitars, including Dusty Hill's favorite Charvel bass, the biggest loss was six of the band's ten Rio Grande amps, which were custom built for the band and have defined their sound from the beginning.

"They're tube amps, constructed in the tradition of Marshalls and Hi-Watts, about 135 watts, and they had a really rich tube sound, tube pre-amp and power-amp stage. There was a guy down in Texas called Jake Stack who made those for us," Gibbons says.

"Tell him the name of the place, though," urges drummer Frank Beard. "That's the cool part."

"Jake's Bait and Music." Laughter erupts around the table. "Jake Stack is about six feet four inches, and he's all the time wearing khaki safari clothing and dark glasses. The place sits right on the water in Rio Grande City, Texas, and you can get either professional music gear or professional fishing gear, the finest of each."

"Just play or cut bait, y'know?" adds Hill.

The Guitars, the Amps, the Lasers

The guitars you'll find in Billy Gibbons' tackle box these days are custom-built Deans, part of a project between Dean Zelinsky and ZZ Top that will find ZZ Top guitars on the market sometime late this year.

His amps are still Rio Grandes, assuming they don't lose any more, and his effects include a Roland flanger with stereo chorus; an Ibanez analog delay; Bobby Blue Braden's Bisarktone, which is "a variation on that original Harold Boda modulator" that can be heard on "Cheap Sunglasses" from *Deguello*; two MXR pitch transposers; and four 15-band graphic equalizers.

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POWER AMP	
Freq. Resp.:	+0, 1dB, 5Hz 40kHz
THD:	0.1% (200 mW to 200 Watts RMS, 20Hz 20kHz) Typ. below, 0.05%
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Asch from pg. 88

World War II, when Asch joined forces with Norman Granz to form Disc Records, a label which was responsible for some of the finest jazz ever recorded. Mary Lou Williams, James P. Johnson, Coleman Hawkins and Nat King Cole (before he became a pop idol) are among the stellar players who recorded for Disc between 1945 and 1947. But Granz was a notoriously reckless businessman—the sessions he conducted with Hawkins were legendary for their extravagance—and Disc was soon scuttled beneath a sea of debts. Only the helping hands of Jack Kapp, of Decca Records, and George Mendelsohn, of Vox, enabled Asch to form Folkways in 1947, only months after Disc had gone bankrupt.

Asch maintains that his earliest recordings, made at his self-designed studios on West 46th Street in Manhattan, had the best fidelity of any he has issued. "In those days there were no acetates; they recorded directly on wax," he recalls. "We used one RCA ribbon mike, set in such a way that there was a balance between the instruments and the voice. It was a direct from microphone to wax process, which is still the cleanest sound there is."

One area in which modern technology did prove to be a boon to Folkways was the development of the long playing record. "We had been constricted in trying to get folk ballads on record in under three minutes on our 78s," explains Asch. "With the LP, we could do longer narratives." The advent of the long player left Asch with only one problem: a stockpile of Asch, Disc and Folkways 78s that he needed to sell in order to raise funds and make space for a new line of LPs. Again, Asch might have gone under, were it not for some timely outside aid, this time from legendary retailer Sam Goody, who bought out much of his stock, enabling him to proceed to manufacturing LPs.

With the dawn of the bebop era and the record equipment revolution of the late 1950s, Asch ceased making jazz records (whose practitioners now demanded double-tracking) and began to withdraw from producing altogether. Although he has since moved to new offices at 41 West 61st Street (New York City, NY 10023) and seldom steps behind a recording console, Asch still exerts control over Folkways' recordings, farming out work to trusted associates who are largely faithful to his recording philosophy.

One notable exception was a 1963 recursion to the studio on 46th Street with Bob Dylan. Dylan had been signed to Columbia Records by an astute John Hammond (legend has it that Dylan was turned away from the Folkways offices;

continued on page 118

Vaughan from pg. 82

did it, or at least how we thought he did it."

For Stevie, the bands came and went with dizzying speed, both in his native Oak Cliff, Texas (a suburb of Dallas) and later in Austin where his family moved in 1972. One of his first bands, a classic 60s garage punk affair, had the unfortunate name of the Epileptic Marshmellow. (Stevie asked me not to print that one, but I couldn't help it.) Another early group was called Blackbird, "which was kind of ironic, since we had a gay black lead singer." Then there were the Nightcrawlers, the Cobras, the Triple Dirt Review, etc., until he struck paydirt in 1978 with Double Trouble, which originally featured Joplin blues heiress LouAnn Barton on co-lead vocals.

By then, Vaughan's growing Jimi Hendrix fixation had turned into pure passion. Over the years, he has covered a variety of Hendrix nuggets from "Little Wing" and "Third Stone From The Sun" to "Manic Depression" and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)" in his live set. He remembers with a hearty laugh one Halloween night when he went to a Fabulous Thunderbirds gig dressed up as Jimi Hendrix, complete with an Afro fright wig he borrowed from Jimi clone Randy Hansen. But what he shares with Hendrix, besides the raw inspirational tone of his Stratocaster, is a quiet searching ambition to investigate uncharted areas of the blues' inner space without undermining the strength of tradition.

"But, see, Jimi was influenced by a lot of the same people as I am. He was obviously a big Albert Collins freak, he must have dug Albert King and B.B. and Hubert Sumlin (an unsung hero of many Jimmy Reed records). So there's a lot of the same influences coming in. Plus, after you've heard Hendrix, what are you gonna do? You can't get that outta your mind, y'know?" Vaughan's face suddenly takes on a religious gleam. "You don't *want* to."

In time, Vaughan may have the same effect on the post-punk generation. Duran Duran is not exactly the Butterfield Blues Band, but Vaughan has seen encouraging signs of re-interest in the blues, from the success of the Stray Cats ("Okay, it's rockabilly, but it's really close") to his own gigs, opening for arena bands like Cheap Trick. "I mean, who would have expected that crowd to listen to us? But they did and they enjoyed it."

But Stevie Ray Vaughan is too simple in his vision, too true to his blues, to lead that crusade. His only ambition is "to be respected because what I play is real. If I can play something and not be embarrassed when somebody I really respect walks in the room, then I'm okay." ■

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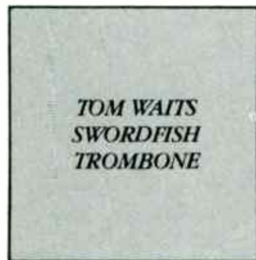
RECORD REVIEWS

Tom Waits
Swordfish Trombone (Island)



Sometimes we love our inventions more than they love us. Take Tom Waits. Started out about ten years ago as a brilliant and quirky young songwriter whose music incorporated the sense and the style of Hoagy Carmichael, Jerome Kern, Slim Gaillard and Stephen Foster; whose lyrics evoked the beat sensibility of Kerouac, Bukowski and the City Lights crowd; and whose rasp of a voice conjured up Lord Buckley and Louis Armstrong. Somewhere along the way, Waits up and turned into a character from one of his songs, a singing Maynard G. Krebs, the last drunk in the last bar mumbling into his beer and ambushing strangers with false confidences and tall tales. It's a part he's gotten good at, and he plays it to the hilt, wandering through a number of films and turning himself into a personality, a "Character" with a capital C. But the songs, though always clever, started to sound formulaic (like a good con that a lousy drunk has switched on a few too many times), and his voice, which once had a tender and musical gruffness, lost all its musicality and became a harsh rasp: Sydney Greenstreet wheezing Gregory Corso's greatest hits.

Swordfish Trombone, Waits' first record for Island, is his bid to expand that character and to sometimes act totally out of character, to open up and put all of his musical cards on the table. There are echoes of everyone from Dr. John, Ray Charles and Slim Harpo to Bruce Springsteen, and there's even a strange and beautiful fragment, an incantation of sorts ("Trouble's Braids") based on Burundi-style whisper singing. There's as much guitar as piano on the album, and in true blues tradition Waits shows himself to be a more enthusiastic than accomplished player, bringing a fine ragged edge to "Gin Soaked Boy," a song the Fabulous T-Birds should cover immediately.

What all this experimenting does (aside from letting in some good fresh air) is put what Waits does best in clear relief. His shaggy dog stories ("Swordfish Trombone," "Frank's Wild Years") have a casual urgency to them that was missing from his last few records, and his voice and timing have never been better; his voice still has a gruffness, but he's in control of it, it has a lightness to it, and no longer sounds like you're being dragged through a carton of Gitanes during each song. "Soldier's Things," a song of a yard sale reminiscent of Paul McCartney's lovely "Junk" and of Raymond Carver's stories, is the most haunting song he's recorded in years: 'A tinker, a tailor, a soldier's things./ His rifle, his boots filled with rocks./ And this one's for bravery. And this one's for me./ And everything's a dollar in this box."

This is a grab-bag of an album, perverse and self-indulgent, but wildly playful and alive and strong. — ***Brian Cullman***

Joan Jett
Album (Blackheart/MCA)

I can tell you that the new Joan Jett album, *Album*, is good, no problem. As to just *how* good the thing is, however, please keep in mind that all declarations are equivocal. Blame it on Wayne Newton. You see, I write this fresh upon arrival from Washington and Newton's Fourth of July floorshow. Thus my dilemma—after that session, gravel in a Maytag would exhibit a heretofore unrealized attraction. At any rate, *Album* is better than Wayne Newton, gravel in a Maytag, and is frequently the equal of Jett's two earlier records. It shows her uneasily accomodating to her arena-sized success. But if the record's an on-again, off-again rumbler, it frequently bangs about with the glory of a buffalo padding down Park Avenue. These songs move—live they would abrade every which way. They aren't exactly stationary on *Album*, but the production fluffs them up like a pillow. Perhaps this is a result of the chart success of her *I Love Rock 'N Roll* in 1982; a breakthrough like that tends to make musicians and industry ilk hanker for ever more airplay. The production terraces the sound on *Album* in surprising ways. On "The French Song," for instance, half of the chorus soothes like a Stevie Nicks' velvet glove, just before the rest of it interrupts with a punch. Besides aiming for the charts, the production goes a long way to crafting a distinctive sound for Jett, making space for both her bubblegum fun and her one-of-the-boys bravado.

Her eyes are so resolutely set on the farthest rows of the arenas that, occasionally, she almost stumbles off the stage. On numbers like "I Love Playin' With Fire" and "Had Enough" (which the liner notes inexplicably fail to list as her tribute to the Sex Pistols) she sounds like she's doing only what's expected of her—which she never has before. Still, the ground-clearing caterwaul does gratify elsewhere on the record, and a freshness and punk-informed pissed-offedness prevail.

Though her own material is stressed like never before, as always there's an eye-opening cover. If nothing on *Album* quite matches last year's "The Little Drummer Boy," the treatment of Sly Stone's "Everyday People" is still nervy, and it delivers in deuces. The goony glitter rock beat she embraced previously has receded, but it lingers on in several hipswivelers of *Album*. Jett's band, the Blackhearts, continues to hone their lean, heavy-metal-inflected style, coming across steady, even sometimes daring, though never fraught.

"I am what I am" Jett growls in "The French Song," like Popeye immediately after a green fix. And what she is comes into focus on *Album*: not the dedicated fan of *I Love Rock 'N Roll*, but a professional who knows it's too late to turn back now. For the first time, it's her original material and not the covers that carries the day. She has to think harder about what to do next, in the wake of chart-topping success: *Album* isn't a full

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answer. Still, it provides more than enough reasons for waiting around until she tries again. — ***R.J. Smith***

Eurythmics

Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This) (RCA)

Anyone with access to a "new music" radio station (or MTV) will already be aware that there's a lot of truly tedious piffle emanating from England these days. Synthesizer-based dance pop is a fine idea in the hands of talented practitioners (Human League, Heaven 17, ABC, even OMD), but suddenly the airwaves are awash with soulless poseurs and simple-minded groove merchants whose talents, such as they are, reside largely in their technological accoutrements. Given this increasingly dreary state of affairs, it is doubly exciting to discover *Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)*, an album whose creators, singer Annie Lennox and electronicist Dave Stewart (formerly of the Tourists, now operating on their own as the Eurythmics), obviously did considerable thinking before they whipped the covers off their computers. *Sweet Dreams* is a rich and captivating aural experience, superbly textured, smartly sung, full of vivid new sounds and sonic combinations. By comparison, most of the synth-pop competition seems merely overdressed.

The Eurythmics' music arrives fully realized—false moves may be the only moves missing from their bag of compositional strategies. Annie Lennox is one of the most distinctively talented new singers to emerge from the British synth-pop scene, and her unusually expressive voice and adventurous sense of phrasing are major sources of delight here. But Dave Stewart's synthesized sound settings, which meld marvelously with Lennox's often multi-tracked vocals, also offer autonomous pleasures of their own. Stewart is that rare being, a knob-twirler who combines technical expertise and a try-anything attitude with seasoned musical taste—style, I believe it's called. Of course, he shines on the predictable stuff: on "I Could Give You (A Mirror)," he plumps up a bed of bass that's big enough to roll around in; and he pulls off the venerable symphonic turn on the title tune with an unjaded conviction worthy of Ultravox. The woozy, snipped bass riff on "Somebody Told Me" is a really clever piece of work—it may even be original—and with Lennox wailing out front on the brilliant "Wrap It Up" (a Memphis whomper from the classic pens of Isaac Hayes and David Porter), Stewart's body-punching percussion pushes the song beyond mere "white funk" into true sweaty soulfulness.

As effortlessly enjoyable as it is, *Sweet Dreams* is hardly fluff. The album's nine original songs deal, in moderated but unmistakable tones, with disconnection and decay; even "Wrap It Up" has an unsettling edge built into its electro-arrangement. One of the small wonders of this record is that the music—which ranges far enough afield to encompass occasional echoes of English folk ("Love Is A Stranger"), pure Floydian highfly (note the banshee guitar glimmerings in "This City Never Sleeps") and even jazz (the muted "trumpet" in "The Walk")—delivers the message so expertly that you're almost happy to hear it. Synth-poppers in search of real electricity should plug into this one. — ***Kurt Loder***

Wynton Marsalis/Raymond Leppard/National Philharmonic Orchestra

Haydn, L. Mozart, Hummel Trumpet Concertos (CBS Masterworks—Digital)

Wynton Marsalis

Think Of One (CBS)

In the classical (as distinct from the baroque, the romantic or the modern) trumpet concerto, an orchestra and a soloist meet, engage in conversation, dance, court each other's favors and ideally make a species of elegant love. This may help to explain why the piano and the violin figure more significantly in the history of the form than the trumpet, which by nature distinguishes itself from the classical orchestra and stands too regally, too inflexibly, apart. There are not many trumpet concertos in the repertoire; Franz Josepn Haydn supplied us with most likely the best. It gives Wynton Marsalis something truly first-rate to play in his debut as a classical trumpet ace.

It took me a long time to warm to his reading of the piece. Oh, his legit tone is sufficiently luminous, his execution flawless and his tonguing spiked with the proper *punctilio*, but it seemed to me on my first dozen listenings or so that Marsalis had only come partway out to meet the music; that he and the vigorous and idiomatic NPO were playing in different rooms and that this had less to do with the natural difficulties of solo trumpet and orchestra than it did with Marsalis.

I was bothered most in the early parts of the first movement, in which Haydn gives the soloist apparently simple lines to play over orchestral accompaniment and challenge—you know at once that you are in the hands of a master. Marsalis plays the passages perfectly but too unbendingly, partly at a loss for interpretational nuance. Later in the movement, when a developmental Haydn gives the trumpeter lots of notes to play, Marsalis seems far more on target and at ease. In his own excellent cadenza, with the orchestra on hold, Marsalis is brilliant and almost cruelly virtuosic—I can hear, however distantly, the sound of a legion of classical brass players packing up and going home. All in all, the more I listen the less inclined I am to carp. Marsalis' reading has both authority and conviction, and with repeated listening he has gotten me to hear the piece his way for awhile. Like everything Marsalis does (except maybe winning the *Downbeat* readers' poll, which is only funny) the performance is a *tour de force*. He handles the second two movements beautifully, toying with the orchestra a bit in the *allegro* and not even blinking at the traps for tongue and fingers that Haydn has scattered along the way. Tasty.

Leopold Mozart, father of the famous failure, wrote his short two-movement concerto in a less dramatically interactive style than Haydn. The *adagio* requires the soloist to play long-lined melodies way up high, and Marsalis' upper register on the baroque instrument is breathtaking; the *allegro* demands speed and heraldry in a similar range and Marsalis makes it. I don't expect to hear this piece played better.

Johann Nepomuk Hummel, billed when young as "the new Mozart" and used when older as the moldy figs' bulwark against that barbaric upstart Beethoven, has written the most elaborate piece on the record, a ripe, post-Mozartean concerto that must be a severe test of a trumpeter's every muscle and nerve. I appreciate Hummel's skill without being much moved, except occasionally, by his music. Marsalis runs the difficult course well enough, though he quacks occasionally in the bottom octave, and I'm left wondering what he's got left to play should he decide to pursue a classical career as seriously as his gifts warrant.

As a jazz trumpeter, Marsalis is already an institution at the age of twenty-one. *Think Of One* is an advance over his first, eponymous disc; it's played entirely by his working band, there's a lot of fine improvising and the writing is intelligently diversified. Still, Marsalis is so good so young that I wish seven years had already passed and feeling had had a chance to catch up with technique. But then you can't have everything. Notoriously, you can't have simultaneous youth and age, not often anyway, though there are moments.

For a price you can have this record

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though, and it's a good one. The music is still an outgrowth of late 60s Miles, though Marsalis uses every opportunity that his range of vision affords him to keep the music unpredictable and his own. He likes to use a variety of tempos in a single piece, sometimes one per improviser, in order to shape a piece and break up the routine, and that's what it does. When Mingus used that device it was like coming over the ridge into the next county of perception, a revelation of material already implicit in the rich, innately multiplicitous composition. Similarly, when Marsalis has found an interesting way to tackle Monk's "Think Of One"—the entire band phrases the melody, which is then retained as a background pattern for the soloists—he runs the idea into the ground long after the listener has gotten the point. We're a long way from the penetrating, brilliant appropriation of Monk that Anthony Davis came up with some years back ("Crepuscule," on a Barry Altschul album) or, currently, Arthur Blythe's daring, percipient transformations of Monk on his new album *Light Blue*. Which is to say, I suppose, that despite some appearances Marsalis really is only twenty-one and some things plainly do take time.

Meanwhile, the album's fine. Branford still sounds like "is it Wayne or is it Memorex" but he can really play, and the disc closes with an affecting rendition of Billy Strayhorn's "Melancholia." Marsalis takes his art forms, whether classical or jazz, pretty much as he finds them, making his alterations for the most part in the margins and keeping the quality as high as he can. There's nothing especially new here, but there is enough on this two-album release to widen eyes and ears. It's an obvious triumph for a prodigious young artist who, I assume (I hope), has not stopped growing yet. — ***Rafi Zabor***

Aztec Camera

High Land, Hard Rain (Sire)

Aztec Camera isn't just another helping of fresh and clean-scrubbed "modern pop," the latest in a line of new shirts and fab haircuts. Sure, *High Land, Hard Rain* is blissfully hummable and blushingly romantic in its way, but there's none of the calculated naivete of rock's current crop of profession innocents, the Nick Heywoods and Claire Grogans of the world. Aztec Camera may appeal to your melodic sweet tooth, but it won't leave a nasty saccharine aftertaste in your mouth.

The reason for this is Roddy Frame, the mind and voice behind the Aztec Camera sound. Although Frame has quite a knack for simple, catchy melodies and memorable instrumental flourishes, his "pop" qualities aren't all a matter of surface. Frame balances his effervescence with doses of doubt and romantic despair, and like as not will drop a moody minor-chord progression in between a pair of upbeat verses, as he does in "Obvious." The sound is simple, yet lush; it's almost as if Frame would like to sound slick but doesn't know how. The guitars are bluntly unadorned and the rhythm section plays like an average lounge band—chops-conscious, but not chops-heavy. It isn't just a matter of balance, of course—Frame understands that such subtle shifts will ultimately boost the effect of the upbeat sections, and happily exploits such tricks of the craft. He also delights in such unexpected sounds as raw acoustic and under-amplified electric guitars. But there's a secondary virtue as well, and that's the leavening of reality such touches lend to his songs. Because it

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hovers between joy and trepidation, "Obvious" rings true as a song of love-sought-but-not-achieved; similarly, "Walk Out To Winter" mixes the warm remembrance of love in its first flush with chilling realization of its absence, while "Release" parlays Frame's fondness for jazzy modality into a touching account of reflection and recollection.

It would be a mistake to suggest that any of this is particularly earth-shattering—why fall into the trap of using excellence as an excuse for hype? At times, as with the delightful "From Pillar To Post," Aztec Camera is engagingly melodic, and no more. That even that would be enough to make music paper headlines in Britain says something about the general shallowness of that scene; for our purposes, it's enough to know that *High Land, Hard Rain* is a record that deserves and invites replay after replay, and that Aztec Camera shows tremendous promise. These days, that's more than enough. — ***J.D. Considine***

Kate Bush
Kate Bush (EMI/America)

This five-song mini-album makes for a surprisingly accurate Kate Bush sampler. Not only does it feature two of the better selections from *The Dreaming*, but it offers a smattering of her earlier material as well, all of which has been unavailable in this country. Yet even though it makes for an easy introduction, at the same time it introduces the listener to a number of Kate Bush's failings.

On the plus side, the mini-album format affords a cleaner sound than *The Dreaming* did, which makes it easier to absorb the layers of detail Bush packed into "Sat Into Your Lap" and "Suspended In Gaffa." The rippling rhythms of "Sat" are far more effective when you can hear them all, and the nuances of Bush's vocals stand out impressively. But at the same time, the sonic clarity also shows up just how much of Bush's handiwork is gimmickry and how little is magic. The shift from her whisper to her scream in "Sat" was more entrancing when it wasn't spelled out so clearly, while the enhanced imaging of "Gaffa" makes the effect of sonic depth seem far more affected than dramatic.

As for the other songs, all *Kate Bush* really seems to prove is that America caught on to Bush at just the right time. "Babooska" is catchy enough in its slurpy way, but drags on like an elementary school Christmas pageant, while "Un Baiser d'Enfant" will quickly confirm any listener's prejudices against English-speakers who sing in French. Perhaps the most revealing item is the live version of "James And The Cold Gun." A pleasantly melodramatic number on Bush's first album, her only pre-*Dreaming* American release, it shows up here as a flaccid demi-epic propped up by Bush's preening vocals and a side tray of tired guitar heroics. And that's why *Kate Bush* may have been a mistake for EMI/America; because after *The Dreaming* suggested that Kate Bush was both daring and different, this record seems to show that she's really pretty much the same as any other over-ambitious *chanteuse*. — ***J.D. Considine***

Sunny Adé
Synchro System (Island)
Juluka
Scatterlings (Warner Bros.)

After Sunny Adé's trail-blazing American tour earlier this year, many people wonder just how far African music will penetrate American pop. Trendies and record company execs alike stant alert, all senses poised to probe any made-in-Africa sounds that stray within reach—but warily, since African music remains vast and unknown. Without English lyrics, without electronic handclaps to simplify com-

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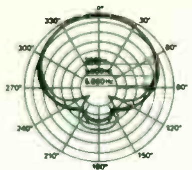
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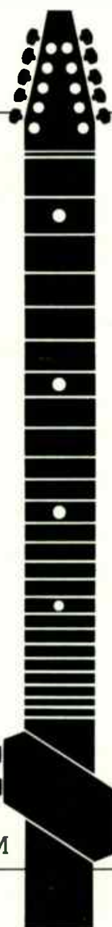

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plex rhythms, African pop remains problematic. And yet, like video a few years back, Africa inescapably seems the next frontier.

Fact is, knowledgeable observers began speculating about Sunny Adé's potential years ago. Some Nigerians will tell you he's been recycling Fela's licks in the *juju* context for years. But already Sunny's punctured his "Mr. Cool" image with an athletic, energized stage act that seemed beyond him ten years ago. And he's substituted yet more layers of chunky rhythms and stinging steel guitar solos for his often aimlessly meandering lead guitar. On *Synchro System*, he's taken it a step further—he's fully integrated electronics into his ensemble, uniting organic African rhythms with electronic textures in order to make African music competitive with state-of-the-art synth/pop/funk dance music.

And that's what *Synchro System* is all about: dance music. It might was well be titled *Sunny Adé & The African Beats Meet The JB's*. After all, the title track, which along with "Synchro Feelings" and "Synchro Reprise" dominates the record, was nothing more than a dance riff in its original incarnation in 1974 ("system" is merely the standard term used by *juju* musicians to denote their personal rhythmic approach). But where the original was a sparse, slinky *juju* shot, the new version is a hard, funky orchestral dance track fueled by the crunching rhythm of electronically distorted drums. Synthesizer gurgles and whooshes bubble and oscillate in perfect harmony with elastic rhythms. In short, Sunny Adé has accomplished the goal of so many Western artists—he's transmuted the complex, vital, preeminently human African rhythms to the electronic medium. "Synchro Reprise," with some standard dance record remix tracks, hints at a whole world of possibilities in that direction.

Synchro System hangs together much better than last year's purposely sampler-styled *Juju Music* LP. The pulsating funk of "Synchro Feelings"—driven by a wicked little guitar lick and grunting drums—flows naturally into the more gentle Congo-styled "Mo Ti Mo." Throughout the LP, the old problem of recording talking drums (which tend to sound muddy, especially in tandem with the bass) is alleviated by little halos of reverb on each drum which separate them and produce clarity. As before, the majestic harmonies are beautiful, the guitar army impeccable. *Synchro System* should shut up the doubters.

Doubters will have a field day with South Africa's Juluka, whose *Scatterlings* LP will probably be dismissed for the wrong reasons. Those familiar with traditional styles or the urban embellishments of tradition a la Sunny Adé may not understand that the earnest folk/

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pop of racially-integrated Juluka may actually be a valid reflection of their consciousness. The South African music scene remains the most European of the African pop scene; Christian church music, jazz and Western pop permeate the society more than most other African countries. Add the problem of apartheid and resultant colonial mentality and you'll understand better why Juluka may in some sense even be considered progressive in South Africa.

Unfortunately, these considerations do not guarantee good music. The title track—dominated, as much of the LP, by the voice and composing of white South African Johnny Clegg—veers between earnest but hopelessly plodding folk rock and ersatz acoustic "Bette Davis Eyes" pop. The mainly English lyrics freight the song with overblown energy and unwieldy phraseology. The best tracks ("Shake My Way," "Siyayilanda" and "Two Humans On The Run") are pleasant pastiches of light funk, Xhosa harmonies and accents, and jazz-inflected flute or sax. Only on "Shake My Way," an irresistible little backyard party groove, does Juluka seem comfortably African. A little more of that groove and they would be welcome at any party. — ***Randall F. Grass***

Arthur Blythe
Light Blue (Columbia)

Subtitled *Arthur Blythe Plays Thelonious Monk*, *Light Blue* ventures beyond the three or four durable Monk ballads and blues that have become common currency (the three or four that Miles Davis recorded back in the 50s, in other words) to lay claim to riches even Monk himself had forgotten about. With the exception of "Epistrophy" —the wending theme heard in truncated form at the end of Monk's club sets—Blythe has chosen pieces that Monk himself played all too infrequently. The liberties that Blythe takes with this still provocative material—the salsa rhythms that spice "We See," for instance; or the pointillistic writhing that commences "Epistrophy"—only serve to emphasize the prophetic role that Monk played in jazz. Blythe's enlargements seem to flow organically out of Monk's odd intervals in a manner that reveals the integrity of composer and interpreter alike.

In the process of honoring Monk, Blythe reaffirms his own status as the spunkiest and most slyly inventive of the post-Coleman altoists, and his quintet establishes itself as one of the supplest, most sublimely interactive small units in contemporary music. The sawtooth intensity of Blythe's "Off Minor" solo surely owes something to Bobby Battle's puissant drumming, and Battle's brisk rejoinders to the altoist during their fours on "Nutty" also announce the drummer's increased confidence and maturity. Tuba player Bob Stewart and cellist Abdul Wadud retain their capacity for delightfully startling role reversals—best demonstrated here on the moody free improvisation that emerges out of "Light Blue," and the striding counterpoint behind Blythe's solo on "Coming On The Hudson." While hardly as invigorating a soloist as his predecessor Blood Ulmer, guitarist Kelvyn Bell has a softer, more tremulous sound that blends handsomely with Blythe's alto.

Blythe's layered voicings for this pianoless quintet affectionately mimic Monk's shambling keyboard gait at times. Monk's glancing wit and melodic implacability are more difficult to emulate, but Blythe manages to suggest them as well. The altoist has invested a lot of himself in Monk's music, and Monk returns the favor: the Monk pieces lend *Light Blue* a consistency that was lacking on Blythe's previous Columbia releases, however thrilling their peaks. This is a record to savor, from beginning to end. — ***Francis Davis***

Guthrie from pg. 44
the charts from the first LP) wasn't really disco, although because the rhythm track was the focus of the song, it was good dance music.

"I had a lot of input on the production of both records, though. I always arrange, produce and sing all background and lead vocals, and it's fun, because by rights I'm a session singer and I really enjoy creating parts and trying to come up with distinctive lines and harmonies. On *Portrait* I was able to bring in Harry Whitaker, who is the perfect accompanist for me. He and I go back to my days with Roberta Flack when he was her musical director, and I find him to be a most sensitive improviser, at ease in jazz, rock or pop.

Many of the basic tracks on *Portrait* were outtakes from the extremely prolific original Compass Point sessions. But Island's Bahamian hit factory was hosting several new projects concurrent with Gwen's, and the ever more eclectic Sly and Robbie pulled Bernie Worrell in from an adjacent studio to add some synth lines.

"The idea to cover 'Family Affair' came from my producers. I had mixed emotions about it, because I felt Sly Stone's version was definitive. But they were big Sly Stone fans, and so the challenge became how to update the instrumentals and find a delivery completely different from how he'd done his. So I had them rearrange some things. Initially they'd used the same guitar part as the original, so I had them replace the guitar with synthesizer instead."

In spite of serving her producers' objectives, Guthrie's albums have been models of democratic collaboration. Studio whiz-kid Steven Stanley, who's just finished producing the new B-52's and Tom Tom Club records, contributed songs and his considerable engineering talents to both Guthrie vehicles, and seems slated to produce her third. Guthrie, whose own songwriting has been liberally featured on her solo efforts (although nothing so fine as "Supernatural Thing") still looks forward to really being able to cut loose with some material radically different from the Bits & Pieces formula.

"I was upset that we didn't get a chance to do another reggae tune on *Portrait*, but we had already cut enough tracks and had to work with what we had. But I've written some tunes that go farther than just reggae. And I'd like to do some more pop kinds of tunes, maybe use strings, which I've been avoiding. I'd really like to do a very versatile, Quincy Jones brand of pop." — ***Carol Cooper***

Morse from pg. 44
The stage was set, the question posed: could P.I.T. survive its own excesses? Steve Morse, a patron pontiff of P.I.T., arrived to answer in the affirmative with ex-Dreggie drummer Rod Morgenstein and relative unknown-who-may-not-stay-that-way-for-long bassist Jerry Peek. Moving confidently through a set of Dreg classics and old and new originals, Morse revealed a keen understanding of how to ration and pace a P.I.T. performance. The music was no less inventive or demanding than the Fents' had been, but spread on the simpler frame of an intelligent power trio, Morse's ideas could be heard and digested more easily. The high point of the evening came when Morse interrupted his Hendrix/Allman/McLaughlin excursions to play three perfect acoustic jewels, including two exquisite and ambitious solo guitar pieces and a baroque keyboard-guitar duet with Morgenstein. For an audience fried out of their guitar cases on P.I.T., Morse rubbed on cooling salve and offered the bottom line it-don't-mean-a-thing: all those fast notes are only as real as the melodies they create.

Having delivered this revelation, Morse resumed the electric P.I.T. celebration; the doubters were converted and the two-song benediction was delivered by the real McCoy himself, Rick Derringer. Purged but still prodigious, the congregation then hurried home after 2 a.m. in small groups to avoid patrols of the New Wave Red Guards and the KGB (Kritics for Garage Bands). — ***Jock Baird***

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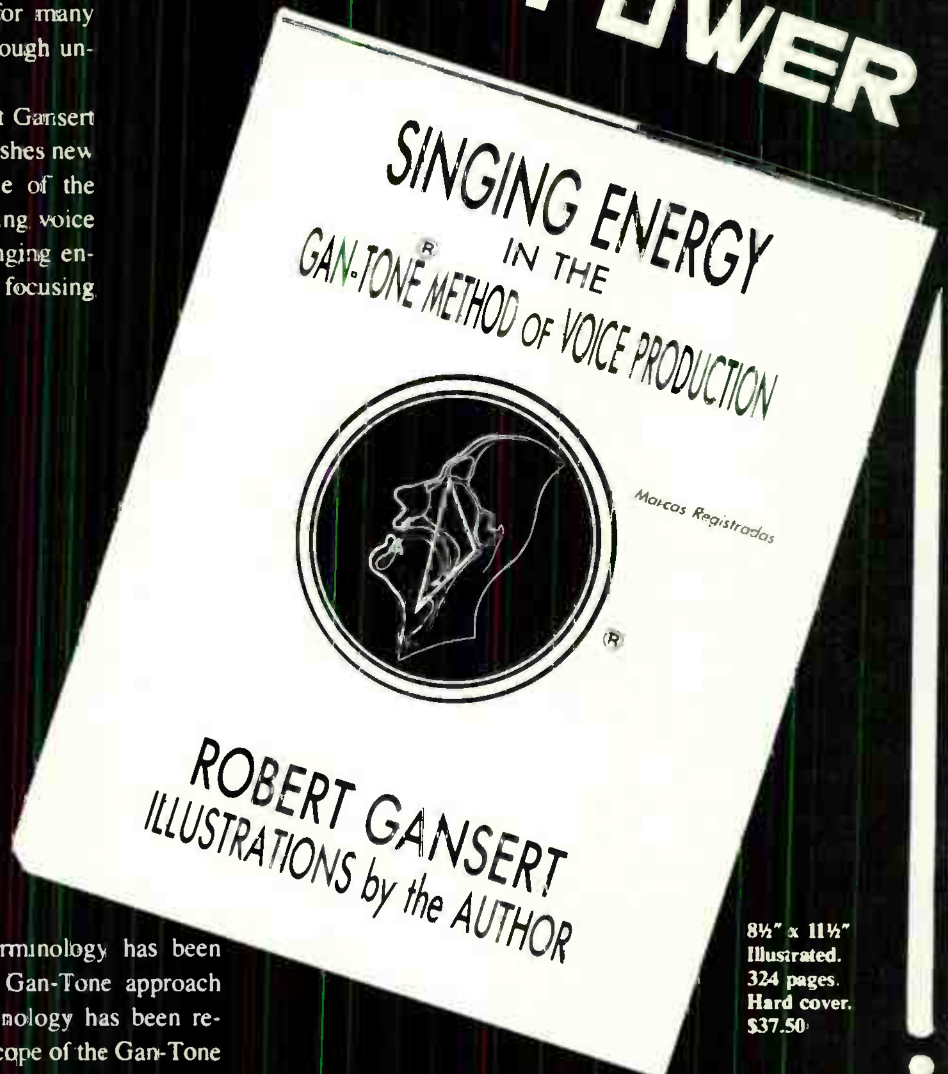

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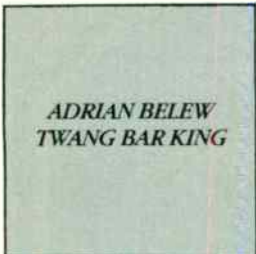
World Radio History

Adrian Belew
Twang Bar King (Island)



Despite a well-earned reputation for daredevil guitar gymnastics, Adrian Belew is a good old boy at heart... well, at least he seems to be, part of the time anyway. With his second Island effort *Twang Bar King*, Belew and his long-time working band Ga-Ga (plus studio ringer and drummer *extraordinaire* Larrie London) make very convincing noises in a more or less mainstream pop context, and if Belew hasn't completely subsumed his many artistic reference points (collaborators like Zappa, Bowie, Talking Heads and King Crimson; and seminal influences like the Beatles and Hendrix), at least he isn't wearing them on his shirtsleeve.

Twang Bar King is of the Chinese restaurant school of pop: one from column A, two from column B plus assorted appetizers. Belew is one of the most delightfully schizoid figures in pop, and those hanging around in hope of some extended jerk-off vamping over an ostinato are in for a real long wait. The good old boy aspect of Belew's personality is rooted in his blue-collar rock 'n' roll/R&B roots, which is to say, he writes *songs*. His main input isn't lead guitar but rhythm arrangements, and he never really solos, maybe he'll just comment on the verses in a decidedly hooky manner (as on the Little Richard-like screamer "I'm Down," the new wavish boogie of the title tune, and the honking and shouting of "The Ideal Woman").

The other side of Belew's coin is a kind of Afro-Eurasian textural sensibility which shows up in the form of cinematic castles made of sand on "I Wonder," the touching dirge "She Is Not Dead" and the high-life inflected power surge of "Jungle Jam" (with Larrie London's tiger-in-his-tank pulse forming a convincing argument for getting him out of the Nashville studios and into the front lines where he belongs). It's a painterly approach, and becomes more and more effective as Belew's narratives show less tongue and more chic, particularly on "Life Without A Cage," "Another Time" and "Fishhead," which hold up as songs and not merely verbal pastiches on which to hang some hooks.

Still, even if a tone poem like "The Rail Song" comes across as overblown, literal sentiment, and if Belew (like SCTV's Joe Flaherty in his soliloquy to Crystal Gayle on the subject of "critters") feels more comfortable doing a Doctor Doolittle shtick (on the quite lovely "Ballet For A Blue Whale"). *Twang Bar King* proves that while

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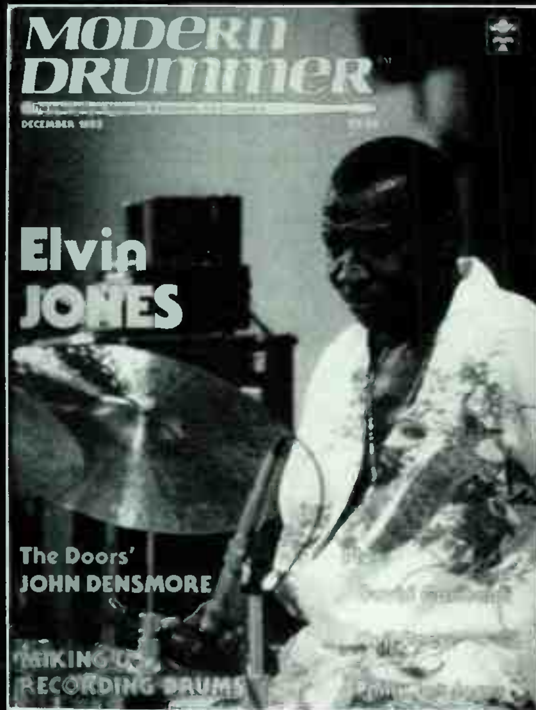

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Adrian hasn't quite reached his ultimate synthesis of song and sound, he's well on his way. — ***Chip Stern***

B-52's
Whammy! (Warner Bros.)

Whammy, eh? Shammy is more like it. Remember when the B-52's used to be...well, fun at least? The memory is fading fast. This album is an aspic of congealed mannerisms. Guitarist Ricky Wilson and drummer Keith Strickland play all the instruments, leaving keyboardist Kate Pierson to yawp along with Cindy Wilson and the increasingly insufferable Fred Schneider through a set of "songs" that barely justify the name. What happened to these people? They can't be all written out—since 1979, they've come up with two LPs, one mini-LP ("Six songs at a special price") and now this: nine songs (at least two of them throwaways, one a Yoko Ono cover) at the usual price, the whole thing clocking in at about seven-and-a-half minutes more than the aforementioned mini.

Deeply dire, friends. The only composition here that approaches the threshold of catchiness is the opener, "Legal Tender," which boasts some cute keyboard sounds and an almost interesting lyrical concept (beat inflation by counterfeiting cash) courtesy of Ricky Wilson's sometime songwriting collaborator Robert Waldrop. But cuteness is all it's got—there's no real *song*—and from this point, it's downhill all the way.

"Whammy Kiss" ("Come on mammy and give me that whammy," Schneider squawks) is, to these ears at least, unlistenable, as is the witless "Butterbean." "Song For A Future Generation" could have been interesting—the idea that one might live on into other, more interesting lives through one's children is not without promise—but the group brings nothing to it beyond the usual callow whimsy. The same goes for "Queen Of Las Vegas"—any song centered on a mother's deathbed advice cries out for at least a token human touch; but the guiding minds behind the B-52's seem unable, or unwilling, to provide it. The rest of the record nardly merits discussion. Yoko Ono's "Don't Worry" is an outtake from another project; "Trism" is too lyrically oblique to have any effect, and is in any event musically useless; and "Work That Skirt" is an *instrumental*, for chrissakes.

I can't say that this is the worst record *I've* heard so far this year (Rickie Lee Jones' is *way* out ahead). But I don't know about *you*.... — ***Kurt Loder***

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ROCK SHORT TAKES

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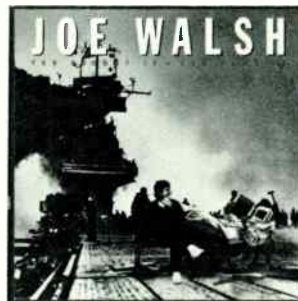

Quarterflash

Donna Summer — *She Works Hard For Her Money* (Mercury). The best thing about Michael Omartian's production on this album is that he understands Summer's voice as well as Giorgio Moroder did, but also knows how to turn that voice into a rock instrument, which Moroder didn't. Consequently, all the charm and character that made the disco hits so lovable is here with bells on, which is good news. Moreover, Omartian realizes that the trick is not to surround Summer with gimmicks but with songs that suit her voice, and that the best way of getting those songs is to write with her. But the best news of all is that Omartian can tap in Summer's Christian instincts without letting her turn maudlin, with results that are downright inspirational. She does indeed work hard on this one.

Mitch Ryder — *Never Kick A Sleeping Dog* (Riva). This is Mitch Ryder's resurrection as the original soulful rock singer, and if you have any doubts, just cue up "When You Were Mine" and listen to how he's added a whole layer of world-weary regret to Prince's lament on lost love. It isn't just inflection at work here, but the sort of knowledge that you only get from experience, and perhaps the most inspired move that John Cougar (or, as the album credits him, the "Little Bastard") makes here is matching Ryder's tired growl with that of Marianne Faithfull for the aptly-titled "A Thrill's A Thrill." They don't sing 'em like that anymore.

Rod Stewart — *Body Wishes* (Warner Bros.). Yeah, I know the title sounds like another dose of "D'Ya Think I'm Sexy," but as it turns out, this one comes out rocking and does surprisingly well by it. Sure, the rhythm tracks are squeaky clean, with all the guitar raunch eq-ed to within an inch of its life, but Stewart's voice cuts like a knife, and that finds him leading the band instead of the other way around. Aside from "Ghetto Blaster," a teen-jungle number as feisty as prime Alice Cooper, the songs aren't much to write home about, but the performances more than compensate.

Joe Walsh — *You Bought It, You Name It* (Full Moon/Warner Bros.). It's typical of Joe Walsh that the catchiest number here—his "Thanks For The Mammaries" number, "I.L.B.T.'s"—is totally unfit for airplay and likely to offend any number of female listeners. It's also typical that Walsh doesn't care, any more than he worries over whether or not we really need a song called "I Can Play That Rock 'N' Roll." What's atypical about *You Bought It* is that Walsh's laid-back obnoxiousness has earned him his best album to date, a record that's as much fun as a Southern frat party and about as well behaved. Just try not to pass out on the turntable, okay?

The Fleshtones — *Hexbreaker!* (I.R.S.). Their 60s fixation firmly in place, the Fleshtones show up on the cover of this album wearing clothes you probably haven't seen since the last time you looked at your Love albums. The good news is that this time they've got the sound to go with it—not just the licks, but also the over-the-top enthusiasm of ambitious semi-competents. But even though the ragged edges suit the instrumental tracks to a tee, Peter Zaremba's vocals are still awkward enough to make the Fleshtones sound like poseurs. After all, even the Kingsmen could yelp on pitch.

The Plimsouls — *Everywhere At Once* (Geffen). Now *here's* a garage band that has come to terms with its time. Even though producer Jeff Eyrich has slicked up the Plimsouls, tightening the arrangements and turning "A Million Miles Away" into mainstream hit material, he's left the band's bite and drive intact. So not only are the Plimsouls able to make the most of their smarts, as on Pete Case's "Shaky City," they also enjoy the luxury of sounding dumb, as on the grimy, "Lie, Beg, Borrow And Steal."

Loverboy — *Keep It Up* (Columbia). More pre-fab riffs, more sly *double entendres*, and enough high-tech sweetening to turn them into a second-level Foreigner ought to be enough to keep this album on the radio through November. With any luck, you'll be out of town then.

Malcolm McLaren — *Duck Rock* (Island). Would you buy a used trend from this man? After foisting off the Sex Pistols and Bow Wow Wow, Uncle Malc is out peddling refried Afro-pop, muzaked Lucumi rituals and second-hand scratch mixes. It's fun when it works, as on the turntable-mad "Buffalo Gals," and boring when it doesn't, as on the hopelessly lame "Double Dutch," and utterly forgettable the rest of the time. Quack, yourself.

Jr. Tucker — *Jr. Tucker* (Geffen). This eighteen-year-old *wunderkind* is already a sensation in his native Jamaica, but with Ray Parker, Jr. behind the board, he's the pop voice that Raydio never had. Tucker's voice is innocent enough to carry off a conceit like "Going Through School And Love" without a snigger, yet as an artist, he's mature enough to use his vocal control to make

continued on page 113

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World Radio History

JAZZ

By Don Palmer

SHORT TAKES

Yea, I know these aren't jazz albums, but everybody keeps mentioning the blues influence on Miles Davis, Lester Bowie, Ornette Coleman, et al, and blues names appear in jazz album dedications and even in the Death Done Made Us Part sections of reputable publications. But the blues are more than just a convenient journalistic reference point, as numerous quality releases from last year demonstrate.

Albert King — *San Francisco '83* (Fantasy). Albert King celebrates the fifteenth anniversary of his Fillmore West debut with his first new release in nearly five years, and it's a good one too—unadorned, no-nonsense blues with just King and rhythm. King's economical phrases and hovering, held notes urge the band to peaks of tension that are released in choked and biting runs. He's a master bluesman capable of expressing emotional possibilities in a succinct manner, both instrumentally and with his deep, commanding voice.

A.C. Reed — *Take These Blues And Shove 'Em* (Ice Cube). Never mind the Johnny Paycheck title rip-off, because this is no country cover. Tenor saxophonist Reed and drummer Casey Jones (both work with Albert Collins) have produced a tough urban blues album rivalling Junior Wells' classic *Hoodoo Man Blues*. Reed honors namesake Jimmy on half the songs, retitling and straightening the inebriated, concupiscent rhythms into forceful struts. But it's the lean, aggressive funk and the unlikely combination of Delta-rooted guitar interplay with synth-like vamps that make this album vital. Reed surrounds his gruff vocals and beefy R&B tenor with several of Chicago's more capable young blues players, including guitarist Lurie Bell and harpist Billy Branch.

Rocking Dopsie & His Cajun Twisters — *Hold On!* (GNP Crescendo); **Clifton Chenier & His Red Hot Louisiana Band** — *I'm Here* (Alligator). Dopsie is one of the heir-apparents (along with "Buckwheat" Dural) to Chenier's "King of the Bayous" crown, but they'll have to wait a little longer because Chenier—the Jimmy Smith of zydeco accordian—is a modernizing monarch. On his first studio date since recovering from a debilitating illness, Chenier exuberantly fronts a seven piece band while dashing off short solos, answering his horns with clever melodic riffs, or settling into the ensemble with tension-building obbligatos. The band snaps out the rhythms, both on the laconic shuffles and percussive Caribbean-influenced waltzes. Dopsie, no slouch himself, commands a generous bayou following with material less daring than Chenier's. Rhythmically, the Twisters are less fluid than the Red Hots, but with their cross rhythms and muffled backbeat they rock a groove just as hard.

James Booker — *Classified* (Rounder). The eccentric N'Awlins pianist has finally scored a legitimate US release, but on first hearing I was disappointed that Booker sounded more controlled and sedate than on his previous albums. It took a third listen before I realized how marvelously Booker feeds various styles into his dense orchestral conception. His uncanny knack for finding the blues in pop standards and gospel conviction in secular love songs is matched only by his penetrating, manic warble. Booker's layered, two-fisted clusters redefine possibilities first explored by **Jelly Roll Morton** (*Piano Classics, 1923-24,* Folkways) and continued by the likes of Tuts Washington and Professor Longhair.

Z.Z. Hill —*The Rhythm And The Blues* (Malaco). I've yet to hear Hill's 1982 W.C. Handy award-winner because Southern soul—that regional amalgam of gospel and blues—is harder to find than Bar-B-Q with cole slaw in New York City, but if this new release is indicative, count me in. Though in the Hi Records/Willie Mitchell mold, Hill avoids the mellifluous pop/gospel vocalizations of Al Green. His voice slides from sermonizing growls to falsetto moans with lusty urgency. Producer Tommy Couch keeps the arrangements interesting with staggered guitar/horn/piano lines, although the love ballads and strings temper Hill's gritty edge to some extent.

Clarence Gatemouth Brown — *One More Mile* (Rounder). Despite over thirty years of experimentation with blues, bop, country and Cajun musics of his native southwest, Brown is probably revered more for his novel appearance as a black man in a cowboy hat than for his finesse, musical knowledge and instrumental prowess. But the Puddin' Head Wilson of American regional music garnered some long overdue recognition with 1982's Grammy-winning *Allright Again,* and now he's enjoying the accompaniment of musicians capable of keeping time without his guidance. Though Brown's vocals don't duplicate the droll cool of Roy Milton or the insouciant, impassioned sound of Junior Parker, he has enough sense to avoid slavish re-enactments, and his crisp guitar, songful fiddle and blues orchestrations fill in the gaps.

Jimmy Johnson — *North/South* (Delmark); **Lonnie Brooks** — *Hot Shot* (Alligator). Versatile guitars, fatback bass, rock-influenced drums and witty lyrics should make for some hip contemporary blues, yes? No. *North/South* is as thin and tinny as a transistor radio. Not even his compact phrases and careful attack can differentiate Johnson's guitar from a rhythm section that punches out its modulations and grooves lackadaisically. Louisiana rocker Brooks, on the other hand, sticks to his succesful formula to deliver a typical bar-storming set of swamp funk, Cajun ballads and plenty of black magic.

Joe Turner —*Life Ain't Easy* (Pablo); **Jimmy Witherspoon with Panama Francis & the Savoy Sultans** — *Sings The Blues* (Muse). Two singers influenced by Jimmy Rushing, one is a rough-and-tumble shouter, the other an urbane crooner. Turner is in fine fettle these days, regularly rocking the house at Sweet Basil, Fat Tuesday's or Tramps. The Pablo, recorded in 1974, finds Turner in comparable form but in a distinctly different mood, storytellin' (rappin', if you like) with menacing honesty over spare, creeping after-hours grooves on loose jams with Roy Eldridge, Lee Allen and Al Grey. Witherspoon's 1980 session is more formal. He pays homage to Rushing with Basie-ish backing by the Sultans. The session swings nicely: George Kelly roars on tenor, and Spoon conscientiously recreates the Rushing sound. But com-

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pared to the explosive Basie orchestra of '37 and '38—well, we're talking locomotives and Datsuns here.

John Jackson — *Deep In The Bottom* (Rounder). This black songster is one of the last of a generation whose careers were extended by the 60s folksong movement. With a twangy Virginia drawl and leisurely, accomplished finger-picking, Johnson is a conduit for black folk tales that date from slavery. He offers a glimpse at a peculiar society—one virulently racist, loyally paternalistic and deeply committed to the belief that music is an honest expression of the human spirit. Contradictory and knuckle-headed beliefs fade after a time, and so has Jackson's music. His voice and picking lack the spry affirmation of his first two Arhoolie releases.

Reissues: *Howlin' Wolf* (Chess) breathed life into the music that originated in the Mississippi Delta in the 1920s. Wolf's raspy, ferocious voice, with its blue yodel, was an extension of the Delta's deep blues tradition. And he stood at the heart of Chicago blues. Without Wolf, without the weird, hunching drone rhythms of *Bo Diddley* (Chess), without the salacious roadhouse rhythms and molasses-thick drawl of *Slim Harpo, The Original King Bee* (Rhino), rock 'n' roll might never have introduced passion to middle America.

Rock Shorts from pg. 110

the most of every twitch in the rhythm section. With his voice and Parker's production, this could be the start of something big.

Jim Capaldi — *Fierce Heart* (Atlantic). A terrific set of songs—richly melodic, harmonically acute and generally perceptive on both a lyrical and spiritual level—that somehow seem unmarked by their performances. Occasionally, as on "That's Love," or "Bad Breaks," the sonic signature of Steve Winwood breaks through (I'll forego the obvious remarks on affinities), but for the most part this music remains pleasantly anonymous. While that's enough to make me appreciate Capaldi's strengths as a writer, my instinct as a listener is to wait for the cover versions.

Quarterflash — *Take Another Picture* (Geffen). Boy, just when I'd worked out a bunch of nifties along the lines of "just a Quarterflash in the pan," they come along with an album that sounds like another winner. It isn't just the pop material, which at least would have lived up to preconceptions; Quarterflash actually rocks a couple of 'em here, and with the sort of vigor that makes their bar band origins ring truer than ever.

The Alarm — *The Alarm* (I.R.S.). This Welsh quartet has a lot of good moves—sharp, ringing guitar figures; dark, Dylanesque harmonica; good, sturdy melodies

continued on page 118

"JAZZ IN ALL STAGES OF ITS DEVELOPMENT HAD TO DO WITH FREEDOM. OTHERWISE IT WOULDN'T BE JAZZ."
—Sun Ra

60198

ERIC GALE—Island Breeze

Master guitarist Eric Gale with a broadly appealing album fusing contemporary musical influences from Jazz to Caribbean to R&B. Featuring an all-star cast including Bob James, Buddy Williams, Gary King, George Young, Ralph McDonald and stunning vocalist Sandy Barker. Compositions include "Boardwalk" and "Dark Romance" by Bob James, and "Island Breeze," "My Mama Told Me So," and more.

60262

THE GRIFFITH PARK II COLLECTION —The Concert

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60261

RED RODNEY & IRA SULLIVAN—Sprint

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60264

LENNIE TRISTANO—Manhattan Studio

Recently discovered tapes from Tristano's New York studio of the visionary pianist in a set of extraordinary improvisations on "Lover Man," "There Will Never Be Another You," "Mean To Me," "I'll Remember April," "I'll See You In My Dreams," and more. With Peter Ind and Tom Wayburn. A rare masterpiece that provides new insight into the work of a brilliant musical thinker.

60168

STEPS AHEAD

Virtuosity and musical synergy abound on the debut American release of a true superband, STEPS AHEAD, featuring Michael Brecker, Mike Mainieri, Eddie Gomez, Peter Erskine and stunning Brazilian pianist, Eliane Elias, "Pools," "Islands" & "Skyward Bound" lead the way.

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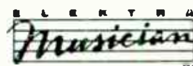

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Flock from pg. 30

seems to be having trouble hearing himself, is gesturing to the roadie running the monitors. The roadie turns up Score's mike for his high background part; it is too loud. Then come the low notes of the verse and Mike can't be heard. He touches his mouth and shoots a look sideways. Nothing happens. He repeats the gesture. A small change in levels fails to do the job. The song has been spoiled for him. Worse, the cauldron of low-end rumble in soundcheck is still there, possibly because the bleachers are not completely full. For want of a few hundred more bodies....

Again the unfamiliarity of the crowd with *Listen* runs smack into A Flock's determination to play *every* cut from it. This first costs them in reduced enthusiasm, and then, when they insist on playing the lengthy two-chord ballad "The Fall," in wandering attention. They recover this by unveiling a remarkable stage backdrop that resembles space colonies on Jupiter, and double-timing the show again, using "I Ran" as an anthemic encore-producer (a similar attempt to anthemize "Wishing" appears less successful). As they race back on for their encore, the fight to get control of the monitor mix and the boomy acoustics becomes undone: Paul's mike is turned up instead of Mike's, and his casual vocals become broken up, unbeknownst to him, rendering the finale "(It's Not Me) Talking" a grim, deafening throw-away. The boominess spreads like tar. But for all the problems, the band has indeed put on a good show; much of the audience leaves praising the backdrop.

As the band runs offstage and down into the depths of the concrete maze, the journalist follows Mike closely; his heavy cotton shirt is completely soaked between his shoulder blades and he mutters, "It was just so hot, I just...." He is convinced the show was a disaster. Frank is furious. "I couldn't hear any drums! I had to time Ali by hearing the acoustic click of his stick hitting the snare." Using electronic drums does have a price. As the band reaches the locker room, the entourage is deftly turned away by Chas. "We're going to have a little *talk* right now; please come back in fifteen minutes." Animated discussion is heard from behind the closed door; it is very likely that the soundman will be doing another job the night after next in Atlanta—being one of the men, he won't, of course, be fired.

It is a tired and depressed band that gradually calms down and licks its wounds. A group from the British embassy has come round to say hello and Mike, ever the diplomat, chats with them for a while. Of all the band, only Paul feels reasonably well about the gig; his solo on the fade of "Man Made" was one of the high points of the show. The journalist jokes about how inert he looked before going on. "Well, you've got to get your gig together," he shrugs.

For the band that has always had it easy, things have become difficult. The Cinderella stairway to stardom that put these kids from Liverpool in limos has become steep and pitted with potholes. America is simply not going to effortlessly accept a record like *Listen* the way it did "I Ran." But a little work doesn't seem to be hurting A Flock Of Seagulls; the fact that they care enough to get angry when their shows are imperfect is an indication that these new obstacles will be overcome. If the bubble bursts and the limos disappear, they could even make the critics like them. Especially if they ditch the hair.

Captain Pernod sits in the wreckage of the locker room. Having given away his ration of Pernod and grapefruit juice, he makes do with a beer. "There's no gig tomorrow?" he asks cautiously. "Oh, thank God. I'm going to sleep all day."

Flock Boxes

Mike Score uses two Roland SH-101s and a Juno 8, piped through a Studiomaster powered mixer and into two Roland 3-way speaker systems. He also uses an Aria guitar through a Roland JC-120 amp.

Paul Reynolds plays a Kramer through a Pro-Co Rat distortion and a Roland RE-501 chorus echo and thence to two JC-120s. He also uses a Roland GR-3000 guitar synth.

Frank Maudsley plays his Gibson Artist bass through a Boss flanger, an Ibanez multi-effects unit and an MXR 6-band equalizer taped to the head of his Ampeg V6B. He also uses an Ibanez bass for funkier parts.

Ali Score uses Simmons drums and Paiste cymbals. While Mike just bought a Drumulator, the band still uses a Roland TR-606 drum machine for two songs.

Taylor from pg. 38

place of genuine ideas, if one wants to be Machiavellian, one seeks to stimulate controversy, and intimidate, causing furor.... The bromide, empty barrels making the most noise. Nothing's happening. Actually, that personality in itself is minimal; the real ogres are the people who employ It (Stanley Crouch) and use It. As a matter of fact, It walked into Sweet Basil the other night, and I was sitting close to the door. It spied me and It shook It's umbrella at me as It went by. Which is about the height of It's level of persuasion.

I'm preparing two things that will address certain aspects of the disease. There are much more important things to do, but it was what made me really examine my temple—it just made me stronger, and has made me more silent, and (in a raspy whisper) *haarrrdd*, very hard.

Musician: *I was talking to Anthony Davis about this same problem: the double-edged sword of racism.*

Taylor: In the case of Anthony Davis, It's attitude towards that man's music is just another indication of his blindness. The question isn't whether the material Anthony uses should or should not be used; the thing that must be taken into consideration is that the attempt is being made and how maturity will lead Mr. Davis to eventually create what he will create. Hopefully, it will be something that will help us all.

But on the other hand, look at what It cottons to: music that is post-bebop, even some ne'er-do-well bebop at that, and some of it that isn't interesting at all. Mr. Davis should realize that it's going to be very difficult for dunderheads to deal with him, because they're not even ready to deal with me yet.

Musician: *Will dunderheads ever be ready?*

Taylor: That's the problem. Because, once you really realize where you are in the totality of the society you're living in, it's very obvious. One of the things that makes Western civilization run is cash flow, and if you're not doing something that's stimulating the cash flow, *it's on you buddy*. Nobody asks us to try to make beauty if it's not co-signed by a corporation. It's incumbent upon you to find out exactly what the margins of your existence are going to be.

Musician: *Which is something I'm sure you had to come to grips with early on in your career.*

Taylor: I'm an only child and I love the idea that I was treated like a prince. It took me a long, long time. Because I was spoiled, I was always very sure of what I wanted to do. I did not necessarily understand all of the ramifications and the responsibilities attendant to the position I took. But if you're fortunate enough to live in spite of all the cigarettes you smoke every day, the dunderheads are going to be made even more uncomfortable....

The big band is doing very well right now. We've got an incredible female vocalist, a Latino percussionist; I'm reciting poems, dancing and chanting. I've also got a whole program of new music that I've been working on for the last four months. There's so much to be done. I'm very excited right now. I think that I'm on to something. The Puritan ethic was so devastating to us, because it took the whole pleasure of life out of living.

Musician: *When I really started investigating African music, I realized how many similarities there were with your music. Throughout your music there's constant call-and-response. The way you approach rhythm and melody is so much more African than Western. You don't separate rhythm from melody the*

continued on page 122

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Muta from pg. 44

accepted as part of that system. So that poem was written to say it's not too good to stay in a white man's country too long a-building it up when you're never going to be accepted as part of that system. Now you have some people can't understand these sentiments. Why is it I always wonder that whenever a black man write to black people, him get called a racist? I never understood that. Some people take these things personally, like it's to make them feel inferior. But it's not that. More importantly, we write certain things so people will understand how *we feel*."

Two reasons the redemption songs found on *Check It* carry so much emotional and esthetic impact are co-producer Earl "Chinna" Smith's stunning musical craft and Muta's own stirring lyrical wit. On "Hard Time Loving," for example, he presents the plight of young lovers forced to curb their appetites because of their social reality. Accompanying such anti-romanticism is one of the record's many surprising twists on reggae's riddim forms—twists which often contain goofs like the invocation of "Greensleeves" which opens "Hard Time Loving." In performance at the Ritz, Muta showed that he could use a bit of seasoning in the area of pacing and building a show, but his visual and musical presence is undeniably a commanding one. — ***Greg Tate***

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Asch from pg. 94
he later told journalist Israel Young that he "never got to see Moe Asch"). When he came up with some overly political songs he wrote to benefit *Broadside* magazine (a mimeographed, topical publication founded by Pete Seeger and Sis Cunningham), Hammond arranged for him to go into the studio under the alias Blind Boy Grunt with Asch at the production helm. Several of Dylan's performances are still available on a couple of discs in the Folkways catalog.

But Asch's main aesthetic task over the past two decades has been to decide what material is good enough, or carries sufficient cultural weight, to be on Folkways. "It's hard to spell out the criteria," he says evenly. "You use your feeling and your whole experience when you hear something and you decide whether it is right or not. I am interested in the music primarily as a social expression, not as a technical expression. The music that I issue should have some humanistic purpose.

"It is really not so difficult," he continues, "to know what is the truth and what is falsehood. For instance, you know the twang that many folk singers developed after Bob Dylan. This is false, it is not common to the man. With Dylan, of course, it was the poetry that counted rather than the rendition. His popularity was a combination of the rendition *and* the poetry, but that style wouldn't work for Folkways. On my Broadside sessions with Dylan, he was dealing with specific political and economic problems, so he didn't falsify his voice. He stated it as he felt it. This is my main criteria. Does a guy actually mean what he says or is it just something he thinks he can make a couple of bucks out of? The guy has to live it and feel it and has to say, 'I'm being browbeaten by society and I've got to get it out of my guts... I'll go to Asch and see what he says.' That's the kind of thing I look for." ■

Rock Shorts from pg. 113
and a powerful, rifle-crack beat. Excellent qualities each, but taken together it all becomes too strident, sort of like the Clash doing *Blonde On Blonde* and *really meaning it*. Let's hope maturity sets in before egoism does.

London Symphony Orchestra — *Zappa, Volume 1* (Barking Pumpkin). Sneer at the concept if you must, but this is neither joke nor rock-star indulgence. Although the orchestral Zappa seems to ramble a bit, especially during the three-movement "Mo 'N Herb's Vacation," most of the music here stands up to close and critical listening. Of course, this is no "Hot Rats For Strings," if that's what you're thinking; instead, Zappa shows a heavy debt to Edgar Varese, by way of Olivier Messiaen. The orchestration, I should add, is exquisite. Too bad he isn't serious about his rock records.

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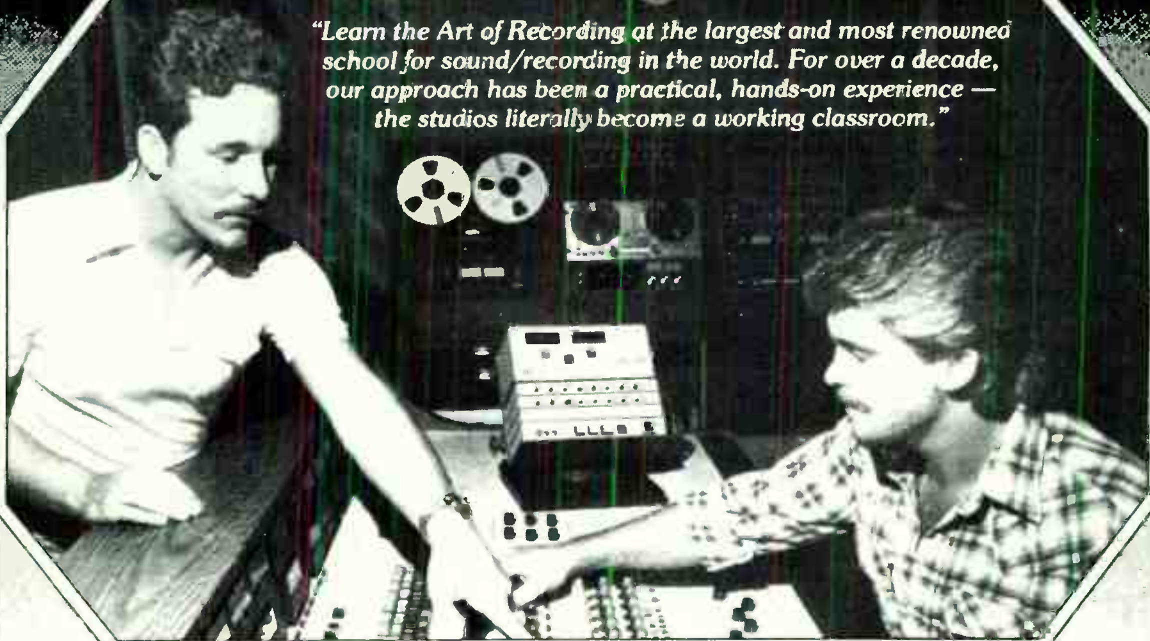

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Taylor from pg. 114
way Europeans have; yours are truly rhythmic melodies, where rhythm and melody are one unified conception.

Taylor: This is really interesting, because you're the first writer that I've ever come across that understands this. But *that's it; that is really it.*

Musician: *Most people said that you were translating modern European influences into the black experience.*

Taylor: I studied European music and they studied me. We had a go at each other and we found each other wanting—wanting to get rid of the unnecessary boredom.... Well, as long as the Queen of England keeps visiting us to make sure that California's descent into the Pacific is a gradual one, I'll be satisfied.

Musician: *Your music reflects many elements of dance, and you've done a number of projects with dancers. What was your collaboration with Mikhail Baryshnikov like?*

Taylor: Oh, that was an incredible experience, a beautiful experience. I could tell you a lot about the Baryshnikov experience... because that experience more than any other, really told me about the attitudes of the people who are in power in the art world and how they feel about American artists....

Now, Russian ballet is one of my passions. I love the Russians because of the emotional content they possess. When I saw (Rudolf) Nureyev, I had never seen anything like that kind of extraordinary drama, you dig. I also saw (Yuri) Soloviev when he came with the Kirov in '65....

So, the first time we were supposed to have a rehearsal, I had been up all night and I got there and Baryshnikov didn't show. The next rehearsal, Baryshnikov didn't show again. So two days later, I was called and told that he'd definitely be there for a two-hour rehearsal. I left my apartment at the time the rehearsal was supposed to begin. I got up to 57th Street and decided that I was going to buy some shirts, because I didn't like the way I looked. I finally arrived with fifteen minutes left in the rehearsal. I mean, I loved the drama.

The first section of the first piece had certain prepared things on the strings—prepared in my way, of course. We started, and Baryshnikov went into these rhythmical movements with his shoulders. The choreographer shouted, "*No!*" Now, with George Balanchine you count, so American dancers all *count*. So Heather Watts looked at me and said very quietly, "You know, Bary can't count."

At the next rehearsal, it's like the hottest day of the year. I walked in and made a joke to Heather, who's usually very open, but there was no response. And the choreographer was even more intense than ususal, because Baryshnikov had just been named to head the American Ballet Theatre. The atmosphere was really tense. With all the gigs I've had in Harlem playing bad pianos from nine to five in the morning making five dollars, I had never been in an artistic environment where the feeling of depression was as great as this.

Bary is a wine, women, party person. So that day he came in and they all knew that he'd been out all night, and this was the day that they were going to get him. But his verve recognized the implicit as well as the explicit vicissitudes of the dynamic he was crossing, i.e., big fish in larger pool, great pressure all around. "You've got to *count*," they started in with him. Finally, the only time I heard him raise his voice, he said, "You want me at *that space, I will be there!*" "No, you *must count*," they screamed back. But when it finally went down, he was *there* (Taylor snaps his fingers)....

After we performed at the Hollywood Bowl, we were taken to this little restaurant. Now, I had been watching all this crap coming down on Bary, so I was respectful and didn't bother him much. I mean, everybody was *on* him. And at this dinner were these two gentlemen in their sixties and seventies, with diamonds on all their fingers, who were going on and on to Bary, to the point that he started falling asleep in front of them. So I had to wake him up. I leaned over and whispered the name Soloviev to him, and he opened his eyes and just looked at me. You see, Baryshnikov looks very much like a smaller Soloviev and he worshipped him. Soloviev had just committed suicide the year before, took a gun to his head and blew his brains out. This effected Baryshnikov very much.

From that point on, we really started talking. By the time we got to Philadelphia, he had me riding in the limo with him. He was a very nice man and a hard worker. He finally injured himself in California; the Balanchine method finally got to him. Baryshnikov dealt, really dealt; they just should have let him follow his own instincts. (At this point, the phone rings and Cecil answers it.)

Listen to this, it's Frank Wright (he hands me the phone and I hear Wright playing a frenetic tenor solo). Frank's wild. He's great, just listen to him. M

Heads from pg. 18
Speaking In Tongues' serene and subliminal dubwise mix; the move to the dance floor happened as I got hooked on its skanking-and-syncopating blend of Bootsy, Bernie Worrell, Bob Marley and the Heads' own *More Songs About Buildings And Food*. If in the end I find myself somewhat neutral about the whole affair, I think it's for two reasons: the first is that while Talking Heads have certainly got all the right ingredients for great funk on *Speaking In Tongues*, it just doesn't burn off the grooves like any of its black models, partly because it doesn't have as much slippery bottom going for it. The second reason has to do with the fact that in opting for a blacker feel, the band seems to have lost the edge of alienation and experimentation that made *Remain In Light* such a crazed polarization of Funkadelic and Miles Davis' *Agharta* and *On The Corner* LPs. In becoming more familiar with the funk, Talking Heads seem to have given up some piece of their genetic souls, and that may explain what the new record is missing for all its craft, humor, warmth and danceability. M

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